



Sexual Violence Costs Utahns Dearly

Govt spends 5 times more on perpetrators than victims

(Salt Lake City, UT) – For the first time, the Utah Department of Health and Utah Coalition Against Sexual Assault have released data showing the economic burden of sexual violence in Utah. The report revealed the costs resulting from sexual violence during a one-year period totaled nearly \$5 billion, or approximately \$1,700 per Utah resident.

Studies in Utah indicate that one in three women will experience some form of sexual violence in their lifetime and that one in eight women and one in 50 men will experience rape. While Utah falls well below the national average for most violent crimes, the rape rate exceeds the national average. “From year to year, our rape rate is consistently higher than that of the U.S.,” said Teresa Brechlin, UDOH Violence Prevention Coordinator. “We are 7th lowest in the country for homicide but 9th highest for reported rape. This is troubling.”

In addition to the expenditures borne by the social systems that address sexual violence, there are significant personal costs to victims. In fact, the greatest cost of sexual violence – nearly \$4 billion – is the pain, suffering, and diminished quality of life that victims experience throughout their lives. Costs due to suffering and lost quality of life, suicidal acts, substance abuse, mental health care, and lost work are the top five most expensive outcomes of sexual violence.

A 25-year-old Utah woman, who wished to remain anonymous, knows these costs all too well. “After the assault, even the simplest day-to-day activities were a struggle for me. I suffered from debilitating social anxiety. I dropped out of school and had a hard time holding down a job.” This survivor’s experience is not unusual. Victims of sexual violence report being less satisfied with life, having poorer health, not receiving adequate social and emotional support, and being more limited in their activities than those who had not experienced sexual violence.

For children, sexual violence costs averaged \$184,504 per incident. For adults, rape costs were \$154,598 per incident and other sexual assaults cost \$282 per incident. Data from the report also revealed dramatic differences in the resources that are allocated after a person is sexually assaulted. In 2011, the Utah state government spent approximately \$16.5 million on victims of sexual violence (15.1%), while spending more than \$92 million on perpetrators of sexual violence (84.4%). Only \$569,000 or 0.5% was spent on efforts to prevent sexual violence.

“In spite of significant resources expended on perpetrators of rape and sexual assault, reports of sexual violence have continued to increase; while the negative impacts on victims go largely unaddressed.” said Alana Kindness, executive director of the Utah Coalition Against Sexual Assault. “While there is clearly a need to strengthen the criminal justice response to these crimes, it is also clear that a more comprehensive strategy is needed; one that includes an investment in the well-being of those impacted by the crime. This will require increased investment in services that can reduce the long-term costs of unaddressed victimization and a strong commitment to prevention.”

Rape and other forms of sexual violence are preventable. “Every day, we have opportunities to promote healthy and safe attitudes and beliefs about relationships, gender, and sexuality. We have a responsibility to intervene when we witness unhealthy attitudes and behaviors toward others,” said Ned Searle, Director of the Utah Office on Domestic and Sexual Violence.

If you or someone you know has been the victim of sexual violence call the rape crisis and information line at (888) 421-1100. To download a copy of the report Costs of Sexual Violence in Utah, visit www.health.utah.gov/vipp or www.UCASA.org.

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