

PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Women Against Abuse believes we can achieve our mission to provide quality, compassionate, and nonjudgmental services in a manner that fosters self-respect and independence in persons experiencing intimate partner violence and lead the struggle to end domestic violence through advocacy and community education by focusing on safety, empowerment and prevention strategies for our clients and our community.

As the Centers for Disease Control reminds us, *all forms of intimate partner violence are preventable*. Our policy focus, therefore, is on changing the norms in our communities that allow this violence to thrive.

To create our policy agenda, we ask ourselves: What conditions in the community condone and/or promote domestic violence? What strategies might change those conditions?

To that end, our policy agenda looks toward the future, working to create the conditions in which we are able to achieve our mission to end domestic violence, and works to dismantle power inequities that allow violence to manifest and thrive.

In addition to policy conditions that directly impact people experiencing domestic violence, we extend our focus to include strategies to promote racial equity and justice in recognition of the centuries of racist institutional practices at work to disenfranchise Black, Brown, Indigenous and People of Color.

These systemic oppressions are at the root of inequitable access to power both at the community level and at the relationship level, and ultimately result in continued violence, health and safety inequities, ongoing unresolved experiences of trauma, and intergenerational cycles of abuse.

Instead, our future vision includes communities in which each individual can live freely, safe from abuse, with equitable access to opportunity, support, and hope.

WHAT SURVIVORS ARE SAYING

- *"Going back to my family is not an option because my ex will know where to find me."*
- *"I'm nervous about finding housing outside of WAA and I don't know what type of housing I would qualify for."*
- *"I was shot at while trying to serve a PFA to my abuser."*
- *"They [Police] did what they had to do but it takes forever."*
- *"I want to see grassroots community centers with programs for youth, but also services/information for adults."*
- *"Levels of assistance should be geared toward the level of violence victim has experienced."*
- *"Laws should be more on the victim's side."*
- *"The police don't seem to care and only wanted to know if I had a PFA, even though he just attacked me."*
- *"I would like to see a PFA database that police could use for quick reference from their cars or phones."*
- *"Housing is not guaranteed even if you do all the steps right."*

THE CHANGE WE WANT TO SEE

ADEQUATE, EQUITABLE FUNDING

Every year, Women Against Abuse is forced to turn away thousands of requests for safe shelter due to a lack of capacity in our emergency safe havens. We advocate for federal, state and local funding that supports domestic violence programs and we will promote legislative proposals that support these programs through additional revenue streams.

- *Ensure adequate and stable federal, state and local funding for programs that support people experiencing abuse*
- *Support funding initiatives that directly benefit survivors of domestic violence*
- *Support funding initiatives that create and support expanded interventions for people acting abusively*

SAFER COMMUNITIES

Survivors have expressed a need for more education and awareness of domestic violence in the community. We advocate for increased culturally-specific support for immigrant and trafficking survivors.

- *Mandate training on domestic violence for law enforcement, court personnel, and health and human service staff*
- *Support accountability and transparency measures for law enforcement*
- *Restrict access to firearms for people acting abusively*
- *Oppose immigration enforcement interference with local law enforcement*
- *Eliminate barriers to care for victims of human trafficking, including the decriminalization of sex work*

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Financial abuse impacts 99% of survivors of domestic violence, and can dramatically hinder their survival and ultimate safety and healing. The pandemic has made it even more difficult for survivors of domestic violence to reach financial self-sufficiency. Providing opportunities for economic growth while reducing barriers to accessing basic needs is critical.

- *Advocate for increased access to safe housing for survivors of domestic violence*
- *Support efforts to create and develop affordable housing opportunities for the lowest income individuals*
- *Promote economic justice by increasing the minimum wage*
- *Eliminate barriers to accessing public benefits for survivors*
- *Ensure equitable access to basic needs including food and transportation as well as affordable childcare*

ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Survivors of domestic violence have called for increased access to quality, safe, comprehensive, and affordable physical and mental healthcare. Women Against Abuse advocates for an effective coordinated community response to domestic violence that highlights the issue of domestic violence as a public health crisis that is impacting our community.

- *Improve safe access to comprehensive and quality physical and mental healthcare*
- *Ensure access to reproductive and sexual health services*
- *Provide paid parental and sick leave for workers*
- *Implement comprehensive, community-wide screening and intervention for domestic violence*

PREVENTION OF FUTURE VIOLENCE

Preventing future violence requires addressing current violence in our community in the form of systemic oppression and racism. Women Against Abuse seeks to disrupt the cycle of violence by prioritizing policies that expand education for professionals, youths, survivors, and the community at large.

- *Mandate training on teen dating violence for teachers, staff, professionals and students*
- *Support efforts to close the gender wage gap and achieve pay equity*
- *Promote community violence interruption strategies as alternatives to policing*
- *Oppose voter suppression and other discriminatory barriers to civic participation*