

# The Clinton Administration's Crime Control Strategy:

## A Commitment to End Violence Against Women



Taking Back Our Neighborhoods  
One Block at a Time

September 1999

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## Executive Summary

When the Congress and President Clinton teamed up to make the Violence Against Women Act become law in 1994, the nation took a giant step forward in its recognition of, and response to violence against women, particularly domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. This law not only strengthened criminal laws and provided funding to enhance their enforcement, but also provided a foundation for a successful long term criminal justice effort to end violence against women. By encouraging collaboration among police, prosecutors, and victim service providers, the Violence Against Women Act is building a comprehensive community response to violence against women all across America.

*“The Violence Against Women Act provides us with a powerful tool with which to fight the scourge of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. While we have made significant progress, we must continue to use all necessary means and available information to help reduce -- if not eliminate -- all types of violence against women.” Attorney General Janet Reno*

*“This is not a women’s issue. This is an issue for families and for children and for men as well. And it is an American challenge that we have to face. This issue has been swept under the rug for too long. We have tried to take it out into the daylight, to let people talk about it, to give people a chance to find courage in the efforts of others and to know that they can find help. That’s what the Violence Against Women Act is all about.” President Bill Clinton*

Since the passage of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the Department of Justice has launched a multifaceted initiative to combat domestic violence, stalking, and sexual assault. The Department’s efforts have been guided by two key principles: ensuring the safety of victims and holding perpetrators of violence accountable for their acts. The Department has made issues of violence against women central to our work in three important ways: bringing prosecutions under the federal domestic violence, stalking, and firearms laws; raising awareness of the VAWA and the issues of domestic violence, stalking, and sexual assault in communities throughout the country; and forging partnerships among police, prosecutors, and victim service providers at the state, tribal, and local levels through the STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program and other VAWA grant programs. The Department has also worked closely on this initiative with state, local, and tribal judges.

The Justice Department has awarded more than \$700 million dollars in VAWA grant funds to law enforcement officials, prosecutors, victim advocates and courts to address the problem of violence against women at the state, tribal, and local levels. The Department, through the Offices of the United States Attorneys, has prosecuted over 179 cases involving interstate domestic violence, interstate stalking, interstate violation of a protection order, or possession of a firearm while under a protection order or after conviction for a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence.

Although progress has been made in recent years, domestic violence -- violence by intimates -- still accounts for about 20 percent of all violent crimes against women and about 30 percent of all murders of women in America. More than one million women are stalked each year, and a quarter million were sexually assaulted in 1996 alone. The Clinton Administration has laid the groundwork for a strong and effective strategy for building collaborative community partnerships to keep women safe and hold perpetrators accountable. Now, as the goal of a safer America is within reach, it is essential to continue this effort in order to bring an end to violence against women.

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President Clinton, Attorney General Reno, and others have led a historic effort to reduce crime in our nation's communities. As part of that effort, President Clinton signed into law the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which was enacted as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. The law takes a comprehensive approach to fighting violence against women. It combines tough new penalties with programs to prosecute offenders and aid victims of such violence. This groundbreaking law has transformed the legal landscape, by bringing these issues from behind closed doors into the center of public debate, thereby helping to shift social attitudes toward violence against women.

The VAWA recognized the devastating consequences that violence has on women, families, and society as a whole. For the first time, federal resources, federal law enforcement, and federal prosecutors joined the front lines of the struggle to end violence against women. The VAWA encourages federal, state, tribal, and local governments to collaborate -- to work together to figure out how to end the terrible scourge of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking that has shattered the lives of so many of this nation's women, children, and families. Today, law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, and women's advocates are working together, sharing information and ideas to keep women safe and hold offenders accountable.

