

NJCBW GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Batterer Accountability

The NJCBW believes in the right of every human being to live free of violence and maltreatment, and that no individual has the right to exert coercive power and control over another. We believe individuals must be held accountable for their behavior toward others, therefore, the responsibility for violence in a relationship lies solely with the perpetrator. Correlative issues such as substance abuse do not excuse or cause domestic violence. Abusers have the choice and responsibility to change their behavior.

Children

The New Jersey Coalition for Battered Women recognizes that children can be impacted by domestic violence as secondary victims and are often themselves subjected to physical or sexual abuse within the family. The Coalition believes that children are entitled to live free from abuse and have services available to them. The Coalition also recognizes that victims of domestic violence are required to make extremely difficult safety choices for themselves and their children within a maze of safety risks generated by the batterer and often by life circumstances, e.g., lack of employment, housing, and child and medical care. When these difficult safety choices are coupled with the lack of an effective system response, victims of domestic violence are often blamed for failing to protect their children. The Coalition believes that, in most situations, a victim/parent is and should be considered the expert on what is the safest course of action for herself and her children. Therefore, the Coalition also believes that children exposed to domestic violence are best served by the provision of supportive services to the victim/parent.

Coordinated Community Response

The New Jersey Coalition for Battered Women believes that changing societal attitudes and responses to domestic violence cannot be accomplished in isolation and that an integrated and coordinated community response is critical. With a coordinated community effort, we will be better able to achieve an effective prevention and service delivery system for all victims of domestic violence.

Empowerment

The NJCBW recognizes that power is taken from women both by individual abusers and by the larger patriarchal society. We further recognize that it is our responsibility to assist battered women to regain that power. As individual service providers, we must help victims make and implement their own decisions. As organizations, we must identify and change institutions and policies that disempower women. This refers to member programs as well as other organizations. The NJCBW believes that the empowerment of battered women should be the philosophical basis for all of our work.

Equality

The NJCBW believes in the right of self-determination, safety, and justice for ALL women. We recognize that every woman deserves to have her voice similarly heard. We know that society has traditionally devalued some populations and, therefore, their voices have not been heard. The NJCBW believes in the inclusion and active support of women regardless of race, creed, age, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, physical capability, mental illness, educational level, or socioeconomic status. Similarly, we recognize that these populations are in our program staffs. We believe staff members can and should be encouraged to share their insights regarding their unique cultural experience.

Quality Services

The New Jersey Coalition for Battered Women believes that the provision of services to battered women and their children is one critical avenue for addressing the problem of domestic violence. We believe that victims of domestic violence are entitled to the highest quality services possible and that these services should be characterized by the facilitation of the empowerment of women. We believe that we have a responsibility to assist in establishing and maintaining high standards of service among our member programs. The Coalition also believes that we are accountable to the women we serve. We must listen to them and use their feedback and input to guide our programs.

Special Needs

The New Jersey Coalition for Battered Women recognizes that domestic violence has devastating effects on all victims but that some victims face additional, unique barriers to safety. Examples of these populations include, but are not limited to elderly women, women of color, lesbians, women with physical and/or mental disabilities, women who are immigrants and women living in poverty. The Coalition believes the special needs of these populations should be considered in the development, outreach, and delivery of victim services.

Women's Use of Force

To understand women's use of force it is essential to consider both the context in which such acts occur and the differences between men's and women's use of force. Men's use of force occurs within the broader social context of male entitlement and the devaluation of women. The vast majority of men who use force against their partners engage in a pattern of behaviors designed to isolate, intimidate and control. Such acts more often result in serious injury than women's use of force. Women's use of force is primarily self-defense or in reaction to abuse, and is not part of a history of coercive control. Only a small minority of the women who use force do so to control and intimidate, and such acts are not supported or reinforced within the broader societal context.

Approved and adopted by the NJCBW Board on October 11, 2001, except for *Women's Use of Force* which was approved and adopted on July 11, 2002.