

For Immediate Release
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The White House
Office of the Vice President

We Can't Wait: President Signs Memorandum Establishing Policies for Addressing Domestic Violence in the Federal Workplace

Today the Obama Administration announced new efforts to help combat and prevent domestic violence in the federal workplace. President Obama today signed a [memorandum](#) that will require federal agencies to develop policies to address the effects of domestic violence and provide assistance to employees who are experiencing domestic violence.

“We know that domestic violence doesn’t just stay in the home. It can extend into the workplace, with devastating effects on its victims and costs that ripple across the economy. Federal employees aren’t immune. The President’s Memorandum sends a message about what the federal government—and all employers—can do to end this abuse. Today, President Obama directed the federal government to become a model for all employers in providing a safe workplace and support for any employees who suffer from domestic violence. For the first time, all federal agencies are required to establish policies to respond to the legitimate needs of employees who are being abused and who might need help,” said Vice President Biden.

Domestic violence affects both the safety of the workplace and the productivity of employees. Victims report being harassed at work or distracted from their jobs because of abuse. The steps the Administration is taking today will build on ongoing efforts to improve workplace safety and assist victims of domestic violence.

The memorandum directs the Director of Office of Personnel Management, in consultation with the Attorney General, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Labor, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and other interested heads of agencies, to issue guidance to agencies addressing the effects of domestic violence on the federal workforce. The guidance will include steps agencies can take to intervene in and prevent domestic violence against or by employees; guidelines for assisting employee victims; leave policies relating to domestic violence situations; general guidelines on when it may be appropriate to take disciplinary action against employees who commit or threaten acts of domestic violence; steps agencies can take to improve workplace safety related to domestic violence; and resources for identifying relevant best practices related to domestic violence.

Since Congress passed the [Violence Against Women Act in 1994](#), annual incidents of domestic violence have dropped by more than 50%. However, domestic violence remains a significant problem facing women, families, and communities. According to the 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 1 in 3 women in the United States will experience rape, physical violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner at some time in their lives, and more than 12 million individuals experienced violence in the one-year period covered by the survey. While women are disproportionately affected by domestic violence, men can also be victims.

President Obama and Vice President Biden have focused on the important issue of domestic violence [since day one](#), naming the first ever White House Advisor on Violence Against Women during the first months of the Administration.

In October 2010, President Obama and Vice President Biden announced unprecedented coordination across the Federal Government to respond to and prevent domestic violence and sexual assault. In addition, this administration pushed colleges and universities to act to prevent sexual assault on campus, and it modernized the definition of rape so that this appalling crime is more accurately reflected in our national crime statistics.

The Violence Against Women Act expired in 2011, and while we wait for Congress to reauthorize this critically needed legislation, the federal government is doing its part.