Domestic Violence Fact 5

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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Every day four women die in this country as a result of domestic
violence, the euphemism for murders and assaults by husband's or boyfriend's. That's approximately 1,400 women a year, according to the FBI. The number of women who have been murdered by their intimate partners is greater than the number of soldiers killed in the Vietnam War.

BATTERING:  Although only 572,000 reports of assault by intimates are officially reported to federal officials each year, the most conservative estimates indicate two to four million women of all races and classes are battered each year. At least 170,000 of those violent incidents are serious enough to require hospitalization, emergency room care or a doctor's attention.

SEXUAL ASSAULT: Every year approximately 132,000 women report that they have been victims of rape or attempted rape, and more than half of them knew their attackers. It's estimated that two to six times that many women are raped, but do not report it. Every year 1.2 million women are forcibly raped by their current or former male partners, some more than once.

THE TARGETS:  Women are 10 times more likely than men to be victimized by an intimate. Young women, women who are separated, divorced or single, low- income women and African-American women are disproportionately victims of assault and rape. Domestic violence rates are five times higher among families below poverty levels, and severe spouse abuse is twice as likely to be committed by unemployed men as by those working full time. Violent attacks on lesbians and gay men have become two to three times more common than they were prior to 1988.

IMPACT ON CHILDREN; Violent juvenile offenders are four times more likely to have grown up in homes where they saw violence. Children who have witnessed violence at home are also five times more likely to commit or suffer violence when they become adults.

IMPACT ON HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES: Women who are battered have more than twice the health care needs and costs than those who are never battered. Approximately 17 percent of pregnant women report having been battered, and the results include miscarriages, stillbirths and a two to four times greater likelihood of bearing a low birth weight baby. Abused women are disproportionately represented among the homeless and suicide victims. Victims of domestic violence are being denied insurance in some states because they are considered to have a "pre-existing condition."
LEGISLATION: In 1994, the National Organization for Women, the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, and other organizations finally secured passage of the Violence Against Women Act, which provides a record breaking $1.8 billion to address issues of violence against women.

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