

# Safety Committee

## **Initiative: Increase awareness and resources to both prevent gender-based violence and to better support survivors of gender-based violence.**

Gender-based violence is an umbrella term to include domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, etc. The issue of gender-based violence affects women and girls of all walks of life.

### **Research/Justification**

We have identified three key groups in which to dedicate our current efforts: students, Hamilton County employees, domestic violence survivors.

#### **1) Prevention Among Students**

Sadly, many girls are affected by gender-based violence. 57% of teens have friends who have experienced dating violence and 33% of teens in an abusive relationship do not tell anyone.<sup>7</sup> 23% of all females report first experiencing partner violence before the age of 18.<sup>8</sup>

Gender-based violence is an issue of educational equity for girls. It impacts attendance and performance during critical education years. By reaching students of all genders at a younger age, we hope to prevent future instances of gender-based violence as well as support victims.

On October 3, 2019, we recommended to CPS' Student Achievement Committee that they expand their use of existing prevention education programs available through Women Helping Women and YWCA, specifically the Coaching Boys Into Men and Safe Dates programs. We asked the school board to identify two additional high schools to host one or both of these programs in the 2020-2021 school year, and it was added as an action item. These programs address the issues of toxic masculinity at the youth level and educate students on signs of abuse so that they can take care of themselves as well as their friends.

#### **2) Hamilton County Employees**

Protecting and accommodating victims of gender-based violence is a workplace equity issue. Unfortunately, 60% of intimate partner violence victims report losing their jobs after the incident and 25% of rape survivors report losing their jobs within one year of the assault.<sup>9</sup>

We can't equip survivors to make a change if they fear losing their jobs. Losing income could cause a woman to return to an unsafe environment. According to Futures Without Violence's "Workplaces Respond" program, survivors report economic



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<sup>7</sup> YWCA

<sup>8</sup> Center for Disease Control

<sup>9</sup> Futures Without Violence / Workplaces Respond.

insecurity as a reason for staying in an abusive relationship. And economic insecurity can factor in with all socioeconomic levels. Fear of harm to public or professional image of the survivor or the abuser. Public facing professionals may avoid safety planning that will be public record, such as calling the police, protection orders, criminal and domestic court.

The State of Ohio and the City of Cincinnati both have workplace policies to provide reasonable accommodations for victims of domestic violence who are either State or City employees. It is vital to the interests of Hamilton County that all county employees receive the support and services they need, including access to appropriate resources dedicated to gender-based violence survivors as well as to the prevention of gender-based violence.

### 3) Domestic Violence Survivors

Domestic violence is a serious crime against society with victims from all social and economic backgrounds. For example, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men experience intimate partner violence.<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately, many victims don't have the resources they need to attain medical/psychological care, safe housing, or legal support and they don't seek help because they feel deep and misplaced shame and stigma because of their abusers choices.

Within the county, there are only a few programs available to train police to recognize signs of domestic violence and dispatch support teams to provide immediate assistance to survivors through this critical transition time. These teams go to the victims, rather than requiring the victim come to them and, as such, are able to support more victims and have a bigger impact. These efforts help break the cycle of repeated violence and help reduce the domestic violence homicide rate.

There are other high domestic violence crime rate areas in Hamilton County that are not currently served by these onsite domestic violence victims advocates so we are asking the county to explore funding services to:

- 1) Ensure that victims' advocates are available 24-7 to be dispatched to scenes of domestic violence at the request of local law enforcement
- 2) Identify funding for Hamilton County municipalities with higher rates of domestic violence that are not currently served by existing domestic violence emergency response teams



<sup>10</sup> Center for Disease Control

## Recommendations

- Support the expansion of programs available to train police to recognize signs of domestic violence and dispatch support teams to provide immediate assistance to survivors through this critical transition time.
- Begin work to encourage all county employers to give appropriate and reasonable accommodations employees who are victims of gender-based violence and provide workplace training to prevent gender-based violence and promote a safe work environment.
- The County Commission should encourage all schools within Hamilton County to expand gender-based violence prevention efforts.
- Enact policies and practices that support survivors of gender-based violence which include: Support a comprehensive workplace training and education program for all Hamilton County employees to prevent gender-based violence and promote a safe work environment; Adopt policies and procedures that give appropriate and reasonable accommodations to all Hamilton County employees who are victims of gender-based violence; Provide immediate assistance and support to Hamilton County employees who are victims of gender-based violence, such as information and referrals to resources.
- Explore funding services to: 1) Ensure that victims' advocates are available 24-7 to be dispatched to scenes of domestic violence at the request of local law enforcement 2) Identify funding for Hamilton County municipalities with higher rates of domestic violence that are not currently served by existing domestic violence emergency response teams.

Respectfully Submitted,

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