February 2024

Black History Month

STANDING FIRM celebrates the achievements and continued contributions of the Black community, recognizing their central role in U.S. history, from activism & civil rights to leadership, inventions & creativity, music, culture, cuisine, and more.

As we celebrate Black heritage, it is important to also recognize that racist societal structures, systemic racism, and racist policies have caused immeasurable harm to the Black community. The pervasive nature of systemic racism means both Black women and Black men experience domestic violence at higher rates than other communities.[1] The numbers below represent the rates of the experience of physical violence:

- 45.1% of Black women
- 40.1 % of Black men[2]

The pandemic contributed to the increase in domestic violence. It is natural to expect that as the world has reopened, cases would drop. Unfortunately, that is not the case. The effects of the pandemic and COVID 19 were experienced more intensely in Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities and therefore, domestic/intimate partner violence (IPV), linked with unique stress points and barriers these communities face, also increased.[3, 4]

Some of the barriers may be:

- A reluctance to report abuses due to a reasonable distrust of law enforcement, and societal & court systems.
- Lack of representation (language, culture) in service providers.
- Experiences of racism that prevent speaking out.
- Pressure from their community to keep family matters private.
- Black women (who experience domestic violence at high rates) are more likely to be criminalized by the system and more likely to be arrested when trying to defend themselves against an abusive partner.[5]
- Black women are disproportionately more likely to die at the hands of an abuser. According to the Violence Policy Center, "Black women were murdered by men at nearly three times the rate as White women in 2018. This represents a rate of 2.85 per 100,000 compared to 1.03 per 100,000."[6]

It's important that prevention, treatment, and intervention efforts be tailored to the special needs and circumstances of Black women. For example, programs should empower women to seek help by providing services and advocates that demonstrate an understanding of a variety of races and cultures. ***And as employers, we must create and promote a work culture that is safe, supportive, equitable, and welcoming for ALL.***

STANDING FIRM and Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh are here to help.

National Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention Month

If you are an organization that employs teens or has teen volunteers, it's critical to learn about teen dating violence as it may show up in your workplace. As we've learned, statistics show that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men in the United States experience intimate partner violence (IPV) in their lifetime. While IPV can happen at any age, studies show that it is more common in the 18- to 24-year-old age range—putting young people more at risk in their current and future relationships. 1 in 3 teens experience dating violence. For those who identify as nonbinary or LGBTQIA+, the likelihood is even greater that 1 in 2 persons will experience abuse.[7]

Dating violence is a pattern of abusive behavior used by one person in a dating relationship to exert power and control over a dating partner. Some ways this abuse may show up:

- Checking their partners phone without consent
- Frequently checking their social media accounts
- Isolating their partner from friends, family, school, work
- Ridiculing them in front of others
- Extreme jealousy
- Loud/violent outbursts or mood swings
- Possessiveness
- Physical harm
- Constantly calling, texting, messaging; needing to know every move
- Stalking
- Forcing someone to do something they don't want to do[8]

Employers need to remember that (just as with adults), teens may not have a strong support system or trusted person in whom they can seek guidance or assistance and to recognize that the normal "moody" teen may have very real issues happening in their lives. It's important to have appropriate policies and procedures in place, training to recognize the signs, a safe and supportive environment so the teen feels safe to disclose, and a list of resources available to help them take steps to safely get out of an abusive relationship.

Also, it's imperative to remember how important relationships are to young people and remember that they don't always have the skills to confront someone, to say "No", or provide appropriate consent. Being in an abusive relationship can impact their schoolwork, job, physical and mental health, and future well-being.

Healthy relationships include respect, trust, honesty, effort, communication, and compromise. Partners must respect each other's boundaries, feel free to share their feelings, and can make decisions without fear of any negative repercussions from the other.

STANDING FIRM can provide consulting, training, and resources to ensure you are ready to recognize, respond, and refer youth or adults in abusive relationships. Visit standing-firm.org to learn more.

If you or your office participated in "Wear Orange Day" on February 6th (an annual effort during this month to raise awareness about dating violence), share your photos with us at contactsf@standing-firm.org to be featured in posts throughout the month. By sharing pictures on social media, it is helping spread the message that everyone deserves a healthy relationship! It's not too late to host your own "Wear Orange Day" event!

We welcome and say “Thank You” to our new and renewing Employer Alliance Against Domestic Violence Members:

Academy Pittsburgh

Resources

Intervention, Prevention, Policy Information, Financial Guidance

https://wcspittsburgh.org/

National Domestic Violence Hotline

Advocacy | Black Women's Policy Center | United States (blackwomenspolicycenter.org)

https://justharvest.org/

https://pittsburgh.dressforsuccess.org/

https://resources.alleghenycounty.us/resource/financial-empowerment-center-fec

https://paable.gov/

National Sexual Violence Resource Center

Books

A Black Woman’s Guide to Overcoming by Shavonne J. Moore-Lobban and Robyn L. Gobin

Race, Culture, & Gender by Ava Kanyeredzi

Domestic Abuse in the Novels of African American Women, A Critical Study by Heather Duerre Humann

Shout Out, Women of Color Respond to Violence

For Teens

https://www.loveisrespect.org/get-involved/tdvam/

https://www.teendvmonth.org/resources/

https://humanoptions.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2024-TDVAM-Campaign-Toolkit-Eng_FINAL.pdf

https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/domestic-violence-organization-launches-love-like-that-campaign-to-educate-young-people-about-healthy-relationships-302045242.html

Book List

https://www.yalsa.ala.org/thehub/2016/01/25/booklist-dating-violence-consent-and-healthy-relationships-in-young-adult-fiction/

Citations

[1] Leemis R.W., Friar N., Khatiwada S., Chen M.S., Kresnow M., Smith S.G., Caslin, S., & Basile, K.C. (2022). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2016/2017 Report on Intimate Partner Violence. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs/nisvsreportonipv_2022.pdf

[2] https://assets.speakcdn.com/assets/2497/dv_in_the_black_community.pdf

[3] McKinley, C. E., Liddell, J., & Lilly, J. (2021). All work and no play: Gender roles with Indigenous women "pulling the weight" in home life. Social Service Review, 95 (2), 278-311. (Issue published June 2021). https://doi.org/10.1086/714551. PMC8321394

[4]McKinley, Catherine E., Ph.D., LMSW (2021). Published November 16, 2021. How Gender Norms Can Make Domestic Violence Worse for BIPOC. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-well-woman/202111/how-gender-norms-can-make-domestic-violence-worse-bipoc

[5] https://www.verywellmind.com/domestic-violence-varies-by-ethnicity-62648

[6] Violence Policy Center. When men murder women: An analysis of 2018 homicide data. September 2020.

7 https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/fastfact.html

[8] https://www.loveisrespect.org/dating-basics-for-healthy-relationships/warning-signs-of-abuse/