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Final Research Report

Access to Justice for Adolescents and Young Adults Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence: Effectiveness and Accessibility of Civil Protection Orders

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Introduction and Specific Aims

Adolescent intimate partner violence (IPV) is a prevalent problem with well-documented adverse health outcomes. IPV includes physical, sexual, or psychological violence and has a lifetime economic burden of more than \$3.6 trillion for the 43 million individuals in the United States affected.¹ Nationally representative data of youth ages 12 to 18 in a current or past-year relationship indicate that 18% experienced physical violence, 18% experienced sexual violence, and over 60% experienced psychological abuse.² Experiences of IPV can have severe, long-lasting health outcomes over the life course, including low academic achievement, depression, substance abuse, suicidality, adult IPV victimization, and death.³⁻⁶

One prevention strategy that has been found to be protective against subsequent IPV is the award of a civil protection order (CPO), a court order granted to protect an individual from another whose behavior is abusive, threatening, or exploitative. CPOs are the most common legal remedy used by individuals experiencing IPV, with more than one million CPOs issued annually in the United States.^{7,8} CPOs can act in a number of ways: prohibiting or setting limits on perpetrator contact, prohibiting the perpetrator from committing additional violence, excluding the perpetrator from a shared residence, stipulating custody and child support, and mandating counseling.⁹ Violations of CPOs may lead to a misdemeanor or felony charge, accompanied by penalties, such as monetary fines or incarceration. Approximately 20% of adult women in the United States experiencing IPV annually obtain CPOs,¹⁰ although estimates vary from 12% to 40% among different samples.⁹ CPOs can be an effective tool in preventing IPV recurrence and increasing feelings of well-being and empowerment among individuals experiencing IPV.¹¹

Research on the effectiveness of CPOs among adult IPV victims has shown that full (usually in effect for 12 months) CPOs are associated with a decreased risk of new episodes of police-reported physical abuse.¹² CPOs are also associated with reduced risk of subsequent self-reported physical and nonphysical IPV, and there is evidence of a dose-response relationship by duration of the CPO.¹³ However, none of the studies of CPO effectiveness conducted to date have included adolescents, despite their high risk of IPV and the critical importance of intervening early to mitigate the substantial downstream adverse physical and mental health consequences of abuse exposure. Additionally, we know very little about adolescents' awareness and perceptions of CPOs other than that they are highly underutilized by adolescent IPV victims.^{14,15} To complicate matters, adolescent access to CPOs is more limited than that of adults, and this accessibility varies by state.^{3,16} Barriers exist that make it statutorily challenging for adolescents to qualify for CPOs (e.g., failure to include dating relationships as a qualifying relationship type) and pose challenges to autonomy (e.g., requiring parental permission or notification for filing).^{3,16}

This mixed-methods study sought to lay the necessary groundwork to determine whether the effectiveness of CPOs in preventing future IPV among adults extends to adolescent and young adult (AYA) victims of IPV. Further, it sought to examine the knowledge, perceptions, barriers to, and facilitators of AYA IPV victims' use of CPOs to best identify next steps in improving access and uptake among this population. To address the research gaps on this topic and to provide practical, policy-relevant data on this issue, we proposed the following aims:

1. Examine the effectiveness of CPOs among AYAs (aged 14 to 24 years) with a history of IPV on IPV-recidivism rates of: 1) physical IPV; 2) psychological IPV; and 3) IPV-related property crimes. *Hypothesis: We hypothesize that CPO coverage periods will*

be associated with lower rates of IPV recidivism and that no evidence of differential effect will exist between minor (14 to 17 years) and young adult (18 to 24 years) petitioners. Evaluate whether temporary and full CPOs are less likely to be awarded to petitioners who are minors (14 to 17 years) relative to petitioners who are young legal adults (18 to 24 years). Hypothesis: We hypothesize that both temporary and full CPOs will be less likely to be awarded to petitioners who are minors compared to petitioners who are young adults, after adjusting for group differences.

2. Explore AYAs' (14-24 years) perceptions of the usefulness and accessibility of CPOs for IPV, including knowledge, attitudes, barriers, facilitators, and decision-making processes using qualitative research methods.
3. Assess judicial officer adherence to model CPO hearing protocols and determine balance and fairness in court proceedings; safety measures assessed and taken by the judicial officer; respectful behaviors taken by judicial officers (as measured via CPO hearing recordings), and determine whether they differ for cases involving petitioners who are minors (14 to 17 years old) compared to those involving petitioners who are young adults (18 to 24 years old). *Hypothesis: We hypothesize that CPO cases involving minor petitioners will be less likely to be characterized by adherence to model protocols relative to cases involving young adult petitioners.*

Aim 1: Research Design and Methods

Study Design Aim 1.

Aim 1.A. and 1.B.: Study Design Overview. A retrospective cohort study was conducted among AYAs (14 to 24 years) with a previous police-reported arrestable IPV event. The victim-suspect pairs were followed up to determine those that go on to become

petitioners and respondents in CPO filings at any time from the index criminal event through the three-year follow-up period. CPO coverage periods served as the time-dependent exposure of interest. IPV recidivism in the three years following the index IPV event served as the outcome of interest.