There is no question that the VAWA is making a difference. Under the VAWA, communities across the country and all levels of government are creating coordinated, community-wide responses and are setting up infrastructure needed to improve our response to violence against women:

- States and tribes are changing their laws to treat violence against women as a serious crime. Twenty-four states and the District of Columbia mandate arrest for most domestic violence offenses and forty-nine states now authorize law enforcement to make an arrest based on a probable cause determination that a protection order has been violated.<sup>1</sup>
- Jurisdictions are changing the way they handle domestic violence cases to make sure these cases are given the attention they need. Thirty-six court systems have some type of special court jurisdiction, structure, or services to handle domestic violence cases.
- States are acting to lift some of the costs from women who were victimized by violence. As required by the VAWA, all states and the District of Columbia now have some provision for covering the cost of a forensic rape exam. All states and the District of Columbia mandate or authorize that convicted or charged sex offenders be tested for HIV.<sup>2</sup>
- States are increasingly recognizing that domestic violence hurts children, too. Forty-two states, and the District of Columbia, include domestic violence as a factor for a court to consider in child custody decisions.
- United States Attorneys, at the Attorney General's request, have each appointed special VAWA points of contact in their offices to help coordinate prosecution of federal VAWA crimes. Over 179 indictments on such crimes have been brought since the enactment of the law.

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<sup>1</sup>See Miller, N., *Domestic Violence: A Review of State Legislation Defining Police and Prosecution Duties and Powers*, Domestic Violence Legislative Review, Institute for Law and Justice, August 1998.

<sup>2</sup>National Conference of State Legislatures, "HIV/AIDS Facts to Consider", January 1999.

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- The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) estimates that in 1997, more than 7,700 of the 69,000 handgun sales blocked through presale background checks were denied because of a domestic violence misdemeanor conviction or a valid restraining order. From January 1, 1998 to November 29, 1998, 9,310 of the 70,000 blocked handgun sales were denied for these reasons as well.

Although we are making progress, violence still devastates the lives of many women:

- Although the overall number of women murdered by an intimate<sup>3</sup> has dropped since 1976, intimates are still responsible for 30 percent of all homicides of women. Women are much more likely than men to have been murdered by an intimate.
- Violence by intimates accounts for about 20 percent of all violent crimes against women.
- More than 250,000 women were sexually assaulted in 1996 alone.
- Over one million women are stalked annually, and fully eight percent of all women in this country have been stalked at some time in their life. Overall, most stalkers are men (87 percent) and most stalking victims are women (78 percent).

Simply put, violence against women remains a critical problem in this country, and continues to call all of us to action.

## Federal Funds Are Making a Difference

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) established grant programs that are being used to forge focused and effective partnerships among federal, state, and local governments, and between the criminal justice system and victim advocates. There are six VAWA-related grant programs. These programs assist state and local governments and agencies in training personnel, enforcing laws, assisting victims of violence, and holding perpetrators accountable. The VAWA provides federal grants to help communities across America develop innovative strategies to combat violence against women.

The Department of Justice has awarded more than \$700 million through the VAWA grant programs since 1994, directing critical resources to communities' collaborative efforts to respond to violence against women. The VAWA grants finance community initiatives involving victim service providers, victims' advocates, law enforcement, prosecutors, courts, health care providers, and community organizations.

Federal funds have reached across the nation -- from remote, rural and tribal communities, to large urban centers; from nonprofit domestic violence shelters to State prosecutors' offices. They are making a difference in the lives of women everywhere. And they have made a difference in how communities respond to violence against women -- by bringing together police, prosecutors, advocates, judges, and others to make America safer for women and families.

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<sup>3</sup>The term "intimate" includes spouse, ex-spouse, common law spouse, same sex partner, boyfriend, and girlfriend. Violence By Intimates, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Washington D.C. March 1998.

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## ***STOP Formula Grant Program***

The Department's largest VAWA grant program is the STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program. "STOP" stands for "Services•Training•Officers•Prosecutors" -- reflecting the collaborative goals of this program. It promotes a coordinated approach by encouraging the States to pool the expertise and resources of law enforcement, prosecutors, courts, and victims advocates. Since 1994, the STOP Program has provided \$549 million to all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 6 territories, including over \$138 million in fiscal year 1999. Under the VAWA, states have pulled together law enforcement representatives, prosecutors, and victim services providers to design a statewide plan for the use of these funds. States have awarded over 5,000 STOP subgrants.

We are building from these initial successes. The Department is supporting the expanded involvement of courts in STOP grant partnerships, and also continues its emphasis on sexual assault and stalking prevention and prosecution.

In Cache County, Utah, STOP funds support a sexual assault prosecutor. In the seven years before this prosecutor was hired, the County had not charged a single sexual assault case. In 1997 alone, the prosecutor's office handled more than 60 sexual assault cases.

