



WEEK WITHOUT VIOLENCE



eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca

WEEK WITHOUT VIOLENCE 2019
SOCIAL MEDIA & ADVOCACY TOOLKIT
AUGUST 2019

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INTRODUCTION

WEEK WITHOUT VIOLENCE

For more than 20 years, YWCA has set aside one week in October as a Week Without Violence—one week when YWCAs across the country join with YWCAs around the world as part of a global movement to end gender-based violence. This year, Week Without Violence will take place from October 14 – 18.

Through our work as the largest network of domestic and sexual violence services providers in the U.S., we know that not all violence is acknowledged or responded to equally, and that some victims go unrecognized altogether. Our focus on gender-based violence — which recognizes a spectrum of violence, including but not limited to, intimate partner violence, sexual assault, trafficking, and harassment — allows us to address, educate, and take action around myriad issues that impact our communities.

THIS TOOLKIT

Week Without Violence is an ideal time to raise awareness and advocate for ending gender-based violence in your community and across the country. This toolkit provides a broad range of social media and advocacy resources to assist you in joining the Week Without Violence campaign. You'll find tools and strategies to engage on social media, to educate others about gender-based violence, and to advocate to your elected officials to support policies that will end gender-based violence.

WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN WEEK WITHOUT VIOLENCE

We believe that everyone deserves to be safe and free from violence, abuse, and threats. However, violence against women continues to impact the lives of countless women and their families across the United States. Women and girls of all ages, income levels, racial and ethnic communities, sexual orientations, gender identities, and religious affiliations experience violence in the form of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and trafficking.

Even if your organization does not have programming specifically designed to support survivors, you likely know and come into contact with survivors of gender-based violence:

- 1 in 5 women has been raped in her lifetime; every two minutes another American is sexually assaulted
- 1 in 3 young girls is a victim of physical, verbal, or emotional abuse in the United States
- 1 in 3 women will experience domestic violence within her lifetime – and more than 4 women are murdered by their partners each day
- Intimate partner violence is the immediate cause of homelessness for almost half of homeless women, and over 90% of homeless mothers have experienced severe physical or sexual abuse



At YWCA, we imagine a world without violence. We know that together, we can end gender-based violence. And we invite you to join us for Week Without Violence 2019.

SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

Social media is a powerful tool for raising awareness, educating your followers, engaging your legislators, and building community. Please use these social media tools as a resource as you participate in Week Without Violence.

KEY TACTICS

- **Promote:** Announce your participation to your followers! Tell everyone that you're participating in Week Without Violence and why. Encourage others to support your advocacy efforts via social media. Add the event hashtag – #WWV19 – to your posts and share the provided graphics and facts. Invite others to join you by sharing the Week Without Violence website: www.ywcaweekwithoutviolence.org.
 - **Starting August 16: Use the Week without Violence [graphics](#)** to spread the word that you'll be participating in Week Without Violence this fall! Post a tweet with one of the graphics to highlight the work that you do to prevent and address gender-based violence in your community, and add our Week Without Violence hashtag, #WWV19.
 - **Monday, October 14 through Friday, October 18:** Post tweets, graphics, and photos of your Week Without Violence activities and event. If you schedule a tour of your facility or other event with your legislator(s), post a photo with your Member of Congress and/or their staff. Include a “thank you” message.
 - **Friday, October 18:** Participate in the Week Without Violence Twitter chat highlighting the intersection between gun violence and gender-based violence.
 - **Week of October 21:** Follow-up and reflect on your Week Without Violence successes and share them across your social media platforms.
- **Educate:** Issue education is vital when it comes to public policy. Use the sample social media posts below and fact sheets in your toolkit to share information about gender-based violence in our country. Share statistics, data, and stories, as well as relevant research, news articles, blog posts, and other related content – there is a wealth of information out there! Write about how gender-based violence has affected your community or the people you serve. Share how VAWA and FVPSA programs help the women, children and families your serve.
- **Calls to Action:** Tweet at or tag your legislators to implore them to reauthorize VAWA and FVPSA, key legislation that supports survivors and promotes safety. You can also provide their contact information and urge your followers to do their part and contact their legislators, as well. You can find many of your legislators' Twitter handles on this [list](#).
- **Engage your followers:** Encourage your friends and followers to participate in Week Without Violence by sharing why it's important to end gender-based violence, using the event hashtag, contacting your legislators, and calling for others to get involved. Retweet partner organizations and tag them in relevant posts. Encourage them to retweet and share with

followers and remind folks to contact their legislators. Week Without Violence is a movement that everyone is welcome to join!

- **Keep it short:** Facebook and Twitter offer quick and easy ways to engage members of your community and share critical messages widely. Keep it short! Think of a tweet or post like a headline. It should draw a reader's eye but leave them wanting to know more. Tweets can be no more than 280 characters and Facebook wall posts or status updates can be several sentences, so it's best to be concise.
- **Follow "high-level" Twitter accounts and Facebook pages:** Look for other nonprofits, violence prevention advocates, agencies in your community or state, media and lawmakers. Follow, friend, or like them and many organizations will follow, friend or like in return, or re-tweet or re-post your information.
- **Show:** Use graphics, photos, video, and stories to help convey your messages. Use the sharegraphics in your online toolkit, snap photos at event(s), ask staff and volunteers to briefly explain why they're working against violence in short videos/graphics, and more! When possible, show, don't tell.

JOIN OUR TWEET CHAT

Join us for an engaging Twitter chat from 2-3 p.m. ET on Friday, October 18. We will be discussing the intersection between gender-based violence and gun violence. We will share the Twitter chat questions and a schedule of questions closer to the event date!

HASHTAGS

One universal hashtag helps unite us and keep our message consistent, unified, and cohesive throughout Week Without Violence, and helps us track the yearly campaign. **Please use the hashtag #WWV19 for anything on social media related to Week Without Violence.** If you'd like, please feel free to add other hashtags, such as #WorkAgainstViolence, #endGBV, and #endDV, as well as #DVAM, #VAWA4ALL, and #FVPSA.

GRAPHICS

Share the official [sharegraphics](#) (located in the online toolkit) on your social media platforms to further amplify our message, encourage engagement, heighten awareness about gender-based violence, and encourage participation in Week Without Violence.

If you create some great sharegraphics or original photos that you love, please feel free to share them with us! We always enjoy amplifying and sharing great images and work from the network.

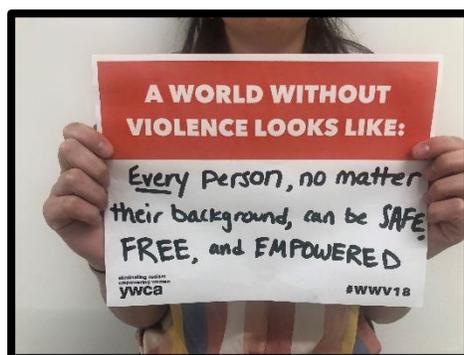
CUSTOMIZABLE SIGNS & SELFIES

Help us spread the word about [Week Without Violence](#) and show why you're committed to ending violence by taking a photo/selfie with a customizable sign! Here's how:

- Download and print one of [signs](#), which have the following prompts:
 - A world without violence looks like:
 - Ending gender-based violence is important because:
 - I stand with survivors because:
- Fill out a sign with your thoughts!
- Take a picture with your sign. Check out the end of this toolkit for tips for taking a good photo.
- Share the picture to your social media using the hashtag #WWV19, and tag 5 friends or organizations challenging them to do the same!

Your photo can be serious or smiling, include your face or just show your hands holding the sign, and it can even include multiple people, each holding their own sign! It's up to you!

Here are some examples featuring a YWCA USA staff member:



SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Share your photo to social media using any of the following sample content or draft your own! Be sure to use the hashtag #WWV19 and tag YWCA USA on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and/or [Instagram](#), and then tag 5 friends or organizations encouraging them to take their own Week Without Violence photo.

- Not all violence is acknowledged and responded to equally. That's why I'm joining @YWCAUSA's #WeekWithoutViolence campaign to end gender-based violence. #WWV19 [insert photo]
- I'm joining @YWCAUSA's #WeekWithoutViolence campaign because I want to raise awareness about ending gender-based violence. Won't you join us? Share your selfie and visit <http://ywcaweekwithoutviolence.org> to learn more. #WWV19 [insert photo]
- Together, we can continue to raise awareness about gender-based violence and the importance of supporting survivors. Post your #WWV19 selfie and share your thoughts to help raise awareness and inspire others. [insert photo]
- Everyone deserves to be safe and free from violence. That's why I'm joining @YWCAUSA's #WeekWithoutViolence campaign to end gender-based violence. #WWV19 <http://ywcaweekwithoutviolence.org> [insert photo]
- Working to end gender-based violence is crucial, and I believe each of us must keep doing our part until we achieve a world without violence. I'm proud to join @YWCAUSA's #WeekWithoutViolence campaign. Learn more: <http://ywcaweekwithoutviolence.org> #WWV19 [insert photo]
- To me, a world without violence looks like_____. I stand with the @YWCAUSA and their global sisters, and their mission to end gender-based violence around the world. #WWV19 <http://ywcaweekwithoutviolence.org> [insert photo]
- Everyone deserves to be safe and free from violence. Unfortunately, not all survivors of violence are given the same access to resources and support. I stand with all survivors, today and every day. #WWV19 [insert photo]
- 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner in their lives. A world without violence looks like: _____ #WWV19 [insert photo]

TIPS FOR YOUR WEEK WITHOUT VIOLENCE CAMPAIGN PHOTO

Take the photo in an area that is well-lit. Natural light is best, but indoors is fine as long as there is enough lighting. Avoid back-lit settings that can cause dark photos. Avoid pointing your camera directly into a source of light.

- Make sure your camera lens is clean!
- If you are taking a group shot, make sure everyone's faces are visible.
- Make sure your handwriting is legible on the sign, and if possible, use a bold, thicker writing tool when writing your answer.
- Please don't display any shirts or signage that support or negate a political party or candidate. (YWCA USA is a 501c3).



DEVELOPING YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Use some of these prompting questions to help craft your social media posts that are specific to your YWCA and your community. Remember: we are aiming to show the impact of gender-based violence in your community and the importance of the work your YWCA does to prevent and end gender-based violence, as well as the importance of VAWA and FVPSA reauthorization.

