



United States Department of Justice

# Office on Violence Against Women

*Working Together to End the Violence*

## A Message from OVW Director Cindy Dyer

During October, designated as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month 2008, I urge you to renew your commitment to raising awareness and preventing this serious crime. Domestic violence continues to impact women, children, families and communities across the country and around the globe. The Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) is dedicated to formulating national policy and sharing promising practices as we work together to address this serious crime.

In 1994, Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act to address violence against women. Subsequent reauthorizations of the Act have enhanced its scope and we as a nation have learned more about effective intervention and prevention strategies. The expansion of the Act recognizes that the crimes of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking impact the lives of women, and their children and families, throughout a woman's life span. We have also confirmed that specific groups—such as teens, those with disabilities, and women later in life—may be more vulnerable than others.

The 2005 reauthorization of the Act has focused attention on the need to intervene early in the lives of our teens, who are just beginning to explore intimate partner relationships as they begin dating. Healthy relationships begin at a young age. Teens face unique challenges as they learn dating behaviors in the new digital era. Research indicates that as many as twenty percent of young girls and teens have experienced some form of dating violence.

OVW is proud to support and co-sponsor with the Family Violence Prevention Fund a national education and awareness campaign targeted towards youth. Expected to launch in early 2009, this new campaign will help teens and youth recognize the signs of controlling behavior and abuse. At OVW, our goal is to promote healthy relationships and prevent dating violence, and future domestic violence, before it even starts.

Please join us during the month of October 2008 to help raise awareness and give a voice to all that may be victimized by violence. Through our shared resources and collaboration we can continue to make sure we are directing help and support to all of those suffering from domestic violence, whether adult or teen victims. Thank you for doing your part to assist us as we move forward to combat the crime of domestic violence.

[www.ovw.usdoj.gov](http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov)

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