In California, STOP funds have been used to provide training on stalking investigations to more than 6,000 law enforcement officers.

In Delaware, STOP funds have trained police officers on domestic violence, and two counties are focusing on the often neglected elderly victims of domestic violence.

Communities around the country are using STOP funds to set up programs that give women who are stalked immediate contact with police in an emergency.

In Alabama, STOP funds have helped establish mobile units that provide on-site assistance to domestic violence victims in rural areas.

## ***STOP Violence Against Indian Women Grant Programs***

Under the STOP program, the VAWA sets aside funds each year to combat domestic and sexual violence against women in Indian country. Data from the National Violence Against Women Survey show that Native American and Alaska Native women are more likely to be stalked and to disclose victimization by rape and physical assault than women of other racial/ethnic backgrounds.

The Department is committed to addressing and reducing domestic violence and sexual assault against Indian women. A total of \$21.1 million has been awarded to tribes, including nearly \$5 million in Fiscal Year 1999. Tribes are using the funds to develop and strengthen the response of tribal justice systems to violent crimes against women. The activities of the STOP program have also raised awareness of domestic violence among tribal leaders and communities. Under all five VAWA discretionary programs, more than \$34 million has been awarded to 142 Indian tribal governments and organizations serving 281 Native communities.

On the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, law enforcement officers were arresting both parties in 10 percent of all domestic violence cases in 1996, which is a high percentage. After VAWA funds helped train officers on how to identify the predominate aggressor, the dual arrest rate dropped to less than 2 percent in 1997. Women are no longer arrested for having defended themselves against abuse.

The White Mountain Apache Tribe of Arizona uses its prosecution allocation to support an advocate who works within its prosecutor's office to assist and support victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

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## ***Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies Program***

The Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies Program has enabled communities across the country to use the power of the criminal justice system to keep victims safe and hold offenders accountable. Through this program, the Department awarded over \$105 million in Fiscal Year 1998 and expects to award another \$28 million by October 1999. To qualify for these funds, communities must demonstrate their community-wide collaboration of efforts to prevent and stop domestic violence. The result has been the development of new partnerships and a deeper understanding of violence against women.

In order to promote the effective preparation and prosecution of domestic violence cases, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin has used funding from the Grants To Encourage Arrest Policies Program to add three assistant district attorneys and three victim liaisons to the Office of the District Attorney's Domestic Violence Unit. Additionally, Milwaukee County has used grant funds to make available on weekends the services of nonprofit, nongovernmental victim advocacy agencies.

With funding from the Grants To Encourage Arrest Policies Program, St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana has strengthened its ability to provide victims of domestic violence with support, advocacy and safety as cases against their abusers proceed through the criminal justice system. Specifically, St. Tammany Parish has made training on the proper and effective treatment of domestic violence cases available to all law enforcement officers in the Parish, created domestic violence units within the Sheriff's Office and the prosecutor's office, and opened a satellite office of the local shelter, Safe Harbor, in order to serve women on the Parish's west end.

## ***Rural Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Enforcement Program***

The Rural Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Enforcement Program assists rural areas in the investigation and prosecution of cases involving domestic violence and child abuse, as well as enhances the delivery of services to such victims. The Department has already awarded over \$30 million for these efforts and expects to award another \$20.9 million by the end of September. Rural communities often have to reach farther to respond to domestic violence and child abuse, and thus, Rural funds are important to identifying and securing technology and other means to address the geographic isolation that has limited response and services. Rural grants are also helping communities develop partnerships between child protective services and domestic violence advocates to address the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child abuse, as well as to ensure the safety of battered women and their children.

In Bonner County, Idaho, where no domestic violence program existed prior to a 1997 Rural award, advocates respond with law enforcement to domestic violence calls and provide outreach and follow-up services to victims. VAWA funds have also supported the opening of a shelter for battered women and their children.

In rural Massachusetts, health and human services providers, law enforcement officials, clergy, and others are receiving training to address domestic violence and child victimization in their communities. The goals of the project include prevention through community education and outreach, advocacy and counseling to children and non-offending parents, and coalition building to address victims' safety and access to community resources.