- How many women, girls, and family in your community are impacted by gender-based violence?
- What will you be doing this Week Without Violence to highlight the need to prevent and end gender-based violence?
- Do you provide service(s) to victims and survivors of gender-based violence? What do you want legislator(s) to know about the service(s) you are able to provide because of VAWA and/or FVPSA policies and programs?
- What need(s) do VAWA and/or FVPSA address in your community? Why are they critical?
- Do you receive VAWA and/or FVPSA funding? What do you want your legislator(s) to know about the services you provide through this funding?
- What is the degree of unmet need for domestic violence services in your state? (You can use YWCA's new interactive [Data Map](#) to find this information.)
- We know you have some impactful stories. How have VAWA and/or FVPSA changed lives in your community?

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA

Remember to tweet at or tag your legislator(s)' Twitter handle when possible! You can do so by including their Twitter handle in your tweet or tagging them in a photo or sharegraphic. If you are including their Twitter handle at the beginning of your tweet, be sure to include a period (“.”) beforehand so your tweet will appear publicly on Twitter.

PROMOTIONAL: To be used in advance of Week Without Violence

- Announce your participation
- Encourage others to join in
- Share images, facts, news articles, blog posts, etc. about gender-based violence
- Share information about Week Without Violence and direct people to the website
- If you will be hosting an event(s) in your community, share information and facts about the upcoming event

Facebook:

We are so excited for YWCA's upcoming Week Without Violence, taking place October 14-18, when we will join others around the country to raise awareness, support survivors, and make calls to action to end gender-based violence. Learn more and join us at <http://www.ycaweekwithoutviolence.org/>

Twitter:

We are #OnAMission to #WorkAgainstViolence. Join us for Week Without Violence, October 14-18 <http://www.ywcaweekwithoutviolence.org/> #WWV19

Gender-based violence impacts the lives of countless women & families across the country. Let's work to end it: <http://www.ywcaweekwithoutviolence.org/> #WWV19

#DV, sexual assault, trafficking, stalking & more impact women & girls of all backgrounds. It's long past time we end this culture of violence. Join us for Week Without Violence: <http://www.ywcaweekwithoutviolence.org/> #WWV19

Week Without Violence is October 14-18. I'm joining @YWCAUSA to #WorkAgainstViolence. Will you? #WWV19 <http://www.ywcaweekwithoutviolence.org/>

WEEK WITHOUT VIOLENCE: To be used throughout Week Without Violence, October 14-18

- Share images, facts, news articles, blog posts, etc. about gender-based violence
- Interact with others using the hashtag
- If you are hosting an event(s) in your community, upload and share content in real time
- Contact your legislators and ask them to support legislation that supports survivors and promotes safety
- Participate in YWCA USA-hosted social media events (more information to come!)

Facebook:

Example 1: We are proud to participate in YWCA's annual Week Without Violence. Join us as we fight to end gender-based violence. Visit <http://www.ywcaweekwithoutviolence.org/> to learn more.

Example 2: I am proud to join YWCA and others across the country for Week Without Violence. As the largest network of domestic and sexual violence service providers in the country, YWCA supports policies that protect survivors, promote safety, and ensure economic security and stability for victims of gender-based violence. This week join us as we raise awareness, support survivors, and advocate for critical policies. <http://www.ywcaweekwithoutviolence.org/>

Example 3: Women of all backgrounds and identities disproportionately bear the burden of gender-based violence, and it is important to recognize the diverse experiences of survivors. LGBTQ+ people, women and girls with disabilities, communities of color, veterans, and those with multiple marginalized identities are just some of the groups that are at heightened risk for violence, and who often face greater barriers to safety and accessing resources and support. This week, I am joining YWCA and others for Week Without Violence, to elevate stories, share information, and raise awareness about gender-based violence. Please join us: <http://www.ywcaweekwithoutviolence.org/>

Example 4: The Violence Against Women grants are critical for our domestic violence programs. Without this funding, [describe the impact e.g. we would struggle to keep our women's shelter open]. [Tag your legislator(s)]: Please support women and families by ensuring that we don't lose these vital funding streams.

Example 5: The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) supports 28 YWCAs across the country to provide preventive and support services to children and families. At YWCA [your local association], we provide [names programs or services supported by FVPSA funding], which have resulted in [describe the outcome and successes of your local YWCA's efforts]. By working as a community, we will ensure that women, children and their families are afforded a safe harbor with comprehensive services to help them heal and thrive.

Twitter:

PROMOTE:

#YWCA's Week Without Violence starts today! Join us in our commitment to ending gender-based violence: <http://www.ywcaweekwithoutviolence.org/> #WWV19 @YWCAUSA

This week is Week Without Violence, a campaign by @YWCAUSA to end gender-based violence. Join us as we raise awareness & #EndDV: <http://www.ywcaweekwithoutviolence.org/> #WWV19

This week is #YWCA's annual Week Without Violence. Tell us: why is it important to #WorkAgainstViolence? #WWV19 @YWCAUSA

EDUCATE:

Domestic violence overwhelmingly impacts women, regardless of socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, race, religion. #WWV19 #DV

Gender-based violence impacts 1 in 4 women in the U.S. On average, more than 3 women are murdered by their partners every day. #WWV19 #GBV

.@RepSallySmith: We rely on #VAWA4ALL to support much of our programming and services for women and families. #WWV19

1 of every 4 homeless women is homeless because of violence committed against her. #WWV19

#DYK: In America, someone is sexually assaulted every two minutes. #WWV19

Because of #VAWA4ALL and #FVPSA, more survivors are able to seek and receive help from community service agencies and the criminal justice system. #WWV19

In the U.S., 1 in every 3 young girls is a victim of physical, verbal, or emotional abuse. #WWV19

Victims of violence often face many barriers to accessing resources & safety. This is even more

pronounced among #WOC. #WWV19

Native Americans are victims of rape or sexual assault at more than double the rate of other groups. #WWV19

Domestic violence is the #1 cause of death for Black women between the ages of 15-35. #WWV19 #DV

#AAPI is an extremely diverse group, and the reality is that language is often a barrier to accessing safety & resources for #AAPI victims. #WWV19

In a study, 48% of Latinas reported that their partner's violence against them increased since immigrating to U.S. #WWV19

Women with disabilities are at greater risk for violence, experience it more severely, and face more barriers to support. #WWV19

Staggering. 80% of women with disabilities have been sexually assaulted. #WWV19

What is the leading cause of injury to women ages 15-44 in the U.S.? #WWV19

Multiple studies indicate the over 50% of transgender people have experienced sexual assault in their lives. #WWV19

94-99% of domestic violence survivors have also experienced economic abuse. #WWV19 #DV

This is the reality in America: Domestic violence is a public health epidemic. #WWV19 #DV

#GBV, #IPV and trauma have negative health consequences on survivors that can be seen and felt long after violence has stopped. #WWV19

The effects of gender-based violence are often compounded by racism, poverty, access to healthcare. #WWV19 #GBV

Studies indicate that women in abusive relationships have much higher rates of developing health issues. Domestic violence IS a women's rights and health care issue. #WWV19 #GBV

Abusers are increasingly using technology as a way to monitor, harass and abuse, making it harder for survivors to find safety. #WWV19

Survivors need enhancements like those in #VAWA19 and #FVPSA19. @SenSallySmith: please support #VAWA4ALL and #FVPSA in the Senate! #WWV19

INSPIRE:

I'm #OnAMission to end gender-based violence because everyone deserves to be safe. Join me:

www.ywcaweekwithoutviolence.org #WWV19 #endGBV

I believe that together, we can end gender-based violence. Join me #OnAMission:
www.ywcaweekwithoutviolence.org #WWV19 #endGBV

We #WorkAgainstViolence all year long. Help us keep the momentum by donating today: [link to your local YWCA or organization doing domestic violence work's donation page] #WWV19

Join us for a march to end violence against women this Friday at 7:30 pm. Volunteers needed!
#domesticviolence #endDV #WWV19

We just posted new action alert! Email Rep. [NAME] to support #VAWA19 #VAWA4ALL

SHOW:

Why are we #OnAMission to end gender-based violence? Find out: [link to impact story]. #WWV19

Our team at today's Week Without Violence event. Together, we are #OnAMission to #endGBV [share photo]. #WWV19

WATCH: Why I #WorkAgainstViolence [share an original video] #WWV19

Tune into @kabc, Wed 10/16 at 7 am to see how Martha got back on her feet after leaving a violent relationship. #domesticviolence #WWV19 #endDV

FOLLOW UP: To be used after Week Without Violence

- If you hosted an event(s) in your community, post a recap or share more content about the event
- Reflect on Week Without Violence in your posts, thank people for participating, and encourage everyone to continue to work against violence
- Thank your attendees and your followers for joining you.
- Show or tell how you will continue to work against violence throughout the year.

Facebook:

Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's Week Without Violence. Whether it was through sharing stories on social media, supporting survivors, talking to policymakers, or hosting an event, your work and engagement helped us collectively raise our voice about gender-based violence. This week might be over, but together, we made it clear that we must all continue to work to end gender-based violence. You have the power to help YWCA in our mission to eliminate racism, empower women, stand up for social justice, help families, and strengthen communities.

Twitter:

Gender-based violence is a public health issue as well as a moral one. Week Without Violence might be over but our work won't stop. Together, we are #OnAMission. #WWV19 #endGBV

We are committed to ending gender-based violence & continuing to support survivors. Today, tomorrow, and every day. #WWV19 #endGBV

Thanks for participating in Week Without Violence! The work continues, and together, we can end gender-based violence. #WWV19 #endGBV

ADVOCACY TOOLS

EDUCATE YOUR COMMUNITY

This section is all about educating your community about gender-based violence. Community members may not be familiar with gender-based violence; one way to introduce them is through sharing the [power and control wheel](#). Others are familiar but may not know where to go to receive services or where to direct others. In this section, you will find resources where survivors can receive help as well as fact sheets that can be shared with community partners or used to table at community events.



An additional way to educate your community is through sharing information through social media and having an online campaign. Use our Week Without Violence [Social Media Tools](#) to find tips and best practices for engagement.

You can also choose to engage and educate your community through hosting an event, such as a panel discussion, presentation, or screening. The last part of this section includes a [guide for putting](#)

[together a Week Without Violence event](#). If you are planning an event, it's important to note that **it is imperative for us to center the voices of survivors** and acknowledge that experiences vary for survivors based on gender, race, socio-economic status, and ability. Especially as we look to solutions for gender-based violence, it's important for us to listen to the wants and needs of survivors.

RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE ABOUT GENDER BASED VIOLENCE:

- [Power and Control Wheel](#)
- [Barriers to Safety Flyer](#)
- Week Without Violence Fact Sheets – located in the Week Without Violence toolkit
- [Gender-Based Violence Talking Points](#)

RESOURCES FOR SURVIVORS SEEKING HELP:

- [The National Domestic Violence Hotline](#): 800.799.SAFE (7233) – provides a phone and chat line for survivors of domestic violence
- [The National Sexual Assault Telephone Hotline](#) (RAINN): 800.656.HOPE (4673) – provides a toll-free line for survivors of sexual assault

HOST AN EVENT:

Bring members of your community together to learn about gender-based violence and what they can do to support survivors and prevent future violence. Use our [How to host a Week Without Violence event guide](#) to help you plan your event.

VOTER ENGAGEMENT

Voting is one of the strategies used to accomplish YWCA's mission of eliminating racism and empowering women. We know that the people we elect to office will determine public policy on major issues that impact our communities. Together, we can make a difference this election and every election by ensuring our voices are heard.

This section outlines some ways to discuss gender-based violence and promote Week Without Violence while engaging voters this election.



TIE YWCA'S MISSION AND THE ISSUE OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE TO THE ELECTION:

Week Without Violence provides an opportunity to further your issue advocacy by helping voters understand the connection between voting and YWCA issue priorities.

- Educate voters and candidates about gender-based violence
- Share YWCA USA's fact sheets on gender-based violence
- Hold issue forums: Get Out The Vote initiatives can include a campaign to educate voters about the important issues on which policy is being debated.
 - Invite people to speak about gender-based violence. Presenters may be survivors; nonprofit professionals; academics; local, state, or federal lobbyists; or others with expertise on the issue.
 - Include an introduction by a community leader or survivor to provide context and explain why these issues are important to YWCA without endorsing a policy position or a candidate.
 - **Remain non-partisan. Avoid endorsing or alluding to your assessment of any candidate or policy position.**
 - Pair promotion of Week Without Violence with your voter registration: If your YWCA hosts voter registration drives at events in your community or through tabling, you can use that opportunity to also share information on your work around gender-based violence and resources for survivors.

SOME IMPORTANT RULES AROUND VOTER ENGAGEMENT:

The IRS clearly states that 501(c)(3) organizations may conduct voter engagement or connect with candidates on a nonpartisan basis. This includes encouraging voter participation, educating voters, and talking to candidates about issues. Below are guidelines for YWCAs in conducting activities during the 2019 election season.

As 501(c)(3) organizations, **YWCAs can:**

1. Promote or conduct voter registration
2. Educate voters on the where, when, and how of voting
3. Encourage and remind people to vote
4. Encourage staff to serve on Election Day as a poll worker, translator, or other nonpartisan volunteer
5. Distribute nonpartisan sample ballots, candidate questionnaires, or voter guides
6. Host or co-sponsor a candidate forum (the forum must be open to all candidates, conducted in a balanced way, and include a nonpartisan panel of questioners)
7. Hold a voter education event
8. Educate the candidates on your issues
9. Continue issue advocacy during an election
10. Support or oppose ballot measures as a lobbying activity (subject to normal lobbying limits)
11. Conduct nonpartisan training on issues and organizing skills
12. Allow staff to participate as individuals in political campaigns, on their own time and not as representatives of the organization

YWCAs may NOT conduct *partisan* activities to support or oppose any candidate for public office, including:

1. Endorsing a candidate
2. Making a contribution to a candidate or party. This includes “in-kind” contributions such as publicity, staff time, and use of facilities or assets, *unless* those resources are made equally available to all candidates at their fair market value
3. Rating candidates on who is most favorable to your issue(s)

Have questions about the do’s and don’ts for 501(c)(3)s? Check out [this webinar](#) or [this resource](#) from NonProfit Vote. You can also call the Bolder Advocacy hotline at 866-NP-LOBBY (866-675-6229).

For more information about YWCA’s Voter Engagement and resources for 2019, please join the Voter Engagement Intranet [Community](#) and check out our [webinar](#) on 2019 voter engagement

ADVOCATE TO ELECTED OFFICIALS

This section contains two actions to help you urge your elected officials to take action on gender-based violence, the first are calls to make to federal legislators, the second is a pledge for state and local elected officials. For more resources on engaging elected officials, please see our, [Getting to Know Your Policymakers](#), [Contacting and Meeting Your Legislators](#), and [Hosting a Successful Legislator Site Visit](#) guides.

VAWA & FVPSA ACTION ALERTS: URGE CONGRESS TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS!

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) provide strong foundational support to address the prevalence of gender-based violence in our communities, including comprehensive resources and support to meet the needs of victims and survivors. [Act now](#) to urge your Members of Congress to support reauthorization of VAWA, FVPSA, and other policies that will help women and girls be safe from violence in your communities.

PLEDGE FOR LOCAL AND STATE OFFICIALS TO SUPPORT SURVIVORS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Together we can end gender-based violence, but it will take a commitment from all of us. Use the action below to engage your state and local elected officials and candidates in the movement. With their help we can ensure that the unique challenges women and girls face are put in the forefront of policy efforts and that all survivors have the resources and support they need to thrive. With this pledge we can hold leaders accountable to work with us to end gender-based violence. Urge your state and local elected officials to pledge their support TODAY. Consider simply emailing this pledge to your elected officials and candidates for office or print to use as a call to action after meeting with them. Once they sign on, make their commitment public and hold them accountable to following through.

Steps you can take to ensure that women and girls will be safe from violence in your community:

- Download the [pledge](#).
- Email the pledge to a state or local official (e.g. mayor, member of council, sheriff, state senator, state representative, etc.), or print it out to use as a call to action after an in-person meeting.
- Once the official signs on, make their commitment public and hold them accountable to following through.

WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Elected officials often search newspapers from their home districts for mentions of their name. Use

this opportunity to educate your elected officials about the prevalence of gender-based violence in your community, and the importance of their actions to support survivors and prevent future violence. If there has been a recent incident of gender-based violence in your community, use [Sample A](#), otherwise, use [Sample B](#).

GET TO KNOW YOUR LEGISLATOR, THEN MEET THEM OR HOST A LEGISLATOR SITE VISIT

One of the most effective advocacy tactics is to develop a strong relationship with your elected officials, both at the federal and state level. You can use the tips in our [Getting to Know Your Policymakers](#) guide to learn more about your legislators, then use our [Contacting and Meeting Your Legislators](#) and [Hosting a Successful Legislator Site Visit](#) guides to reach out to your elected officials to arrange meetings and even a site visit!

ENGAGE YOUR COMMUNITY AND ELECTED OFFICIALS ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

Use our [social media tools](#) for tips, sample tweets, and Facebook status updates to:

- Raise awareness about gender-based violence in your community and the needs of survivors
- Ask your elected officials where they stand and what they will do to support survivors

APPENDIX

- Gender-Based Violence Talking Points
- Hosting a Week Without Violence Event
- Week Without Violence Pledge
- Letter-to-the-Editor Sample A
- Letter-to-the-Editor Sample B
- Getting to Know Your Legislator Guide
- Contacting and Meeting Your Legislator Guide
- Hosting a Successful Site Visit Guide
- Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) – Fact Sheet
- Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) – YWCA Local Impact & Success Stories
- Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) – Fact Sheet
- Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) – YWCA Local Impact & Success Stories

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE TALKING POINTS

SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

- YWCA is the largest network of domestic and sexual violence services providers in the United States.
- The **Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)** and the **Family Violence Prevention Services Act (FVPSA)** provide comprehensive resources and support to meet the needs of victims and survivors of gender-based violence, particularly those who experience higher risks of violence, such as Native women, immigrant women, women of color, and LGBTQ+ survivors.
- VAWA and FVPSA provide strong foundational support to address the prevalence of gender-based violence in our communities.
 - Across our network, YWCAs rely on funding from FVPSA as well as VAWA's transitional housing, STOP formula, sexual assault services, rural, legal assistance, underserved populations, children and youth, and other grant programs – to meet the needs of their communities.
 - Tell your local YWCA's story
 - Services offered
 - Impact
 - Federal support you specifically rely on (if any)
- During VAWA and FVPSA reauthorizations this year, we need your support to ensure that the existing legislative structure and grant programs are maintained, and that VAWA's critical protections for survivors of color, LGBTQ+ survivors, Native women, and other survivors who experience higher risks of violence are preserved.
- Ask your Member of Congress to protect survivors of gender-based violence by cosponsoring and supporting the passage of VAWA Reauthorization (H.R. 1585) and FVPSA Reauthorization (S.2259).

HOSTING A WEEK WITHOUT VIOLENCE EVENT IN YOUR COMMUNITY

You can host an event on your own or with a group (your company, organization, place of worship, etc.). Your event can be any size, take place anywhere, and even be a private event.

Community events are great ways to spread YWCA's Week Without Violence message: together, we can end gender-based violence. A community event can provide information, motivate activists, bring allies together, increase awareness about gender-based violence in your community, and celebrate victories. As you undertake your planning, make sure to **center the voices of survivors** and acknowledge that experiences vary for survivors based on gender, race, socio-economic status, sexual identity, and ability. Especially as we look to solutions for gender-based violence, it's important for us to listen to the wants and needs of survivors.

Goals

Setting goals for an event will enable you to measure success. Consider setting numeric goals (i.e. audience turnout, funds raised, actions taken) as well as non-numeric goals (i.e. to educate the community about gender-based violence, to raise awareness about Week Without Violence, to celebrate a local elected official signing the Week Without Violence [Pledge](#)). For example, setting a goal to "produce 35 hand-written letters to our elected official" provides a clear statement of what you are trying to accomplish that can guide your planning decisions.

Step-By-Step: How to organize a community event

1. Logistics

- **Type of event:** There are many different formats for a successful event. The format depends, in part, on whether your goal is to educate or motivate. If your goal is to educate, a forum or panel discussion is an engaging way to provide information. A single-focused speaker or group of speakers, or a screening of video about gender-based violence, allows for an emotional presentation that will motivate your audience. Potential speakers include experts in gender-based violence, YWCA staff, local or community leaders, local college or university professors, elected officials, or individuals who have been personally affected by gender-based violence.
- **Public or private:** Determine whether you want your event to be open to the public, or to be a private affair. Both types of events are well-suited to Week Without Violence.
- **Co-hosts/co-sponsors:** Working with another organization to co-host or co-sponsor your event offers several advantages. Collaboration provides a bigger pool for resources and potential attendees. It can also result in a more balanced or diverse perspective. Moreover, working with

other organizations represents a great opportunity to build and maintain coalitions. If you do cosponsor your event, make sure that you have the same goals.

