

CONVERGE COVID-19 Working Groups for Public Health and Social Sciences Research

Research Agenda-Setting Paper

This paper was written to help advance convergence-oriented research in the hazards and disaster field. It highlights areas where additional research could contribute new knowledge to the response to and recovery from the pandemic and other disasters yet to come. Questions about the research topics and ethical and methodological issues highlighted here should be directed to the authors who contributed to this paper.

Working Group Name:

Domestic Violence and Survivor-Centered Approaches to COVID-19

Working Group Description:

Public health experts agree that the best approach to slowing the spread of COVID-19 in the U.S. is enacting social distancing measures, including stay-at-home or shelter-in-place orders. However, for vulnerable subpopulations who receive comprehensive domestic violence services from organizations that draw on theories of empowerment and trauma as they design, provide, and evaluate services, this approach is particularly problematic. This Working Group will examine the extent to which such theories can be effectively used in service provision during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Priority Research Topics and Specific Research Questions:

Priority Research Topics	Potential Research Questions
1. Document the impact of COVID-19 public health measures (i.e., social distancing) on the continuity of or adaptations to the provision of empowerment- and trauma-based DV services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are national- and state-level DV organizations responding to COVID-19?
2. Understand the ways in which DV service adaptations required compromises related to empowerment- and trauma-informed service delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is DV service provision continuing to adhere to theoretical frameworks of empowerment and trauma during COVID-19? To what extent do compromises related to empowerment and trauma-informed service delivery have differential impacts, such as by race/ethnicity, documentation status, sexuality and gender identity, or (dis)ability?
3. Identify recommendations to increase institutional capacity of DV service providers to maintain theoretically-sound service provision in environments altered by all types of future emergencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What research-informed recommendations and guidance are needed by state- and national-level DV service providers to ensure the continuity of theoretically- and empirically-informed services during COVID-19 and future public health emergencies?

4. Identify recommendations to increase institutional capacity of DV service providers to maintain culturally specific and responsive services in environments altered by all types of future emergencies, particularly in light of their disparate impacts on different populations.

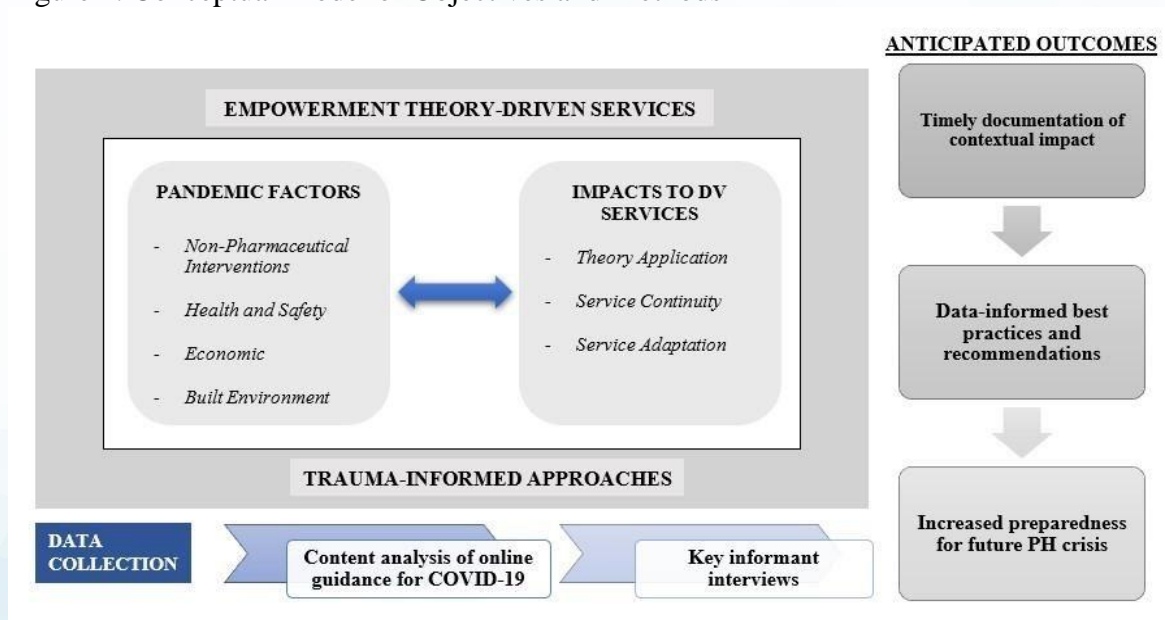
- What research-informed recommendations and guidance are needed by state- and national-level service providers to ensure the delivery of theoretically-based culturally-specific services and services for historically underrepresented groups?

Ethical / Methodological Considerations:

While domestic violence occurs across all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds and identities, there are communities and populations that experience unique challenges and inequities. For example, LGBTQ+ individuals may not want to risk “outing” themselves; individuals who are undocumented may fear for their safety if they seek any services. The COVID-19 pandemic creates unique risks for individuals with some disabilities and health conditions. The recent protests against police brutality highlight how systemic racism is embedded across institutions. Living with violence is also more complex for families in the U.S. Mexico border regions where state sanctioned violence often marks the lives of residents. And of course, many individuals fall into multiple underserved groups. Thus, it is imperative that study of domestic violence engages diverse, interdisciplinary partners and perspectives. We propose utilization of interdisciplinary collaborations consisting of scholars, researchers, and practitioners from the fields of women and gender studies, sociology, public health, epidemiology, disaster response and other fields or disciplines rooted in centering inequities. Likewise, methodologies utilized for the study of domestic violence must include, at minimum, a mixed-methods approach that considers these critical contextual factors and incorporates practitioner expertise and perspective. In addition, interpretation of findings should take into account the unique nature of individual DV survivor’s experiences and safety needs, thus recognizing the already-existing variability in DV service provision apart from the COVID-19 pandemic context.

Other Frameworks, Considerations for Collaboration, and/or Resources:

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Objectives and Methods



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This COVID-19 Working Group effort was supported by the National Science Foundation-funded Social Science Extreme Events Research (SSEER) network and the CONVERGE facility at the Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado Boulder (NSF Award #1841338). Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSF, SSEER, or CONVERGE.