

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface/Introduction.....	3
How We Did Our Work.....	6
Charge to the National Advisory Committee on Violence Against Women .....	9
The NAC’s Response to Its Charge.....	11
<p><b>Charge Question No. 1:</b> The Violence Against Women movement is often misperceived as a singularly woman’s issue, when in reality, it is not. Violence Against Women is as much a concern for men—fathers, brothers, and sons—as it is for women. What policy guidance may the Committee provide to the Attorney General and the Secretary in enlisting the voices and actions of men in addressing the incidence of these crimes?.....</p>	11
<b>Policy Recommendations</b> .....	12
<p><b>Charge Question No. 2:</b> Healthy families are a product of healthy relationships and healthy marriages. What policy guidance may the Committee provide to the Attorney General and the Secretary with respect to the federal government’s role in fostering and maintaining healthy relationships and healthy marriages as one of many tools in addressing the incidence of these crimes? The Committee should examine the role domestic violence advocates may play in any marriage and family initiative.....</p>	13
<b>Policy Recommendations</b> .....	14
<p><b>Charge Question No. 3:</b> Local communities are the best architects of policies and practices aimed at preventing and addressing the incidence of these crimes. What policy guidance may the Committee provide to the Attorney General and the Secretary with respect to the federal government’s role in fostering community ownership of efforts to end violence against women? The Committee should also examine the role of clergy and faith-based organizations in fostering community ownership and participating in coordinated community responses to violence against women.....</p>	16
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	20
<p><b>Charge Question No. 4:</b> Much has been accomplished since the enactment of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 to develop and sustain coordinated community responses to these crimes. What policy guidance may the Committee provide to the Attorney General and the Secretary concerning strategies aimed at identifying and disseminating promising practices and policies? The committee should focus on program sustainability, innovation, and effective coordinated community responses, including the participation of health and medical service providers.....</p>	21
<i>Substandard Services and Practices</i> .....	22
<i>Identification of Best Practices</i> .....	23
<i>Dissemination and Promotion of Best Practices</i> .....	24
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	25
<p><b>Charge Question No. 5:</b> The Violence Against Women Act of 1994 began an unprecedented investment of federal funds to support programs that provided services to victims and to support initiatives and practices that hold offenders accountable for their crimes. Recipient accountability for these program dollars has consequently become an important issue. What policy guidance may the Committee provide to the Attorney General and the Secretary concerning the importance of recipient accountability and program sustainability?.....</p>	28
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	29
<p><b>Charge Question No. 6:</b> Children who witness family violence are at risk of continuing the cycle of violence. Children-witnesses are also at risk of never being able to reach their fullest potential</p>	

as their educational opportunities and health are compromised by these experiences. What policy guidance may the Committee provide to the Attorney General and the Secretary concerning the issue of children who witness family violence and strategies that address the needs of these victims?.....30

**Charge Question No. 7:** Healthy dating relationships among adolescents are essential to keeping our nation’s communities and homes safe. What policy guidance may the Committee provide to the Attorney General and the Secretary concerning healthy dating relationships and violence among dating couples?.....31

**Policy Recommendations**.....33

National Advisory Committee Members Who Adopt this Response.....35

# **NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

## **RESPONSE TO THE CHARGE**

### **Preface/Introduction**

This document responds to the charge given to the National Advisory Committee on Violence Against Women. It provides many recommendations for the Department of Justice (“DOJ”) and the Department of Health and Human Services (“DHHS”) regarding policies and practices for ending sexual and domestic violence against women. This is neither an exhaustive nor a comprehensive list.

Furthermore, the National Advisory Committee supports the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act in 2005 to the extent that it embodies the spirit and emphasis of this response to the charge.

Readers are cautioned to consider carefully the applicability of any practice or policy for their community. It should not be assumed that all protocols or practices are appropriate for all communities nor appropriate at every stage of a state’s or local community’s efforts to address violence against women. Communities are encouraged to assess their prevention and intervention policies, practices, and competencies before adopting a new component, thereby ensuring that an adequate infrastructure exists to support the success of the initiative.

Communities that have had demonstrable success reducing domestic homicide, rape, and sexual and domestic abuse have many factors in common, including strong advocacy for victims and the existence of comprehensive approaches to domestic and sexual violence.

Strong advocacy for adult victims and their children is both the context in which these comprehensive approaches have been developed and a fundamental strategy. It serves as an invaluable check on our zeal to eradicate sexual and domestic violence against women. While safety is the paramount goal, the dignity of the victim should be given consideration. Victim-centered advocacy provides some assurance that system practices are empowering, not re-victimizing and traumatizing to domestic and sexual violence victims.

For example, vertical prosecution models (where the same prosecutor handles the case from beginning to end), are strongly encouraged and nationally accepted as a best practice for addressing domestic violence. Successful vertical prosecution of domestic violence crimes should be measured by the experience of the victim throughout the process, not simply by the conviction rates. Through prosecutorial procedures, the voices of victims can and should be heard in courtrooms, particularly in decisions concerning bail, continuances, plea bargains, dismissals, and sentences. To that end, prosecutors can identify and work collaboratively with victim witness advocates and victim service agency advocates.

Prosecution practices supported by a thorough knowledge of sexual violence, domestic violence and stalking, thorough law enforcement involvement, and strong victim advocacy have been shown to reduce victim recantation, increase victim safety and involvement, and increase perpetrator guilty pleas and waivers of jury trials. However, an imprudently selected practice or protocol can cause additional harm to the victim, rather than prevent it. For example, formation of a Sexual Assault Response Team, comprised of representatives from law enforcement, prosecution, victim services, and forensic nurse examiners, is strongly encouraged and nationally accepted as a best practice for addressing sexual violence. Before implementing such a policy, the community must assess its resources to determine if personnel can support such a focused approach at each stage of the investigation and prosecution. If the resources are not available, the project may fail, and the victim could be left with nowhere to turn. Another example of a successful protocol for addressing domestic violence is evidence-based prosecution.

Without strong investigation, thorough police reports, properly collected physical evidence when possible, and adequate advocacy and support for the victims, the prosecutor is left to rely entirely on the victim for building the case. Informed domestic and sexual violence prosecution ameliorates trauma to victims and their children and sends consistent messages to perpetrators. The cumulative outcome is a reduction in sexual and domestic violence against women.

Despite this report's heavy emphasis on legal system involvement, the Committee is aware that the justice and health care systems will not and cannot end sexual and

domestic violence against women. That being said, the criminal justice system's role in saving lives and restoring power to victims and communities continues to be critical. For perpetrators of domestic violence, the criminal justice system is often the starting point for intervention and accountability. Many judges, attorneys, corrections, and law enforcement officers have committed their careers to transforming the criminal justice system in their communities and states and to protecting victims. Sometimes, however, contact with these systems results in re-victimization and unintended aid to the perpetrator.

