

# How Can I Help?

## Individuals

**Educate others** — Share this information with family members, peers and co-workers.

**Inform the public** — Write letters to the editors of local newspapers supporting Compassionate Care for Rape Victims and the work of the Coalition.

**Contact your elected officials** — Let them know that you support compassionate, comprehensive care for victims of rape, incest or sexual violence, including access to EC. To find out who represents you, go to [www.legis.state.wi.us](http://www.legis.state.wi.us) and click on “Who represent me?”

**Join the Coalition** — If you are interested in joining, please contact Sara Finger at 608-251-0139 or [sara.finger@wiawh.org](mailto:sara.finger@wiawh.org).

## Social Service Organizations

**Join the Coalition** — Have your organization join the Compassionate Care for Rape Victims Coalition. Current members who have signed on and are working to ensure rape victims can access EC include: American College of Nurse Midwives-WI Chapter, Brown County Coalition for Women’s Health, Chippewa Valley Citizens for Women’s Health, Community Advocates, Eau Claire County Coordinated Community Response Team, Friends of Abused Families, Inc. of Washington County, League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, Medical Students for Choice, NARAL Pro-Choice Wisconsin, National Association of Social Workers-WI Chapter, Options Fund, Inc, PAVE: People Against a Violent Environment-Beaver Dam, PAVE: Promoting Awareness, Victim Empowerment-Madison, Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin, Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice WI, Republicans for Choice, Sexual Assault Treatment Center, Task Force on Family Violence, The Healing Center, United Council of UW Students, Winnebago County Coalition for Women’s Health, Wisconsin Alliance for Women’s Health, Wisconsin Association for Perinatal Care, Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Wisconsin NOW, Wisconsin Women’s Network, and Women’s Medical Fund.

**Share your expertise** — The Coalition is working to educate the community. This is impossible without the partnership of the experts including survivors and service providers. Be a resource for the Coalition, provide information, edit materials or present information to potential members.

**Be a voice for survivors** — Professionals on the front lines are crucial to advocate for the needs of survivors. Use your expertise to speak to the media, write letters to the editor, communicate with elected officials or testify at legislative hearings.

## Board members

**Encourage the organization to join the Coalition** — Board support is necessary for organizations to become fully engaged in the efforts to secure Compassionate Care. Discuss the issue at your next board meeting. Move that the organization join the Coalition.

**Facilitate a board presentation** — If you prefer to have a formal presentation of the issue, members of the Coalition are available to come to your agency and present information on this initiative. We will reinforce community support of this initiative, and the involvement of respected organizations with diverse missions.

**Become a spokesperson** — Support the organization by making yourself available to speak to the media or elected officials as a board member of the Coalition.

*For more information or to join the Coalition, please contact Sara Finger, WI Alliance for Women’s Health at 608-251-0139 or 866-399-WAWH or via e-mail at [sara.finger@wiawh.org](mailto:sara.finger@wiawh.org).*

## Cited Resources:

ACOG — American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. (1998, July). *Statement on Contraceptive Methods*.

Van Look, Paul & Felicia Stewart. (1998). “Emergency Contraception.” In Robert A. Hatcher et al., Eds. *Contraception Technology*, 17<sup>th</sup> edition. New York: Ardent Media.

Rape victims  
deserve  
compassionate care.  
You can help make  
it happen.



COMPASSIONATE CARE  
FOR RAPE VICTIMS  
COALITION

## Purpose of the Coalition

Using research, education and advocacy, this statewide collaboration is working to secure access to emergency contraception (EC) for rape, incest and domestic violence victims. Victims deserve to have access to comprehensive health care.

## Coalition Focus

**Research** – Implement a statewide study to learn about current practice as it relates to emergency room care for victims of rape, including information about and availability of EC. Utilize results to inform need for policy or practice changes or enhanced education.

**Education** – The Coalition is comprised of experts from a variety of related fields who educate providers, patients, the public and policy-makers about the care needs of rape victims.

**Advocacy** – Work with administrators and elected officials to ensure that state and local laws, policies and practices reflect the standard of medical care for victims of sexual violence. Speak on behalf of the Coalition at relevant meetings, hearings and forums.

## Why was the Coalition Formed?

Many rape victims face an overwhelming fear that a pregnancy could result from the rape. The most effective way to alleviate this fear is to provide rape victims with information about pregnancy prevention and allow them to decide whether to prevent pregnancy. The Coalition founders believe women deserve comprehensive emergency care, including information about and access to pregnancy prevention. Unfortunately, many Wisconsin emergency rooms are not responding to this basic need. As a result, many rape victims are denied pregnancy prevention information and access in Wisconsin emergency rooms.

EC is the most effective method for preventing pregnancy after an assault. Numerous studies of Wisconsin emergency rooms have found that less than one-half of emergency medical providers inform rape victims about the availability of EC and most refuse to refer women to an alternative provider where the victim can obtain EC. A 2002 Report by the WRAP project concluded that only 43% of hospitals dispensed EC. In addition, a 2002 national survey found that only 26% of Wisconsin Catholic hospitals will dispense EC to rape victims. (Catholics for a Free Choice, 2003). Catholic hospitals in Wisconsin see approximately 41% of all emergency visits.

## Compassionate Care for Rape Victims Act

Recently the Compassionate Care for Rape Victims Act was introduced in the Wisconsin State Legislature.

This bill would require hospitals to inform sexual assault victims about EC and make it available to patients who request it. This legislation is one critical piece in the overall strategy to improve care for victims and is actively supported by the Coalition.

## What is EC ?

EC is simply a high concentration of birth control pills that can prevent pregnancy when taken within 120 hours after unprotected intercourse. If taken within 72 hours, EC is at least 75% effective in preventing pregnancy. The sooner EC is taken, the more effective it is. The latest research shows that EC is the most effective if taken within 12 hours.

## An Existing Pregnancy

**Can EC Disrupt an Existing Pregnancy? No.** EC has no effect on an existing pregnancy. (Van Look & Stewart, 1998.) Hormonal methods of contraception, including EC pills, prevent preg-

nancy by inhibiting ovulation and fertilization (ACOG, 1998). EC has no effect on an existing pregnancy.

## Information & Care

### *Rape Victims Deserve to Be Informed and Receive Comprehensive Care*

The American Medical Association has determined that all hospital emergency rooms should be informing rape victims about EC and dispensing it if requested, as this is the standard of care for rape victims. Ensuring this practice is happening in Wisconsin means that these patients will be afforded the standard of care to which they are entitled.

In 2001, an estimated 5,292 rapes were reported to Wisconsin law enforcement agencies. Nationally, over 300,000 women are raped each year, resulting in over 25,000 unintended pregnancies and 16,000 abortions. About 22,000 (88%) of these pregnancies could be prevented if all women who were raped used EC. (*American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 2000).

## Community Support

### *The Community Shows Overwhelming Support for EC*

In an August 2004 survey of Wisconsin voters, 82% reported that they favored ensuring access to EC for victims of rape and incest. This number is significantly higher than the national average. (A nationwide poll by Lake Snell Perry & Associates and John Deardourf found that 74% of voters favor requiring hospitals to make EC available to rape victims.)

In addition, 53% of Wisconsin voters polled said they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports mandatory EC availability. Half of voters said they would be less likely to vote for a candidate who would allow hospitals to deny access to EC to women who had been raped.