



PhD in Health and Social Sciences,  
Professional Practice - Terms and Development

# Trial Lecture and Public Defence of Doctoral Dissertation

PhD candidate: Astrid Gravdal Vølstad

Friday, 12 December, 10:15–15:00  
Volda University College

[Link to live streaming](#)



**HØGSKULEN I VOLDA**  
Volda University College



**Molde University College**  
Specialized University in Logistics

Astrid Gravdal Vølstad holds her trial lecture and the public defence of her doctoral dissertation for the PhD in Health and Social Sciences, Professional Practice – Terms and Development. The PhD programme is offered jointly by Volda University College and Molde University College. The disputation is the final part of the doctoral programme.

### Title

«Mandatory Reporting of Intimate Partner Violence: Experiences and Perspectives Among Victims and Perpetrators»

### Summary

The doctoral research project has examined the perspectives and experiences of victims and perpetrators of intimate partner violence (IPV) regarding the Norwegian mandatory reporting law.

The findings support that mandatory reporting is an important measure to stop and prevent IPV. Most of the IPV victims in the study report positive experiences, although some have also faced negative consequences. Few have experienced a loss of trust in the help service system. More than half of the IPV perpetrators report that they would not have lost trust if mandatory reporting had been used, and believe that helpers should report to the police even in cases where patients do not want them to. At the same time, some of the findings raise questions about the practice surrounding mandatory reporting, and whether the risk of severe and persistent violence is systematically used as a criterion when assessing whether the duty is triggered. Many of the IPV victims in the study have experienced serious violence without mandatory reporting being used. There is also no clear connection between the type of violence IPV victims state they have been subjected to and their experience with mandatory reporting. Most of the IPV victims and perpetrators in the study have received information about mandatory reporting,

but fewer indicate knowing the law. This may indicate a need for clearer information.

### Background

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a serious issue that can have major consequences for both individuals and society. To prevent and stop such violence, several countries, including Norway, have laws that require people to attempt to avert violence, for example by reporting to the police.

The Norwegian mandatory reporting law, the duty to avert, applies to everyone, including professionals in help services who are otherwise bound by confidentiality. Mandatory reporting also applies in cases where the person subjected to violence does not want anyone to intervene. This has sparked debate, but despite strong opinions, there has been little research, and no one has previously studied mandatory reporting in Norway. There has also been no research, in Norway or elsewhere, that includes individuals who have perpetrated violence.

The aim of the study has been to gain a better understanding of how mandatory reporting functions in Norway, by examining the experiences and perspectives of IPV victims and perpetrators who have sought help. This doctoral research project has focused on the areas that have been least explored in previous studies: IPV victims' experiences with and knowledge of mandatory reporting, and the perspectives of those who have perpetrated IPV.



## Significance and Impact

This study is the first of its kind to examine intimate partner violence (IPV) perpetrators' perspectives on mandatory reporting, and the research therefore contributes new knowledge in both a Norwegian and international context.

The findings indicate that mandatory reporting is an important intervention for preventing and stopping IPV, as most IPV victims describe positive experiences and that mandatory reporting did not lead to a loss of trust, while most perpetrators were positive towards the duty of mandatory reporting. At the same time, several IPV victims describe negative consequences, which highlights that experiences with mandatory reporting can be complex. This is important to emphasise, as previous research has tended to view mandatory reporting as black-and-white: either good or bad.

The research results suggest there is potential for improvement in the practice of mandatory reporting, both in terms of the information provided about the duty and whether it is systematically followed when there is a risk of severe and persistent violence. The research highlights the need for better routines, clearer information, and training of professionals, so that the prevention of IPV can be carried out in a safe and effective manner.

## Evaluation Committee

### Elizabeth Cook

Senior Lecturer, PhD in Criminology,  
City St George's, University of London

### Annika Maria Désirée Melinder

Professor of Clinical Psychology,  
University of Oslo

### Atle Ødegård

Professor in Interprofessional  
Collaboration, Molde University College

## Main Supervisor

### Solveig Karin Bø Vatnar

Psychology specialist, PhD, Oslo University  
Hospital; Professor II, Molde University  
College

## Co-supervisor

### Kevin Stewart Douglas

Professor, Simon Fraser University;  
Researcher, Oslo University Hospital



Astrid Gravdal Vølstad (30) is a psychologist and completed her doctoral studies at Volda University College. She earned her professional degree in psychology at the University of Oslo in 2022. After completing her PhD, she has worked at the Centre for Research and Education in Forensic Psychiatry at Oslo University Hospital.

# Programme

## 10.15: Trial Lecture

Topic for the trial lecture: «Challenges and Opportunities in Psychological Research on Partner Violence: Bridging Theory and Empirical Evidence».

## 11.00: Break

## 12.15: Public Defence

The title of the dissertation is «Mandatory Reporting of Intimate Partner Violence: Experiences and Perspectives Among Victims and Perpetrators».

- Procession enters (audience rises)  
*Dean, Doctoral Candidate, Evaluation Committee and Chair of The Doctoral Committee*
- Dean introduces the Doctoral Candidate and the dissertation
- Doctoral Candidate presents the dissertation
- First Opponent examines the Doctoral Candidate
- Short break – approx. 10 minutes
- Second Opponent examines the Doctoral Candidate
- Opponents ex auditorio
- Procession exits (audience rises)  
*Dean, Doctoral Candidate, Evaluation Committee and Chair of The Doctoral Committee*

**The dissertation is available for public review from Friday, 28 November at the student services office and in the library of Volda University College.**

