

Forensic Nurses Help Close the Gap in Health Care for Survivors of Violence

*International Association of Forensic Nurses Puts Mobile-Ready Resources
and Individualized Support into Hands of Those Treating Victims of Intimate Partner Violence*

Elkridge, Md., May 21, 2024 — Health care providers for the first time have access to a national protocol that provides evidence-based clinical guidance on how to effectively identify and treat the more than 10 million American adults who are victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) annually, and the World Health Organization estimates that about one in three women aged 15-49 worldwide have been victims of IPV.

The National Protocol for Intimate Partner Violence Medical Forensic Examinations released by the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) provides guidance and tools for all clinicians when caring for patients that disclose experiencing IPV. The International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN) in collaboration with OVW and a cadre of multidisciplinary experts, created this first evidence-based guidance with best practice recommendations for clinicians in various settings, including an interactive, mobile-friendly version of the protocol with expanded resources and tools.

“Decades of research and practical experience have shown healthcare professionals the acute and long-term health consequences of IPV, but the release of this protocol provides a standard, evidence-based approach for our doctors, nurses and others to assess, treat, and support victims of intimate partner violence. It is critical that healthcare clinicians understand IPV from the patient’s perspective, and are properly prepared to perform trauma-informed examinations,” said Jennifer Pierce-Weeks, BSN, RN, SANE-A, SANE-P, IAFN Chief Executive Officer.

IPV refers to various forms of abuse that can occur in a relationship that is considered intimate between partners, this could be romantic partners or individuals and their caregivers that may have a longstanding relationship, for example. IPV can be inflicted by both current and former spouses and dating partners, and others with whom the victim has had a personal relationship. The exact types of behaviors, the rate of occurrence, and impact vary. IPV can include, but is not limited to psychological abuse, sexual violence, physical violence, and stalking. Patients impacted by IPV experience acute and long-term physical and mental health consequences as a result of violence, which may be mitigated by enhanced care from clinicians that have access to IPV specific education and resources.

“Our interactive version of the national protocol puts ready-to-use resources into the hands of clinicians nationwide, better preparing them to provide trauma-informed care during some of the most frightening moments of a patient’s life,” said Pierce-Weeks. “IAFN is committed to reaching as many clinicians as possible with these tools so that ultimately, victims receive the very best patient care available.” The interactive version of National Protocol for Intimate Partner Violence Medical Forensic Examinations is available [here \(https://www.safeta.org/national-ipv-protocol/\)](https://www.safeta.org/national-ipv-protocol/).

IAFN also provides training and technical assistance through individualized support to healthcare professionals and other disciplines who respond to survivors of IPV and other types of violence.

IAFN offers an online Intimate Partner Violence Nurse Examiner Certificate Program designed to improve nurses’ skill specific to physical examinations, including evidence collection, of patients who are victims of IPV. Course information is available in the IAFN course catalog at forensicnurses.org.

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The International Association of Forensic Nurses is a professional organization of more than 6,000 nurses from 25 countries who provide specialized healthcare for patients impacted by violence and trauma. The Association establishes the standards of practice for forensic nursing; defines and advances the global research agenda to enhance forensic nursing's evidence-based response; develops, promotes, and disseminates information about forensic nursing science; and serves as a global network for forensic nurses to exchange ideas, serve as mentors, and enhance their practice. Additionally, the Association offers board certification for sexual assault nurse examiners who care for Adult/Adolescent (SANE-A®) and Pediatric/Adolescent (SANE-P®) patients. For more information, visit [forensicnurses.org](https://www.forensicnurses.org).

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