A full campaign to eradicate sexual and domestic violence against women requires the will of communities to eliminate the many social factors that cause and contribute to such violence. It requires involving a broad and rich array of national, state, tribal and local organizations, agencies, and systems. Health care systems, businesses, schools, social and fraternal organizations, social services agencies, media, the entertainment and sports industry, faith communities, and government have important roles to play. The Committee has tried to include these communities of influence throughout this report. The Committee's recommendations for policy, practice, and involvement are meant to inspire action and commitment.

## **How We Did Our Work**

On November 2, 2001, the U.S. Attorney General and the U.S. Secretary for Health and Human Services issued the charter for the National Advisory Committee on Violence Against Women (“NAC” or “the Committee”). The NAC was asked to provide “practical and general policy advice concerning the implementation of the Violence Against Women Act, the Violence Against Women Act of 2000, and related legislation, and to assist in the efforts of the Department of Justice (“DOJ”) and the Department of Health and Human Services (“DHHS”) to combat violence against women, especially domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking.”<sup>1</sup>

The NAC had its inaugural meeting on October 29, 2002. At that meeting in Washington, D.C., the NAC participated in the Justice Department’s First Annual Symposium on Domestic Violence, and heard remarks from U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft, DHHS Deputy Secretary Claude Allen, Assistant Attorney General Deborah Daniels, and the Director of the Office on Violence Against Women Diane Stuart.<sup>2</sup>

The second NAC meeting took place on February 20-21, 2003, in Dallas, Texas. At this meeting, the Committee heard presentations from a number of DOJ and DHHS officials about how their agencies currently address violence against women. The Committee also heard from representatives of the previous NAC, and discussed the guidance developed by the last NAC, the Toolkit to End Violence Against Women, available at <http://toolkit.ncjrs.org/>. The current Committee worked with a cognizance of this tremendous resource developed by the last NAC.

Also in Dallas, the NAC received its official charge (reproduced below). The Committee met in three subcommittees: Criminal Justice, Community Education, and Prevention. These subcommittees met to discuss answering the questions in the charge with public policy recommendations. Various Committee members underscored their desire to develop a proposal that will have practical impact nationally. The subcommittees recommended that the NAC adopt a proposal creating a federal

---

<sup>1</sup> Charter for the Advisory Committee on Violence Against Women.

<sup>2</sup> Copies of these addresses may be found at the U.S. Department of Justice’s Violence Against Women Office webpage, at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo/nac/welcome.html>

government-based, national initiative that would refocus the nation's consciousness on the issues of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking ("DV/SA/S").

In Dallas, the Community Education and Prevention Subcommittees recommended that the Committee develop nine working groups defined around communities of influence. These working groups would develop specific recommendations to implement the message conveyed through the national initiative. The following list of communities of influence was offered: (1) Business; (2) Education; (3) Faith-Based; (4) Judicial; (5) Law Enforcement; (6) Local/State Government; (7) Media; (8) Mental and Physical Health; and (9) Sports/Entertainment. The Advocacy movement was identified as a central influence on all of the communities of influence.

The third NAC meeting took place in Washington, D.C., at the United States DHHS on April 24-25, 2003. The Committee heard presentations from various components of DHHS, which handle women's health issues. Also, each of the subcommittees and/or communities of influence met to work on developing policy recommendations on their respective topics.

In the summer and fall of 2003, the individual subcommittees met to continue their work. These subcommittee meetings took place at locations that aided their work. For example, the Criminal Justice Subcommittee met in San Diego, California, on August 28-29, 2003, and in addition to formulating policy recommendations in a variety of areas, had the opportunity to tour the San Diego Family Justice Center. On July 16-17, 2003, the Prevention Subcommittee gathered in Washington D.C. and the Community Education Subcommittee met in Tampa, Florida on July 10, 2003, also to formulate policy recommendations and discuss best practices.

In October 2003, the work of the NAC was joined with an exciting and noteworthy event. The NAC met in Washington D.C. on October 8-9, and received reports from its various subcommittees. Committee members shared their thoughts and recommendations on each other's proposals.

Also, on October 8th, the NAC and others visited the White House for an event in the East Room at which President Bush recognized October as Domestic Violence Awareness month. The President announced the creation of the President's Family Justice Center Initiative by the DOJ in coordination with other agencies to help local

communities provide comprehensive services under one roof to victims of domestic violence. The President also announced the creation of the Safe and Bright Futures for Children Initiative from the DHHS, which will provide grants to community and faith-based organizations to bring together services helping children who witness domestic violence to prevent the cycle of violence from continuing from one generation to the next. Finally, the President announced that the Stop Family Violence postage stamp went on sale across the country, which will raise money for domestic violence prevention efforts. This is only the third time in U.S. Postal Service history that it has issued a fundraising stamp. The President's proclamation can be found at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/10/20031008-6.html> and his remarks can be found at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/10/20031008-5.html>.



### **Charge to the National Advisory Committee on Violence Against Women**

Family and community are two pillars of American society. Through our families we learn enduring lessons of life: cherished relationships, cultural heritage, and spirituality. It is through our communities that we learn the lessons of charity and responsibility for our fellow Americans. Healthy families and communities are the environments through which our nation's children are educated, adults lead productive and empowering lives, and our elderly transmit the wisdom learned from their many decades. Far too often, however, the vitality of our families and communities is weakened by abuse and violence occurring within the walls of a home, on our streets, in our schools and universities, and in our places of work. These abuses are wrong and they are criminal. These abuses are public health and economic problems. Much has been done, through the labors of victim advocates, communities, and our families--with government's help--to identify its roots, respond to the needs of victims, and sanction the offender.

As we near a decade of the enactment of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994, the Attorney General and the Secretary of Health and Human Services have determined this to be an opportunity to examine the strength of the Act. The National Advisory Committee on Violence Against Women is therefore tasked with identifying strategies for the second decade of federal support to efforts aimed at preventing and addressing all forms of family violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. They shall focus on the following three areas: Community Education, Prevention, and Criminal Justice, while examining the following priority issues:

- (1) The Violence Against Women movement is often misperceived as a singularly woman's issue, when in reality, it is not. Violence Against Women is as much a concern for men--fathers, brothers, and sons--as it is for women. What policy guidance may the Committee provide to the Attorney General and the Secretary in enlisting the voices and actions of men in addressing the incidence of these crimes?
- (2) Healthy families are a product of healthy relationships and healthy marriages. What policy guidance may the Committee provide to the Attorney General and the Secretary with respect to the federal government's role in fostering and maintaining healthy relationships and healthy marriages as one of many tools in addressing the incidence of these crimes? The Committee should examine the role domestic violence advocates may play in any marriage and family initiative.
- (3) Local communities are the best architects of policies and practices aimed at preventing and addressing the incidence of these crimes. What policy guidance may the Committee provide to the Attorney General and the Secretary with respect to the federal government's role in fostering community ownership of efforts to end violence against women? The Committee should also examine the role of clergy and faith-based organizations in fostering community ownership and participating in coordinated community responses to violence against women.
- (4) Much has been accomplished since the enactment of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 to develop and sustain coordinated community responses to these crimes. What policy guidance may the Committee provide to the Attorney General and the Secretary concerning strategies aimed at identifying and disseminating promising practices and policies? The committee should focus on program sustainability, innovation, and

effective coordinated community responses, including the participation of health and medical service providers.

