

# Trauma-Informed Reporting:

A Guide for Media Professionals on Addressing the Intersections of Gender-Based Violence, Trauma, Mental Health, and Substance Use

## Introduction

Reporting on the complex interplay of gender-based violence, trauma, mental health, and substance use requires a nuanced, trauma-informed approach.

This guide aims to provide media professionals with the tools and knowledge to report on these issues sensitively and accurately, while prioritizing the safety and well-being of survivors.

## Key Considerations

**Understand the complexities:** Recognize that gender-based violence, trauma, mental health, and substance use are intricately linked. For example, people who use violence often leverage substance use stigma to maintain power and control over their partners.

**Prioritize safety:** Always prioritize the safety of survivors when reporting. Avoid disclosing identifying information or details that could put them at risk.

**Use trauma-informed language:** Use language that is respectful, nonjudgmental, and counteracts victim-blaming narratives. Refrain from sensationalizing or glamorizing violence, mental health, or substance use.

**Provide context:** Place individual stories within the broader context of systemic issues, such as the lack of accessible mental health and substance use services, and the impact of trauma on survivors' lives.

**Include resources:** Provide information on local and national resources for survivors, such as helplines, support groups, and counseling services. We offer several resources to this end.

## Contextualizing the Issues

**Substance use coercion:** Explain how people who use violence often may use substances to control, manipulate, or exploit their partners and how this can impact survivors' mental health and recovery.

**Trauma and mental health:** Discuss how survivors' mental health can be impacted by the trauma of abuse and the importance of trauma-informed approaches in supporting healing for survivors and their families.

**Access to services:** Highlight the barriers survivors face in accessing mental health and substance use treatment services, such as stigma, financial constraints, and treatment sabotage by an unsafe partner.

**Systemic oppression:** Acknowledge the role of systemic oppression, including racism, sexism, and poverty, in exacerbating the challenges faced by survivors, including lack of access to culturally affirming care.