Aim 1.A. and 1.B.: Study Population. The study population consists of King County current or former intimate partners with a previous police-reported arrestable IPV event between January 1, 2015, and December 31, 2020, and where there is a victim between the ages of 14 and 24 years and a suspect between the ages of 14 and 29 years. Study subjects were identified through King County criminal records available from the Washington State Administrative Office of the Court's (AOC) Justice Information System (JIS) database. Criminal records in this dataset comprise all arrested IPV offenders (at the scene or on a warrant) and offenders who were not arrested but were subsequently summoned to appear. The cohort was linked to CPO filings, and those victim-suspect pairs with CPO coverage during the period from the index event to the end of the three-year follow-up period were identified. Criminal court records with missing victim identifiers were investigated by court partners, who reported on whether the victim in the criminal case was the same as the victim in the CPO filing. The victim-suspect relationship status was verified as eligible (current or former intimate partners) through a review of the CPO petition. No exclusions were made based on sexual or gender identity. However, petitions submitted by an adult petitioner (typically a parent or guardian) on behalf of a minor petitioner were excluded, as our interest lies in studying protection order filings that are sought freely. We did not exclude petitions that involved the assistance of third parties (including a parent or guardian), but for which it was apparent the intention to seek a

protective order was being made by the IPV victim or petitioner. A random 3:1 sampling of criminal cases without any active CPOs during the follow-up period was then performed. Only CPO+ and CPO-cases with existing police incident reports for the index event that led to their inclusion in the study were retained in the final sample to have sufficient background information on the index criminal IPV event. This required narrowing of our original cohort to a more recent time period, given regular purging of records associated with juvenile offenders.

Aim 1.A.: Exposure of Interest: Time-dependent CPO Coverage. We measured and parameterized temporary and full CPO periods of protection as our time-dependent exposure of interest. Specifically, we created two time-dependent dichotomous variables that were positive during time periods for which temporary CPOs and full CPOs, respectively, were in effect for a given victim-suspect couple. Time, in these analyses, was defined as time since the petition filing date. We were unable to determine the date of service of temporary CPOs accurately; therefore, risk estimates for temporary CPO coverage periods refer to the risk of IPV during the entire temporary order period, regardless of whether the respondent had yet been served. We had intended to gather the date of service from the court docket data; however, the service notifications in the docket did not differentiate between attempted service and actual service, and some courts did not provide docket data to the state AOC system. We examined the moderation of the full CPO exposure periods by age group of the petitioner/victim (14-17 vs. 18-24) to determine whether there were meaningfully different effects by petitioner age group.

Aim 1.A.: Outcome Definition and Ascertainment: IPV Recidivism. IPV recidivism was defined as subsequent criminal IPV events documented in the statewide criminal court records perpetrated by the index suspect against the index victim. Specifically, we measured police-reported criminal court records (these records are more inclusive than arrest records alone) for IPV-related crimes occurring within Washington State, and categorized these events as follows: 1) physically or sexually abusive IPV recidivism: events with a charge of assault, rape, reckless endangerment, or any other charge constituting intentional physical or sexual harm; 2) psychological IPV recidivism: events with a charge of threats, harassment, stalking or other psychologically but not physically harmful acts; and 3) IPV-related property crimes: events with a charge of burglary, theft, malicious mischief, or other property-oriented crimes committed by the index IPV suspect against the index IPV victim. We categorized these events hierarchically to avoid double-counting of single events. IPV events that included any physically or sexually abusive charges were counted as physical or sexual IPV recidivistic events; psychologically abusive IPV events were counted if they did not also include a physically or sexually abusive charge(s); and property crime IPV events were counted only if there were not physically or sexually abusive charge(s) or psychologically abusive charge(s). We also studied a global outcome corresponding to the occurrence of any IPV-related crime during follow-up. Follow-up IPV criminal events with charges of “violation of a civil protection order” in the absence of other criminal charges were excluded as outcomes, given this outcome could not occur among those without a court order, thus unfairly biasing IPV rates among the CPO-negative group.

Aim 1.B. Exposure of Interest: The exposure of interest for Aim 1.B. was the age group of the petitioner/victim (<18 vs. 18-24 years old).

Aim 1.B. Outcomes of Interest: The outcomes of interest for Aim 1.B. were issuance vs. denial of the full CPO.

Analyses: Aims 1A and 1B. Extended Cox regression was employed in the quantitative analyses for Aim 1A. Wald tests were conducted to test for statistical significance, and hazard ratios served as the risk estimates, with 95% confidence intervals providing measures of precision in those estimates. Two time periods were examined for each outcome: the first 365 days following the index criminal event and the full three-year follow-up period. We adjusted for the following set of a priori confounders: victim age, defendant age, victim-suspect relationship type, whether victim and suspect shared children in common, whether victim and suspect ever lived together, severity of victim injuries on the index event date (as noted by the responding officer), whether the victim was strangled and severity of strangulation injuries (as noted by the responding officer), whether the suspect had any domestic-violence-related criminal charges in the two years prior to the index event, and total number of criminal counts against the suspect in the two years prior to the index event. We tested for effect modification by petitioner age group (<18 vs. 18 to 24 years old) by including an interaction term between full protection order coverage periods and petitioner age group. This process was repeated for all study outcomes. Significance of the interaction term was performed via a Wald test.