- (5) The Violence Against Women Act of 1994 began an unprecedented investment of federal funds to support programs that provided services to victims and to support initiatives and practices that hold offenders accountable for their crimes. Recipient accountability for these program dollars has consequently become an important issue. What policy guidance may the Committee provide to the Attorney General and the Secretary concerning the importance of recipient accountability and program sustainability?
- (6) Children who witness family violence are at risk of continuing the cycle of violence. Children-witnesses are also at risk of never being able to reach their fullest potential as their educational opportunities and health are compromised by these experiences. What policy guidance may the Committee provide to the Attorney General and the Secretary concerning the issue of children who witness family violence and strategies that address the needs of these victims?
- (7) Healthy dating relationships among adolescents are essential to keeping our nation's communities and homes safe. What policy guidance may the Committee provide to the Attorney General and the Secretary concerning healthy dating relationships and violence among dating couples?

## **The NAC's Response to its Charge:**

**Charge Question No. 1: The Violence Against Women movement is often misperceived as a singularly woman's issue, when in reality, it is not. Violence Against Women is as much a concern for men—fathers, brothers, and sons—as it is for women. What policy guidance may the Committee provide to the Attorney General and the Secretary in enlisting the voices and actions of men in addressing the incidence of these crimes?**

The emergence of men speaking out and working against domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking (“DV/SA/S”) has been important and must be encouraged. These social problems affect everyone in society. Perpetrators of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking are primarily male, but victim gender varies to some degree depending upon the issue and the age demographic. While victims of DV/SA/S are predominately female and female teens experience the highest rates of domestic violence and sexual violence, it must be noted that males are also victims. Family violence against men is higher for older men than for adult men in other age groups, and Native American women experience the highest rates of sexual assault and domestic violence. People with disabilities and frail elderly are at greater risk of domestic violence and sexual assault than the general population. Youth, including male children, are a substantial portion of the SA victim population.<sup>3</sup>

Men are often affected by violence against women when a family member, friend, or colleague is victimized. This social problem affects entire communities, businesses, productivity, etc. There is a need for individual responsible men who abhor violence against women to hold accountable those men they know who are engaging in violence against women. Men of good conscience should not remain silent bystanders. As strong healthy responsible men, these fathers, sons, brothers, clergy, friends, employers and coaches can be positive role models for boys and girls. The importance of men as peers confronting other men who are controlling and violent--in social, workplace, and familial settings--while holding their own non-violent belief systems and behavior as a model, cannot be underestimated. Many men now do look for opportunities to assist. They seek

---

<sup>3</sup> Sources: "Intimate Partner Violence, 1993-2001," February 2003, NCJ197838, Crime Data Brief, Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.

and need guidance in how to hold men accountable without further endangering victims or themselves.

While men, as individuals, have an important role to play, the general social environment must support and sustain any efforts to end violence against women. To further these efforts, the faith and business communities have been noted as important sectors for involvement. There are no religions which publicly promote or approve of violence against women and the faith community is well situated to both prevent and intervene, but needs guidance on the nuances and causes of DV/SA/S.

The voices and actions of businesses should be enlisted. It is important for small, medium, and large businesses and corporations to educate their workers and employees about the effects of violence; the cost, loss of productivity, and absenteeism that is caused by violence against women. We encourage employers to speak out against violence in the workplace, to contact and work with local and state domestic violence and sexual assault organizations and coalitions, and to develop programs that offer advocacy services and other outreach programs and referrals to combat violence against women within their businesses.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- A) The DOJ and the DHHS should engage and recruit high profile men, who are carefully vetted, to participate in public awareness campaigns, such as the former Attorney General's *Take the Pledge* campaign. Sports and entertainment figures should be sought to work with other men in the entertainment and sports industry to promote standards of non-violent behavior. The DOJ and the DHHS should also consider asking the President to name an "All-Star Team" committed to Ending Violence Against Women. The team "drafting" event would be an opportunity for the President to use the power of his office to recognize non-traditional activists and attract new relationships and a broader network of stakeholders to encourage others to follow their examples. The President could challenge certain groups to become positively engaged in the issue – corporate leaders, sports leagues, the faith-based community and Non-Governmental Organizations ("NGOs").

- B) The DOJ and the DHHS should continue outreach to faith-based organizations that are providing education and supportive services to victims and perpetrators; such as a summit of faith-based organizations organized by the OVW to educate leaders of faith-based organizations and to discuss their role in ending violence against women.
- C) The DOJ and the DHHS should engage youth service and civic organizations on the issue of violence against women and work with these organizations, to the extent possible, to create opportunities and training programs in the elimination of DV/SA/S.
- D) The DOJ and the DHHS should work with and encourage men's groups, service clubs, men's ministries, and predominately male organizations to devote themselves to stopping violence against women.

**Charge Question No. 2: Healthy families are a product of healthy relationships and healthy marriages. What policy guidance may the Committee provide to the Attorney General and the Secretary with respect to the federal government's role in fostering and maintaining healthy relationships and healthy marriages as one of many tools in addressing the incidence of these crimes? The Committee should examine the role domestic violence advocates may play in any marriage and family initiative.**

Healthy marriages are essential to society and should be encouraged and supported. In instances where family violence, substance abuse, and criminal histories may make some men and women inappropriate marriage partners or even dangerous to their spouses or children, it should not be encouraged.

Some educators, fathers, and marriage and fatherhood organizations may not be trained in, or familiar with the indicators of DV, the differences between common couple conflict and DV, or know how to link with DV services. While interested, some may not be aware of educational and preventive efforts to teach youth and adults relationship skills and how, in some cases, couples can be taught to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence. There are new developments in research and statistics in these fields, which are not well known across these fields, or to policymakers and practitioners, that can help illuminate some of the current concerns. There have already been a few programmatic efforts to bring these fields together to develop some common goals and working relationships. Some victims of domestic and sexual violence become single parents when

they choose to leave an abusive spouse or decide not to marry the abusive parent of their child. Some victims of sexual assault elect to raise the child conceived as a result of rape. Public policy should not create further hardships for any victims who become single parents and work hard to protect their children from violence.

