

Jewish Delegate Assembly of Greater Pittsburgh
Policy Statement on Gender Violence
Passed: 11/3/2014

Jewish tradition speaks to the importance of treating others with kindness, honor and respect and is clear that domestic violence is contrary to Jewish values. The Talmud speaks of this imperative directly in how men should respect their domestic partners and children. In the Talmud (B. *Yevamot* 63a; B. *Sanhedrin* 76b) the Rabbis say: “Of him who loves his wife as himself, and honors her more than himself, and brings up his sons and daughters rightly...” Shalom bayit is a fundamental value of Jewish life, so much so that "even G-d's Name is erased for its sake" and the Talmud understands that people cannot and should not live with feelings of danger and insecurity.

Gender based violence, defined as violence that is directed against a person on the basis of gender, is a serious issue in American society affecting individuals in every community. Moreover, domestic, gender and sexual based violence affects people in all racial/ethnic, socio-economic, religious, geographic, and occupational groups. Women are victims of violence more often than men. Nationally, one in three women are victims of violence by an intimate partner; one in four girls is sexually abused in childhood, one in five college-age women are sexually assaulted on campus. The U.S. Department of Justice statistics for 2013 reflect that women accounted for 85% of the victims of intimate partner violence.

The effort to address the problem of domestic, sexual and gender based violence remains a profound challenge for the organized Jewish community of Pittsburgh, as well as for our many interfaith and intergroup partners. With domestic, sexual and gender based abuse being the source of so many of the crises we face today, the Delegate Assembly stresses the importance of working toward a society that, as a whole, regards this problem as significant and unacceptable.

A Pennsylvania campaign, the **PA Says No More** campaign, is advocating a transformation of this perceived “woman’s issue” to one where men take the lead to combat gender violence. The Jewish community should get behind this campaign. There are many ways for men – as parents, coaches, educators, employers, community leaders, clergy – to model healthy, equitable relationships and advocate for the elimination of gender based violence.

The Jewish Delegate Assembly of Greater Pittsburgh:

- Recognizes that gender violence remains a serious issue in American society and within the Jewish community.
- Urges Jewish community agencies, organizations and congregations to mobilize individuals to sign the Pledge to End Gender Violence, with the broader objective to eliminate all forms of domestic, gender and sexual based violence and change public attitudes and social norms.

- Believes Pittsburgh area Jewish organizations should, like the JCC has, join the movement to end gender violence by supporting the PA Says No More Pledge to End Gender Violence¹
- Supports programs for boys and men with the goal of modeling healthy, equitable relationships to these individuals, to interrupt other men's violence and teach boys about healthy masculinity.
- Believes the Pittsburgh Jewish community should disavow silence on gender based violence by acknowledging through education, advocacy, and leadership the existence of these types of abuse that occur within our society and community and by encouraging victims and survivors to seek assistance and justice.
- Applauds the work of the Jewish Domestic Abuse Task Force to increase awareness of domestic abuse and violence in and around the Pittsburgh Jewish community and to continue to provide prevention education and advocacy through programs and events for parents, teens, educators, clergy, clinicians and the general community on the issues and impacts of abuse on spouses, partners, teens, the elderly and children at home, in school, in religious and ethnic communities and the workplace.

The Community Relations field should:

- Develop a public awareness campaign and educate the Jewish community, the general public and public officials on issues surrounding the issues related to domestic, gender and sexual based violence.
- Encourage Agency Executives and community leaders to join Standing Firm: The Business Case To End Partner Violence
- Encourage local synagogue professionals - rabbis, cantors, educators, youth leaders and lay leaders to educate themselves in the recognition and support of victims of abuse, to be sensitive to the problem, and further encourage rabbis to speak on this subject from the pulpit in order to empower victims of violence to contact the rabbi and/or seek other assistance.
- Support the Jewish Domestic Abuse Task Force and programs which educate as to the existence of the problem within the Jewish community and to advocate for the development and sustainability of counseling and support services necessary to provide safety and hope to those in our community who live in fear and whose physical, emotional and spiritual well-beings are endangered.
- Work with victim service agencies, the PA Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the PA Coalition Against Rape, Pennsylvania and Federal courts, law-enforcement agencies, legislatures and social service agencies to develop strategies to combat domestic, sexual and gender based violence and to protect all victims of abuse and work with local law enforcement and social service agencies to sensitize them to the specific needs and concerns of the Jewish community
- Participate in coalitions with other local, state, and national faith, community, humanitarian, and non-governmental organizations, and engage political and community leaders to raise

¹ The pledge encourages men to commit to end gender violence and to not use violence of any form in their relationships, speak up if another man is abusing his partner or is disrespectful or abusive to women and girls, be an ally to women who are working to end all forms of gender violence and mentor and teach young boys about how to be men in ways that don't involve degrading or abusing girls and women and lead by example.

awareness about domestic, gender and domestic based violence through education, service and advocacy.

- Encourage the incorporation of prevention initiatives and training into Delegate Assembly member organization programs, orientations, staff meetings, and empower staff to speak up about gender violence
- Encourage member organizations to use their websites, newsletters and social media to promote awareness.
- Support the continual reauthorization and increased funding of the Violence Against Women
- Support policies to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace and urge the adoption by member agencies and others of sexual harassment policies.
- Should work in cooperation with Jewish Family & Children's Service and community partners and participate in efforts which bring to light the impact of federal budget cuts on victims of abuse.
- Advocate that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania while planning and implementing public assistance programs, take into account the role that violence plays in the lives of individuals trying to move from poverty to self-sufficiency.
- Encourages university and college administrations to conduct top-to-bottom reviews of policies governing gender and sexual based misconduct and violence, and associated procedures for the investigation and resolution of complaints. Campuses should also reinforce existing and form new relationships between their institutions and campus police, local law enforcement, crisis response centers, victim advocacy organizations and delineate respective responsibilities between college and universities and local law enforcement for investigations, sharing of information and training while continuing to encourage the reporting of violence to appropriate law enforcement agencies and to university officials.