Aim 1B was analyzed by bivariate chi-square analysis and was limited to the cases for which the follow-up period included coverage for a temporary CPO and for which a full order hearing took place. This process was done to accurately calculate the percentage of

full orders awarded, which requires observing the transition period between temporary and full orders. Cases that did not continue to a full order hearing (e.g., the petitioner terminated the order, the petitioner failed to appear) were excluded from this analysis.

Aim 1: Results

Study Sample: Aim 1A

The final study sample comprised 411 cases, 115 of which were covered by a temporary or full civil protection order at some point during the three-year study follow-up period. Only 17 of the CPO+ cases involved an adolescent petitioner; the remaining 98 involved young adult petitioners. Characteristics of the study sample by protection order status are provided in Table 1.

Cases involving a CPO were somewhat less likely to have ever lived together, though somewhat more likely to share a child in common. Suspects with property or weapon-related crimes in the two years before the index criminal event were less likely than suspects without such a history to be named as a respondent in a CPO. Characteristics were otherwise comparable between study groups, including having comparable severity index event indicators and domestic violence-related criminal histories.

Civil Protection Order coverage on Study Outcomes: Aim 1A

Physically and Sexually Abusive IPV. A total of 117 physically or sexually abusive IPV events occurred during the first 365 days of follow-up (411.0 person-years) and 167 during the entire three-year follow-up period (1,086.7 person-years). There was no evidence of significant effect modification by petitioner age group on physically or sexually abusive IPV or any of the other Aim 1A outcomes; therefore, non-stratified risk estimates were provided. Results of the multivariable extended Cox regression analyses for all

outcomes are presented in Tables 2 (first 365 days of follow-up) and 3 (entire three-year follow-up). As seen in Table 2, after adjustment for confounders, rates of physically or sexually abusive IPV were comparable during periods of temporary or full protection order coverage relative to no protection order coverage. Rates were also comparable for this outcome when considering the full three-year follow-up period (Table 3).

Psychologically Abusive IPV. A total of 24 psychologically abusive (non-physically/sexually abusive) IPV events occurred during the first 365 days of follow-up (411.0 person-years) and 42 during the entire three-year follow-up period (1,086.7 person-years). After adjustment for confounders, rates of psychologically abusive IPV were markedly elevated during temporary CPO coverage periods relative to times without CPO coverage in the first 365 days of follow-up. These are comparable during periods of temporary or full protection order coverage relative to no protection order coverage.

Table 1: Baseline Characteristics: Aim 1 Cohort by PO Status

	PO- n = 296 %	PO+ n = 115 %
Demographic Characteristics		
Victim/Petitioner age		
15 to 17	12.8	14.8
18 to 21	52.7	41.7
22 to 24	34.5	43.5
Suspect/Respondent age		
15 to 17	9.1	7.0
18 to 21	32.1	29.6
22 to 24	32.8	35.7
25 to 29	26.0	27.7
Victim-Suspect relationship		
Spouse or former spouse	4.7	9.6
Dating partners	59.1	50.4
Former dating/share child(ren) in common	36.2	40.0
Victim and Suspect ever lived together ¹	30.1	20.0
Victim and Suspect share child(ren) ¹	23.0	33.9
Characteristics of the Index Criminal IPV Event		
Officer noted alcohol or drug use by the suspect	25.0	28.7
Weapon used	22.0	26.1
Injuries to victim as noted by the officer		
No injuries noted	27.0	27.8
Less severe injuries noted	23.3	23.5
Moderately severe injuries noted	22.6	21.7
Severe injuries noted	27.0	27.0
Victim strangulation and related injuries noted by officer		
Not strangled	54.7	52.2
Strangled, no strangling injuries noted	5.4	7.8
Strangled, mod. severe strangling injuries noted	13.2	10.4
Strangled, severe strangling injuries noted	26.7	29.6

¹ p<0.05

Table 1: Baseline Characteristics on Aim 1 Cohort by PO Status During Study Follow-Up, continued

DV-related Criminal History in the two years before the index criminal IPV event	PO- n = 296 %	PO+ n = 115 %
Number of psych. abusive crimes		
0	83.5	78.3
1	6.1	10.4
2+	10.5	11.3
Number of physically/sexually abusive crimes		
0	71.3	71.3
1	18.6	19.1
2+	10.1	9.6
Number of property crimes		
0	89.2	90.4
1+	10.8	9.6
Non-DV Criminal History in the two years before the index criminal IPV event		
Number of psych. abusive crimes		
0	93.2	94.8
1+	6.8	5.2
Number of physically/sexually abusive crimes		
0	76.7	83.5
1+	23.3	16.5
Number of property crimes ¹		
0	79.7	91.3
1+	20.3	8.7
Number of alcohol/drug-related crimes		
0	92.2	94.8
1+	7.8	5.2
Number of DUIs		
0	90.9	96.5
1+	9.1	3.5
Number of weapon crimes ¹		
0	93.9	99.1
1+	6.1	0.9

¹ p<0.05

Table 2. Results from Multivariable Extended Cox Regression Models by Time-dependent Temporary and Full CPO Coverage Periods Relative to no CPO Coverage; First 365 Days of the Follow-Up Period