In addition to promoting healthy marriages, it is important to encourage and promote responsible and cooperative parenting among parents who never married or who are divorced, and teach skills that promote non-abusive strategies that specifically address controlling and abusive behavior and tactics.

Today, more than ever, DV programs work with an increasing number of systems and institutions – including among others the criminal justice system, health care, education, child protection services, and public assistance programs – which have begun to understand how DV affects the families they serve. The expertise of DV programs is invaluable to the systems, disciplines, and institutions that work with families and couples. It must be ensured that effective DV coalitions and programs have the capacity to take on this collaborative/consultative role without compromising their other responsibilities.

While marriage formation and healthy relationship programs are carried out at the local level, the federal government may help to champion their success. As a funder and policy maker, the federal government can provide incentives to local government and block grant recipients at the state and local level. Well-publicized positions by the President and Administration officials against DV/SA/S raise public awareness and set a tone for social change, such that communities are alerted to the need for particular changes in order to support the implementation and sustain the outcomes of marriage formation and healthy relationship programs that also are working to end DV/SA/S.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- A) The DOJ and the DHHS should ensure that all definitions, protocols, and policies, related to healthy marriage and family formation initiatives include specific language addressing the issues of sexual assault and domestic violence.
- B) The DOJ and the DHHS should continue to convene events with prominent public figures taking well-publicized positions against DV/SA/S. Once the event is organized,

the Attorney General and the Secretary of the DHHS should consider asking the President to be involved.

C) The DOJ and the DHHS should work with the electronic media to air existing and new public service announcements about domestic and sexual violence and the importance of its eradication in relation to healthy families and marriage promotion.

D) The DOJ and the DHHS should foster a dialogue with colleges and universities, particularly with their Schools of Journalism to alert them to the importance of reporting the realities of DV/SA/S.

E) The DOJ and the DHHS should work with national DV/SA/S groups and professional journalism associations to encourage advanced education for journalists and creative strategies for engaging their interest in reporting DV/SA/S.

F) The DOJ and DHHS should ask, in federal block grant funding, provided through the Office of Public Health and Science, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and others that administer grant programs how DV/SA/S are addressed in the grantees' program plans.

G) The DHHS should encourage each state to include in its state plan for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (“TANF”) a description of how it will develop and implement domestic violence policies and procedures to ensure the safety of battered women and their children who receive TANF supports. Each state plan should describe how trained caseworkers will screen individuals and refer victims to services, waive program requirements that would place the client in danger or make it more difficult to leave an abusive relationship, and consult with domestic and sexual violence experts to develop and implement policies and programs. The specifics of program design and implementation should be left to the states. Procedures also should be implemented to ensure that victims are not sanctioned for non-compliance with TANF requirements due to domestic violence.

H) The DHHS should encourage marriage promotion grantees to consult or contract with state and local DV/SA/S programs, as was required in the President’s Family Justice Center Initiative.

I) The DHHS should examine existing federal marriage promotion funds to consider how to allow for the consultation and expertise that DV/SA/S programs are being asked to provide.

J) To ensure that DV is appropriately addressed in any marriage promotion program – whether focused on strengthening relationships, improving parenting skills, promoting responsible parenthood, or supporting strong and healthy families – grantees should be encouraged to consult or contract with state and local DV/SA/S programs. It is particularly important that consultation and technical assistance be available to marriage promotion program grantees from DV programs in these specific areas: 1) the review of program plans, including policies, procedures and written materials, designed to identify and respond to the needs of DV/SA/S victims; 2) the development and ongoing review of confidentiality procedures; 3) the development of a crisis response protocol when there is a disclosure of current DV/SA/S; and 4) the provision of training for marriage promotion program staff on DV/SA/S issues.

**Charge Question No. 3: Local communities are the best architects of policies and practices aimed at preventing and addressing the incidence of these crimes. What policy guidance may the Committee provide to the Attorney General and the Secretary with respect to the federal government’s role in fostering community ownership of efforts to end violence against women? The Committee should also examine the role of clergy and faith-based organizations in fostering community ownership and participating in coordinated community responses to violence against women.**

The federal government can help support local communities in their efforts to eliminate violence in the family and support healthy families. However, it is primarily local communities that must lead the effort to develop effective responses to address domestic violence, stalking, and sexual assault crimes in families and neighborhoods throughout the country.

Advocates seeking to engage law enforcement and the criminal justice system in responding to domestic violence introduced Coordinated Community Response teams (“CCRs”) in the mid-1980s. CCRs are an important asset to any community effort to eradicate DV/SA/S. Initially, and today, CCRs serve as a method for community monitoring and assessment of existing policies and protocols for domestic violence intervention. They assess systems’ compliance with standards for victim safety and



intervention practices that treat victims with dignity and hold perpetrators accountable for the violence. As the vision for coordinated community response strategies develops, national initiatives such as the President's Family Justice Center Initiative can move us forward toward greater collaboration at the local level.

Since their inception, CCRs have evolved to include broad community participation in prevention, intervention, and treatment. Others have adopted them as effective organizing and planning vehicles to address sexual assault, child abuse, and elder abuse. Assuming that victims and victim advocates are actively involved, CCRs can be successful models for developing community ownership and action plans grounded in education and understanding of the issue, participation, and clear expectations. The federal government can advance community efforts by identifying emerging issues and promoting best practices. The President's Family Justice Center Initiative represents one type of innovative collaboration which should be promoted and supported. Block grants can be a vehicle for promoting best practices and innovative collaborations. (See more at question 4).

Accurate assessment of the problem is important when fostering community ownership. The Department of Justice should encourage law enforcement agencies and the military to use incident-based reporting through the National Incident Based Reporting System ("NIBRS"), and the Defense Incident Based Reporting System ("DIBRS"), not solely the Uniform Crime Reporting system ("UCR"). The use of these reporting systems will capture the entire picture of the amount of reported crime for DV/SA/S. In addition, due to the known rates of underreporting, nationally representative surveys including those that have the potential to collect state specific data--such as DHHS's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System modules on intimate partner violence and sexual violence--should be encouraged.

Local small, medium, and large businesses and corporations are crucial community partners. As employers of victims and perpetrators and as influential community members, local businesses have much to offer and much to gain by participating in local efforts to eradicate violence against women. The involvement of local businesses is important to establish a community culture of non-tolerance toward sexual and domestic violence against women.

