

Guidelines on Domestic Violence

March 12, 1997

Approved by the Jewish Community Relations Council of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin, Sonoma, Alameda and Contra Costa Counties

Domestic Violence is emotional abuse, or physical abuse; or the threat of such abuse, when one person exerts control over another person.¹ Domestic violence is the most prevalent cause of injury to women in the United States.² Although domestic violence affects both genders, ninety-five percent of documented domestic assaults in the nation are by men against women.³ Domestic violence is also a major cause of homelessness of women and children.

Domestic violence touches upon the lives of people from all socioeconomic levels, ethnic groups, sexual orientations, and religious groups, including the Jewish community. Numerous studies and surveys have been conducted over the past two decades with results showing that domestic violence affects a significant percentage of Jewish families.⁴ In response, Jewish domestic violence shelters have been opened in Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, and Toronto.

Jewish women often stay in violent relationships longer than women in the non-Jewish community.⁵ Reasons for this fact vary, although it is in part due to concern with maintaining *shalom bayit* (peace in the home). Within the Jewish community, shame and disbelief around the issue of domestic violence often prevent victims of abuse from seeking and receiving the help that they need.

Domestic violence also has a profound effect on children. Children who are raised in an abusive home often grow up in a constant state of siege, and are unable to mature through the normal stages of child development. They are much more likely to grow up thinking that violence is a part of normal interaction between people, and, therefore are more likely to become abusers or victims as adults.

In order to raise awareness, and decrease the incidence, of domestic violence in the general and Jewish communities, it will be the policy of the Jewish Community Relations Council to:

1. Support appropriate legislation which provides for education about domestic violence to judges, parole and probation officers, law enforcement officials, teachers (in public schools and elsewhere), health-care workers and other appropriate community leaders.
2. Consider the issue of domestic violence when reviewing welfare reform and immigration legislation.
3. Sponsor and participate in educational programs for the community addressing the issue of domestic violence.
4. Develop a list of resources (in coordination with other advocacy groups) for members of the Jewish community, and encourage volunteer work in the area of domestic violence.
5. Develop working relationships with agencies, religious institutions, advocacy organizations and coalitions that address the issue of domestic violence.
6. Support appropriate legislation that would provide funding for protective and support programs for victims of domestic violence.

Notes

1. California law states that domestic violence is abuse perpetrated against: a spouse or former spouse; a cohabitant or former cohabitant; a person with whom the respondent is having or has had a dating or engagement relationship; a person with whom the respondent has had a child. [Return to text](#)
2. "Violence Against Women in California" published by the California Elected Women's Association for Education and Research, citing report from the Centers for Disease Control. [Return to text](#)
3. "Violence Against Women in California," citing Federal Bureau of Justice statistics. [Return to text](#)
4. In a 1991 survey by the Jewish Family & Children's Services of Philadelphia, 14% of 431 Jewish respondents stated that they had been physically or psychologically abused by their partners; in a survey conducted by the Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles, Family Violence Project, 30% of 209 respondents in the Jewish community reported family violence and 22 respondents reported cases of spousal abuse; in an interview with the Executive Director of the Transition Center, a kosher shelter for battered women in Queens, New York, she stated that domestic violence exists in 15–19% of Jewish homes; the Jewish Family Service in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in a 1994 study entitled "What is Family Violence?" reports that between 25%–33% of all American Jewish families experience domestic violence. [Return to text](#)
5. Liane Clorfene-Casten, "A Chicago Haven for Jewish Battered Women," *Lilith*, Winter 1993 (reports that Jewish women stay in abusive relationships for 7–13 years whereas women in non-Jewish homes stay in such relationships for 3–5 years); the "Jewish women International Resource Guide for Rabbis indicates that in a survey conducted by the coalition on Domestic Violence in Cleveland, Ohio, of those women reporting spousal abuse, less than 50% sought assistance to escape their situation. [Return to text](#)

