

Factsheet: The Obama Administration's Commitment to Combating Violence Against Women

Domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking are not just criminal justice issues – the scope and far-reaching effects of violence require a coordinated response across the Federal government. In 2010, the President Obama announced unprecedented cooperation across the entire government to protect victims of domestic and sexual violence and enable survivors to break the cycle of abuse.

The President called on every agency in the Federal government to be part of the solution to ending violence against women. The initiatives announced and highlighted today demonstrate a comprehensive approach to reducing violence against women.

Improving the Workplace Response to Domestic Violence

- **Today, the Obama administration announced new efforts to help combat and prevent domestic violence in the federal workplace.** President Obama signed a memorandum directing federal agencies to develop policies to address the effects of domestic violence and provide assistance for employees who may be experiencing domestic violence. These policies will also serve as a model for private sector employers.
- Many victims report being harassed at work or distracted from their jobs because of abuse, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that domestic violence costs our nation more than eight billion dollars a year in lost productivity and healthcare costs alone. This new effort builds on ongoing Administration initiatives to improve workplace safety and assist victims of domestic violence.

Combating High Rates of Violence Among Teens and Young Adults

- **Today, the White House is teaming up with Discovery Education to help prevent teen dating violence.** Federal officials will join with Discovery Education today for a live web event broadcast to more than 250 participating schools around the country. This program will help students, teachers, and school administrators identify warning signs of abuse and learn how to help teens who are experiencing violence. One in ten teens will be physically hurt on purpose by a boyfriend or girlfriend this year alone.
- In September 2011, the Department of Justice provided funding for the **National Dating Abuse Helpline** to use the latest technology to be available around the clock by text, online chat, or phone so that teens and young adults can reach out in the way they feel most comfortable. The President's 2013 budget includes an additional 1.3 million dollars to help the National Dating Abuse Helpline and the National Domestic Violence Hotline meet the growing volume of requests for help.

- Recognizing the need for concentrated, coordinated efforts to reduce the high rates of violence among youth **Vice President Biden launched the 1is2many initiative** in September 2011. This initiative raises awareness about dating violence and sexual assault and encourages bystanders to speak out against violence. The Vice President solicited input from young men and women across the country on how to reduce dating and sexual violence in schools and on college campuses. www.whitehouse.gov/1is2many
- In July 2011, Secretary Sebelius of the Department of Health and Human Services announced Apps Against Abuse, a challenge to technology innovators to find new ways to reach teens and young adults to prevent dating violence and sexual assault. **Today, the winning apps are available for free download.**
 - **Circle of 6:** This iPhone app makes it easy to reach your circle of friends and family and let them know where you are and what you need. The app uses text messaging to contact your circle, GPS to locate you when needed, connections to reputable domestic violence organizations, and a user-wide pledge to stop violence before it happens.
 - **On Watch.** This iPhone app lets you transmit critical information by phone, email, text, and social media to your support network. You can check in with friends, call 911 or campus police, set countdown timers that send messages and GPS information automatically if events or activities do not go according to plan, and connect to sexual assault, dating violence, and domestic abuse hotlines.
- One in five young women will be sexually assaulted while in college, and the traumatic effects of this violence can be devastating. On April 4, 2011, Vice President Biden and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan introduced **comprehensive guidance to help schools, colleges and universities better understand their obligations under federal civil rights laws to prevent and respond to the problem of campus sexual assault.** The new guidance makes clear the legal obligations under Title IX of any school, college or university receiving federal funds to respond promptly and effectively to sexual violence.
- The Office of Civil Rights at the Department of Education has resolved multiple investigations with first-of-their-kind agreements to comprehensively address sexual assault on campuses. These agreements have included **measures to change the culture at schools** and colleges where sexual violence is more prevalent and the implementation of climate checks and monitoring that allow the Office of Civil Rights to hear about the situation on the ground directly from students. This year, Office of Civil Rights will give more than 40 technical assistance presentations related to how Title IX applies in cases of sexual harassment and sexual violence to colleges, trade associations, bar associations, and state agencies.