	Temporary CPO		Full CPO	
Outcome	aHR ¹	95% CI	aHR ¹	95% CI
Physically or sexually assaultive IPV	1.19	0.47, 2.98	0.96	0.50, 1.82
Psychologically abusive IPV	10.97	3.16, 38.2	2.20	0.69, 7.03
IPV property crime	NC	---	NC	---
Any IPV	1.95	0.96, 3.93	1.07	0.61, 1.86

aHR: adjusted hazard ratio

95% CI: 95% confidence interval

NE: not estimable; too few events

¹Adjusted for victim age, defendant age, victim-suspect relationship type, whether victim and suspect shared children in common, whether victim and suspect ever lived together, severity of victim injuries on the index event date, whether the victim was strangled and severity of strangulation injuries, whether the suspect had any domestic-violence-related criminal charges in the two years prior to the index event, and total number of criminal counts against the suspect in the two years prior to the index event.

Table 3. Results from Multivariable Extended Cox Regression Models by Time-dependent temporary and full CPO coverage periods relative to no CPO coverage; entire 3-year follow-up period

	Temporary CPO		Full CPO	
Outcome	aHR ¹	95% CI	aHR ¹	95% CI
Physically or sexually assaultive IPV	1.22	0.49, 3.05	0.89	0.52, 1.53
Psychologically abusive IPV	8.21	2.58, 26.1	1.04	0.36, 2.98
IPV property crime	NE	---	NE	---
Any IPV	1.95	0.97, 3.91	0.88	0.54, 1.43

aHR: adjusted hazard ratio

95% CI: 95% confidence interval

NE: not estimable; too few events

¹Adjusted for victim age, defendant age, victim-suspect relationship type, whether victim and suspect shared children in common, whether victim and suspect ever lived together, severity of victim injuries on the index event date, whether the victim was strangled and severity of strangulation injuries, whether the suspect had any domestic-violence-related criminal charges in the two years prior to the index event, and total number of criminal counts against the suspect in the two years prior to the index event.

The point estimate for full CPO coverage periods in the first 365 days was also elevated but non-significant. Results for the entire three-year follow-up were similar, though the risk estimate for full CPO coverage periods was attenuated to the null.

IPV Property Crimes. A total of three IPV property crimes (absent any concurrent physically, sexually, and psychologically abusive charges) occurred during the first 365 days of follow-up (411.0 person-years) and four during the entire three-year follow-up period (1,086.7 person-years). None of these events occurred during temporary or full CPO coverage periods; therefore, risk estimates were non-estimable.

Any Abusive IPV. A total of 144 abusive IPV events occurred during the first 365 days of follow-up (411.0 person-years) and 213 during the entire three-year follow-up period (1,086.7 person-years). After adjustment for confounders, rates of any abusive IPV were marginally elevated during temporary CPO coverage periods for the first 365 days and the full three-year follow-up periods. In contrast, full CPO coverage rates were comparable relative to periods without CPO coverage for the first 365 days and the full three-year follow-up periods.

Award of Full Protection Orders by Age of Petitioner; Aim 1B

Among the Aim 1A sample, 79 cases were eligible for Aim 1B. This included 13 cases involving adolescent petitioners, and the remaining 66 cases involved young adult petitioners. Of the 79 cases for which a full order hearing was called, 11 cases (1 adolescent petitioner and 10 young adult petitioner cases) were dismissed due to the petitioner failing to appear. The remaining cases were all awarded full orders by the court.

Therefore, of the cases for which the petitioner appeared at the full hearing and a full hearing was held, 100% of both the adolescent and young adult petitioner cases were awarded a full order in this small sample.

Aim 1: Conclusions

We found no evidence of a protective effect of full civil protection orders on physical or sexual abuse in our study sample, in contrast to earlier work. Consistent with prior work, we found a marked increased risk of psychologically abusive IPV associated with temporary protection order coverage relative to no protective order coverage. It should be noted that we were unable to isolate the temporary protection order period following service to the suspect (order respondent); therefore, the temporary protective order coverage period includes a period during which the order is not yet active (given this requires service (i.e., notification) of the respondent. Additionally, serving the respondent can be protracted, and more protracted periods may be indicative of suspects with more serious criminal histories. The study sample, as noted below, is likely to represent a sample of adolescent and young adult IPV at a more severe end of the spectrum; therefore, results should be interpreted with this in mind.

Strengths

This population-based study is the first that we know of to investigate CPO use and effectiveness among an adolescent population. We had access to a rich set of information on case studies, including statewide criminal data histories and follow-up events, police incident reports of the index criminal IPV event, civil protection order petitions, and court filings data. This allowed for examination and adjustment of a breadth of important

confounding variables, and allowed us to account for the time-dependent nature of civil protection order coverage periods, person-time of follow-up, and to measure multiple failure data across the three-year follow-up period.

Limitations

Our study sample consisted of adolescents and young adults with a criminal record(s) of IPV and, as such, likely represents a population at greater risk of IPV recidivism and more severe IPV. Additionally, given the relative youth of our sample, limiting our sample to those with retained criminal records may reflect a population at even greater risk of adverse outcomes than the general population of adolescents and young adults experiencing intimate partner abuse. Also, statistical power was more limited than anticipated due to a lower rate of CPO use, particularly among adolescents, and our need to narrow the study enrollment period and sampling approach to avoid systematic purging of juvenile records.