- **Location:** Choosing the right location for your Week Without Violence event depends on who you'd like to attend and the environment you want to create. Where do people in your community already gather? If you are promoting the event to the public, think about a place where people of any race, ethnicity, religion, sexual and gender identity, immigration status, and ability would feel comfortable. If you want to encourage your local elected officials or other community leaders to attend, select a location that would be appropriate and convenient for them. Find a space that is big enough for your attendees to be comfortable, but not so large that it is difficult for people to see the presentation or participate in a group discussion.

Other factors to consider when selecting a space include parking, access to public transportation, and the distance your guests must travel to get there. It is a good idea to select a space that is wheelchair accessible. It is also a good idea to consider making your event child friendly or allowing space for childcare so that parents of young children can participate in your event.

DON'T FORGET: Once you've determined logistics, return to your [Week Without Violence account](#) to register your event. Registered events will appear on our [event map](#) and will help us show the depth and breadth of support around the country for preventing and ending gender-based violence. Plus, all registered events receive a unique, customizable mini-site (including a unique URL!) to use in event promotion!

2. Publicity

- **Know Your Audience:** Not every event is of interest to every audience. Before you develop your publicity plan, decide who you want to attend your event.
- **Personal or public:** If you are hosting a small house party, personal invitations are the only "publicity" you will need. These can take the form of phone calls, e-invites, or written notes. If you are planning for a large audience, [flyers](#), newsletters, email, Facebook events, and community event calendars can all prove useful. The personalized event page you receive when registering your event at [Week Without Violence](#) can also be incredibly useful in promoting your event.
- **Paid advertising:** If you / your YWCA has funds at its disposal, paid advertising could be an option. Knowing your intended audience will ensure that resources are targeted and well spent.
- **Know Your Event:** If you are hosting a large public event, make sure you have planned it to be of interest to the general public. What is unique about your event? Different angles will help you to catch the interest of potential attendees and the media, who can help raise awareness about gender-based violence and your event.

- **Make Your Plan:** Having focused on your audience and your event, you are now ready to make your publicity plan. Calendarize all relevant deadlines, e.g., for publications (newspapers, events listings, etc.), as well as “lead times” required for printing and distributions of flyers, posters, invitations, and programs.
- **Decide on your “look”:** All your materials should have a consistent theme and share similar design elements that highlight the message of your event. You can download promotional materials for use in your publicity in your [Week Without Violence digital toolkit](#).
- **The Five W’s:** In everything you produce—flyers, posters, e-invites, news alerts, event listings—you must have the correct 5 W’s:
 - Who will be speaking
 - What will they be addressing
 - When will it happen
 - Where will it take place
 - Why you are sponsoring the event

3. The Event – Careful preparation on the day of your Week Without Violence event will result in a smooth-running event.

- **Registration:** At your registration table you should have the following things that one or two people are in charge of:
 - Sign-in sheets with space for attendees’ name, address, phone numbers, and email
 - YWCA educational materials, stickers, buttons, wrist bands, etc. **Promotional merchandise ordered by September 27th are guaranteed to arrive prior to Week Without Violence.**
 - Name tags and markers
 - Create a station where attendees can engage with the campaign theme and issues. For example, bring copies of the Week Without Violence “Imagine a World Without Violence” [fillable signs](#) for attendees to fill out, then snap photos to share on social media.
 - Extra pens
- **Refreshments:** While not absolutely necessary, guests always appreciate refreshments. You can keep it as simple as coffee, water, and sodas, with store-bought cookies or pastries. If you hold your event at a local coffee shop or restaurant, the owners may donate some drinks and snacks.
- **Introductions and opening remarks:** As your participants get settled, take the opportunity to welcome them and thank them. It’s important to acknowledge the time and effort people make to show up, let them know it’s appreciated!
 - Introduce yourself—who YWCA is, what Week Without Violence is, and why you are holding an event— with a few brief comments reminding attendees of the importance of preventing and ending gender-based violence. If the group is small enough, you might go around the

- room and invite each person to say their name and what brings them to the event.
- If you notice any local elected officials, community leaders, or other key individuals in the room, introduce them and thank them for their attendance.
 - In your opening remarks, briefly explain the format of the event so that people know what to expect and how long they might be there. Also, suggest that your guests write down questions, comments, or ideas they have during the presentation to bring up during group discussion.
- **Presentation:** Here are a few options to get you started in thinking about your event's main attraction:
 - Have someone from your local YWCA speak about YWCA's mission to empower women, and how this directly ties to issues of gender-based violence.
 - Use the fact sheets and materials from the [toolkit](#) to hold a dialogue about gender-based violence in your community. Discuss how you can create better supports for survivors of violence. Create a plan of action.
 - Hold a panel discussion with local leaders, advocates, experts, and other stakeholders.
 - Organize an awareness event such as a march, film screening, or art exhibit; have a discussion afterwards, led by a facilitator.
 - Create space for survivors to share their experiences. This could be a creative event such as an open mic or it could be a more structured time of sharing.
 - Invite local elected officials to make a proclamation to end gender-based violence at a local press event. Then encourage them to create policies that support survivors.
 - **Group Discussion:** An important part of the evening will be the time when individuals can share ideas. Leave ample time for group discussion and suggestions for individual action to follow the screening.
 - Have a few pre-planned topics or questions. If everyone in the room seems to have something to contribute, you can scale back to focus on a few central points. On the other hand, you can use a question or idea as a way to elicit a response.
 - Call on people. Give each person a chance to speak and graciously limit the length of their comments.
 - Stick to a time limit. If you hit your time limit and the group is still talking, ask for one last question.
 - **Take Action:** One of the most important parts of your event is encouraging your attendees to take action to prevent and end gender-based violence!
 - Invite your attendees take action to fight gender-based violence. Some ideas include urging policy makers to support reauthorization of VAWA and FVPSA through letters or phone calls, or through [YWCA's online Action Center](#).

- **Wrapping Up:** At the end of your forum, it is a good idea to give a short concluding address.
 - Thank everyone for coming, again, and be sure to remind them to sign up for the [YWCA Action Center](#), and to receive updates from you about future events and actions to prevent and end gender-based violence.
 - This is also a good time to let people know about all the great work your YWCA has been doing and what is coming in the future.

4. Debrief: After the event pull together your team. Evaluate whether you achieved your goals or not and what you would do the same/differently next time. Celebrate a job well done.

5. After Your Event:

- The sign-in sheet from your event becomes one of your most valuable organizing tools. Enter it into an electronic database as soon as possible. That list contains the names of people you already knew were inspired to become supporters of YWCA, or someone you met whom you had not worked with before, or a key leader in your community, or an organization who you can ally with in the future. For your next event, invite them and ask them to bring a friend!
- Follow up with your attendees in some way before too much time passes. If it was a small event, give everyone on your list a call or send an email or note. If you had a large event, choose a select number of people to contact. Tell attendees how glad you are that they participated and ask for feedback on the event. If you already have plans for another event, give them a heads-up now and ask if they will commit to being there.
- Week Without Violence and your event are powerful because they inspire people in your community. You can share news about your event with your community. Suggest ways that people can get involved in preventing and ending gender-based violence in your community and provide a way for them to get in touch with you. Send an article as a letter-to-the-editor to your local newspaper.
- YWCA USA would **love** to see pictures from your event! Share photos and quotes from your event with us and we will elevate your work on social media and the YWCA USA website. Tag us on Twitter at @YWCAUSA and use the hashtag #WWV19. You can also send photos to advocacy@ywca.org.

WEEK WITHOUT VIOLENCE PLEDGE

Dear [Elected Official]:

Women and girls of all ages, income levels, racial and ethnic communities, sexual orientations, gender identities, and religious affiliations experience gender-based violence in the form of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, trafficking, and stalking. Gender-based violence continues to be a pervasive problem in the United States, with far-reaching consequences:

- 1 in 3 women experiences some form of gender-based violence.
- Out of every 1000 cases of rape, 57 lead to an arrest, 11 are referred to prosecutors, and only 7 lead to a felony conviction.
- 1 in 3 girls is a victim of physical, verbal, or emotional abuse in the United States.
- 1 in 4 women will experience domestic violence and, on average, more than 3 women are murdered by their partners in the United States every day.
- Victims of domestic violence lose about 8 million days of paid work per year because of the violence that they experienced.

YWCA is the largest network of gender-based violence service providers in the country. We know the women and girls impacted by this violence. Survivors have shared their stories and experiences with us, helping us to develop strategies to address the multiple challenges that they face. As we participate in Week Without Violence, we ask that you show your commitment to supporting and protecting survivors of gender-based violence by taking the pledge below.

PLEDGE

I _____, acknowledge that gender-based violence impacts the lives of countless women and their families that are within my constituency. I acknowledge that survivors of gender-based violence are an expansive and diverse group. Their lives and safety are important to me, even if their lives are different from my own. To show my commitment to end gender-based violence, this term I pledge to:

- Consider how any and all policies may affect survivors and victims of gender-based violence in my community.
- Make every diligent effort to ensure that survivors who are marginalized due to racial inequity, immigration status, disability, homelessness, health care issues, or other concerns have resources available to them in my community.
- Dedicate time to raise my awareness and the awareness of others about gender-based violence.
- Visit a non-profit organization in my jurisdiction that serves survivors of gender-based violence.

Signature _____ Date _____

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR (A): VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT (VAWA) & FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND SERVICES ACT (FVPSA)

INSTRUCTIONS:

- *If possible, start your letter with a short reference to a recent article (within the last five days) in the paper about VAWA or about an incidence of violence against a woman in your community. If you do not know of a recent story, search your newspaper's website for "violence against women act" or "domestic violence."*
- *Start you letter with a reference to the headline and the date it was published.*
- *Keep your final letter to less than 250 words.*
- *Check your local news outlet for submission rules, guidelines, processes.*

To the Editor,

In reference to your article, **HEADLINE**, on **DATE**, **ORGANIZATION** is urging our community and our elected officials to support the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Family Violence Prevention Act (FVPSA). Once again, VAWA and FVPSA – and the women and families they help – are being overlooked in an effort to score political points in our current heated environment. That's wrong.