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## ***Domestic Violence Victims' Civil Legal Assistance Grants Program***

*"These funds can help victims begin to pick up the pieces and take practical steps to bring order to their lives."*

*Bonnie Campbell, Director, Violence Against Women Office*

While the central goal of the VAWA is to improve the criminal justice system's response to violence against women, victims of domestic violence face related problems in civil matters such as custody and visitation, abuse and neglect, child support, divorce, or other civil cases where domestic violence is involved. Child custody cases involving domestic violence pose particularly difficult challenges for judges, battered women, and children. In October 1998, the Department awarded \$11.5 million to legal services and victims organizations, battered women's shelters, law school clinics, and bar associations to strengthen civil legal assistance for victims of domestic violence. The Department awarded another \$21.9 million in June of this year.

Through the George Washington University Law School's Domestic Violence Advocacy Project in Washington, D.C., law students work with hospital emergency room personnel and are available 24 hours a day to respond to the legal needs of battered women.

In Eugene, Oregon, the grant funds will allow the Lane County Legal Aid Society to partner with shelters to provide representation to battered women in protection order hearings and other civil matters.

## ***Grants to Combat Violent Crimes Against Women On Campuses***

Under the newest program providing grants to combat violence against women on campuses, the Department has recently received over 100 applications to develop comprehensive, coordinated responses to violent crimes against women on campuses, including sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking. This program was authorized under the Higher Education Amendments of 1998 and requires campuses to develop partnerships with nonprofit, nongovernmental victim advocacy organizations, and local criminal justice or civil legal agencies to enhance victim safety and offender accountability and to prevent these crimes. Congress appropriated \$10 million in fiscal year 1999 to encourage institutions of higher education to adopt a coordinated community response to violence against women. The Department expects to make approximately 20 awards to institutions of higher education under this program by the end of September.

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## *COPS Domestic Violence Grants*

The Department's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) is the core component of the Clinton Administration's commitment to increase community policing as part of a community-wide response to crimes, including domestic violence. The COPS Domestic Violence Grants foster partnership and coordination between law enforcement and victims advocates at the community level. The Department's COPS office has dedicated over \$58.5 million to efforts designed to address domestic violence through community policing. In 1996, under the Community Policing to Combat Domestic Violence program, COPS awarded over \$46 million to 336 law enforcement agencies for this purpose. Under this program, law enforcement agencies were asked to apply jointly with community service or victim advocate organizations to execute well-planned, innovative strategies. In 1998, COPS expended \$10 million for training, research and evaluation, and test sites in communities where law enforcement established such partnerships to enhance coordinated responses to domestic violence.

The Bristol, Connecticut Police Department has held trainings for all officers on how to assist victims of domestic violence with safety planning and risk assessment. It has also developed a video for local cable television on domestic violence, and formed community policing partnerships with court personnel, educators, state social services officials, and the religious community to combat domestic violence.

The Colorado Springs, Colorado Police Department created a 21-person domestic violence team representing a variety of community groups to train officers on dealing with domestic violence issues. Each officer works with the team for 100 hours to learn and develop strategies to combat domestic violence, assist victims, and to use risk assessments to reduce future incidents.

## *Training and Technical Assistance Grants*

Using funds drawn from each of the major VAWA grant programs, the Department also works to build the capacity of national criminal justice and victim advocacy organizations to foster community partnerships and to respond effectively to violence against women. The Department plans to award over \$36 million through Fiscal Year 1999 for this purpose. The Department also sponsors mentoring efforts and peer-to-peer consultations, making it possible for people who want to establish effective programs in their community to visit other communities and learn from experts in the field.

**Technical assistance includes training, policy development, and information, for example:**

- Holding Judicial Institutes, sponsored by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and the Family Violence Prevention Fund, for assisting judges in handling civil and criminal cases involving domestic violence;
- Development by the International Association of Chiefs of Police of a model policy and procedures for handling domestic violence and abuse cases involving police officers;
- Development of a Promising Practices Manual by the STOP Violence Against Women Technical Assistance Project; and
- Development by the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs of a partnership with other state sexual assault coalitions (Minnesota, New York, Connecticut, and Illinois) for sharing resources, information, and strategies and mentoring newly formed coalitions nationwide.

