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JOAN LAROCCA

OFFICE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ANNOUNCES ONLINE FACT SHEET FOR ANONYMOUS REPORTING AND FORENSIC EXAMINATIONS

WASHINGTON – Cindy Dyer, Director for the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) today announced the availability of an online fact sheet on the provision of the Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005 (VAWA 2005) pertaining to forensic examinations. The *Frequently Asked Questions: Anonymous Reporting and Forensic Examinations* can be viewed at www.ovw.usdoj.gov.

The Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005 (“VAWA 2005”), 42 U.S.C. § 3796gg-4(d), provides that states may not “require a victim of sexual assault to participate in the criminal justice system or cooperate with law enforcement in order to be provided with a forensic medical exam, reimbursed for charges incurred on account of such an exam, or both” (the “VAWA 2005 forensic examination requirement”). Under this provision a state must ensure that victims have access to an exam free of charge or with full reimbursement, even if the victim chooses not to report the crime to the police or otherwise cooperate with the criminal justice system or law enforcement authorities.

“The Office on Violence Against Women is continuing its commitment to assist victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking to receive the services and treatment they need, especially following sexual assault. Receiving immediate medical treatment, without being required to report the crime or cooperate with the criminal justice system, is an important and necessary response to the victim,” said Dyer.

All states must comply with the VAWA 2005 requirement regarding forensic examination by the statutory deadline of Jan. 5, 2009, in order to be eligible to receive STOP (Services, Training, Officers, Prosecutors) Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program funds. Information on this can be obtained at http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/stop_grant_desc.htm.

Technical assistance to states on complying with the VAWA 2005 forensic examination requirement is available through the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA) at <http://www.mcasa.org/C/4/C4.htm> or by telephone at (410) 974-4507. For further information on forensic examination requirements and other STOP Program requirements, visit http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/docs/FAQ_FINAL_nov_21_07.pdf.