

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: GUIDELINES FOR HEALTH SECTOR RESPONSE

WHO's new clinical and policy guidelines on the health sector response to partner and sexual violence against women emphasize the urgent need to integrate these issues into clinical training for health care providers. WHO has identified the key elements of a health sector response to violence against women which have informed the following recommendations:



Women-centred care:

Health-care providers should, at a minimum, offer first-line support when women disclose violence (empathetic listening, non-judgmental attitude, privacy, confidentiality, link to other services).



Training of health-care providers on intimate partner violence and sexual violence:

Training at pre-qualification level in first-line support for women who have experienced intimate partner violence and sexual assault should be given to healthcare providers.



Identification and care for survivors of intimate partner violence:

Health-care providers should ask about exposure to intimate partner violence when assessing conditions that may be caused or complicated by intimate partner violence, in order to improve diagnosis/identification and subsequent care.



Health-care policy and provision:

Care for women experiencing intimate partner violence and sexual assault should, as much as possible, be integrated into existing health services rather than as a stand-alone service.



Clinical care for survivors of sexual violence:

Offer comprehensive care including first-line support, emergency contraception, STI and HIV prophylaxis by any perpetrator and take a complete history, recording events to determine what interventions are appropriate.



Mandatory reporting of intimate partner violence:

Mandatory reporting to the police by the health-care provider is not recommended. Health-care providers should offer to report the incident if the woman chooses.