

Policy Position: Gender-Based Violence

eliminating racism
empowering women

ywca

west central michigan

What We Believe

Individuals of all ages, income levels, racial and ethnic communities, sexual orientations, gender identities, and religious affiliations may experience violence in the form of domestic or intimate partner violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and trafficking. Women and girls, particularly those with multiple marginalized identities, often face disproportionate rates of these and other forms of gender-based violence. Additionally, survivors may be met with limited supports within their communities or increased barriers to safety for themselves and their families.

Gender-based violence can have life-long and detrimental mental, physical, sexual and reproductive impacts on individuals, their children, and their families. Sometimes, such violence can even be life-threatening. Across the United States, gender-based violence incurs significant financial and societal costs for thousands of communities. With the onset of the COVID-19 and other national crises, the costs are more apparent as reports of gender-based violence, such as domestic violence, increased significantly. These happenings have also caused many women of color, particularly Black women, to experience increased violence. This is due to the disproportionate impact of the virus on communities of color, as well as the compounding effects of health and policing systems that were built in ways that discriminate and oppress them and their families.

As a part of the largest network of domestic and sexual violence service providers in the United States, the YWCA West Central Michigan is an integral part of responding and advocating for the needs of survivors every day. We also understand that the root causes of gender-based violence are deeply connected to systems of oppression, power, and privilege; systems that allow for racism and sexism to thrive. At the YWCA West Central Michigan, we are committed to working for practical, comprehensive, and equitable solutions to protect and keep survivors safe, hold perpetrators accountable, and eradicate all forms of gender-based violence in West Michigan and across the state.

What We Know

- According to the 2019 Michigan Sexual Violence Prevention Survey Report, over 1 in 3 Michiganders agree with the most popular myths about rape, including those that blame survivors and excuse violence, abuse, and harassing behaviors [1].

- 41.8% of Michigan women and 23% of Michigan men experience intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner rape, and/or intimate partner stalking in their lives [2] [3].
- Domestic and intimate partner violence impacts housing stability. More than 90% of homeless women experience severe physical or sexual abuse at some point in their lives, and 63% have been victims of domestic or sexual violence [4].
- 11.7% of adolescents across Michigan and nearly 4% of high school students in Kent County have experienced sexual violence in the past 12 months [5][6].
- In a 2015 Survey by the National Center for Transgender Equality, 10% of respondents from Michigan who were perceived to be transgender while in grades K-12 reported experiencing sexual violence while in school [7].
- In 2019, Michigan reported 364 instances of human trafficking making it the 7th highest state to experience human trafficking [8].

What We Support

At the federal, state, and local levels, the YWCA West Central Michigan seeks to educate, advocate, and urges policymakers to

- Reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).
- Reauthorize the Family Violence Prevention and Services Reauthorization Act (FVPSA).
- Fix and increase the cap on the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund.
- Ensure legal protections for survivors of gender-based violence.
- Promote job-protected safe leave to enable survivors to seek medical and legal support.
- Promote access and expansion of housing that is safe and affordable for survivors of violence.
- Create safe, equitable, and inclusive educational environments that support learning for all students, are free from sexual violence, and respect and affirm the gender identity and expression of youth and students.

*Adopted by YWCA West Central Michigan Board of Directors
in February 2021*

[1] McGirr, S., Pynnonen Hopkins, D., Fluegeman, S., & Stechschulte, A. (2019). *Michigan Sexual Violence Prevention Survey Report*. Okemos, MI: Center for Healthy Communities, MPHI.

[2] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2014). *Lifetime prevalence of rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner by state of residence—U.S. women, NISVS 2010*. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/nisvs/state_tables_74.html.

[3] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2014). *Lifetime prevalence of rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner by state of residence—U.S. men, NISVS 2010*. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/nisvs/state_tables_75.html.

[4] Browne, A. (1998). "Responding to the Needs of Low Income and Homeless Women Who are Survivors of Family Violence." *Journal of American Medical Women's Association*. 53(2): 57-64.

[5] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2019). Michigan, High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2019 [Data set]. Retrieved from <https://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Results.aspx?LID=MI>

[6] *Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth 2019-2020* (2020). In Michigan School Health Survey System: County Report Generation. Michigan Department of Education. Retrieved from mdoe.state.mi.us/schoolhealthsurveys/ExternalReports/CountyReportGeneration.aspx

[7] 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey: Michigan State Report. (2017). Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality.

[8] National Human Trafficking Hotline. (2020). What is Human Trafficking? <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/>