Aim 2: Purpose, Goals, and Objectives

Aim 2: Explore AYAs' perceptions of the usefulness and accessibility of CPOs for IPV, including knowledge, attitudes, barriers, facilitators, and decision-making processes using qualitative research methods.

Aim 2: Methods

Participants and Procedures

Aim 2 involved conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews with AYAs who have experienced IPV. We interviewed AYAs between 14 and 24 years old in King County, Washington, who had experienced some form of self-reported IPV. We used multiple

sampling methods to identify potential participants. First, we collaborated with regional agencies that serve IPV survivors and specifically work with youth populations. Advocates were provided with flyers with basic information about the study to offer to eligible clients as appropriate. We also recruited through social media advertising on Instagram. We aimed to recruit youth who were at different levels of engagement with the legal system, spanning from those with no knowledge or engagement with legal help-seeking to those who have filed for CPOs. In addition, we intentionally sampled to ensure adequate representation by age group (14-17 vs. 18-24 years old) since states have different restrictions on access to CPOs based on age or requirements for parent or guardian permission or notification. Recruitment continued until we reached sufficient depth and breadth, which we determined through concurrent data analysis.

We conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with participants via Zoom between December 2022 and January 2024. Interviews were conducted by a co-investigator (CO-I), who has experience conducting interviews on interpersonal violence with youth. At the beginning of the interview, we reviewed the consent form, and participants were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could end their participation at any time. We obtained a waiver of parental consent, and AYA participants provided verbal consent/assent to participate. The semi-structured interview guide was developed using existing empirical literature and consultation with advocates at community organizations. Participants were asked about their experience with general help-seeking around IPV, experiences and perceptions of legal help-seeking (including CPOs), barriers to and facilitators of legal help-seeking, and recommendations for increasing accessibility of legal services for AYAs. At the end of the interview, participants

were asked to complete a short demographic survey via REDCap. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes, and participants received a \$50 gift card for their time.

Analyses

Aim 2: Participant demographics were analyzed descriptively. Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and uploaded into Dedoose software for analysis. Given the objective of describing lived experiences of AYAs with help-seeking for IPV, we were guided by phenomenology. We conducted our analysis using a codebook approach to thematic analysis to identify themes. Three coders carefully reviewed transcripts and conducted open coding based on recurring topics to inductively develop an initial codebook with both semantic and latent codes and code labels (i.e., definitions). We randomly selected six transcripts (20%) to be double-coded, where two of the three coders (including a Co-I) independently applied the initial codebook to each of these transcripts. The coders and investigators reconvened to discuss discrepancies and make revisions to the codebook. The remaining interviews were randomly assigned across the three coders for coding with the revised codebook. Throughout the coding process, the three coders met for weekly collaborative discussions to modify and clarify the codebook and discuss complex excerpts. We used a consensus-based approach to construct a coding hierarchy, developing higher-level themes to best describe legal help-seeking among AYAs experiencing IPV. During analysis, we identified barriers and facilitators to legal help-seeking at multiple levels of the social-ecological model: individual (individual perceptions and attitudes), relationship (factors related to relationships with partners, family, and peers), systems (legal system structures, how AYAs interact with the legal system), and societal (systems of oppression, social and cultural norms). We maintained trustworthiness

through confirmability (e.g., independent coding) and credibility (e.g., deep, iterative engagement with the data).

Aim 2: Results

Of the 30 participants, 43% were 14-17 years old and 57% were 18-24 years old (see Table 4). Most participants identified as a woman/girl (80%), followed by a man/boy (20%). Nearly half of the participants identified as White (43%) or Asian (47%), and 13% as Black or African American. Most participants (77%) did not live independently from their parents.

We identified themes within three main categories: (1) barriers to legal help-seeking, (2) facilitators of legal help-seeking, and (3) recommendations and solutions to increase access to legal help-seeking. Informed by the social-ecological model (See Figure 1), themes within the barriers and facilitators categories are presented by level.

Barriers to Legal Help-Seeking

Individual Level. Participants expressed concerns about privacy and confidentiality as barriers to seeking legal help. They noted that talking to people they are not comfortable with (e.g., counselors, court system actors) and having those people learn about their experiences of IPV acted as a deterrent to legal help-seeking. These concerns were often related to feelings of embarrassment and shame, as participants worried about pervasive stigma around IPV. Some participants also described a sense of misalignment that would prevent them from engaging in legal help; participants shared how filing a CPO would not be viable because of their preferred approaches to conflict management, perceived lack of likelihood of being in such a situation again, and a general sense that CPOs would not be the right fit for them. Participants described a lack of trust in self, specifically how dynamics of

IPV (e.g., gaslighting, simultaneous fear of and care for partner) resulted in confusion about whether their experiences constituted IPV or warranted help-seeking.

Relationship Level. Participants described numerous ways in which characteristics of their relationships with others, including the abusive partner and their close family and friends, would present barriers to seeking legal help. For example, participants described how abuse characteristics (e.g., frequency, type, severity) were a barrier to seeking legal help, considering emotional and psychological abuse or coercive control as not legitimate or valid enough to require help compared to physical abuse. They also expressed hesitation about seeking help if others did not perceive the abuse to be that severe, which was sometimes attributed to their young age.

