

This statewide survey of 439 domestic violence survivors in Ohio analyzed the strengths and barriers to accessing ODVN services. Advocates at 26 member programs across the state distributed the voluntary and confidential survey to survivors in their programs or networks. The survey was available online and in paper. ODVN and select programs also shared the online survey via social media to reach survivors who were not connected to domestic violence service providers. For the most part, survivors quickly accessed services. But they did encounter some barriers, and made suggestions for improvement.

## Snapshot

**87%** of respondents were not denied access to Ohio's domestic violence services.  
**12%** were denied services.

Survivors shared a need for more information about the types of services available and the need for **longer-term access to services**.

Almost **60%** of survivors who entered domestic violence shelter were provided shelter immediately.

Almost **a third** of respondents reported having a disability.

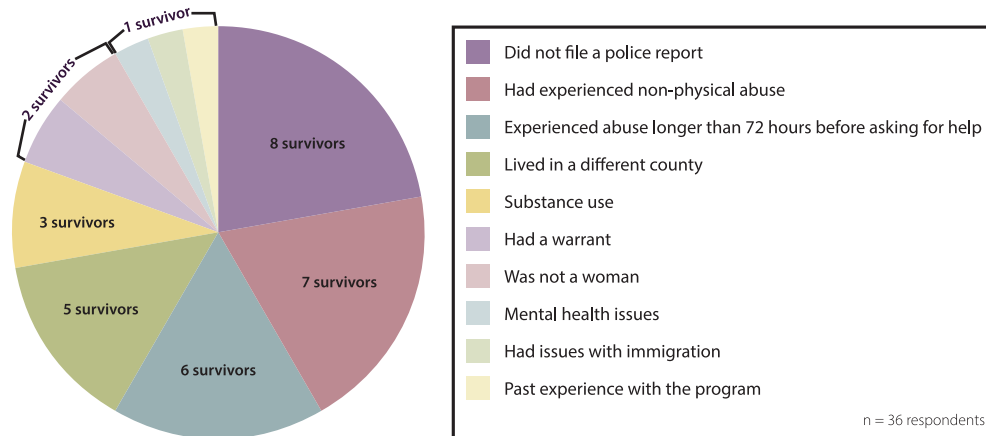
Almost **a third** needed a language interpreter when calling the hotline. While **85%** of those were provided an interpreter, following ODVN's best practices, **15%** were not.

## Top 5 Services Sought by Survivors

<i>When calling the hotline, what services were you seeking?</i>	Percentage
Emergency shelter	<b>49%</b>
Counseling/mental health assistance	<b>43%</b>
Housing assistance (transitional housing, rental assistance, etc.)	<b>41%</b>
Legal/court assistance (divorce, custody, protection order, etc.)	<b>36%</b>
General advocacy/case management	<b>30%</b>

## Denial of Services

Among the 52 survivors who had been denied services, the reasons for the denial are listed. Service denial indicates possible stigma and discrimination in the service process.

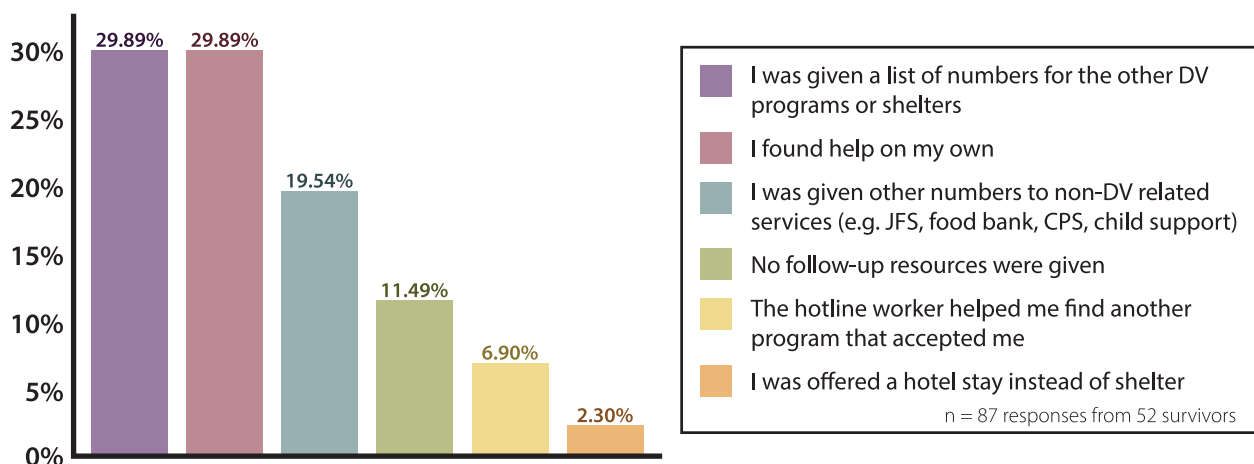


Denials were higher for those survivors who answered via social media—**23%** of those 48 survivors had faced a denial of service.

