



RESOLUTION ON DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Intimate partner, domestic, and sexual violence affect our society at an epidemic level. In their lifetime, an estimated 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have experienced physical violence by a partner, and an estimated 1 in 6 women and 1 in 33 men have experienced some form of sexual violence.

Domestic and sexual violence include a variety of abusive behaviors, including physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual assault, and stalking. Domestic and sexual violence can occur in any type of relationship, including between spouses, intimate partners, dating partners, parents and children, siblings, extended family members, teachers and students, or caregivers and patients. Unfortunately, domestic and sexual violence can occur in any community and impact people of all ages, genders, religions, and sexual orientations.

Domestic and sexual violence remain seriously underreported crimes. Survivors continue to face obstacles, including shame, stigma, harassment, and disbelief or denial. Police and criminal justice responses to reported crimes can be inadequate, ineffective, and even harmful.

Domestic Violence – Over 10 million people experience abuse every year in the United States. Women ages 18-34 experience the highest rates of domestic violence. A weapon is used in 19% of domestic violence incidents. Firearms are a particular risk factor for domestic violence fatality: the presence of a gun in an abusive relationship raises the risk of homicide for a female victim by 500%. Domestic violence has serious impacts on a victim's physical and mental health, with only 34% receiving medical care for abuse-related injuries. Victims are also at increased risk of depression and suicidal behavior.

Sexual Violence – 1 in 6 women and 1 in 33 men have been the victim of sexual assault or attempted sexual assault in their lifetime. People ages 12-34 are at the highest risk of sexual violence: Women ages 16-19 are four times more likely (than the general population) to experience sexual violence. Female college students ages 18-24 are three times more likely to experience sexual violence, while non-student women 18-24 are four times more likely; male college students ages 18-24 are five times more likely to experience sexual violence than male non-students the same age. Fifty-five percent of sexual assaults occur in or near the victim's home; 3 out of 4 perpetrators are known to the victim, most commonly a friend, acquaintance, person of trust or authority, or intimate partner. Rape and sexual assault have serious impacts on victim's physical health, including the risk of sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy, as well as negative mental health outcomes. Ninety-four percent of victims experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and over one-third experience suicidal thoughts.

Other Violence – Other forms of intimate partner, domestic, and sexual abuse include stalking, elder abuse, and child abuse.

In 1994, the passage of the federal Violence Against Women Act signaled a major shift in governmental awareness and response to domestic and sexual violence. The Violence Against Women Act provides funding to states to support victim services, law enforcement, and other response and prevention efforts. The law also funds the National Domestic Violence Hotline, as well as local domestic and sexual violence coalitions, shelters, legal services, transitional housing, and more.

The Violence Against Women Act has been successfully reauthorized three times since 1994, most recently in 2013. Each reauthorization has come with improvements for reaching underserved populations, refining criminal justice responses, and recognizing the intersectional needs of victims and survivors of violence. Other federal programs, such as the Family Violence Prevention Services Act, have also been instrumental in responding to domestic and sexual violence and providing crucial services to victims and survivors.

The Jewish Council for Public Affairs believes that:

- The Jewish community has a moral and ethical responsibility to combat domestic and sexual violence in the U.S. and around the world. Our Jewish values of respect for human life, safety, and dignity give us a mandate to work for the protection and advancement of human rights.
- Laws, regulations, and enforcement must be strengthened at all levels of government to deter and combat domestic and sexual violence; prevent future violence; lengthen statutes of limitations for victims; support survivors of violence; and ensure victim-centered, trauma-informed criminal justice responses.
- The Jewish community should work with the courts, law-enforcement agencies, legislatures, and social service agencies to develop strategies to combat domestic violence and sexual assault and support survivors.
- The Jewish community should work with legislatures, law enforcement agencies, and victim service organizations to end the rape kit backlog.
- Education for children, teens, and young adults is an essential component of the effort to prevent domestic and sexual violence, instilling an understanding of healthy dating relationships, sexual consent, and recognizing and responding to abuse.
- The Jewish community should work with Jewish and other faith communities, clergy, ethnic and community-based organizations, health professionals, service providers, educators, and other stakeholders to continue working for the prevention of domestic and sexual violence.

The Jewish community relations field should:

- Advocate for the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act and the Family Violence Prevention Services Act.

- Work with legislators at the federal, state, and local level, as well as communities at large, to address the dangerous intersection of firearms and domestic violence, through education, new laws, and additional funding necessary to improve the safety of potential victims and survivors.
- Oppose any proposed cuts to U.S. Department of Justice programs that support the safety and civil rights of victims and survivors, particularly the Office on Violence Against Women, and Violence Against Women Act and Family Violence Prevention Services programs.
- Renew its commitment to vigorously defending Violence Against Women Act and Family Violence Prevention Services programs, and be vigilant to threats to this vital funding.
- Work with legislators on policies to end the rape kit backlog, provide funding for testing and maintenance of evidence, and promote justice for survivors and safety for communities.
- Work with legislators on policies that promote the economic security of victims and survivors, including affordable housing, employment and housing nondiscrimination, paid sick and safe days, paid family leave, and public benefits.
- Work with Jewish Family Services and other community organizations to ensure that services are culturally-sensitive and address the holistic needs of victims and survivors.
- Increase education to communal leaders, clergy, emergency responders, and lawmakers on the barriers victims and survivors experience, which prevents many from disclosing their abuse at the time it is occurring.
- Increase communal awareness of the need for sensitivity, support, and validation of victims and survivors.
- Promote age-appropriate abuse prevention education in community schools, camps, and youth groups.
- Raise awareness of the epidemic of sexual assault on college campuses, and the need for strong enforcement of Title IX to ensure equitable access to education for victims and survivors.
- Continue to work with other faith and cultural communities to address domestic violence; and engage with local Jewish domestic and sexual violence prevention coalitions to create and implement effective prevention and intervention strategies; organize and participate in interfaith work; and promote education for clergy and lay leaders in recognizing and responding to domestic and sexual violence in the Jewish community.
- Advocate members of government to develop laws regarding realistic and effective extension of statutes of limitations allowing victims to come forward when they are ready and able.

- Protect victims of sexual trafficking and domestic or sexual violence who come forward to report abuse, without regard to immigration status.