

For Immediate Release  
January 31, 2012

**ATTORNEY GENERAL ERIC HOLDER'S TASK FORCE EXAMINES CHILDREN'S EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE IN RURAL AND TRIBAL COMMUNITIES**

WASHINGTON – Attorney General Eric Holder's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence today held a public hearing in Albuquerque, N.M., on the challenges rural and tribal communities face in preventing children's exposure to violence. In a recent survey of youth in New Mexico by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 20 percent reported they were bullied on school property and almost 10 percent experienced dating violence. Nearly 16 percent seriously considered attempting suicide during the 12 months before the survey.

“Protecting our nation's children and young people from violence is a responsibility that every American shares. For today's Justice Department, this work is one of most important, and most urgent, priorities,” said Attorney General Holder. “That's why this task force represents a powerful and promising step forward. It brings a wealth of experience and talent together to focus on one of the greatest public safety epidemics of our time: children's exposure to violence.”

“Our children are exposed to far more violence than we realize,” said U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales, who delivered opening remarks at today's hearing. “The task force will enhance how we work together to serve our children in cities and towns, on reservations, and in rural areas throughout the nation.”

Speakers at today's hearing at the Vincent E. Griego Council Chambers also included task force co-chairs Joe Torre, chairman of the board of the Joe Torre Safe at Home® Foundation, and Robert Listenbee Jr., chief of the Juvenile Unit of the Defender Association of

Philadelphia, as well as other task force members and Albuquerque area residents who have experienced or witnessed family, community and other types of violence.

“Rural and tribal communities face unusual challenges, such as lack of resources or access to services, that complicate efforts to reduce the impact of violence on children,” said task force member Sarah Deer, a citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma and an assistant professor at William Mitchell School of Law in St. Paul Minn. “This hearing in Albuquerque will help the task force understand these unique challenges and guide us toward solutions.”

The task force will identify promising practices, programming and community strategies to prevent and respond to children’s exposure to violence. It also will issue a final report to the attorney general in December 2012 that will present policy recommendations and serve as a blueprint for preventing and reducing the negative effects of such violence across the United States.

“The task force is focused on the well-being of our most precious resource: our children,” said Torre. “I hope that our work will make a significant contribution to solving this urgent problem.”

The task force is comprised of 13 leading experts including practitioners, child and family advocates, academic experts and licensed clinicians. The full list of task force members is located at: [www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood/tf-members.html](http://www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood/tf-members.html).

The task force held its first hearing in Baltimore in November 2011, and will hold two additional hearings this spring in Miami and Detroit. Details on past and future hearings are available on the Defending Childhood website: [www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood](http://www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood).

The task force is part of the attorney general’s Defending Childhood Initiative and is staffed by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD), a nonprofit research and consulting agency.

### **About the Defending Childhood Initiative and the Task Force**

For more information about Attorney General Holder’s Defending Childhood initiative, the

Defending Childhood Task Force and upcoming hearings, please visit:

[www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood](http://www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood) and [www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood/task-force.html](http://www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood/task-force.html).

**About the National Council on Crime and Delinquency**

NCCD promotes just and equitable social systems for individuals, families and communities through research, public policy and practice. For more information about NCCD, please visit

[www.nccd-crc.org](http://www.nccd-crc.org).

###

12-37