VAWA and FVPSA save lives, support families, and need to be reauthorized. A strong VAWA reauthorization bill (H.R. 1585) passed through the House of Representatives on April 4th, 2019 but has still not been taken up in the Senate. A strong bipartisan reauthorization bill for the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) (S.2259) was introduced on July 24.

As an organization serving women, girls, and families in **TOWN/CITY**, we strongly support the reauthorization of VAWA (H.R. 1585) and FVPSA (S.2259) and call on Congress to swiftly pass these bills to maintain and strengthen protections for victims and survivors of violence. We believe that ALL Members of Congress should take steps to end gender-based violence.

It's time to take the politics out of domestic violence and hold Congress accountable for helping to make sure all survivors are safe and free from violence and fear. **[Names(s) of Member(s) of Congress]** – where do you stand?

NAME

TITLE, ORGANIZATION

(Include your phone number and email address. Some newspapers ask for a physical address as well, but none of that will be published.)

**SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR (B)
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT (VAWA) &
FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND SERVICES
ACT (FVPSA)**

INSTRUCTIONS:

- *Keep your final letter to less than 250 words.*
- *Check your local news outlet for submission rules, guidelines, processes.*

To the Editor,

ORGANIZATION is urging our community and our elected officials to support the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Family Violence Prevention Act (FVPSA).

VAWA and FVPSA save lives, support families, and need to be reauthorized. A strong VAWA reauthorization bill (H.R. 1585) passed through the House of Representatives on April 4th, 2019 but has still not been taken up in the Senate. A strong bipartisan reauthorization bill for the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) (S.2259) was introduced on July 24.

Around the country, one in five women has been raped in her lifetime, one in three women will experience domestic violence, and more than three women are murdered by their partners every day. In our own community **[INSERT LOCAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE STATISTICS]**.

It is crucial that candidates and elected officials are committed to preventing gender-based violence and protecting survivors.

Make sure that every candidate for office can tell you what they will do to prevent and end violence against women, and how they will ensure that survivor needs are met.

Every current Member of Congress and local elected official should also publicly declare their support for the reauthorization of VAWA and FVPSA.

It's time to hold Congress accountable for helping to make sure all survivors are safe and free from violence and fear.

NAME

TITLE, ORGANIZATION

(Include your phone number and email address. Some newspapers ask for a physical address as well, but none of that will be published.)

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR POLICYMAKERS

Who Are Your Elected Policymakers?

In considering who you want to influence, make a list of the legislators who cover the entire area that you serve and where your staff and volunteers live; don't just limit yourself to where your YWCA is physically located.

- ✓ **TIP:** You can find your federal legislators [here](#). Through GovTrack, you can also see their bio, Committee assignments, official website, donors, and scores from interest groups on their votes.

What Do You Know About Them? Learn the basics such as:

- Key committee assignments - Prioritize building relationships with Members of Congress on key committees.
- ✓ **TIP:** For example, the Appropriation Committees are key to federal funding decisions. The Judiciary Committees are key on VAWA's reauthorization. The Senate Banking Committee determines housing policy.
- Staff e-mail and contact information, including key Washington, DC staff aides who handle health and children's issues, local district directors, and schedulers (Note: DC-based legislative staff have a high turnover so set a reminder to confirm the staff on a regular basis such as every six months).
- Social media channels
- Biographical information
- Voting records

TIP: YWCA USA can also provide much of this information about Members of Congress.

You also need to determine:

- Are they known to your Board members, other senior leadership, or volunteers? Do you have people in your network who personally know these legislators?
- What issues do they care most about? The answer to this question is essential to know before you meet.

Starting and Keeping a Relationship

After every election, make a point of introducing your YWCA to each newly elected or re-elected legislator by:

- Sending a letter expressing interest in working together in the years ahead.
- Providing brief background information, including, for example, your annual report or promotional brochure, along with a standing invitation to visit your local association to see your services.

- Putting the legislator on your outreach list as you would a potential big donor and join their e-newsletter/follow their social media channels.
- When you are ready, request a meeting at the legislator's office to discuss your organization, its current situation, future plans, and issues of concern. A member of Congress should meet with representatives of your organization about once a year, and additionally you should try to interact with their staff at least once a quarter. These interactions are about building the relationship, so they take your call or respond to your email when there is a time sensitive vote or policy ask. The regular check-in can be simply sharing a success story, inviting them to your big fundraising gala, or sharing a publication from YWCA or one of your other professional partners.

Facility Tour

What better way to cultivate a relationship with a policymaker than inviting him or her to see your organization in action? We've provided a step by step outline that you can use to organize a tour with your legislator. See [Hosting a Successful Legislator Visit](#) for more information.

CONTACTING AND MEETING WITH POLICYMAKERS

While it may be intimidating to meet one on one with your Member of Congress or state legislator, remember: this is their job. They are inundated by messages and requests for meetings, but they work for you. Elected officials and their staff members see their job as representing their constituents' needs and have a process to hear from you.

Below are some easy ways to get your voice heard along with specific tips and tools, up to the most effective way of advocating for your issues, including a private meeting or facility visit.

While it's important to do whatever you can, given the time you have available, here is what Congressional staff rank as most effective to least effective in terms of making your voice heard:

- 1. Personal call or meeting with the legislator:** If someone from your board/network knows the legislator, you can ask the scheduler to add this person to the legislator's list of supporters whose calls they will return during a set "call time" each day. A request for a call through a personal connection can be key if there is a time sensitive issue/vote. Otherwise, a personal meeting or facility visit is the most effective way to have the legislator understand your issue. You don't need to know the legislator personally to request a meeting or site visit.
 - ✓ **TIP:** A personal meeting or facility tour in the district usually takes at least a month to schedule. If you can meet with your legislator in Washington, D.C. or the state capitol, you can usually get a meeting with the legislator or staff member within 1-2 weeks. More tips on securing the meeting with template language are below.
 - ✓ **TIP:** In addition to building a relationship with the elected official, also try to get to know their local key staff member. For a Member of Congress, that is usually the District Director. On the state level, about 25% of states provide funding for district offices.
- 2. Coalition letter signed by a few prominent local organizations:** Showing the Member of Congress that other organizations have your same concern is helpful to influencing decision-making. One tactic is to send a letter signed by a few prominent local organizations (associations, nonprofits, or for-profit companies) with your logos at the top and the signatures of key senior executives. For example, if you are working on child trauma issues, reach out to local children's hospital and ask if they'll join you in signing this kind of letter. Once you've sent the letter by email to the office, be sure to send it directly to the staff contact responsible for the issue you are addressing and/or District Director. You can also link to the letter on your social media channel and send to the policymaker's account.

3. **Social media messages from local people on the same day in response to a legislator's post:** A survey of Congressional staff found that as few as 30 social media comments were effective to get a lawmaker's attention on a given topic. Check out our [Social Media Tools](#) for tips and best practices.
4. **Personal e-mails to staff with whom you have built relationships or met recently in D.C. or the district office, with an eye-catching, or at least clear, subject line:** Each day, Congressional staff receive several hundred e-mails. If there is a vote coming up and it will harm the children you serve, your subject line could read: "CEO from YWCA XX urges Rep. XYZ to vote yes on today's vote to reauthorized VAWA." If you have not yet met with a staff member and there is an urgent reason to get in touch, you can call the main line and ask for the name and email of the staffer who handles the issue of interest to you. Sometimes, the office will only provide you the staffer's name but not their email address.
 - ✓ **TIP:** If you are contacting a staffer for your House Member, the standard format is "*First name.LastName@mail.house.gov*" and if they work for the Senators, it is "*FirstName_LastName@Senator'sLastName.senate.gov*". For example if Catherine Beane was the name of the House of Representatives staffer, her email would be Catherine.beane@mail.house.gov and if she worked for Senator Durbin, her email would be Catherine_Beane@Durbin.senate.gov.
5. **Letters on letterhead:** Letters from local organizations e-mailed to the right staff member also get noticed. If members of your board or coalition partners are also business owners, encourage them to speak up in that capacity. Personal stories are also very powerful so you can encourage domestic violence survivors to write about VAWA/FVPSA, etc. Your letter could be attached to an e-mail with this subject line, "YWCA XX (employing more than 30 residents of Anytown, USA) urges Rep. XYZ to vote yes on today's vote to reauthorize VAWA."
6. **General e-mails sent through the office's main website account** are fine but may go to spam. Send to individuals as much as possible.
7. **Scripted calls to the main office line and form letters/postcards** to offices are among the least effective communications, unless they are received by the office at an extraordinarily high volume. Physical mail goes through security and is often delayed. Some offices just count the number of calls they receive but don't take your information.
8. **Petitions. Please, please know the limits of petitions.** Elected officials dismiss messages that aren't confirmed to come from their own constituents. With rare exceptions, the primary purpose of petitions is for the organization to collect your contact information for future use. Sign them if you will but know that your job as an advocate is not done by doing so!

Public Town Halls/Candidate Forums

Town halls or similar public forums should not be overlooked by YWCA advocates. You can attend these public meetings and ask questions about the importance of your priorities in public policy decisions. Doing so can also remind the general public of your organization's engagement in the issues that matter to your community. As long as you do not endorse a candidate or party on behalf of your organization, this activity is allowable for YWCA associations. For more information, check out [this](#) from Bolder Advocacy.

The Meeting

Meeting with constituents is as much a part of a legislator's job as voting in committee or on the floor.

Securing and preparing for the meeting:

- Call the legislator's office and ask to speak to the scheduler. Some schedulers use a meeting request form that they can email you or you can find on their website. As a back-up, you can ask for the name of the legislative assistant who handles the issue(s) you want to discuss and email them to request a meeting.
- Be ready with the number of people joining you in the meeting, the dates and times you can meet, and the topics you wish to discuss.
 - ✓ **TIP:** The best days to meet in your home district or state are **during recesses**, when Members of Congress return home from D.C. These "home" meetings can be most effective because you get more time with fewer interruptions and distractions, and it involves less expense for you. You can see the House schedule [here](#) or the Senate schedule [here](#).