Faith-based organizations are critical front-line allies in fostering and maintaining healthy relationships and marriages, and combating domestic violence and sexual assault. Clergy and places of worship may serve as the first line of help for many DV/SA/S victims. Frequently, this group is viewed as the safety net for these individuals. They should be encouraged to participate in coordinated community response teams. The clergy, as trusted members of the community, can foster a platform against DV/SA/S. Clergy should be better able to clarify unacceptable behaviors, without attacking belief systems. The clergy's communication to congregants, as well as their interpretation of scripture, may be better informed when they are participants in local domestic violence and sexual assault programs. A Family Justice Center approach, which includes specially trained chaplains and chaplain assistants, provides one example of collaboration and outreach for clergy and effective spiritual support to victims. Initiatives that build bridges between the DV advocacy community and clergy should be encouraged.

Changing local acceptance of violence against women should be supported by federal efforts that promote improved understanding of DV/SA/S and reduce cultural acceptance of violence against women. Passionate and succinct messages from the President and senior Administration officials that sexual and domestic violence against women is wrong, and calling for it to end, would go far in underscoring and supporting local efforts.

Nationwide, these local efforts through coordinated community responses have identified the need for greater monitoring and accountability of domestic violence offenders through developing batterer intervention programs (“BIPs”) that are coupled with structured offender supervision through coordinated court, probation, and law enforcement scrutiny.

Currently, the resources to operate certified, stand-alone BIPs do not exist in all communities. Nonetheless, supervision of perpetrators is critical in communities with or without specific batterer intervention programs. Local coordinated community response efforts can play an important role in the development of BIPs. During the development of these programs, and as an important accountability component after their establishment, community coordinated court, probation, and law enforcement monitoring of domestic violence offenders is recommended. These approaches can include increased

monitoring of probationary offenders, judicial compliance hearings, enforcement of contempt orders, criminal review of civil protection orders, and prosecution of protection order violations.

There are important reasons to continue to wrestle with methods and designs for these domestic violence offender accountability programs. First, many DV victims want to stay in relationships with their partners if the violence and abuse ends. Secondly, properly structured and qualified batterer intervention programs can provide a window of opportunity for victims to make decisions about their lives and their children, and can provide information about whether and when perpetrators are being monitored. Finally, some batterers may change. The Committee recognizes there are substantial concerns about the effectiveness of batterer intervention programs, including potential danger to the victim when batterers fail the program, or when the program fails the batterer.

Considering the above, BIP providers should be certified and monitored against objective standards, be culturally competent, and be linguistically appropriate. They must be well-trained and work closely with a broad spectrum of local supervisory systems, including local victim services providers, to ensure perpetrator accountability and safety for victims and their children.

Offenders should be assessed for medical, mental health and substance abuse issues and required to participate in treatment for those problems. Indicated medical, mental health or substance abuse treatment may occur concurrently with BIPs or such treatment may best be provided consecutively based on the findings of assessments and resource availability. For example, some perpetrators may need to comply with court-ordered drug or alcohol abstinence in order to benefit from a BIP. Regardless of BIP plans for perpetrators, victims should be informed of the complete recommended plan for all treatment participation and the likely or desired outcome of each component. For example, victims should be informed that completion of substance abuse treatment is not a substitute for participation and completion in a BIP, and that substance abuse treatment alone will not result in cessation of domestic violence.

DV offenders should receive post-release supervision and/or probation, as well as participation in a BIP. Before release there should be a careful search to identify

outstanding protective orders as well as the use of tether systems/electronic monitoring devices or the use of proximity alarms.

The field of sex offender treatment/management is still in its infancy. We know that sex offenders are not uniform in their make-up, predilections, or ability to be re-integrated safely into society. Thus far, the strategy of community management of sex offenders has been concentrated in the area of recidivism prevention. While helpful, Megan's law notification, registration, and civil commitment laws are not always sufficient to prevent subsequent sex offenses. The sex offender must be managed more stringently than other offenders. The Committee encourages the institution of policies requiring long-term supervision. The community should develop and disseminate public awareness/education campaigns to understand the complexity of sex offenders and the extent of sex offending. Effective prevention and education programs should complement public policy in order to protect society and aid in identifying offenders who are not processed through the criminal justice system.

Domestic violence and sexual assault offenders should pay for BIPs and offender treatment on a sliding scale. Payment requirements should not adversely affect victims and their children. It is critical that BIPs and sex offender treatment programs be provided in prisons and local jails.

Finally, the depiction of violence against women in television and movies, as well as in video games, popular music, and music videos promotes and reinforces a social acceptance of violence against women. The Committee encourages and supports those endeavors within the popular culture of music, videos, and games that promote positive messages with regard to the treatment of women. Additionally, the relationship between the consumption of pornography and the incidence of DV/SA should be researched.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- A) The DOJ and DHHS should work with the Department of Labor to recognize key corporations, local businesses and their leaders who have adopted model policies regarding violence against women.
- B) The DOJ should promote effective models of community coordinated court, probation, and law enforcement supervision and monitoring of domestic violence offenders in communities with, or without, BIPs. To the extent that the federal

government is involved in batterer intervention programs, it should encourage states to certify and monitor them against objective standards. Outcome data should be available to stakeholders, including victims. DHHS should be encouraged to continue to assess BIPs' role in addressing behavioral health problems and should apply rigorous standards of assessment and quality assurance to these programs.

C) The DOJ and the DHHS should encourage those federally funded, faith-based organizations which address violence against women to collaborate with existing local or state domestic violence and sexual assault programs and experts.

D) Any program that receives federal funding for the management and supervision of sex offenders should demonstrate adherence to generally accepted standards and practices.

E) The DOJ and the DHHS should continue to support innovative, efficient and effective models of service delivery that demonstrate public/private integration and community support. The President's Family Justice Center Initiative is a recent example.

**Charge Question No. 4: Much has been accomplished since the enactment of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 to develop and sustain coordinated community responses to these crimes. What policy guidance may the Committee provide to the Attorney General and the Secretary concerning strategies aimed at identifying and disseminating promising practices and policies? The committee should focus on program sustainability, innovation, and effective coordinated community responses, including the participation of health and medical service providers.**

The response to this question must consider more than best practice dissemination. As discussed elsewhere in this report, best practices, innovative approaches, and sustainability should be joined with basic, consistent services and responses. Therefore, while we applaud and encourage the continued efforts to expand knowledge and practices, we also recommend that equal attention be paid to addressing the substandard response and inadequate service availability in many communities throughout the country.

The majority of financial support for DV/SA/S services, advocacy and intervention comes from local and state, public and private sources, and essential Federal funding. However, this support varies greatly from state to state and often from

community to community. As a result, there continues to be a disparity in emergency and advocacy services for victims, in justice system and law enforcement response and practice, and in perpetrator treatment and intervention services across the country.

We all agree that there is a community responsibility for crucial crisis services and that local communities should determine how these services are structured. Given this important caveat about community control, there are certain standards that should be met and services that should be provided and maintained regardless of locale: (1) 24-hour access to emergency shelter; (2) 24-hour access to crisis phone lines, victim crisis counseling, and advocacy; (3) immediate transportation for safety and immediate access to emergency medical care; (4) educational access for children accompanying victims to shelters; (5) 24-hour trained law enforcement response for DV/SA/S victims; and (6) services that are accessible and meet the needs of local populations, including, for example, being linguistically and culturally competent.

