Position Statement on Domestic Violence Against Women

This statement was written by the Committee on Women of the Council on National Affairs. It was approved by the Assembly in November 1993 and by the Board of Trustees in December 1993.

Domestic violence against women is an extensive and pervasive problem in our society. Such violence includes physical harm, destruction of property, and marital rape. Estimates are that one out of eight women is a victim of such abuse. In the United States this means that up to 4 million women per year suffer from such assaults. Up to one-third of all women will be assaulted by a partner or ex-partner in their lifetimes. Women are more likely to be assaulted, raped, or killed by their partners or ex-partners than by any stranger. Victims are found in all age, ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, sexual orientation, and educational groups. There is a high correlation between substance abuse and the occurrence of such violence.

Domestic violence against women has serious consequences. It is estimated that 35% of women who visit hospital emergency departments are there for symptoms of ongoing abuse. Forty-five percent of the women killed in the United States die at the hands of husbands or boyfriends. Domestic violence also leads to serious psychological consequences, including anxiety, depression, suicide, traumatic stress disorder, and substance abuse. In addition, domestic violence against women has a serious impact on children, who are more likely to have social and educational problems. Boys who grow up in households where women are battered are more likely to become abusers themselves, whereas girls are more likely to end up in abusive relationships.

Because the American Psychiatric Association (APA) recognizes the major psychological sequelae of domestic violence against women, APA strongly advocates prevention and better detection of domestic violence against women, the improved treatment of victims, offenders, and children, and continued research into the causes, consequences, and prevention of such violence.

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