Sample template email to request a meeting (*Keep the request short – you can make your case in the meeting*):

- I am representing **YWCA Anytown** in your **district/state**, one of more than 200 local YWCAs across the country. As a network, we serve more than 2 million women, girls, and families each year, and locally we reach **xx** each year through our staff of **40** and **100** volunteers.
- We are interested in meeting with you to discuss **xx**.
- Would you be available to meet for a few minutes when you are back in the district on month/day **[give a few options]**? Thanks in advance for letting me know you're your availability. My contact information is below.

- When you have an appointment, be sure to set a quick pre-meeting with others attending from your organization or coalition to discuss what you want to achieve and to plan your roles.
- Be sure to take some materials to the legislator to illustrate or amplify your points, but do not overwhelm them with paper. Similarly, avoid using too many statistics. An overreliance on numbers can kill a meeting.

- Legislators and their staff have an average of eight meetings each day. To stand out, send a one pager about your local association or issue fact sheet the day before the meeting so information can be added to their briefing book.
- If you wind up meeting with staff even though you had an appointment with the legislator, don't worry. Staff members are very important decision makers, and you can also get another shot at a future meeting with the legislator.

Key points for the meeting itself:

- Be on time, if not a few minutes early.
- State your issue(s) succinctly, outlining your concerns, and spending very few minutes on the basic facts of your organization's history and mission.
- Don't do all the talking—listen, and take notes, too. Try to explore what the legislator's views and priorities are and make note of interesting personal details that may come up, like friends you may have in common.
- When the legislator asks questions, provide direct answers whenever possible. If you don't know the answer, admit it and say you'll find out and get back to them.
- Ask the legislator how, and with whom, you should follow up in the future. Sometimes, the commitments made, or views expressed by the legislator don't get back to the staffer who handles the issue. If there a staff member in the meeting, ask for their business card at the end of the meeting.
- **Always have a specific requested action/ask** (even if it's just for continued dialogue), but don't be discouraged if legislators decline to take a solid position or make commitments.

Practice Your Story - "What" vs. "What and Why"

WHAT: The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) supports 64 YWCAs in 28 states as part of its impact in helping 1.3 million domestic violence victims and their children each year.

WHAT AND WHY: The FVPSA program not only helps 1.3 million domestic violence victims each year with emergency and safety services, it also addresses the childcare, housing, community support, transportation, and other barriers that survivors face in achieving long-term independence and safety.

Let me tell you about someone helped by this funding. After ten years of escalating abuse, Sally found her way to the safety of YWCA....

Please continue to fund and reauthorize FVPSA so we can continue to improve the safety of victims like Sally and connect them to services to help them escape the abuse.

After the Meeting:

- Send a thank-you e-mail to the legislator and/or their staffer, restating the main points of the meeting. Send any information requested in the meeting. Make note of any commitments that were made to you.

Sample thank you email (*Add in any points from the meeting that may make the message stand out, make sure to follow up on any questions asked in the meeting that you wanted to confirm, or send any additional information you promised*):

Thank you for making the time to meet with me to discuss the need to increase funding and reauthorize the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) program. For your background, I have attached the one pager that we discussed.

As a member of the YWCA network, we are the largest provider of domestic and sexual violence services in the country reaching 535,000 women, girls, and families each year. I appreciate your consideration of ABC issue/bill and do let me know if you have any questions/concerns as you review this request.

Please do consider me a resource moving forward on domestic violence and gender-based violence issues.

Thank you!

- **Send a brief note to YWCA USA.** This feedback is absolutely essential to YWCA USA's efforts to amplify all of our voices in D.C.! In the case of state legislators, send a report to any other local advocacy group with which you are working.
- As a vote approaches on the issues you discussed, be sure to send your legislator a reminder of the meeting you had, expressing your interest in their support. It helps remind them of the personal connection.
- Report the results of your meeting to your board, staff, parents, coalition partners, and others as appropriate.

HOSTING A SUCCESSFUL LEGISLATOR SITE VISIT

Inviting a legislator to tour your local YWCA or one of your offsite programs is one of the best ways to show them the impact of our mission to your community. Here are some recommendations and guidance on arranging a legislator site visit to make it a great success.

Planning and Asking for the Site Visit

- **Identify the correct legislators.** In Congress, each of your associations is represented by at least one Representative and two Senators. Even if you have employees or families that you serve from multiple Congressional districts, it is considered bad form for Members of Congress to host events outside of their district. So, if you have multiple service locations, make sure to provide the opportunity to visit a location in the area they represent.
- **Identify windows of opportunity.** Most groups will plan local events around federal recess periods, particularly around Easter, Memorial Day, July 4th, and the entire month of August. You can see the House schedule [here](#) or the Senate schedule [here](#).
 - ✓ **TIP:** It is also common to link events to public and educational awareness days/months for press hooks. Members of Congress are looking for events to tie in with these causes. For example, tying Week Without Violence this year to FVPSA's 35th anniversary can be an exciting opportunity.
- **Sending and confirming the invitation.** Their schedules fill up early, particularly around long recess periods, so the invitation should be sent at least three weeks to a month in advance of your preferred date. It is helpful if you provide a few possible dates. For a Senator, they will plan a series of events in the same part of the state when home, so your willingness to be flexible will be helpful. After emailing the invitation letter on your official letterhead to the office's scheduler, wait a day or two and then follow up to confirm it was received.
- **Share a brochure and relevant materials.** Share with the legislator's office by email material about your association, the programs you provide, and information about your impact (employment numbers, a few positive testimonials from women and families served) along with short information on the policy issue you're interested in having addressed. You can send this in advance of the visit and then give to the legislator as "take away" material from the visit.
- **Confirm with scheduler.** About 1-2 weeks before the event, check in with the scheduler to confirm the visit and who will be attending with the member and your cell phone as a contact for that day. When confirming, you can provide map/directions for parking, check on whether the legislator wants it to be open to the media, and provide any bios of the key staff/board members that the legislator will be meeting.
 - ✓ **TIP:** Be ready to be flexible if the legislator is running late.
- **Work with Communications staff.** If you and the legislator agree that at least part of the visit can be open to press, ask the scheduler to connect you with their press secretary. You'll want to do a media advisory, and for your press release, you can ask for a press quote from your legislator. Finally, the visit should be featured on your social media, tagged with the legislator, and included on your website. Consider sharing the opportunity with Board members or prominent supporters.

Sometimes the legislator will prefer a behind-the-scenes tour, and then you just can highlight the visit afterward on your social media channels, e-newsletters, blogs, and website.

- ✓ **TIP:** Remember to have clients that may be in pictures sign waiver forms.

Visit

- Legislators want to know **how your organization impacts the local community**. It always helps to have external stakeholders, such as parents, private funders, community or school partners, to join the visit even for a few minutes to speak in support of your work. Provide a clear timeline of the event and everyone's role in advance.
- Highlight the **connection between public funding (VAWA/FVPSA/Child Care/Housing, etc.) and the impact** your organization has in the local community.
- **Make the "ask."** As some point during the visit, someone (such as Board member or executive) should ask the legislator about your policy issue. YWCA USA can help work with you to identify a timely and appropriate request. Many legislators will not be experts on your work. Use the time to educate them about the families you serve, the issues you need help addressing, and that you are part of a broader, national YWCA network.

Draft Timeline of Event (30-60 minutes)

- ✓ Greet the legislator and staff with brief introductions (2-3 minutes)
- ✓ Tour of the facility should begin promptly and be ready to have someone take photos as you show your work in action supporting your families (20 minutes)
- ✓ Meet with community partners and/or staff to allow the legislator to make remarks, answer questions, and have an open interaction with your stakeholders and their constituents (30 minutes)
- ✓ Closing remarks and thank you (2-3 minutes) (If you want to present a small token of gratitude, it must be under \$50 for Ethics rules.) Don't forget to provide take away materials with your card/contact information included.
- ✓ Issue press release or photos/social media

Post-visit

- **Send a thank you letter** shortly after the visit sent to the scheduler and staffer who accompanied the legislator
- **Monitor for any press coverage** and share with the legislator's communications staff

General tips

- Plan well in advance.
- Be flexible with dates/times.
- Invite the relevant policy staffer or District Director to accompany the legislator
- Share schedule/flow of event with relevant employees, staff, board members, and the scheduler for the legislator in advance.
- Involve your key cheerleaders in the community whether it is someone who was helped by your association, a board member, or corporate sponsor so the legislator hears about your broader impact.
- Take the legislator wherever they request (sometimes they will stop to talk to employees in passing, etc.) so make everyone is aware that the legislator is visiting and is prepared to answer questions.
- Don't be discouraged if it takes more than one invitation to schedule the visit.
- Don't assume they know about your association or your policy issues.

Appendix A – Sample invitation to your Legislator

[On your letterhead with address showing you're in the district]

[Date]

The Honorable [Member of Congress name]

[Capitol Hill office address]

Washington, DC 20510

Dear [Member of Congress name]:

I would like to invite you and your staff to visit [YWCA XX] during your next district working session. Our YWCA association reaches x number of women, girls, and family members each year through xx programs. We would like to take you on a short tour of our association on [date] at [time] to discuss [issue]. If that day or time is not convenient, we would be happy to be flexible to your schedule. I have invited local members of our Board to attend. They are eager to talk to you about our programs and the women and children we serve.

I hope you will join us. A one pager on our work is attached for your reference. I will contact your office within the next two weeks to follow up, and I hope to see you on [date]. If you have any questions in the meantime, I can be contacted at [phone] or [email]. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this site visit.