Participants described a fear of contact with or retaliation by their abusive partner as a barrier to legal help-seeking. For example, they feared that seeking legal help would result in retaliation by their partner, potentially exacerbating the abuse. This fear was especially heightened by not knowing whether the process would result in the outcomes they hoped for, and that the legal system would grant them the protection they were seeking. They also described apprehension about how the legal help-seeking process itself would potentially put them in contact with their abusive partner through court proceedings. Participants sometimes felt that legal help did not fit with their relationship dynamics. Some participants reported not wanting to negatively affect their partners by seeking legal help (e.g., having something on their record) or preferring other options to get their partners' support (e.g., rehabilitation for IPV perpetration). Other participants were optimistic that problems in their relationship would resolve on their own, or wanted to give their partners a chance to change. Participants also shared several reasons for not

wanting to disengage from or leave their partners, including financial dependence, shared housing, shared children, and/or continued love and affection.

In relationships with family and friends, participants worried about the rumors and social consequences of seeking help, including negative effects on friend groups or their reputation, having rumors circulating about them, or feeling isolated or ostracized. Participants also shared how parental attitudes and family norms, including those related to dating and relationships, impact willingness to communicate with parents.

Systems Level. Participants repeatedly expressed a lack of trust in legal systems, generally feeling like legal services would be ineffective or that their concerns would not be taken seriously. Sometimes, the lack of trust stemmed from not being taken seriously based on age, racial, and/or gender bias of lawyers, police, and other court system actors, or beliefs about what constitutes IPV. Other times, participants felt the legal system was undependable, either through inaccurate identification of the primary abusive partner or due to a lack of CPO enforcement. They also described how they felt—or had witnessed through prior experience themselves or with family and friends—that CPOs were ineffective in addressing IPV. Participants expressed how a piece of paper cannot prevent harassment or psychological and emotional abuse. Some participants felt that CPOs may even offer a false sense of protection because abusive partners may continue behaviors without meaningful prevention or intervention, and others described how the complexities of shared housing or children can compromise the usefulness of CPOs.

Some participants reported a lack of good information about CPOs, which dissuaded them from engaging in legal help-seeking. This included their own lack of knowledge or ideas about CPOs, which highlighted misperceptions about CPOs and the legal process. For example, some participants wanted to know more about what legal help looks like and

what qualifies for legal assistance, and several noted they had never heard of CPOs, did not know that legal help for IPV was possible, or shared inaccurate information about CPOs.

Participants described logistical challenges that would discourage them from pursuing a CPO, including money, time, language or comprehension issues, and the complexity of the process. Participants also shared how a lack of proof or evidence of IPV was a barrier to engaging with the legal system, noting that much harm (e.g., over the phone, in person) was unable to be documented and may result in a 'he said, she said' scenario. Some noted that a lack of physical evidence might lead to them being questioned or having their concerns dismissed during the legal process.

Societal Level. Participants described perceptions of victim blaming, noting that individuals who perpetrate violence often receive sympathy or get defended, while people experiencing violence get blamed for not fixing the problem, asking for it, or dressing a certain way. This perception and exposure to others' experiences (e.g., in the media) were seen as evidence that they might also be blamed if they sought help. Participants described broad-ranging cultural stigma (e.g., sexism, racism, homophobia) that posed barriers to legal help-seeking through stigma associated with being an IPV survivor and stigma associated with participant identities.

Facilitators of Legal Help-Seeking

Relationship Level. Participants noted how abuse characteristics could facilitate legal help-seeking, specifically if they perceived the abuse to be severe (e.g., physical harm) or persistent (e.g., stalking). They also shared how negative impacts on their daily life and mental health, property damage, and threats to others would be reasons to seek legal help. Participants highlighted how the need for physical safety, either for themselves or others (e.g., children, parents, friends), also served as a strong motivator for legal help-seeking.

Further, some participants articulated how CPOs often felt like a last resort option for those seeking help in an abusive relationship. Lastly, participants described how a CPO champion, or a relationship with a key person (e.g., parent, advocate), helped them understand options and provided support to navigate the legal system effectively.

Systems Level. Some participants expressed beliefs that CPOs were effective based on general perceptions of the process or the experiences of family members and friends receiving legal help in the context of IPV. Participants described the benefits of having a third party to enforce rules in the context of IPV. Through a CPO, participants articulated how a judge and the legal system can help establish boundaries for the abusive partner, which could take some of the responsibility off survivors. Participants articulated how CPOs can meaningfully result in consequences for abusive partners, helping them realize the gravity of their behaviors.

Recommendations and Solutions to Increase Access to Legal Help-Seeking

Participants expressed a desire to simplify the system for requesting and pursuing a CPO, including clarifying where and how to seek a CPO and ensuring the process for filing a CPO is accessible. Participants described a desire for better advocates, or to have people in legal and law enforcement systems who truly care about survivors. Participants recommended changes to laws and policies around the CPO process: ensuring anonymity and/or protection from repercussions before a CPO is granted, not requiring contact with the abusive partner, having a dedicated space in the legal system for CPOs to make the process faster, and reducing harm and trauma while going through the CPO process. Participants also noted the complexities of parental notification/permission rules for youth seeking CPOs. Some participants expressed that parental notification or permission would

personally dissuade them for seeking a CPO, or they could see how this could create problems. Participants articulated nuance between parental consent and parental notification, with parental notification feeling more acceptable with potential modifications (i.e., notification going to a guidance counselor rather than parents). Finally, other participants expressed a combination of ambivalence or being okay with, or even wanting, parental permission or notification when pursuing a CPO, depending on their relationship with their parent(s).

