



A Message from OVW Acting Director Catherine Pierce

Dear Friends:

[President Barack Obama has proclaimed April 2009 as National Sexual Assault Awareness Month.](#) We are proud to announce this historic and unprecedented proclamation, and we are inspired by what President Obama has asked of us:

I urge all Americans to respond to sexual assault by creating policies at work and school, by engaging in discussions with family and friends, and by making the prevention of sexual assault a priority in their communities.

Sexual violence is a harsh reality in every corner of the globe, including the United States. It is a serious problem in the workplace, on college campuses, in our communities, and sadly, in some of our families. The Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) joins victim advocates, prosecutors, law enforcement officers, sexual assault forensic examiners, and all those serving survivors in recognizing [April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month.](#)

According to the [Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey](#), over 255,000 sexual assaults and rapes occurred or were attempted in 2006 in this country alone. Sexual violence continues to be a significant crime against women, and every threat of sexual assault or brutal act of rape is one too many.

Ending sexual violence is a priority for OVW, and we assure you we will continue to strengthen our efforts to confront this terrible crime. Through our collective efforts and dedication we can end the trauma sexual violence victims experience in the aftermath of assault. Together, we can let it be known that there is no excuse for sexual violence, including the sexual exploitation of women and girls.

In 2009, we launched the [Sexual Assault Services Program \(SASP\)](#) authorized by the *Violence Against Women Act of 2005*. This Fiscal Year OVW will award \$21 million to the [Sexual Assault Services Formula Grant Program](#); and four additional SASP discretionary programs for culturally and linguistically specific programs; State, tribal, and territorial sexual assault coalitions; and tribal governments. Awards will be made this summer to enhance services to sexual assault victims.

In 2004 OVW released the [National Protocol for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examinations](#). Recognizing the additional burdens facing victims of sexual assault in Indian country, OVW is now working with Red Wind Consulting to develop a new protocol specific to Indian country. It is our hope that this will allow Indian victims to receive a uniform, high-quality response in cases of sexual assault.

In other important news, on March 11, 2009, President Obama [signed an Executive Order establishing the White House Council on Women and Girls](#). The Council will provide a coordinated federal response to the challenges confronted by women and girls and will ensure that U.S. government agencies consider how their policies and programs impact women and families. One of the inaugural members of the Council, Attorney General Eric Holder will meet regularly with Council members to find new ways to prevent violence against women, at home and abroad.

Also, OVW is proud to support the second national summit on the intersection of child abuse and domestic violence, *From Inspiration to Innovation: Leadership, Partnership, and Change*, in Jackson Hole, Wyoming from June 2-4, 2009. The registration deadline is extended to April 15. For details on the conference as well as the registration application, please visit <http://www.thegreenbook.info/summit/index.htm>.

In closing, please join me, Attorney General Eric Holder, and President Obama in recognizing the tireless efforts of advocates and organizations working everyday to raise awareness in communities throughout the world during Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Your efforts continue to inspire and motivate our work throughout the year and we are proud to stand with you as partners.

Sincerely,

Catherine Pierce
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U.S. Department of Justice

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