About **12%** (52 people) were denied services.

- Almost **two-thirds** were told the “shelter was full.”
- Another **23%** reported that they were not given a reason.
- A **fifth** reported that they “didn’t meet the criteria,” for reasons ranging from substance abuse and mental health issues to not having filed a police report or experiencing abuse that was not physical.

*If you were denied services, what happened after?*

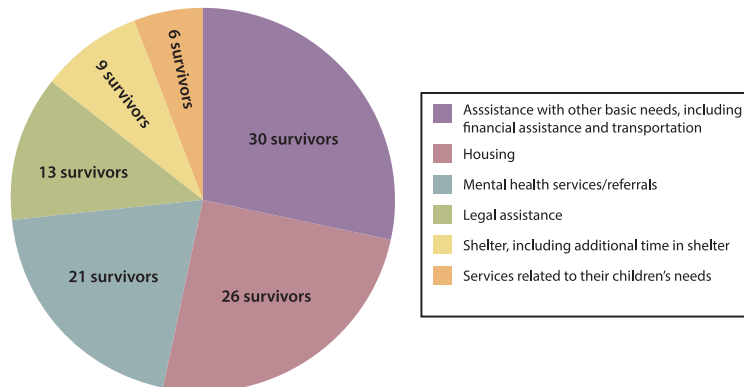


**Impact of Denial.** Without access to services, 29% of survey respondents said the abuse escalated and 32% said the abuse stayed the same—the violence continued.

**Referral Outcomes.** Survivors were: *If you received a referral after a denial, where were you referred?* Of 142 responses, approximately **50%** reported that they were referred to another domestic violence program.

## ⊕ What Services Do You Wish Were Offered?

More than 100 survivors said they received all the services they wanted or needed. Other survivors wish they had been offered:



## 📞 Survivors' Hotline Experiences

When asked, *"What would have made the hotline experience more supportive for you?"*, survivors recommended:

- Employing trauma-informed hotline staff who are non-judgmental, active listeners,
- Creating shorter wait times or alternatives to shelter to address urgent safety concerns,
- Providing digestible information on available resources,
- Implementing warm referral processes (an introduction from the referring agency) and consistent advocacy during the fleeing process,
- Enhancing accessibility via language interpretation and text options,
- Increasing the availability of resources such as shelter, housing, and counseling.

## 🚧 Barriers to Seeking Services

Survivors were asked to share all factors that initially kept them from attempting to access help from a domestic violence program.

- **More than a quarter** indicated concerns about further harm from the abuser and **15%** shared concerns for safety within the program.
- **A quarter** said they feared the program would not accommodate their mental health needs/concerns.
- **More than one-fifth** said concerns about their children kept them from seeking services.
- Between **2%** and **4%** reported use of drugs or alcohol, cultural barriers, and language barriers also made them reluctant to seek help.

All survivors should have access to immediate, equitable, and low-barrier services.

## Exiting Shelter

Of the 439 respondents, 6% reported they had been exited from or asked to leave a domestic violence shelter or program. While the percentage of survivors who have been exited is small, the reasons they were exited are often contrary to established best practices and low barrier services.

Of the 28 survivors who were exited:

- **28%** shared that they were exited because they had reach the maximum length of stay, contrary to funding requirements that prohibit limits on shelter stays.
- **20%** said they did not find housing quickly enough.
- **20%** said they were not given a reason for their exit.

## Substance and Alcohol Use

While **81%** of total survey respondents shared that they were not actively using drugs or alcohol while working with the program, **7%** reported that they were actively using drugs or alcohol. Survivors were asked: *Did you feel safe sharing your use of drugs or alcohol with domestic violence program staff?* Of the 46 responses to that question:

- **64%** said yes, indicating that staff were good listeners, non-judgmental, open, supportive, and offered clear and direct help to address addiction.
- **34%** of respondents said they did not feel safe disclosing their use to staff, citing lack of trust, and concerns about being denied services.
- **7%** of respondents shared they were actively using drugs or alcohol, suggesting survivors feared disclosing their substance use.

