Summary:
Over 10 million people experience abuse every year in the United States. Domestic and sexual violence affect our society at an epidemic level. An estimated 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have experienced physical violence by a partner, and an estimated 1 in 6 women and 1 in 33 men have experienced sexual violence. Domestic and sexual violence include a variety of abusive behaviors, including physical abuse, sexual assault, and stalking. Other forms of abuse and domestic violence include elder abuse and child abuse.

Domestic and sexual violence can occur in any type of relationship, including between spouses, dating partners, parents and children, other family members, or caregivers and patients. Unfortunately, domestic and sexual violence occur in all communities and impact people of all ages, genders, and sexual orientations.

Domestic and sexual violence remain seriously underreported crimes. Survivors continue to face obstacles of shame, stigma, harassment, and disbelief or denial. Police and criminal justice responses to reported crimes are too often inadequate or harmful.

People ages 12-34 are at the highest risk of sexual violence, and young women are especially vulnerable. Women ages 18-34 experience the highest rates of domestic violence. Women ages 16-19 are 4 times more likely (than the general population) to experience sexual violence, and female college students ages 18-24 are 3 times more likely. A weapon is used in 19% of domestic violence incidents. Firearms are a particular risk factor for domestic violence fatality: the
presence of a gun in an abusive relationship raises the risk of homicide for a female victim by 500%. Domestic violence has serious impacts on a victim’s physical and mental health, with only 34% receiving medical care for abuse-related injuries. Victims are also at increased risk of depression and suicidal behavior.

Fifty-five percent of sexual assaults occur in or near the victim’s home and 3 out of 4 perpetrators are known to the victim, most commonly a friend, acquaintance, or intimate partner. Rape and sexual assault have serious impacts on victim’s physical health, including the risk of STIs and pregnancy, as well as mental health. Ninety-four percent of victims experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and over one-third experience suicidal thoughts.

In 1994, the passage of the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) signaled a major shift in governmental awareness and response to domestic and sexual violence. VAWA provides funding to states to support victim services, law enforcement, and other response and prevention efforts. VAWA funds support the National Domestic Violence Hotline, as well as local domestic and sexual violence coalitions, shelters, legal services, transitional housing, and more. Other federal programs, such as the Family Violence Prevention Services Act (FVPSA), have also been instrumental in responding to domestic and sexual violence and providing crucial services to victims and survivors.

Our Jewish values of respect for human life, safety, and dignity give us a mandate to work for the protection and advancement of human rights.
The Jewish Council for Public Affairs believes:
that we have a moral and ethical responsibility to combat domestic
and sexual violence in the U.S. and around the world. Laws,
regulations, and enforcement must be strengthened at all levels of
government to deter and combat domestic and sexual violence;
prevent future violence; support survivors of violence; and ensure
appropriate criminal justice responses.

The JCPA should:
- Lead in working with faith communities, clergy, ethnic and
  community-based organizations, health professionals, service
  providers, educators, and other stakeholders to continue
  working for the prevention of domestic and sexual violence.
- Advocate for the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women
  Act and the Family Violence Prevention Services Act.

The community relations field should:
- Advocate for the reauthorization of the Violence Against
  Women Act and the Family Violence Prevention Services Act.
- Work with the courts, law-enforcement agencies, legislatures
  and social service agencies to develop strategies to combat
domestic violence and sexual assault and support survivors.
- Work with legislators at the federal, state, and local level to
  address the dangerous intersection of firearms and domestic
  violence, both through new laws and additional funding
  necessary to improve the safety of victims and survivors.
• Work with legislators on policies that promote the economic security of victims and survivors, including affordable housing, employment and housing nondiscrimination, paid sick and safe days, paid family leave, and public benefits.

• Work with Jewish Family Services organizations to ensure that services are culturally-sensitive and address the holistic needs of victims and survivors.

• Promote age-appropriate abuse prevention education in community schools, camps, and youth groups. Comprehensive education teaches children, teens, and young adults about healthy dating relationships, sexual consent, and recognizing and responding to abuse.

• Raise awareness of the epidemic of sexual assault on college campuses, and the need for strong enforcement of Title IX to ensure equitable access to education for victims and survivors.

• Continue to organize and engage with local Jewish domestic and sexual violence coalitions to create and implement effective prevention and intervention strategies; organize and participate in interfaith work; and promote education for clergy and lay leaders in recognizing and responding to domestic and sexual violence in the Jewish community.