Sincerely,

[Your name, title, organization]

[Phone and email]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2019

BACKGROUND

- Gender-based violence (domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence) occurs across all races, ages, classes, and ethnic backgrounds, but at disparate rates and with **disproportionate impacts for women of color and other marginalized communities.**
 - **1 in 3 women will experience domestic violence**, and more than 3 women are murdered by their partners each day.ⁱ
 - **1 in 5 women has been raped** in their lifetime.ⁱⁱ
 - **1 in 6 (19.3 million) women has been stalked by an intimate partner** during their lifetime to the point that they felt very fearful or believed that they would be harmed or killed.ⁱⁱⁱ
 - 54% of multi-racial women, 46% of American Indian / Alaska Native women, 43% of Black women, 37% of Latinas, 36% of White women, and 20% of Asian or Pacific Islander women have been the victim of intimate partner violence.^{iv}
- Between 21 and 60% of **survivors of intimate partner violence lose their jobs** for reasons related to their abuse.^v
- Approximately **50% of women who are homeless report that intimate partner violence was the immediate cause of their homelessness**, and over 92% of homeless mothers have experienced severe physical and/or sexual abuse during their lifetime.^{vi}
- Negative physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health issues have been linked to gender-based violence. Survivors are also at a higher risk for developing addictions to tobacco, alcohol, or drugs.^{vii}

WHAT THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2019 (VAWA) DOES

- **Enhances judicial and law enforcement tools**, through reauthorization of the STOP grants and expansion of permissible use of the grants;
- **Improves services for victims** of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking;
- **Provides services, protection, and justice for young victims of violence;**
- **Reauthorizes and updates the SMART Prevention Program** to reduce dating violence, help children exposed to violence, and engage men in preventing violence;
- **Expands grants under the Public Health Service Act** to support implementation of training programs to improve the capacity of early childhood programs to address domestic violence,

dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking among the families they serve;

- **Preserves and expands housing protections for survivors;**
- **Provides economic security assistance for survivors** by reauthorizing the National Resource Center on Workplace Responses, protecting employees from being fired because they are survivors of sexual assault or domestic violence, and protecting survivors' eligibility to receive Unemployment Insurance;
- **Helps prevent intimate partner homicides;** and
- **Helps protect Native American women**, by including provisions to improve the response to missing and murdered Native American women, improving tribal access to federal crime information databases, and reaffirming tribal criminal jurisdiction over non-Indian perpetrators of violence and assault.

PLEASE SUPPORT REAUTHORIZATION OF THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) has been instrumental in preventing and responding to gender-based violence. Since its initial authorization in 1994, and as a result of improvements established during the 2000, 2005, and 2013 reauthorization processes, VAWA has:

- Directly addressed child care, affordable housing, community support, transportation, and other barriers that survivors of gender-based violence face in accessing safety and resources.
- Ensured that survivors of gender-based violence from underserved communities have gained access to the same life-saving and life-changing assistance and resources as other survivors.
- Significantly improved criminal justice and civil court responses to gender-based violence, which has led to an increase in reporting and criminal justice involvement by survivors and an increase in survivors seeking protective orders.
- Greatly strengthened federal-state partnerships to most effectively and efficiently combat gender-based violence, including provision of training and technical assistance, while giving states and jurisdictions the flexibility to respond to their own unique needs.

Please support survivors of gender-based violence by supporting the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2019 (H.R.1585)

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ⁱ Black, M.C. et al (2011). “The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.” Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf.

ⁱⁱ Id.

ⁱⁱⁱ Id.

^{iv} Id.

^v Emily F. Rothman et al. (2007). “How employment helps female victims of intimate partner violence: A qualitative study.” Journal of Occupational Health Psychology. 12(2). Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1076-8998.12.2.136>.

^{vi} Pressing Issues Facing Families Who Are Homeless. (2013). American Institutes for Research. Retrieved from <http://online.fliphtml5.com/xsgw/iqjt/>.

^{vii} Global and Regional Estimate of Violence Against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-Partner Sexual Violence (2013). World Health Organization. Retrieved from http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241564625_eng.pdf?ua=1.

THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT (VAWA) YWCA IMPACT AND SUCCESS STORIES

OVERVIEW

- **YWCA USA reaches 2.3 million women, girls and their families** through more than 200 local associations in 45 states and the District of Columbia. They provide critical programs, including domestic and sexual violence services, through 12,500 staff members and 52,000 volunteers.
- **Every year YWCAs provide more than 535,000 women with safety services**, which include domestic violence and sexual assault programs and services such as emergency shelter, transitional housing, crisis hotlines, counseling, court assistance, and other community and safety programs.
- Since the last reauthorization of VAWA in 2013, at least **56 YWCAs in 29 states have received more than \$30 million in VAWA funding** through DOJ's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW). YWCAs effectively use VAWA funding together with local, state, and private funding from local foundations, private donations, and state agencies to prevent and respond to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.
- YWCA is the **largest network of domestic and sexual violence service providers in the country**.

VAWA FUNDING STREAMS

The following VAWA programs provide significant support to YWCAs as they work in communities across the country to meet the needs of survivors. The YWCA programs and success stories highlighted are representative of the difference VAWA funding has made since it was last reauthorized in 2013.

Transitional Housing Assistance Grants

- **26 YWCAs in 19 states have received \$ \$12,448,518.**
- New York: A young woman in **YWCA Mohawk Valley's** crisis domestic violence shelter was referred to their Safe Horizon's transitional housing program, a residential program for 16-to-21-year-old runaways and homeless girls, due to violence perpetrated by her mother's boyfriend. In the program, this young lady had a determination to complete school and attend college. She is now almost done with college and is excelling in life.
- Oregon: **YWCA Greater Portland's [Yolanda Project](#)** is a unique, ongoing program that diverts pressure on the Portland region's emergency shelter system by working with survivors of domestic violence at risk of becoming homeless to obtain safe, stable housing for themselves and their families.

STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program

- 22 YWCAs in 16 states have received \$1,374,621.
- Washington State: A client of YWCA Kitsap County was able to make use of the local association's comprehensive wraparound services funded through STOP. This included legal advocacy to get a domestic violence protection order, help with navigating the Dependency Court process to regain custody of her son after domestic violence and drug use, and use of their support groups. The housing assistance cut across the continuum. She stayed at a YWCA shelter while visiting her infant daughter in the hospital and then made use of YWCA's partnership with the local housing authority. As a result, the client received a Project Based Voucher. The result of YWCA wraparound services is that the client has permanent housing, both of her children are home with her, her CPS case is closed, she is away from her abuser, and she is going on two years of clean/sober living.

Sexual Assault Services Formula Grant Program

- 9 YWCAs in 8 states have received \$610,420.¹
- Virginia: Headquartered in Lynchburg, YWCA Central Virginia provides free crisis intervention, support, advocacy, and information to approximately 750 survivors of sexual assault and abuse each year.
- Pennsylvania: A victim advocate from YWCA York responded to a hospital call for a possible case of child sexual abuse of a ten-year-old girl. A family friend had approached the girl at a relative's house and attempted to touch her and remove her clothing. The girl revealed that she had shouted, "No! Stop!" before immediately leaving the room to seek a trusted adult. When our advocate told the girl she was proud of what she had done and asked, "Where did you learn how to do this?", the young girl said, "From you. You came to my class and taught me that lesson." The girl's family was given information about free counseling through the Victim Assistance Center and free legal services.

Improving the Criminal Justice Response to Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking Program (also known as Grants to Encourage Arrest and Enforcement of Protection Orders Program)

- 7 YWCAs in 6 states have received \$2,636,570.
- Utah: YWCA Utah provides an array of programs and services for survivors, including its [Family Justice Center](#), shelters, and support services. After ten years of escalating abuse, Candace found her way to the safety of YWCA Utah's Women in Jeopardy shelter. She had just suffered an especially violent incident of physical abuse, perpetrated in front of their children. She was able to bring only one of her two children with her as her husband was keeping the other from her. With the welfare of her children and her pregnancy foremost in her mind, she summoned the strength to

actively take advantage of all the resources YWCA could offer. With the guidance and assistance of her YWCA case manager and advocates, she:

- Pursued free legal advocacy, was reunited with the child her husband had been withholding, and began the process of obtaining a divorce and full custody of all the children.
- Applied for DWS assistance to obtain critical medical care for her high-risk pregnancy.
- Enrolled herself and her children in therapy to help them recover from the trauma and emotional harm of the abuse they had suffered.
- Ensured that her oldest child received academic support and enriching experiences through the YWCA's after-school program.
- Maintained her full-time employment with the support of a safe and stable living environment and the YWCA's free drop-in child care.
- Applied and was approved for Section 8 housing and Rapid Re-Housing program assistance and moved her family to an affordable new apartment.

Rural Assistance Program

- **6 YWCAs in 6 states have received \$4,569,650.**
- Hawaii: At **YWCA Kauai County**, a young mother of two young girls (aged 5 and 11) called the crisis line crying after learning from her youngest daughter that she had been sexually molested by her father. Crisis counselors provided services and supported her as she made a police report and with the children being interviewed. All three family members received therapeutic services from experienced YWCA therapists.

Legal Assistance for Victims Grant Program

- **4 YWCAs in 3 states have received \$2,308,589.**
- Washington State: The [Sexual Violence Law Center](#) at **YWCA Seattle|King County|Snohomish** has three staff attorneys and a director who provide holistic, trauma-informed legal assistance to victims of sexual violence in a wide variety of legal matters, including protection orders, immigration, employment, public benefits, Title IX, housing, and crime victim rights, and provide technical assistance and trainings to advocates, attorneys, and judges working with victims of sexual violence.

Consolidated Grant Program to Address Youth and Children Experiencing Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault and Engage Men and Boys as Allies

- **3 YWCAs in 2 states have received \$2,637,470.**
- Tennessee: **YWCA Knoxville's GameChangers** is the only gender-based violence prevention program for middle-school boys in East Tennessee. It uses a group mentoring structure to teach

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middle school boys about domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, and about how they can help prevent violence against women and girls.

- Tennessee: YWCA Nashville's [AMEND Together](#) seeks to end the epidemic of violence against women and girls by empowering young men and boys to become the catalyst for cultural change.
-

ⁱ YWCA North Central Indiana is listed as receiving funds from the Indiana Dept of Education and Indiana Criminal Justice Institute. The Criminal Justice Institute receives funding from both SASP and STOP. YWCA North Central Indiana is listed as having received \$408,028.

THE FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACT (FVPSA) (S.2259)

BACKGROUND

- Domestic violence occurs across all races, ages, classes, and ethnic backgrounds, but at disparate rates and with **disproportionate impacts for women of color and other marginalized communities.**
 - **1 in 3 women will experience domestic violence**, and more than 3 women are murdered by their partners each day.ⁱ
 - **Nearly 30% of women in the U.S.** have experienced rape, physical violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner and reported experiencing being fearful or concerned for their safety or having PTSD symptoms or injuries; contacting a crisis hotline; needing health care, housing services, victim's advocate services, or legal services; missing at least one day of work; or other impacts as a result.ⁱⁱ
 - 54% of multi-racial women, 46% of American Indian / Alaska Native women, 43% of Black women, 37% of Latinas, 36% of White women and 20% percent of Asian or Pacific Islander women have been the victim of intimate partner violence.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Between 21 and 60% of **survivors of intimate partner violence lose their jobs** for reasons related to their abuse.^{iv}
- Approximately **50% of women who are homeless report that intimate partner violence was the immediate cause of their homelessness**, and over 92% of homeless mothers have experienced severe physical and/or sexual abuse during their lifetime.^v
- Approximately **15.5 million children are exposed to domestic violence each year**, and nearly half of the residents in domestic violence shelters supported by FVPSA are children.^{vi}

WHAT THE FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND SERVICES ACT (FVPSA) DOES

FVPSA has been instrumental in preventing and responding to gender-based violence. Since its initial authorization in 1984, FVPSA has:

- Created the first and only federal funding stream dedicated to supporting community-based violence programs and shelters, directly addressing the housing, child care, community support, transportation, and other barriers survivors face in gaining access to safety and resources.
- Significantly improved domestic violence prevention efforts and increased public awareness about the prevalence of domestic violence, dating violence, and family violence.
- Ensured that survivors of gender-based violence from underserved communities have gained access to the same life-saving and life-changing assistance and resources as other survivors.
- Developed trauma-informed best practices for children and youth exposed to domestic violence.

