

AWS Statement on Intimate Partner Violence

The Association of Women Surgeons (AWS) has a zero tolerance policy for any form of intimate partner violence (IPV). AWS recognizes IPV within the context of family violence, which also includes child and elder abuse and neglect. Violence can be physical, emotional, and/or sexual, and can encompass behaviors such as hitting, punching, harassment, stalking, withholding of financial support, isolation, and sexual assault, among other things.

Violence between intimate partners is a major cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide. Every year, more than 10 million women and men are physically abused by their partners; on average, 20 per minute and over 1000 women are murdered by their intimate partners every year in the United States. And, while IPV, like most violence, disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, it is found in all ethnic groups, religions, socioeconomic strata, and both sexual minority and majority populations.

One in three women and one in seven men will suffer IPV in their lifetime. With such a high prevalence, universal screening is practical, and has been found to be acceptable to survey respondents in health care settings. Physical and sexual abuse are crimes in all 50 states, and most states criminalize financial abuse, stalking, and harassment to at least some degree. Knowledge of local resources, and partnerships with law enforcement and community-based organizations can be extremely helpful. AWS supports restricting access to firearms for abusers to decrease the likelihood of intimate partner homicide in abusive relationships.

The mission of the Association of Women Surgeons is to inspire, encourage and enable women surgeons to realize their professional and personal goals. IPV will not be tolerated within the surgical community, not for our patients, friends, or colleagues. We pledge to help women achieve safety and independence from fear and violence, via legislative efforts and community-based initiatives, such as the Violence against Women Act and the National Domestic Violence Hotline. AWS categorically supports efforts to educate and train surgeons to be a resource and to be advocates for victims of IPV.

Intimate Partner Violence National Resources

Hotlines

- National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
- Rape Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) Hotline
1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

Web Sites

- Futures Without Violence (previously known as Family Violence Prevention Fund)
www.futureswithoutviolence.org
- National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
www.ncadv.org
- National Network to End Domestic Violence
www.nnedv.org
- National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
www.nrcdv.org
- Office on Violence Against Women
(U.S. Department of Justice)
www.usdoj.gov/ovw