

WOMEN AND VIOLENCE

Protecting and Expanding the Rights and Resources of Survivors



OUR MISSION

ENSURING THE ECONOMIC
AND PERSONAL SECURITY OF
WOMEN AND GIRLS.

OUR VISION

LEGAL MOMENTUM ENVISIONS
A SOCIETY IN WHICH ALL
WOMEN AND GIRLS ARE
ECONOMICALLY SECURE,
EMPOWERED TO MAKE
THEIR OWN CHOICES, AND
CAN LIVE AND WORK FREE OF
DISCRIMINATION AND
VIOLENCE.

THE REALITY

Violence against women—sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking—is epidemic. It affects women in the home, in the workplace, in school, and in every other aspect of life.

OUR COMMITMENT

Legal Momentum, the Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund, has long advocated, litigated, and educated to expand and enforce the rights of victims of gender-based violence. Of particular importance, working closely with then-Senator, now-Vice President Joe Biden and the Senate Judiciary Committee, Legal Momentum led the effort to draft and pass the landmark Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 1994 and reauthorize it in 2000 and 2005. We are now leading the movement to again reauthorize this major legislation in 2011. VAWA has secured critical statutory reforms and awarded nearly \$9 billion to state, tribal, and local governments, non-profit organizations, and universities to prevent violence against women, improve the response to victims, and hold offenders accountable. Legal Momentum's violence-related programs demonstrate the organization's commitment to advancing women's right to live free from gender-based violence.

OUR STRATEGY

Legal Momentum combines public policy advocacy, education, and precedent-setting litigation to expand and enforce the law. We educate policymakers, advocates, attorneys, judges, and others to ensure that laws and policies meet women's needs and are implemented broadly, fairly, and effectively. Feedback from these stakeholders and those working "on the ground" helps us identify policies and laws that fall short for women and informs our development of new policies and laws to ensure women's economic and personal security.

OUR PROGRAMS

Legal Momentum's anti-violence programs, listed below, keep us at the forefront of securing personal safety for women and girls:

- **Employment Rights for Victims of Violence:** We help victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking keep their jobs while breaking free from violent relationships or recovering from trauma.
- **Immigrant Women Program (IWP):** IWP is the nation's leading program working on behalf of battered immigrant women. IWP advocates for policy reforms—such as the passage of U-Visa laws, which grant legal status to immigrant women victims of gender-based violence—IWP helps victims understand their rights and litigates when necessary.
- **National Judicial Education Program (NJEP):** NJEP is a unique, award-winning program that uses trainings, model curricula, publications and videos to educate the judicial, legal and justice system communities about the psychological, medical and legal aspects of rape and sexual assault. In 2008, NJEP launched a much-lauded online course, *Intimate Partner Sexual Abuse: Adjudicating this Hidden Dimension of Domestic Violence Cases*, to raise awareness of the great risk posed by co-occurring domestic violence and sexual assault.
- **Violence Against Women Act (VAWA):** Legal Momentum led the effort to pass the original federal Violence Against Women Act and its reauthorizations. We continue to promote programs supporting and protecting the rights of victims of violence under the Act and at the state level.
- **...and More:** Violence can affect every aspect of a woman's life. Through programs on Teen Dating Violence and Housing Rights for Victims of Violence we advocate for policies and practices that address the realities of women's lives.

OUR IMPACT

In the last year alone, Legal Momentum celebrated major achievements that increased victims' access to justice, legal rights, and services. In 2009, we:

- Intervened through our Immigrant Women Program in the notorious Postville, Iowa immigration raid, where women workers were regularly sexually harassed and assaulted by their employers.
- Spearheaded a successful effort to ensure that the modernized federal unemployment compensation program extends benefit eligibility to individuals who leave or are fired from jobs because of domestic violence or sexual assault. We are providing trainings, technical assistance, and state level advocacy to ensure these changes are implemented, and that women can access these benefits.
- Conducted nearly 200 trainings and presentations for over 1,000 participants from targeted audiences including judges and court personnel, advocates, service providers, and others on domestic and sexual violence laws and policies, including the impact of gender bias on these cases and the unique issues facing immigrant women victims.
- Provided specialized legal assistance to over 800 individuals, attorneys, and advocates regarding specific areas of the law concerning violence against women and other areas of family law—in particular, employment, housing, public benefits, and immigration issues.
- At the request of the Obama-Biden Administration, submitted a comprehensive proposal for actions the administration should take at the White House level, through federal administrative agencies, and through future legislation to address all aspects of violence against women, from research to trafficking.
- Helped draft a series of friend-of-the-court (*amicus*) briefs to the U.S. Supreme Court which resulted in the Justices showing awareness that even when domestic violence was not overtly an issue in the case, their rulings would have particular implications for these victims.

OUR FUTURE

Despite these achievements, supportive services, rights, and protective measures for victims remain inadequate, as does the response to victims by many law enforcement and judicial personnel. Economic recessions exacerbate violence—and with state after state reporting budget cuts in services for victims, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) has never been more important. Highlights of this year's work include:

- Leading the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence, a coalition of several hundred organizations Legal Momentum created in 1994 to ensure that the voices and unmet needs of victims and advocates on the ground are brought into the process to reauthorize VAWA in 2011.
- Inaugurating the National Resource Center on Workplace Responses to Assist Victims of Domestic and Sexual Violence to expand protection from housing and employment discrimination for these victims.
- Improving services and protections for immigrant women victims of gender-based violence through trainings for law enforcement to increase awareness of U-Visa certification and the vital protection it provides to these victims.
- Training new and established state judges and judicial educators to integrate and institutionalize information about adult victim sexual assault cases throughout education programs for judges and court-related personnel.
- Ensuring that victims access new services and legal protections by monitoring state and federal agencies, courts, police, prosecutors, direct service workers, and housing authorities to identify problems and urge policy solutions.