Funding for crucial crisis services should be sustained. We should ensure that progress is not reversed.

In addition to the integral role of local communities, tribal communities and states, the federal government has a critical role as well to: (1) promote accessibility of adequate crisis services for victims; (2) ensure that perpetrator intervention practices (including law enforcement and the criminal justice system) hold perpetrators accountable but do not endanger victims; and (3) promote the standardization of best practices. To that end, the federal government's activities should support the identification of best practices and the dissemination and promotion of these practices nationwide and within tribal communities.

### **Substandard Services and Practices**

Some regions do not have the infrastructure of critical services. Often those same communities have intervention practices that do not comply with good practice standards. While oversight of such practices is largely through local and state agencies, the federal government may on occasion be the only entity with the capacity to act. Federal prosecutors with legal experience in the fields of DV/SA/S could participate in training state trial court personnel for screening domestic and sexual violence cases which have a federal jurisdiction component. These include cases involving sex trafficking, the

Internet, interstate travel, and those with Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (“RICO”) elements. In other cases, it may be important for federal agencies to identify substandard services or support the efforts of others to correct problems. For example, when a community fails to provide crisis services, then the state government and/or state DV/SA coalitions should engage that community with a plan for developing critical services. Of course, any effort to improve local services or practices must be approached with care and engage local allies to guard against negative unintended consequences. The federal government is an important ally in promoting basic expectations for community response, in leveraging funds to support remediation plans, or in strategizing various options for holding the negligent party accountable for remediation.

When a program fails to meet federal standards, the funder and grantee should meet. The funder should then give the grantee clear parameters for compliance with standards and offer technical assistance or referrals for technical assistance if needed. If corrections or improvements are not made, that grantee should be dismissed, and the funder should then identify a competent provider.

#### **Identification of Best Practices**

As innovations emerge in one community or state, the federal government, if well connected to state and national DV and SA coalitions, is situated to capture such practices for national dissemination and application. Active and intentional methods for scanning state and local entities to identify best practices should be devised.

Factors to consider in best practice identification include: (1) Can it be replicated?; (2) Can it be evaluated through measurable, evidence-based outcomes?; (3) Can it be institutionalized in the long term?; and (4) Is it effective in improving the safety of women and their children?

Further, when identifying these best practices, the following questions should be asked: (1) Is it in compliance with standards?; (2) Do relationships exist between the program and the community and local agencies?; (3) Is the community aware of the program?; (4) Is it accessible?; (5) Do diverse members of the community use it?; (6) Is the program accountable to local and state authorities and to victims?; and (7) Finally, and most importantly, is it effective in improving the safety of women and their children?

Moreover, such a program will generally have a community participation component (e.g., volunteers, matching funds, private donations). This will indicate good community buy-in and therefore may also have a higher likelihood of application in other communities.

### **Dissemination and Promotion of Best Practices**

In addition to promoting best practices through clearinghouses and related means, the federal government should examine opportunities for best practice compliance in its many grant and funding programs.

Creative funding puts best practice requirements in place ahead of time. The federal government can create the environment for change before funding. This will promote the development of comprehensive responses to DV/SA/S. For example, grants for vertical prosecution might include a requirement that offenders be ordered to treatment. In deferred prosecution, BIP providers must be in place before a court system can mandate BIP as a requirement of a court case. In such instances, adequate allowances in time and funding must be made for the grantee to plan for the best practice implementation during the grant period.

The federal government, through its block grants, may also consider when to include grantees' compliance with DV/SA/S best practices. To compete for money, a CCR--or a plan for a CCR--should be in place.

We also note that as service sectors and stakeholders broaden, demands on local DV/SA programs and state coalitions expand, often with no increase in resources to meet emerging and expanding needs. Innovation is successful when basic services and advocacy organizations are able to retain their role and exist to support the evolution and stability of innovation. If basic services and DV/SA/S advocacy organizations are not adequately supported, innovative approaches will be of little value.

To give value to the intended purpose of rape-shield laws, DOJ and DHHS should encourage states to consider enacting laws forbidding the pretrial dissemination of personal or private information about sexual assault victims. Too often, such information is revealed in pleadings and/or discussed in open court which gives the media the right to publish the information irrespective of whether it will ever be admitted at trial, or if the information is false. Judges should conduct hearings involving such information in



private (though recorded) sessions, and transcribed documents containing such information should be filed under seal. Information would become publicly available only upon a judicial determination of relevancy and admissibility--which in the ordinary course would not be until trial has commenced--and only after opportunities to appeal the ruling have been exhausted.

This policy better protects important privacy rights at stake for victims in the context of rape-shield hearings and other pretrial proceedings where personal and often irrelevant information is divulged. Rather than having all victims obtain private counsel to litigate the disclosure issue, there should be a presumption of nondisclosure of “personal information” unless and until the information is deemed relevant and admissible at trial.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- A) The DHHS should work with public health and medical service institutions to standardize reporting terminology and statistical-gathering requirements for national health statistics regarding DV/SA.
- B) The DHHS should utilize existing resource centers that provide information regarding violence against women to administer and provide related activities that address medical and mental health information and best practices.
- C) The DOJ should conduct a statute review of the 50 states to determine if DV/SA/S is prohibited criminal behavior by statute and appropriate criminal penalties are attached. This review should generate a report that is illustrative and instructional to inform states of best practices.
- D) Through its funding programs, the DOJ and DHHS should work toward standardization of promising practices in civil and criminal justice, law enforcement, and healthcare. From the inception of the “911” call, all responders – from the call taker, to the dispatcher, to the officer and EMS personnel on the street – should be well-versed in DV/SA/S identification. They should be trained in and cognizant of procedures designed to protect the victim and children. The entire criminal justice system needs to advance, such that training and procedures throughout the country are the same in every jurisdiction. Some examples of promising practices should include:
  - Full faith and credit on temporary and permanent protective orders;