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## Keeping Victims Safe and Holding Offenders Accountable

The VAWA provides federal prosecutors important tools to support and supplement state and local prosecution of domestic violence and stalking crimes. In some cases, a federal prosecution may carry a more severe and appropriate punishment for an offender than a prosecution under a state law. Where a defendant has traveled from state to state, the resources of the Federal Bureau of Investigation are available to investigate and build a case for prosecution. In other cases, a state prosecutor may request that the case be referred for federal prosecution because, once detained by a federal court, a defendant is more likely to remain in custody prior to trial.

### *Criminal Prosecutions under the VAWA*

The VAWA strengthens the penalties for sex offenders and domestic violence perpetrators -- doubling the maximum term of imprisonment for repeat sex offenders and authorizing severe sentences for abusers who cross state lines and tribal boundaries to stalk or to commit acts of domestic violence. The VAWA and VAWA-related criminal provisions prohibit crossing state or tribal borders to commit domestic violence, interstate stalking, crossing state or tribal lines to violate a protection order, and possessing a firearm while subject to a domestic violence protection order or if convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence.<sup>4</sup> While the vast majority of domestic violence cases will continue to be prosecuted by states, localities, and tribes, these statutory tools enable federal law enforcement to prosecute and to obtain severe penalties in appropriate cases in cooperation with the state, local and tribal authorities. Vigorous prosecution of federal domestic violence offenses is a top priority for the

Department. These prosecution efforts have succeeded, and will continue to succeed, because the United States Attorneys Offices have prosecuted federal cases where appropriate and formed prosecution partnerships with their state, local, and tribal counterparts in the nationwide fight against domestic violence.

The Department has prosecuted more than 179 cases under the VAWA and VAWA-related criminal provisions of federal law. The following cases exemplify successful federal prosecutions that resulted in convictions and lengthy sentences for the defendants:

- The United States prosecuted a defendant who traveled from Alabama to Texas for interstate stalking. He had been released from federal custody in Alabama for making interstate threatening phone calls to one ex-wife. In Texas, he terrorized another ex-wife and his three grown children. The defendant was convicted. At sentencing, the court considered the defendant's lengthy history of domestic abuse of the four stalking victims -- a history that included beatings, torture, abandonment, threats to kill, stabbing and burning -- and departed upward from the sentencing guidelines to impose a maximum sentence of 20 years in federal prison.
- The United States prosecuted the defendant for shooting at his estranged wife while she was working in a pre-school playground. At the time of the shooting, the defendant was subject to a qualifying protection order. Although the case was initially presented to the district attorney's office, state prosecution of attempted murder would have required proof of the defendant's intent at the time of the shooting. Federal prosecution instead required only possession of the firearm while subject to a

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<sup>4</sup>There are five federal domestic violence offenses: (1) Interstate Domestic Violence, 18 U.S.C. §2261; (2) Interstate Violation of a Protection Order, 18 U.S.C. §2262; (3) Interstate Stalking, 18 U.S.C. §2261A; (4) Prohibition against Possession of a Firearm while Subject to a Protection Order, 18 U.S.C. §922(g)(8); and (5) Prohibition against Possession of a Firearm after Conviction of a Domestic Violence Misdemeanor, 18 U.S.C. §922(g)(9).

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qualifying protection order. The district attorney's office referred the case for federal prosecution and the defendant pled guilty to the federal charge. At sentencing, the court granted the federal prosecutor's request for an upward departure, based upon the danger presented to the young children in the playground, and sentenced the defendant to a 66-month term of imprisonment.

### ***Working to Make Nationwide Enforcement of Protection Orders a Reality***

The VAWA requires states and tribes to honor protection orders issued by other jurisdictions if certain statutory requirements are met. The Department has adopted a strategy for implementing this full faith and credit provision that focuses on providing training, technical assistance, and grants to law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, courts, and victim advocates. The Department funds the Full Faith and Credit Technical Assistance Project of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence, which provides nationwide assistance on a wide range of issues related to interstate and intertribal enforcement of protection orders and sponsored a national training conference in October 1997 that has led to several local and regional conferences. Tribes in Alaska, the southwest and the midwest are also working to strengthen protection order enforcement between tribes as well as between tribes and states.

