

UNDERSTANDING BARRIERS IMMIGRANT LATINAS FACE IN LEAVING VIOLENT RELATIONSHIPS

There are many reasons why women choose to stay in a relationship where violence and abuse are present. Immigrant Latinas also often face barriers to leaving.

Keep in mind that there is great diversity among immigrant Latinas, and each woman will face a unique set of barriers depending on her circumstances.

If I leave he
will have me
deported!

Fear:

- Misinformation that the abuser can get custody of the children if the victim is undocumented
- Partner may threaten to have the victim deported
- Fear of not having financial and occupational stability
- Being shamed into staying by family
- Fear of going to authorities due to undocumented legal status
- Fear of contacting law enforcement due to negative past experiences

He says if I leave him
I will never see the
children again.

He says he will submit my
immigration paperwork,
but he never does.

Where do I go?
I have no family
here.

Isolation:

- Immigration paperwork may be used as way to control and isolate the victim (when the abuser is a U.S. citizen and the victim is undocumented)
- Obligations to care for the home and children while partner works
- Indigenous or Spanish language may not be spoken by service providers
- May live in a rural community where resources are limited or distant
- Abuser may hold on to passports and visas
- Family may live in another country

I don't have a
work visa, how
will I work?

Economic Pressure:

- Difficulty with reading or writing due to limited education
- Language barriers
- Inability to get a job without a work visa
- Lack of occupational skills due to traditional gender roles
- Not receiving assistance (such as with bills) due to legal status
- Lack of access to formal banking services
- Lack of identification documents

What kind of wife
am I to want to leave
my husband?

Customs:

- Not believing in divorce or separation for religious or other reasons
- Belief that the man rules the household
- Fear of not honoring the values of their religion
- Concern that others look down on single/working mothers

Will my church
members still
accept me?