



2015 - 2016 Legislative Agenda

End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin is the leading voice
for victims of domestic abuse in Wisconsin

How We End Abuse

End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin (End Abuse), founded in 1978, is the statewide voice for victims of domestic violence. We educate shelter and program volunteers and advocates, law enforcement, legislators, and community members to provide safety and support to survivors. We strive to shift Wisconsin from the attitudes and beliefs that cause domestic violence to values of mutual respect and equality, and we partner with communities in the effort to prevent and end domestic abuse. End Abuse is committed to legislative efforts which are proactive and focused on the women, children and men who have been victims of domestic violence. End Abuse is guided by core principles:

- Promoting the social change necessary to end domestic violence
- Respecting the individual autonomy of survivors
- Providing safety and justice for victims
- Ensuring accountability for perpetrators



In determining what legislative efforts to support, End Abuse consults regularly with domestic violence programs, survivors of domestic violence, coordinated community response teams, and other professionals who work to address domestic violence.

Our Legislative Agenda is a work in progress. We encourage legislators, local domestic violence programs, survivors and other professionals to contact us with potential legislative initiatives throughout the session.

Transformative Investments:

Give Safety to Domestic Violence Victims and their Children

When help is available to victims and their children, we can save lives and money. Working with an advocate increases the chances domestic violence will end for that victim by 150%. Every dollar invested in victim services, saves approximately \$9.25 in property losses, health care expenses, police response, lost productivity and other costs. For instance, it is estimated that in the last two years alone Wisconsin domestic violence victim service providers prevented at least 190,000 days of lost productivity.

Over the last several years, we have seen a marked increase in attention to the issue of domestic violence. Yet, the availability of services to victims has failed to grow along with the public's consciousness. Every day in Wisconsin, approximately 250 requests for help from victims of domestic violence go unmet because shelters and services providers don't have the staff or capacity. A recent analysis from End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin and the Governor's Council on Domestic Abuse found that local domestic violence victim service providers in Wisconsin are underfunded by about \$19.7 million dollars annually.

714,000 WI women have been victims of domestic violence in their lifetimes.

Every day, about 250 requests for help go unmet because of a lack of resources

Working with an advocate increases the chances violence will end by 150%.

Go to www.widvplan.com to learn more.

End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin believes the state can and should contribute to address the unmet need. Currently, private contributions make up roughly half of all the investments in Wisconsin domestic violence victim services. This fact is a testament to Wisconsinites' belief in the value of helping victims. End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin sets a goal at 9.7 million dollars of additional state funding (annual) to give safety and support to victims and their children in all of the state's 72 counties and 11 tribes.

Break the Cycle:

Prevent Domestic Violence in Our Next Generation

Just as we must support and protect current adult victims, we should plant the seeds to reduce and eliminate the potential for abusive behavior among young people. School-based curricula and practices have a documented track record of creating safety for youth. Because patterns of behavior start early in life and last into adulthood, these focused initiatives for teens hold the potential for significant reductions of domestic violence over the long term.

Currently, one in three teens is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner. This rate is higher than all other forms of youth violence. Over half of teens (57%) know someone who has been physically, sexually, or verbally abusive in a dating relationship. In Wisconsin, over 15% of teens have been subjected to dating violence in the previous year.

These high rates demonstrate that we must give students the knowledge, tools and support from adults they need to recognize and avoid abusive relationships. Time and attention that we give to young people today will improve their safety immediately and will help foster a safer future for us all as they move into adulthood. End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin supports legislation to encourage the adoption of violence prevention education and policies in Wisconsin's schools.

Race for Equality: End Racial Disparity in Wisconsin

Almost every national study on racial disparities confirms what advocates and survivors of color in Wisconsin already know: racial disparities in our state are beyond severe and are among the worst of any state in the country. For example, a 2014 study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Race for Results: Building a Path to Opportunity for All Children*, found that Wisconsin is last in the nation for wellbeing of African American children.

This staggering degree of racial inequality seriously compromises the effectiveness of domestic violence interventions. Victims living in communities decimated by high unemployment and economic insecurity have even more difficult challenges when attempting to escape abuse and sustain healthy families. Racial disparities also undermine attempts to improve the law enforcement response to domestic abuse. While we still have much work to do for all victims, badges and courts will never be sources of safety for all when African Americans and other communities of color see a criminal justice system marked by inequality and disparate treatment. Wisconsin incarcerates African American men at a rate higher than any other state and nearly twice the national average. Eliminating racial disparities in Wisconsin's criminal justice systems is as necessary a step to providing justice to victims as any other policy priority.

In this legislative session, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin will look to support proposals that aim to address racial disparities, and we will raise concerns when initiatives would tend to exacerbate the problem. We seek to be particularly aware of unintended consequences of criminal justice interventions, especially those that are likely to produce racially disparate impacts.

Close the Gaps:

Improve Wisconsin's Legal Response to Domestic Violence

Historically, Wisconsin has been a leader throughout the country in crafting legislation that promotes the rights and safety of victims; however, there are a number of areas in which we have fallen behind and that remain persistent sources of unnecessary risk for victims and their children.

For example, restraining orders are often practically unavailable for individuals who are being abused and harassed by perpetrators who live out of state or for victims who flee to Wisconsin to escape abuse that occurred elsewhere. With the advance of technology, victims are now exposed to abusive behavior through phone calls, text messages, email and social media. Additionally, Wisconsin law does not provide clear authority for courts to protect victims' pets and animals when victims separate from abusers. Domestic violence victims are sometimes reluctant to leave because abusers often threaten or harm a beloved pet or animal as a way to continue to retaliate against and control the victim. End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin supports narrowly crafted modifications to Wisconsin's restraining order statutes to address these victim-safety issues.

In addition, gaps in the family law system disrupt our entire state's response to domestic violence. The criminal justice system devotes significant resources to enforcing no-contact provisions, prosecuting, supervising and incarcerating offenders. But when victims have children in common with offenders, the legal system often puts victims and children right back into harm's way through custody and placement orders. Wisconsin has laws on the books that require courts to account for victims' safety and the safety of their children. However, these laws are underused, in part because of court procedures and practices. End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin supports legislation to better protect victims and their children in family court.