



## Violence Against Women

Violence against women is a significant public health problem in the United States that is characterized by a pattern of repeated, coercive behaviors that may include physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and/or economic forms of abuse.

### **How Common is Violence Against Women in the United States?**

- Over half of women (52%) have experienced violence during their lifetime.
- About two thirds of all incidents of violence against women are the result of intimate partner violence, at the hands of either a current or a former intimate partner.
- Nearly 5.3 million acts of intimate partner violence occur yearly among women ages 18 and older.
- Approximately one third of female murder victims are killed by an intimate partner.
- One in every six women is the victim of attempted or completed rape.
- Annually, over 500,000 women are stalked by a current or former intimate partner.
- Women who report that they have been victims of violence early in life are at twice the risk of reoccurrence of abuse in later life.

### **What are the Consequences of Violence Against Women?**

- Nearly 5 million injuries and over 1,500 deaths annually result from intimate partner violence. Survivors of violence are at an increased risk for short and long term physical, psychological, and economic consequences.
- Over 40% of women who were physically assaulted by their partner were injured during their assault.
- Commonly reported physical injuries include scratches, bruises, broken bones, internal bleeding and head trauma.
- Violence against women can also result in psychological consequences including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, relationship problems, diminished self-esteem, social isolation, and suicidal behavior.
- In addition, victims of violence may engage in risky health behaviors including smoking; alcohol and drug abuse; and unprotected sexual activity, which may increase risks of unwanted pregnancy and HIV infection.
- Violence against women can also have tremendous economic consequences. The cost of intimate partner violence, including medical care, mental health care, and lost productivity, is estimated at more than \$8.3 billion annually.
- Children who witness intimate partner violence are at increased risk for emotional and behavioral problems including anxiety, depression, poor school performance, low self-esteem, and physical health complaints.

*Sources: Heise & Garcia-Moreno, 2002; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000; the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2006; or the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006.*

# Violence Against Women Act

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was initially enacted in 1994 as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, creating the first U.S. federal legislation acknowledging domestic violence and sexual assault as crimes, and providing federal resources to encourage community-coordinated responses to combating violence. VAWA was reauthorized in 2000 as part of the Victims of Torture and Violence Prevention Act and again in 2005 as part of the Department of Justice Appropriations and Reauthorization Act.

**VAWA is the most critical federal law related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.** Specifically, VAWA:

- Acknowledges that domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking cause societal harm;
- Provides funding for resources to assist victims of violence;
- Creates possibilities for women to leave abusive relationships; and
- Improves the criminal justice system's response to violence through training.

## VAWA Funding

- Although many important programs are authorized under VAWA, this law continues to be underfunded.
- Many critical provisions authorized in the 2005 VAWA reauthorization have yet to receive federal funding including training for health professionals; developing public health responses to violence; interventions in healthcare settings; and research on violence against Indian women.
- Additionally, the President's Fiscal Year 2009 budget proposes a \$120 million cut to vital VAWA programs.

VAWA Appropriations	FY06	FY07	FY08	FY09 (proposed)
Labor, HHS, Education	\$178.5 million	\$175.7 million	\$172.6 million	\$172.3 million
Commerce, Justice, Science	\$386.7 million	\$382.5 million	\$399.8 million	\$280.0 million

## APA Recommendations

**In order to ensure that those impacted by domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking receive the critical services authorized under VAWA, APA strongly urges Congress to appropriate funding for VAWA at the fully authorized level for Fiscal Year 2009.** This amount includes \$683 million in authorized funding through Commerce, Justice and Science appropriations and \$320 million in authorized funding through the Labor, Health & Human Services, and Education appropriations.