- Identification of dominant aggressors in potential dual arrest situations to reduce arrests of victims;
  - Training in child witness identification;
  - Emergency medical practitioner training to spot instances of physical abuse;
  - Co-location of community based and criminal justice professionals, through strategies such as the Family Justice Center Initiative;
  - DV/SA advocates working in police stations;
  - More comprehensive threat assessment including:
    - Indicators of strangulation; and
    - Identification of sexual assaults within violent domestic relationships;
  - Training of law enforcement personnel in identification of trafficking situations that initially appear to be DV/SA/S situations;
  - Adoption by law enforcement agencies of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (“IACP”) model policies investigating domestic violence and sexual assault;
  - Adoption by law enforcement agencies of the IACP model policy on investigating DV/SA/S committed by law enforcement personnel;
  - Cross-reporting between law enforcement agencies and animal protection agencies to identify hidden victims of DV/SA and child abuse;
  - Detailed report taking and complete physical and forensic evidence gathering should be the standard for all incidents of DV/SA;
  - Counter-surveillance techniques common to drug investigations should be employed in stalking investigations when possible; and
  - DOJ and DHHS should encourage states to consider enacting laws forbidding the pretrial dissemination of personal or private information about sexual assault victims.
- E) Through its funding programs, the DOJ should work with federal, military, tribal, state and local law enforcement agencies to provide training in the following areas:

- Appropriate and sensitive investigation and treatment of DV/SA/S cases as part of the required academic curriculum for all law enforcement trainees and military recruits;
  - Training on interviewing and effectively communicating with survivors and their families;
  - Training on the use of forensic evidence to corroborate the survivor's case including DNA, digital photography and video ("DVR"), and toxicology;
  - The nature of DV/SA/S, dynamics of domestic violence, the psychology of offenders, the prevalence of and seriousness of acquaintance rape, rape trauma syndrome, child sexual assault and delayed reporting, drug-facilitated sexual assault, and racial stereotypes and cultural impediments to reporting;
  - Proper interpretation services (language and hearing impaired) for DV/SA/S sexual assault survivors in all stages of the investigation;
  - Safety planning to help ensure the safety of the victim and children;
  - Trained victim advocates, whether from non-profit crisis and advocacy centers or law enforcement offices, should be available to coordinate services for DV/SA/S victims; and
  - Skills to improve officer in-court testimony and report writing.
- F) The DOJ and the DHHS should employ any vehicles available to them to influence health professionals' training about violence against women, including screening, identification, treatment, and referral of victims and perpetrators.
- G) The DHHS should clarify federal reporting regulations regarding privacy and confidentiality as they relate to DV/SA/S victims.
- H) The DOJ and the DHHS should encourage schools of medicine, nursing, social work, and law to collaborate with local and state DV/SA/S coalitions and training programs.
- I) Through its funding, DHHS should promote collaboration among DV/SA/S, mental health, and substance abuse service providers to meet the safety and treatment needs of women who experience the co-occurrence of violence, addiction and/or mental illness.

J) The DOJ and the DHHS should continue to collaborate with national medical and health organizations so information is shared via multiple sites.

K) The DOJ and the DHHS should work with other federal agencies to raise awareness of, and share information about, DV/SA/S policies through interactions with the nation's business community.

**Charge Question No. 5: The Violence Against Women Act of 1994 began an unprecedented investment of federal funds to support programs that provided services to victims and to support initiatives and practices that hold offenders accountable for their crimes. Recipient accountability for these program dollars has consequently become an important issue. What policy guidance may the Committee provide to the Attorney General and the Secretary concerning the importance of recipient accountability and program sustainability?**

“Sustainability” can mean three things. First, it could mean sustained impact of the project. Second, it could mean sustaining equivalent funding. Third, it could mean sustaining equivalent activities.

Sustainability should be a shared responsibility and sustaining basic services and advocacy should be a priority. Grantee accountability for federal funding may be more complex than at first glance. Funders should be sensitive to the culture and constraints of non-profit organizations and have reasonable requirements that avoid unintended consequences of undermining desired results.

The federal government has been a partner in ending violence against women for more than 20 years. In 1994, that partnership expanded dramatically with the passage of VAWA. A more thorough discussion of the federal government's role in sustainability as a partner in ending violence against women can be found in the Committee's response to question 3. As stated there, the federal government should promote crucial crisis services. The current federal commitment to both crisis services, and state and tribal domestic violence and sexual assault coalitions should continue to be a priority if the outcomes and impact of VAWA funding is to be sustained.

The evaluation and outcomes should be evidence-based, ongoing, and productive. Only effective programs should be continued. The funders should ask: Which programs should be institutionalized? Which programs may have been good ideas at one time, but no longer work? Every evaluation should have a “client-served opinion.” The way to find out if a program is effective is to ask the client being served.

Effective programs should be sustained and those that are ineffective should be eliminated.

For select initiatives, strategies should be considered that have proven to be successful in related programs. Numerous examples exist which demonstrate that collaboration enhances the likelihood that there will be sustained impact and progress. For example, 20 years ago, advocates engaged nurses and health care systems in the broader goal of victim-centered advocacy; now rape kits and Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner programs are no longer uncommon. This is a result of the wide dissemination of best practices and the development of shared goals.

A review of various states' funding practices makes it clear that simple approaches to sustainability are not available and seldom result in improving service quality and consistency. A funding sustainability protocol should be based on realistic timelines for programs to engage in the community and fundraising development to both replace funding and raise awareness of available services. Innovative initiatives should show continued progress and outcomes. A balance should be sought between outcome-based results and time-limited contracts, with an emphasis on the former.

Clear and consistent application, review, and award practices are important responsibilities for any funder. While peer-review has enormous merit, it is difficult to achieve consistency across evaluators and evaluations. For example, when a program loses funding as a result of a reviewer reading a program's evaluation results incorrectly, this contributes to cynicism among prospective applicants and grantees and may damage efforts to attract broad, innovative, and diverse applicants.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- A) To provide accountability, all data collection requirements need to be victim-centered practices that are respectful and do not violate personal privacy rights.
- B) Reporting requirements should measure project outcomes and balance the value and use of data with the burden on the grantee of providing that data. Aggregate data collected should be shared with program grantees within a reasonable time. Additionally, all grantees need to be held to a reporting time line for submitting financial and program reports.

- C) The DOJ and DHHS should share with each other best practices that promote consistency in grant-making practices.
- D) The DOJ and the DHHS should continue to foster collaborations to maximize resources for prevention, intervention, and research.
- E) DOJ should examine the current broad practice of requiring Memoranda of Understanding (“MOU”) in Request for Applications (“RFAs”). For example, DOJ should consider whether all initiatives that currently require MOUs do in fact benefit from collaboration, whether MOU partners are truly engaged in collaboration or whether their partnership is meaningful to the project, and whether DOJ has the capacity to monitor and enforce compliance.
- F) Federally funded batterers intervention programs should be evidence-based, monitored for reduced recidivism rates, and focus on offender accountability rather than mediation.

**Charge Question No. 6: Children who witness family violence are at risk continuing the cycle of violence. Children-witnesses are also at risk of never being able to reach their fullest potential as their educational opportunities and health are compromised by these experiences. What policy guidance may the Committee provide to the Attorney General and the Secretary concerning the issue of children who witness family violence and strategies that address the needs of these victims?**

Based on research, the Committee believes the issues surrounding domestic violence and children are some of the most pressing issues facing our society. The implications of these issues for prevention and intervention initiatives are significant and deserve dedicated focus from the Committee.

