

# eliminating racism empowering women

ywca

## Violence Against Women

Violence against women affects the lives of countless women and their families across the United States. Daily women and girls of all ages, income levels and race-ethnicities are victims of crime including domestic violence, stalking, rape, sexual assault, child sexual abuse, the trafficking, date rape, verbal abuse and harassment and hate crimes. And many more women are living their lives as survivors of violence.

In 1994, Congress passed the landmark Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). The law established a comprehensive approach to addressing and ending violence against women. VAWA provides a framework for collaboration that included federal, state and local governments, social service providers, law enforcement personnel, prosecutors and the courts. VAWA proved to be a remarkable success at addressing and ending violence against women and girls and has twice been reauthorized.

Key provisions of VAWA include:

- creating the Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE (7233));
- providing assistance to address domestic violence, rape and sexual assault and providing assistance to victims;
- creating provisions to address the needs of battered immigrant women and children, enhancing penalties for repeat sex offenders;
- increasing criminal penalties for crimes against women including domestic violence, rape and sexual assault;
- establishing initiatives to address the impact of domestic violence on children;
- defining dating violence and providing funding to address dating violence;
- addressing violence on college campuses;
- recognizing the unique needs of disabled and older victims of violence;
- providing transitional housing assistance and services to domestic violence victims who are homeless and in need of housing and;
- improving the laws regarding protection orders, sex offender registration and interstate domestic violence.

The Violence Against Women Act also created a number of grants to combat violence against women and girls. VAWA established grants to create and improve law enforcement and prosecution strategies on the state and local levels and to provide services to victims. The measure also established grants to state and local governments to address rural domestic violence and child abuse, grants for battered women's shelters, and grants to address and prevent sexual assault among homeless and runaway youth.

### **VIEW POINTS**

Supporters of ending violence against women argue that violence against women impacts the lives of many women and their families in the United States. They also argue that the success of Violence Against Women Act has proven that it is possible to combat violence against women. Yet there is more work that needs to be done, including eliminating violence against young women and girls and women of color, and addressing the economic consequences of violence on victims.

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While there is much bi-partisan support for VAWA, opponents have argued that the measure is not necessary and that too much focus has been put on women as victims and not as perpetrators of violence. Opponents of VAWA also maintain that the law's definition of violence is too broad and that the issue does not warrant federal funding.

## YWCA POSITION

The YWCA supports public policies that protect victims, hold perpetrators accountable and work to eradicate sexual assault and domestic violence, trafficking of women and dating violence. The YWCA recognizes the need for anti-violence programs and policies to be culturally sensitive in both their approaches to combating violence against women and in responding to victims of violence. Specifically, we support the continuance and full funding for the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). The YWCA also supports legislation that ensures employment stability and economic security for victims of violence against women.

## FACTS

- **Women experience violence throughout their lives including during childhood, youth, and young adulthood.**
- **Young women ages 24 and younger experience many forms of violence including dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, witness family violence and child abuse.**
- **Young women between the ages of 16-24 are the most vulnerable to domestic violence, experiencing the highest per capita rates of non-fatal intimate partner violence.**<sup>i</sup>
- **Black women between the ages of 20-24 experience domestic violence at a higher rate than their White counterparts.** For this age group, there were 29 acts of domestic violence per 1,000 Black women and 20 per 1,000 White women.<sup>ii</sup> Both Black and White women experience domestic violence at similar rates for every other age group.
- **Latina women experience violence.** Approximately 7.9% of Latinas will be raped, 21.2% will be physically assaulted, and 4.8% will be stalked by a spouse, boyfriend or ex-boyfriend during their lifetime.<sup>iii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, (October 2001) "Intimate Partner Violence and Age of Victim, 1993-1999." <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/ipva99.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics. (October 2001) *Intimate Partner Violence and Age of Victim, 1993-1999*. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/ipva99.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Tjaden, Patricia and Nancy Thoennes. (July 2000) *Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey*. U.S. Department of Justice. <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/181867.pdf>