## Challenges Experienced by Survivors

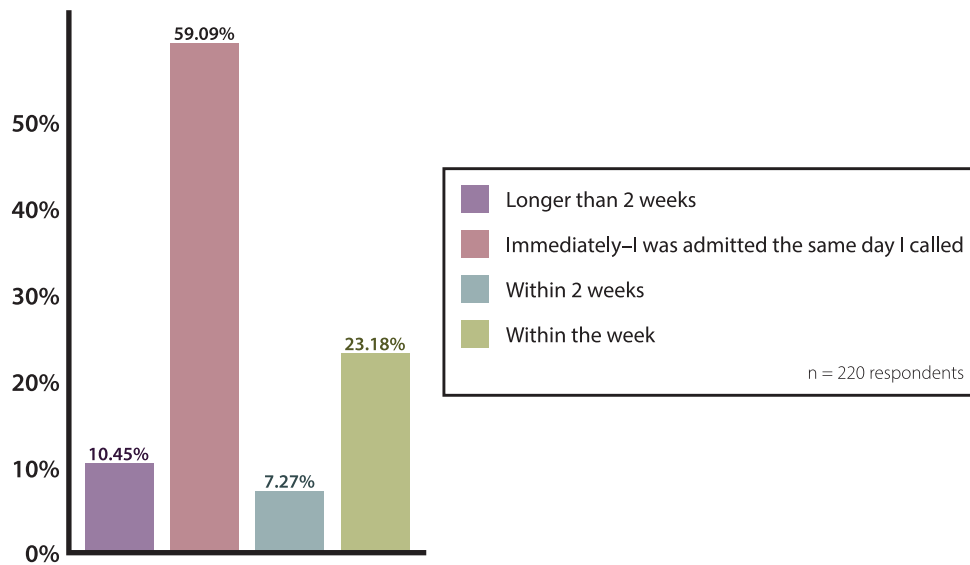
**Survivors experiencing challenges accessing services.** Of the 284 survivors who responded to this question, about one fourth (75) described difficulties they experienced trying to get help.

- **35 survivors** shared that limitations in shelter capacity or a program's lack of resources made accessing support challenging.
- **20 survivors** discussed the impact of wait lists or wait times on their ability to access shelter or programs.
- **20 survivors** retold their disappointing experiences with staff or programmatic deficiencies, such as conflict with staff, issues around communication, or feeling judged or dismissed.

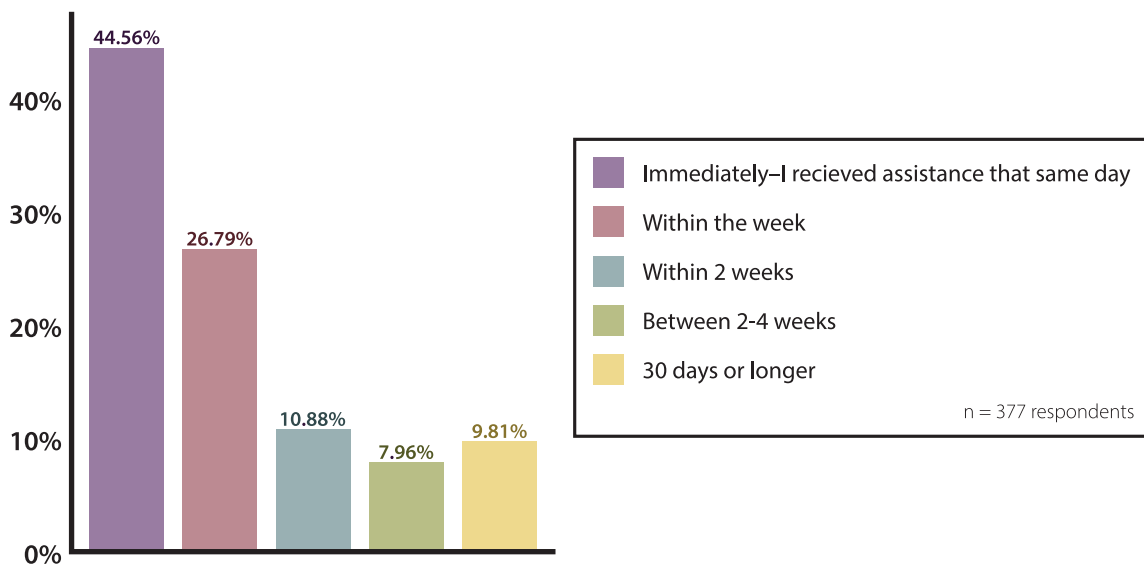


## Response Time to Receiving Assistance

*How long did it take to be admitted to shelter?*



*How long did it take to receive non-residential assistance?*



## Investment in DV Services is Crucial

The top reason survivors are denied services is shelter capacity. In 2025, ODVN member programs sheltered nearly 10,834 survivors and their children, but they turned away, 6,343 people—because the shelter was full.

Among the ongoing needs:

- Flexible financial assistance
- Investments in legal services
- Mental health supports
- Transportation