

BILL OF RIGHTS FOR WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN BATTERED OR RAPED

As a Woman who has been battered or raped, you have the right to:

1. **Live without violence.**
2. **Safety at all times.** This includes freedom from physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, sexual, verbal abuse.
3. **Know that you are not responsible, or at fault in any way for being physically, emotionally, verbally battered and/or raped. Battering and rape are crimes; you are not the criminal.**
4. **To protection under the law in a timely, respectful manner.**
5. **Confidentiality.** You have the right to choose what information you wish to share, whom you wish to share it & how it will be used.
6. **Freely make decisions for yourself and your children based on your beliefs and experiences,** staff, volunteers, institutions and community are responsible for supporting your decisions.
7. **Respectful advocacy.** The role of the advocate is to pro-actively support you in your decisions without imposing other's values and beliefs. You have the right to ask for what you need.
8. **Community support.** For you and your children to fully achieve a life free from violence, communities must provide support through encouragement (not blame), acknowledgement (not denial), assistance (not neglect), protection (not condoning through silence or inaction). The community includes family members, friends, co-workers, law enforcement, medical personnel, government and religious institutions, agencies, schools and the judicial system.
9. **Be believed and treated with respect.** To hold you and your children in high regard by showing honor and consideration.
10. **Be accepted for who you are and how you feel.** Acknowledgement of and respect for you as a women as well as your ethnicity, sexual orientation, economic status, age, age, abilities, education and marital status.
11. **Credible information about domestic violence and sexual assault.** Information does not blame you for the violence done to you or label you as unhealthy, co-dependent or sick. Credible information places responsibility for the violence on the batterer/rapist and recognizes violence against women as a system of behaviors and tactics used to maintain control.
12. **Comprehensive medical services.** You have the right to have your physical complaints (whether or not they are the result of violence) taken seriously and not dismissed as being hysterical, psychological or as a result of being an "over-emotional" woman.
13. **Access resources** regardless of income, age, emotional or physical state, education, sexual orientation, etc., and the right to refuse services.
14. **Religious freedom** and to be supported in your spiritual practices.
15. **Return to the abuser without giving up any rights** (including access to services).

If you are in shelter, you also have the right to:

1. **Safety and protection.** This includes a non-violent, supportive atmosphere while in shelter without giving up any other rights or being required to get a protection order, submit to background checks or other practices not in keeping with the intent of shelter, i.e., safety, resources, support and respect.
2. **Be respected and treated as an adult** by shelter staff, volunteers and other residents.
3. **Understand the purpose of the shelter guidelines which are in place to ensure the safety and rights of all persons within the shelter.**
4. **Use or not use in-house shelter resources** such as support groups, parenting groups, substance abuse services, spiritual and religious resources, counseling, educational program and advocacy.
5. **Review any paperwork regarding you and your children during working hours.**
6. **Right to be informed of, and access to, all services provided.**