

Military Trauma and Domestic Abuse

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Domestic violence can happen to anyone. It is important to remember that abuse is never the fault of the victim. The choice to abuse belongs to the abuser, regardless of age, gender, race, or religion. This extends to military service. Military members experience significant stressors as part of their service, but these stressors do not excuse or justify domestic violence. The military considers domestic violence a criminal offense and takes steps to adjudicate the crime and assist the victim.

Factors That Increase Risk of Domestic Violence in the Military

Military members and their partners may experience challenges and factors that increase the risk of domestic violence.¹ Evidence suggests that there may be higher rates of domestic violence where a partner is in the military or a veteran.² Military members are subject to strict discipline and obedience standards and are often under stress due to the nature of their jobs. Additionally, the military often requires moving frequently, deploying for months at a time, and being away from loved ones—this can create an isolated environment without a support system. Some military members may suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and/or substance abuse issues. These conditions can affect both military and civilians alike, but if a person is in the military, they may have these conditions due to their service. While these conditions may be related to an offender’s history of traumatic experience, they never justify domestic violence.

For more general information about these conditions, visit the websites below:

- [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder \(PTSD\)](#)
- [Traumatic Brain Injury \(TBI\)](#)
- [Substance Abuse](#)

¹ Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program (IPVAP) Prevalence, U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, https://www.socialwork.va.gov/SOCIALWORK/IPV/VETERANS_PARTNERS/WhatIPV/Prevalence.asp.

² Sean Cowlshaw, et al., *Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in Military and Veteran Populations: A systematic Review of Population-Based Surveys and Population Screening Studies*, Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health (2022) <https://www.mdpi.com/1736050>.