



OVW Director's Message: National Domestic Violence Awareness Month 2012

The Office on Violence Against Women, along with the entire Department of Justice, the President and the Vice-President, is proud to join with our partners in the field to recognize October as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. If you have not already seen it, take a moment to read President Obama's 2012 [National Domestic Violence Awareness Month Proclamation](#) which asserts the strong commitment of this Administration.

Over the past year, we have continued to witness improvements in responses to domestic violence in communities across the country. We have seen the development of specialized domestic violence law enforcement units and prosecution programs, programs that meet the needs of underserved communities, and programs that target children who have witnessed violence at home – just to name a few. But we know there is still more to do.

It is the commitment of those of you who work every day to support the woman who has been abused by her partner, the child who has witnessed violence in his or her home, or to ensure that the abuser is held accountable for his behavior, that keeps the issue of domestic violence at the forefront of our minds. Much of this work is unsung. But at least once a year, during Domestic Violence Awareness Month, we ask the country to pause and say thank you to the people who have made it a mission in their lives to support and serve victims and to stop the scourge of domestic violence.

At OVW, we recognize that an effective response to domestic violence must emphasize core support services for victims. Building safe homes and safe communities requires access to safe shelter and housing, law enforcement protection, access to justice and economic opportunity. Victim service agencies play an integral role in the lives of domestic violence victims and survivors, and OVW has prioritized deepening and strengthening these service agencies. Without these protections, victims are potentially forced to make life-threatening decisions.

The Obama Administration and Vice-President Biden are committed to ending the tragedy of domestic violence-related homicides. There are several evidenced-based models for successfully identifying high-risk cases, intervening, and, ultimately, reducing domestic violence-related homicides. These successful models need to be replicated, and that is the goal of our recently released [Domestic Violence Homicide Reduction Call for Concept Papers](#). We encourage anyone interested in applying to review the posting on our website and submit applications by October 16, 2012.

As we amass more data and tools to help break the cycle of violence in our communities, we are able to identify more effective interventions in combating domestic violence. However, we must be continually aware that there is no universal approach to combating violence against women. We need to ensure that the approaches we develop and use to address domestic violence are based in the cultures and experiences of the victims with whom we are working. This is why I am excited to participate in the Annual **Violence Against Women Tribal Consultation** in Tulsa, OK and “Bridging the Gap: *Creating a Community of Support for Survivors with Disabilities*” in Louisville, KY. With alarming rates of domestic violence among American Indian/Alaskan Native women, women with disabilities and Deaf women, events such as these enhance awareness and strengthen community responses for victims of domestic violence.

In the era of a twenty-four hour news cycle and the explosion of social media, more people are aware of domestic violence than at any point in the past. In recent years, we have witnessed emerging technologies like online advocacy help victims of domestic violence. We also know that domestic violence is a complex crime and victim service providers have an increasingly difficult task in maintaining the confidentiality and privacy of the victims they serve. In that vein, OVW is excited to announce the release of a new toolkit

developed in partnership with the National Network To End Domestic Violence's Safety Net Project and The Confidentiality Institute. The "[Technology and Confidentiality Toolkit](#)" will help victim service organizations, programs, and partnerships address concerns of confidentiality and privacy in their work to support victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking.

Raising awareness and increasing knowledge about domestic violence provides us with an opportunity to empower and support victims. We must seize this moment to build community alliances and collaborations, and to provide all victims of domestic violence with the critical and life-saving services they need.

At the Office on Violence Against Women, we remain committed to our programs and our partners. As we continue working to end violence by supporting victims, holding perpetrators accountable, and preventing abuse before it starts, we know we cannot do it alone. We all have a role in this together – at work, at home and in our communities.

And a special message for practitioners on the front-line: You have an important role in the nation's response to domestic violence. I am honored to work side by side with you and thank you for your continued commitment to victims of domestic violence.

We remind all those in need of assistance, or other concerned friends and individuals, to call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).

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