For future solutions, participants noted the need for resources in schools. Participants suggested school-based education as a tool for prevention and supporting youth in harmful relationships. They highlighted a range of ideas for education programs, particularly programs that incorporated feedback from youth into the curriculum, and not limited to programs that focused narrowly on sex education and/or physical harm. Participants noted that school staff, especially counselors, who are well-trained, could help facilitate both legal and non-legal help-seeking.

Other participants more generally discussed the need for accessible community resources, such as hotlines for legal help and general information to help individuals know where to start with legal action. Participants recommended allocating resources in schools, community centers, and workplaces, and using posters, advertisements, and social media to ensure accessible information for those seeking help. Lastly, participants shared forms of help they would have liked or benefited from, especially mental health support and relationship counseling, as well as medical help and trauma-informed care.

Aim 2: Conclusions

The Aim 2 qualitative findings highlight the need for comprehensive resources and

strategies to support AYAs as they seek legal help during or following experiences of IPV, and have implications for practices and policies to remove barriers and increase access to CPOs. Participants described barriers to and facilitators for help-seeking, both of which spanned all levels of the socioecological model. Overall, participants identified far more barriers than facilitators to help-seeking, underscoring the need for additional effort, resource-building, and problem-solving to improve the ability of AYAs to connect to legal help following IPV. To that end, participants also provided recommendations and solutions to increase access to help-seeking for AYAs who have experienced IPV. They also highlighted those as ways to address barriers and amplify facilitators of help-seeking. These data can inform potential interventions to increase knowledge and accessibility of CPOs and ultimately better address the needs of AYAs experiencing IPV.

Strengths

Aim 2: We interviewed a diverse group of AYAs who had a range of IPV experiences and engagement with the legal system and CPOs. Over 40% of our interview participants were under 18, which gave us several perspectives from legal minors who may have different considerations than young adults who are 18+ years old. We gathered rich information from participants that allowed us to organize barriers and facilitators into a framework that identifies factors related to the use of CPOs for AYAs and more broadly understand AYA engagement with the legal system in the context of IPV.

Limitations

Aim 2: While qualitative studies are not meant to be representative, this study was conducted in one county in Washington State, and results may not be generalizable. The

majority of respondents identified as women and girls and White or Asian, and additional studies using an intersectional lens are needed to better understand perceptions and experiences of youth with diverse identities. There is evidence that IPV survivors from racial and ethnic minoritized communities justifiably engage with and perceive the legal system differently than White survivors. In addition, interviews were conducted virtually, and recruitment was also partially conducted via social media, potentially precluding youth without internet access or computer literacy from participating. However, virtual data collection (with the option of keeping video off) may have allowed youth to be more candid than they may have been in person, and social media recruitment allowed us to reach participants who had no familiarity or interaction with service agencies or legal systems. Finally, participants may have been reflecting on IPV experiences from several years prior; however, these are highly salient experiences that support adequate recounting.

Table 4: Demographic information of participants in qualitative interviews (n=30)

	All participants n (%)
Age group	
14-17 years	13 (43%)
18-24 years	17 (57%)
Sex	
Man/boy	6 (20%)
Woman/girl	24 (80%)
Ethnicity	
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	1 (3%)
Not Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	29 (97%)
Race ^a	
American Indian or Alaska Native	1 (3%)
Asian	14 (47%)
Black or African American	4 (13%)
White	13 (43%)
Not listed	1 (3%)
Highest level of school completed	2 (7%)
Grade 9	
Grade 10	4 (13%)
Grade 11	6 (20%)
High school (diploma, GED, or alternative credential)	4 (13%)
Some college	11 (37%)
Bachelor's degree	2 (7%)
Master's or doctoral degree	1 (3%)
Highest level of school parents completed	
Less than first grade	1 (3%)
High school (diploma, GED, or alternative credential)	8 (27%)
Some college	4 (13%)
Bachelor's degree	9 (30%)
Master's or doctoral degree	8 (27%)
Live independently from parents	
Yes	7 (23%)
No	23 (77%)
Overall personal financial situation ^b	
Meet expenses with a little left over	2 (29%)
Just meet basic expenses	4 (57%)
Don't meet basic expenses	1 (14%)
Family socioeconomic status from birth to age 14	
Pretty well off financially	10 (33%)
About average	14 (47%)
Poor	6 (20%)

Note: Only response options that at least one participant selected are shown

^a Participants could choose all that apply, so percentages may add up to >100%.

