



# FACT SHEET

## Intimate Partner Violence and Traumatic Brain Injury: Invisible Wounds

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is caused by a bump, blow, jolt, or piercing injury to the head, or lack of oxygen to the brain. The injury affects how the brain works and can cause disability and death. Many survivors are unaware they have a TBI.

**2x**

Alaska's rate of TBI-related death is the highest in the nation, more than double the national average.

Alaska Division of Public Health (2023)

### Alaska Natives/American Indians

experience rates of TBI **2.5 times** higher than those of non-Natives in Alaska.

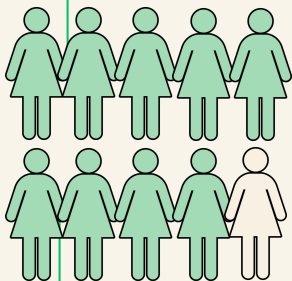
UAA Center for Human Development (2019)

Alaska Native/American Indian children and adults have the highest rates of TBI-related hospitalizations and deaths.

Centers for Disease Control (2025)

More than

**9 in 10**



IPV incidents involve strangulation or hits to the head, face, or neck.

Haag, et. al. (2022)

More than 6 in 10 Alaska Native women experience intimate partner violence (IPV) or sexual violence (SV) in their lifetime.

Alaska Justice Information Center (2010-2015)

up to **75%** of IPV survivors experience possible TBI as a result of the abuse they endured.

Toccalino, et. al. (2022)

### May struggle with:

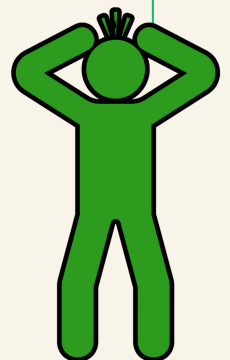
- paying attention
- organizing and completing tasks
- finding the right words
- having patience
- managing stress and emotions
- memory deficits

Gilkerson (2020)

### IPV Survivors with TBI

### TBI effects can make it more difficult for survivors to:

- assess potential danger and react appropriately
- access and navigate needed services
- remember safety plans
- adapt to living in a shelter environment
- engage in healing and educational opportunities



Alaska Native Women's Resource Center  
P.O. Box 80382  
Fairbanks, AK 99708  
907-328-3990  
www.aknwrc.org



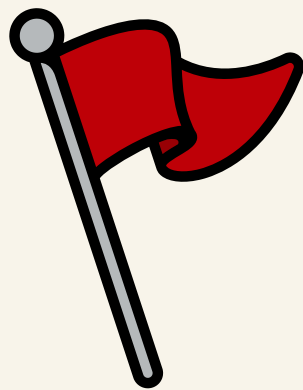
# INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY FACT SHEET

## Signs & Symptoms

TBI symptoms may not appear immediately. They can present days, or even weeks later. If you or someone you know has sustained injury to the head, neck, or face, or has been strangled, talk to a medical provider to determine if you have sustained a TBI.

If you are experiencing any of the following **Red Flag Symptoms**, get medical help immediately.

- Neck pain
- Loss of consciousness
- Confusion or irritability
- Severe or worsening headache
- Repeated vomiting
- Unusual changes in behavior
- Seizures or convulsions
- Double vision
- Weakness, tingling, or burning in limbs



ABI Research Lab

## Resources

The **Alaska Department of Health**, Traumatic and Acquired Brain Injury (TABI) Program supports Alaskans who have experienced brain injuries. TABI Program services may include:

- Assistance in getting a TABI Diagnosis
- Care plan development
- Resource referral
- Peer Support connections (both virtual and in person)
- Mini-grants for unmet qualifying needs

Regional contact information can be found at:

[health.alaska.gov/dsds/Pages/tabi/default.aspx](https://health.alaska.gov/dsds/Pages/tabi/default.aspx)



## References

Alaska Division of Public Health, (2023). State of Alaska Epidemiology Bulletin: Traumatic Brain Injury in Alaska. (Volume 23, Number 2), Alaska Department of Health. [https://epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/rr2023\\_02.pdf](https://epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/rr2023_02.pdf)

UAA Center for Human Development, (2019). TBI Data from the Alaska Trauma Registry and the Alaska Health Facilities Data Reporting Program. University of Alaska Anchorage. [https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-health/departments/center-for-human-development/brain-injury-partnership-program/documents/TBI\\_Data\\_AK\\_Trauma\\_and\\_HFDR\\_accessible.pdf](https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-health/departments/center-for-human-development/brain-injury-partnership-program/documents/TBI_Data_AK_Trauma_and_HFDR_accessible.pdf)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2025). Health Disparities in TBI. US Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.cdc.gov/traumatic-brain-injury/health-equity/index.html#:~:text=A%20recent%20CDC%20surveillance%20report,deaths%20in%20all%20study%20years>

Alaska Justice Information Center. Intimate Partner Violence in Alaska: Adult Female Victimization, (2010-2015). Intimate Partner Violence Dashboard. Alaska's Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault and the University of Alaska, Anchorage. <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/ajic.uaa/viz/AVSDashboard-CDVSA-AJIC/Introduction>

Haag, H.L., et. al. Battered and Brain Injured: Traumatic Brain Injury Among Women Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence - A Scoping Review. Trauma, Violence, and Abuse. 2022 Oct;23(4): 1270-1287. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838019850623>

Toccalino, D., et.al. The Intersection of Intimate Partner Violence and Traumatic Brain Injury: Findings From an Emergency Summit Addressing System-Level Changes to Better Support Women of Survivors. Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation. 37(1):p E20-E29. <https://doi.org/10.1097/HTR.0000000000000743>

Gilkerson, F. (2020, October 6). Understanding Domestic Violence as a Cause of TBI. Brain Injury Association of America. Retrieved from <https://biausa.org/public-affairs/media/domestic-violence-as-a-cause-of-tbi>

Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Research Lab. (n.d.). Abused and Brain Injured: A Toolkit. <https://www.abitoolkit.ca/>. Retrieved March 26, 2025 from <https://www.abitoolkit.ca/traumatic-brain-injury/signs-and-symptoms/>

This publication was made possible by Grant #90-EV-045401-00 from the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