Combating Rape and Sexual Assault

- In January 2012, the Department of Justice **modernized the FBI's Uniform Crime Report definition of rape**, which will lead to a more comprehensive statistical reporting of rape nationwide. The new definition is more inclusive, better reflects state criminal codes, and focuses on the various forms of sexual penetration understood to be rape. For the first time, rapes of men and boys will be included in our national crime statistics. The old definition- which only covers rape of women by force- did not capture the true impact of this crime. The revised definition includes any gender of victim or perpetrator, and includes instances in which the victim is incapable of giving consent because of temporary or permanent mental or physical capacity, including due to the influence of drugs or alcohol, or because of age.
- Research has demonstrated that Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) programs are effective at improving the quality of forensic evidence collected and providing support for victims, but access to trained examiners is limited in some areas of the country. The Department of Justice is creating a **telemedicine center that** will provide remote access to forensic examination consultation in rural and tribal communities.
- The Department of Justice launched a new effort to end sexual violence in the United States including pilot projects to **reduce the rape kit backlog** in targeted cities. Sites in Houston and Detroit are currently classifying the status of their backlogged kits, developing a system for prioritizing kits for testing and notifying victims of the results of kit tests.
- Under the leadership of the Secretary of Defense, several new policies have recently been implemented including expedited transfers for victims of sexual assault who file an unrestricted report. DOD will also start shifting toward the use of one integrated data system, called the Defense Sexual Assault Incident Database (DSAID). This database will promote accurate and timely reporting of sexual assaults, and enhance analysis and trend identification capabilities to inform the Department's sexual assault prevention and response efforts.
- On April 16, Secretary Panetta announced several additional steps to combat sexual assault in the military. These new initiatives include elevating disposition authority for the most serious sexual assault offenses so that, at a minimum, these cases are addressed by a "Special Court Martial Convening Authority" who is an officer at the Colonel (or Navy Captain) level. This will ensure that cases of sexual assault receive a high level of command attention. The Department is also establishing a "Special Victim's Unit" capability within each of the Services, to ensure that specially trained investigators, prosecutors and victim-witness assistance personnel are available to assist with sexual assault cases.
- The Department of Defense provides additional resources for adult Service members and their families at 1-877-995-5247 and www.SafeHelpline.org

Assisting Victims with Health Care, Housing, and Economic Security

- In March 2012, President Obama signed a presidential memorandum establishing a **new effort to address the intersection between HIV/AIDS and violence against women and girls**. The memorandum established an interagency working group that will build on current agency programs addressing the intersection of HIV/AIDS, violence against women and girls, and gender-based health disparities by improving data collection, research, and intervention and prevention strategies. The working group will develop recommendations to help inform the National HIV/AIDS Strategy.
- In July 2011, the Department of Health and Human Services accepted guidelines recommended by the Institute of Medicine as required under the Affordable Care Act that include **screening for domestic violence and counseling as preventative care measures**. When these guidelines go into effect, domestic violence screening and counseling will be available to women with no co-pays.
- The Affordable Care Act includes **protections against insurance discrimination** for victims of domestic violence and **important programs reaching women experiencing violence** during pregnancy and vulnerable families after the birth of a child.
- The Department of Health and Human Services is releasing a new toolkit to build partnerships between domestic violence centers and asset-building agencies **to help victims save for the future** and improve their economic stability.
- In 2011, the Department of Housing and Urban Development issued guidance to clarify that **residents who are denied or evicted from housing as a result of domestic violence may have grounds to file a discrimination complaint** under the federal Fair Housing Act.
- In 2010, the Department of Housing and Urban Development released new rules that **provide protection for victims living in subsidized housing** allowing landlords and public housing authorities to evict perpetrators of abuse, keep their properties safe, and make sure victims do not lose their housing due to crimes committed against them.

Legislation to Protect Victims of Abuse

- The President signed two critical pieces of legislation addressing violence against women. The Tribal Law and Order Act provides new tools and resources to Indian Country to respond to the high rates of violence committed against Native American women. The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act funds 1,700 shelters and service programs for victims of domestic violence and their children.