During the past 20 years, the risks and effects of family violence on children has come to the forefront for researchers and practitioners in the fields of child abuse, juvenile delinquency, and domestic violence. While some research demonstrates the resiliency of children after witnessing violence and experiencing abuse, other research makes clear that many children carry the effects into adolescence and adulthood. The link between animal abuse and child abuse also should be examined.

Recent DOJ and DHHS sponsored Initiatives, such as the Greenbook, the President’s Family Justice Center, the Safe and Bright Futures for Children, and the Judicial Oversight Demonstration have identified the critical need to develop policies,

procedures, and protocols for addressing the relationships between child abuse, sexual assault, and domestic violence. Throughout the country today there are disparate protocols, philosophies, and policies that often put domestic violence victims and their children in danger when the issues of domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assault co-exist in families. Inefficient, ineffective, and uncoordinated prevention and intervention approaches often fail to provide accountability for offenders and safety and healing for victims.

**It is the Committee's suggestion that the Secretary and the Attorney General charge the NAC to focus on the effects of domestic violence on children and the related problems of child abuse/neglect and sexual assault during the Committee's next term as an advisory body.** The National Advisory Committee has unanimously identified the complex issues relating to children and family violence as one of the most significant and pressing challenges facing the national and international efforts to address domestic violence. Accordingly, the Committee proposes to devote a substantial amount of time and effort to understanding these issues, proposing additional research, and recommending policy direction to the Attorney General and the Secretary in the next two years.

**Charge Question No. 7: Healthy dating relationships among adolescents are essential to keeping our nation's communities and homes safe. What policy guidance may the Committee provide to the Attorney General and the Secretary concerning healthy dating relationships and violence among dating couples?**

Informing parents, adolescents, and teens about healthy relationships is an important aspect of domestic violence and sexual assault prevention. Understanding the dynamics and indicators of domestic and sexual abuse and violence is important to the success of relationship programs for youth. It is also important for youth and young adults to be aware of the challenges of single parenthood and the impact of partner selection on the long-term viability of a healthy two-parent family. Conflict resolution skills are an important asset for ensuring a healthy relationship, however, they should not be mistaken as a substitute for fully understanding domestic abuse tactics or sexual violence indicators. Many batterers have sophisticated conflict resolution skills and use their knowledge and communications skills to manipulate their victims, family, friends, and intervention professionals.

Research has shown that children fare better when raised in a healthy two-parent family. It is important that federally funded programs continue to support efforts that give children and youth adequate skills, knowledge, a social environment, and an opportunity to both select and be non-abusive marriage partners capable of parenting and adequately supporting their future families emotionally and financially.

Professionals who have regular contact with youth and teens should know how to detect and intervene in sexual and domestic teen violence. Law enforcement, for example, should be encouraged to recognize dating violence as a crime, if they do not already do so. Health care providers and social workers, including school nurses and school social workers, should screen teens and youth for sexual and domestic violence victimization as well as for witnessing domestic violence.

DV/SA/S programs and coalitions need to build capacity to serve teens and their parents and to expand to understand the unique issues facing teen victims and perpetrators of sexual and domestic violence. For example, to be effective, safety planning with teen victims of dating violence or support groups for teens require the providers' understanding of teen culture; it is not as simple as taking a standard safety plan or support group agenda and retrofitting it for teen victims. Adolescents should be involved in program design and development. Coaches and employers can be important allies for parents, teens, and youth. Efforts to educate them about DV/SA/S and to support their involvement in prevention and intervention should be explored. Youth leaders in the faith community can be strong partners in promoting healthy teen dating and in prevention efforts targeted to teens and youth.


State laws vary greatly as to the legal rights of teenagers to seek help with DV/SA/S. In some states restraining orders are not available to minors and child abuse orders do not provide the same remedies as adult protection orders. Some states do not have important treatment and advocacy resources available to this population. Healthy relationship strategies must examine how to provide important services for teenagers so they have an opportunity to build a stable, productive future.

Consideration should be given to how juvenile courts, services, and other systems can be brought into this effort to prevent and intervene in sexual and domestic violence against teens. Early identification of perpetrator tendencies and patterns of behavior and



opportunities for intervention with teens could help prevent victimization. Prevention-oriented treatment could be adapted from basic offender and batterers' treatment curricula for use with teens. Teen mental health services providers and substance abuse treatment programs and others should screen for domestic and sexual violence victimization, perpetrators/offenders, and witnessing. While a potentially important ally in prevention and intervention, substance abuse programs must understand dynamics of sexual and domestic violence and its interrelationships with substance use/abuse.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

A) To generate a report that is illustrative and instructional to inform states of best practices, the DOJ and the DHHS should review and identify state laws regarding teens' eligibility and access to services including: 

- protection orders;
- mental health services without parental consent;
- participation in sexual or domestic violence support groups;
- use of domestic violence shelters;
- states with emancipation of minor statutes and those without; and
- status of states' application of VAWA with regard to teen dating violence.

B) The DOJ and DHHS should work with the Department of Education (“DOEd”) to educate school administrators and teachers about DV/SA/S and effective strategies for prevention.

C) The DOJ and the DHHS should work with the DOEd to provide coaches with education and training opportunities for sexual and domestic violence prevention programs.

D) The DOJ and the DHHS should continue collaborations with professional schools, associations, and credentialing bodies for school nurses, social workers, and school psychologists to enhance training on screening for DV/SA/S.

E) The DOJ and the DHHS should continue to support research and model programming on prevention strategies and enhancements effective with teens and youth.

F) The DOJ and DHHS should be encouraged to continue to communicate with colleges and universities about their provision of DV/SA/S awareness and prevention education to all students.

G) The DOJ should be encouraged to continue to communicate with colleges and universities about examining their athletic programs and the incidence of DV/SA/S.

**National Advisory Committee Members Who Adopt this Response**

Rhonda Arena

Michael Bedke

Commissioner Barbara Black

Sheriff Michael Bouchard

Judge Michael Brennan

Lydia Chassaniol

Colleen Coble

Rep. Sharon Cooper

Anne Crews

Rosemary Elebash

Pamela Galbraith

Joxel Garcia, MD

Peter Garza

Casey Gwinn

Lt. Det. Margot Hill

Gerald Isaacs

Mary Lauby

Dianna Lightfoot

Elizabeth McCord, MD

Rev. Aldean "Al" Miles

Beverly Nuckols, MD

Nancy Pfothauer

Vernadette Ramirez-Broyles

Delilah Rumburg

Greer Saunders

Judge Abbi Silver

Sherolyn Smith-DeSantis

Oliver J. Williams, Ph.D.