THE FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2019 WOULD:

- **Continue support to prevent and respond to domestic and dating violence.**
- **Meaningfully invest in prevention** by bringing evidence-informed, community-based prevention initiatives to more communities across the country.
- **Create a new grant program for underserved populations**, including youth, disabled, immigrants, and other marginalized populations.
- **Recognize the diverse needs of survivors** by strengthening and creating programs to address culturally-specific needs of survivors in states, territories and Tribes.
- **Strengthen the capacity for Indian Tribes to respond to domestic violence** in their communities.
- **Update funding authorization level by over 40%** to better reflect actual need for services and support on the ground in states, local communities, territories, and Tribes.
- **Enhance access to the services provided by the National Domestic Violence Hotline** for underrepresented populations including American Indian, Alaskan Native, and deaf survivors.
- **Update program and service definitions** to ensure all survivors have access to services and to increase consistency in program guidance across the field.

**Please support survivors of gender-based violence by supporting the
Family Violence Prevention and Services Improvement Act of 2019 (S.2559)**

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ⁱ Black, M.C. et al. (2011). "The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention." Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf.

ⁱⁱ Id.

ⁱⁱⁱ Id.

^{iv} Emily F. Rothman et al. (2007). "How employment helps female victims of intimate partner violence: A qualitative study." Journal of Occupational Health Psychology. 12(2). Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1076-8998.12.2.136>.

^v Pressing Issues Facing Families Who Are Homeless. (2013). American Institutes for Research. Retrieved from <http://online.fliphtml5.com/xsgw/iqjt/>.

^{vi} Family and Youth Services Bureau. (May 3, 2012). "Expanding Services for Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence Fact Sheet." Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/resource/expanding-services-fs>.

THE FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND SERVICES ACT (FVPSA) YWCA IMPACT AND SUCCESS STORIES

OVERVIEW

- **YWCA USA reaches 2.3 million women, girls, and their families** through more than 200 local associations in 45 states and the District of Columbia. They provide critical programs, including domestic and sexual violence services, through 12,500 staff members and 52,000 volunteers.
- **Every year YWCAs provide more than 535,000 women with safety services**, which include domestic violence programs and services such as emergency shelter, transitional housing, crisis hotlines, counseling, court assistance, and other community and safety programs.
- Since 2014, **64 YWCAs in 28 states have received \$14.1 million in FVPSA funding** through the HHS' Family Violence Prevention and Services Program. YWCAs effectively use FVPSA funding together with local, state, and private funding from local foundations, private donations, and state agencies to prevent and respond to family, domestic, and dating violence.
- YWCA is the **largest network of domestic and sexual violence service providers in the country.**

FVPSA-SUPPORTED PROGRAMS

"You have given me security. That is something I haven't had much of in my life. My entire life has been full of tears and confusion. Every scar I carry, I wear as a badge. It gives me something to look at and tells me I can get through whatever comes my way. It is my strength! Every ounce of power and energy I gave to my husband I am now taking it all back! I can't say thank you enough for the gifts you have given me. Don't ever think you don't make a difference in the lives of people that walk through your doors each day!"

~Survivor Statement from YWCA Pierce County, WA

The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) has been instrumental in preventing and responding to gender-based violence. Since its initial authorization in 1984 and subsequent reauthorizations, FVPSA has created the first and only federal funding stream dedicated to supporting domestic violence programs and shelters, thereby directly addressing the child care, housing, community support, transportation, and other barriers that survivors of gender-based violence face in accessing safety and resources.

FVPSA funds have provided significant support to YWCAs as they work in communities across the country to meet the needs of survivors. The YWCA programs and success stories highlighted are representative of the difference FVPSA funding has made since 2014.

Emergency shelter

- **58 YWCAs in 23 states have received \$11,912,139.**
 - Oklahoma: **YWCA Oklahoma's** Thelma Gaylord Emergency Shelter is the only certified emergency shelter for domestic violence victims in Oklahoma County. The shelter offers the capacity to house nearly 120 women and children, and provides free, comprehensive services such as counseling, medical treatment and exams, and economic empowerment programs.
 - Washington: At 14, "Inez" was the only survivor of a fire that killed her entire family. Taken in by relatives, she was raped by her uncle at age 15 as "payment for her care." She gave birth to a son, Manuel, who was never allowed to call her "mother." At 16, she met Tomas who promised her and Manuel a life of love and security — but in reality, "security" meant a locked closet where she and Manuel were routinely starved and sexually assaulted. When her second son Miguel was born, Inez decided that she had to get away before he was victimized, too. Inez learned of the YWCA from women she worked with in the orchards. A co-worker called the YWCA and helped Inez and her children go to the **YWCA Walla Walla** shelter. She lived there for two years while she gained her U Visa and rebuilt her life, with the support of YWCA advocates, who helped her find services for her children. Inez now has her green card and a home of her own. Her boys are thriving in school and preschool.

Crisis hotlines

- **56 YWCAs in 22 states have received \$12,711,381.**
 - Massachusetts: **YWCA Central Massachusetts's** [YWCAHelp](#) is a daily chatline service, which provides emotional support, domestic violence advocacy, referrals to community resources, safety planning, and crisis intervention. The bilingual chatline is answered by trained advocates who offer thoughtful attention.

- Montana: “Allison” called YWCA Missoula’s 24-hour Crisis Line on a Friday from a neighbor's phone in a remote area of Montana after her partner had locked her out of the house with her infant child still inside. She spoke with the advocate for almost an hour. During that time, she shared that they moved to Montana from out of state only weeks before. The threats and intimidation had begun to escalate at the beginning of her pregnancy and had culminated with threats to her and her child that morning.

The advocate discussed safety planning steps with Allison and supported her through the process of calling law enforcement. Later, the neighbor called to thank us. She said Allison's partner had been arrested and that she was driving Allison and her child to the YWCA office. While she was at the shelter, Allison reconnected with family and talked to them about coming home. We provided her with a voucher for the YWCA Secret Seconds Thrift Store, and she was excited to have clothes for her and her baby. She called her former boss and he offered to rehire her. We assisted her with contacting the Crime Victim Advocate closest to where her family lived, and she made an appointment to meet with them to talk about options and a parenting plan. After a couple of weeks, she felt stronger and she was ready to leave. We purchased a bus ticket for her and an advocate transported her to the bus depot to move back with her family.

Case management

- **56 YWCAs in 22 states have received \$11,967,504.**
- Indiana: YWCA Northeast Indiana’s [Steps to Success](#) is a community-based case management program that provides long-term support to individuals or families that have survived domestic violence. Case managers are available to assist survivors and their families as they make decisions about their future for a period of two years. The program’s goal is to provide survivors with help and support with goal-setting, which allows them to become economically, emotionally, and physically healthy. Steps to Success is about restarting life after abuse. Information provided may include, but is not limited to:
 - Personal safety plan
 - Effects of domestic violence on victims and children
 - Housing information
 - Life skills training (employment, education, budgeting, parenting, etc.)
 - Developing support systems
 - Coordination of services with other agencies
- Utah: After ten years of escalating abuse, Candace found her way to the safety of YWCA Utah’s Women in Jeopardy shelter. She had just suffered an especially violent incident of

physical abuse, conducted in front of their children. She was able to bring only one of her two children with her as her husband was keeping the other from her. With the welfare of her children and her pregnancy foremost in her mind, she summoned the strength to actively take advantage of all the resources the YWCA could offer. With the guidance and assistance of her YWCA case manager and advocates, she:

- Pursued free legal advocacy, was reunited with the child her husband had been withholding, and began the process of obtaining a divorce and full custody of all the children.
- Applied for Department of Workforce assistance to obtain critically important medical care for her high-risk pregnancy.
- Enrolled herself and her children in therapy to help them recover from the trauma and emotional harm of the abuse they had suffered.
- Ensured that her oldest child received academic support and enriching experiences through the YWCA's after-school program.
- Maintained her full-time employment with the support of a safe and stable living environment and the YWCA's free drop-in child care.
- Applied and was approved for Section 8 housing and Rapid Re-Housing program assistance and moved her family to an affordable new apartment.

Counseling

- **48 YWCAs in 20 states have received \$3,039,818.**
 - Virginia: "Helen," an adult with intellectual disabilities, was living with her mother and her mother's boyfriend. She contacted **YWCA South Hampton Roads'** 24-hour hotline after being sexually assaulted by her mother's boyfriend in the middle of the night. YWCA arranged for immediate emergency shelter for Helen and her young daughter because she did not feel safe in her mother's home. While in shelter, Helen and her daughter received individual counseling services in order to cope with the trauma of sexual assault and relocation. The YWCA's Housing Specialist advocated on Helen's behalf to the Department of Social Services. As a result, Helen was able to obtain permanent supportive housing. As Helen and her daughter prepared to move into their own place, Helen expressed appreciation for the support that she received. She also expressed excitement and gratitude for the YWCA's role in her life.

Hospital/Medical Accompaniment

- **38 YWCAs in 19 states have received \$8,207,586.**

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- Maryland: YWCA Ann Annapolis and Anne Arundel County maintains a relationship with Baltimore Washington Medical Center (BWMC) and is contacted in the event that a victim of sexual assault or domestic violence would like advocacy, including being present during the Sexual Assault Forensics Exam (SAFE). Highly trained advocates are available through the YWCA to assist victims through the process and provide clothing, referrals, and other resources necessary to assist in recover.

YWCA.ORG

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