^b Only asked to participants who live independently from their parents

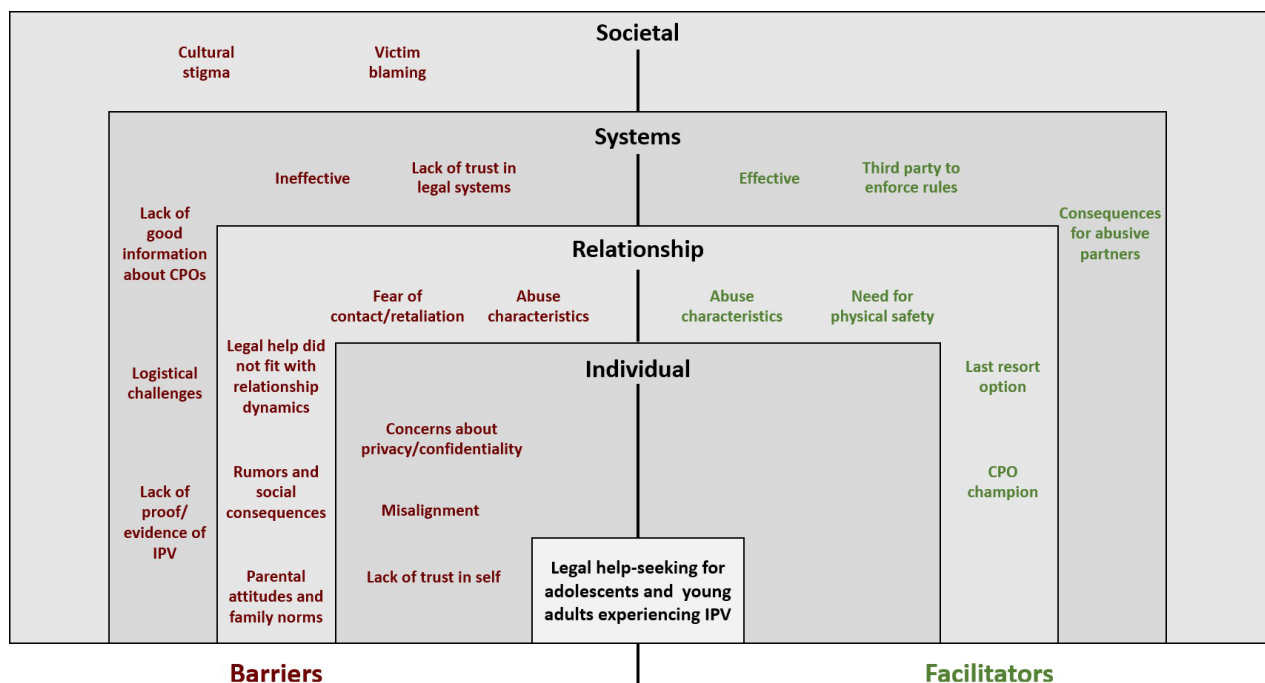


Figure 1. Barriers to and facilitators of legal help-seeking for intimate partner violence from qualitative interviews with adolescents and young adults

Aim 3: Purpose, Goals, and Objectives

The purpose of Aim 3 was to assess judicial officer adherence to model CPO hearing protocols and determine balance and fairness in court proceedings, assessment of safety measures assessed by judicial officers, identify respectful behaviors of judicial officers (measured via CPO hearing recordings) and whether they differ for cases involving petitioners who are minors (14 to 17 years of age) relative to petitioners who are young adults (18 to 24 years of age). *This Aim will be reported on in a subsequent manuscript submitted to NIJ, given continued delays and a pending IRB modification at NIJ.*

Aim 3: Methods

Aim 3: Overview. Aim 3 involves both quantitative and qualitative data to examine whether there are differential court decision-making processes and approaches for CPO petitioners who are minors (<18 years of age) relative to those who are young adults (18-24 years of age). In future analyses, investigators will conduct sub-analyses to critically evaluate cases that resulted in the denial of a full order. Aim 3 will benefit from the same

detailed data collected for Aim 1 from criminal and CPO case files, but additionally involve extensive data collection from digital recordings of temporary and full CPO hearings.

Aim 3: Study Population. Aim 3 involved a random sample of CPO cases filed between January 1, 2004, and December 31, 2019, involving AYA petitioners (aged 14 to 24 years) that progressed to a hearing for a full CPO. Study subjects were identified through the AOC JIS database on CPO filings. Cases in which the full CPO was denied due to no proof of service, to the failure of the petitioner to appear at the full CPO hearing, or to the requested dismissal of the CPO is excluded to focus on cases with the potential for issuance of a full order.

Aim 3: Exposure Variable. The exposure of interest for Aim 3 is the age group of the petitioner/victim (<18 vs. 18-24 years of age).

Aim 3: Outcome Variables. There are several outcomes that will be measured for Aim 3. Domains of interest include balance and fairness in court proceedings, safety measures assessed and taken by the judicial officer, and respectful behaviors of the judicial officer. Each domain will consist of several dichotomous variables that measure both positive and negative aspects of the domain. Indicator variables and a global domain-specific summary score will both be examined in analyses.

Aim 3: Additional variables collected from CPO Hearings. Audio and video recordings of temporary and full hearings will be reviewed for all cases sampled in Aim 3. Data to be collected from recordings include (1) parties present at the hearing (petitioner, respondent, parent[s] of either party, attorneys for either party, protection order advocate, witnesses, others); (2) petitioner and respondent conduct and demeanor; (3) judicial officer conduct and demeanor; (4) information and testimony solicited and/or reviewed by the judicial officer; (5) case outcome; and (6) reason(s) for denial of order.

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