The Department has also worked to develop, produce, and disseminate a series of brochures on interjurisdictional enforcement of protection orders for the different components in the criminal justice system. For instance, in October 1998, the Attorney General introduced a brochure for law enforcement that was developed with the International Association of the Chiefs of Police. A benchcard for judges was released in August 1999 at a meeting of the Conference of Chief Justices and similar brochures for advocates, survivors, and prosecutors are in development.

In order to help confirm the existence and terms of protection orders issued by jurisdictions nationwide, the FBI developed the National Crime Information Center Protection Order File, a national registry that came on line in May 1997. As of June 22, 1999, 25 states are participating -- either by linking their existing state system to the national registry or by entering protection order information directly into it. The Department is assisting an ever-increasing number of states in developing their own protection order registries.

### ***Addressing the Needs of Battered Immigrant Women***

Prior to the enactment of the VAWA, many battered immigrants found themselves trapped between abuse and deportation because those individuals, who were authorized to act for them under the immigration law and also were their abusers, refused to file immigration papers on their behalf. The VAWA responded to their plight by enabling the battered spouses and children of U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents to self-petition for permanent residency, without depending on the help of their abusers. Since the enactment of VAWA, the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Violence Against Women Office have issued regulations to implement the self-petitioning provisions of the VAWA. In June 1997, INS centralized the filing of all VAWA self-petitions in the Vermont Service Center, where a specially-trained unit adjudicates the applications. To date, over 4,300 immigrant victims of domestic violence have been approved for lawful status under the VAWA.

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## Understanding Violence Against Women

The Department of Justice plays a unique role in collecting data on crime and increasing knowledge about the causes and consequences of crime and effective strategies for prevention and intervention. With the enactment of the VAWA, the Department has

contributed to the expanding body of research on violence against women. This data and research make clear the gravity of the problem and demonstrate the need for our continuing efforts to end violence against women through the initiatives authorized by the VAWA.

The Department, through its National Institute of Justice (NIJ), a component of the Office of Justice Programs, continues to play a central role in supporting research to understand the nature, scope, causes, and consequences of violence against women. This research is used to develop strategies to prevent and respond effectively to violence against women. NIJ funds family violence research directly; it jointly conducts research with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and it participates in the Interagency Consortium for Research on Violence Against Women and Family Violence. Moreover, NIJ is making special efforts to support community-driven evaluations that promote partnerships between researchers and practitioners.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), a component of the Department's Office of Justice Programs, is the United States' primary source for criminal justice statistics. BJS collects, analyzes, publishes, and disseminates information on crime, criminal offenders, victims of crime, and the operation of justice systems at all levels of government.

### A sampling of publications addressing violence against women include:

- Tjaden, P. and Thoennes, N., Stalking in America: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey Research in Brief. U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, Washington, D.C., April 1998;
- Tjaden, P. and Thoennes, N., Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey Research in Brief. U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, Washington, D.C., November 1998;
- Violence By Intimates, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Washington, D.C., March 1998;
- American Indians and Crime, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Washington, D.C., February 1999; and
- American Bar Association Criminal Justice Section, Legal Interventions in Family Violence: Research Findings and Policy Implications, U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, Washington, D.C., 1988.

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## Providing National and International Leadership on Combating Violence Against Women

In 1995, President Clinton named former Iowa Attorney General Bonnie Campbell as the Director of the Violence Against Women Office at the Department of Justice. This office, which is housed in the Office of Justice Programs, administers the VAWA grant programs, coordinates Departmental efforts on violence against women, and provides national and international leadership to combat violence against women. Director Campbell works within the Federal government representing the Department of Justice on the President's Interagency Council on Women and works to bring focus within the missions and jurisdictions of other agencies on issues of violence against women. Through the work of the Violence Against Women Office, the Department is collaborating with the Departments of Health and Human Services and Housing and Urban Development and other federal agencies on a wide variety of initiatives to address violence against women. Director Campbell has traveled to every region of the country and has, on almost 250 occasions, met with and spoken to prosecutors, law enforcement groups, judges, domestic violence advocacy groups, women's centers, colleges, universities, health professionals, and many others.

As the issue of violence against women has taken on global importance, Director Campbell and other Department staff have represented the Department internationally as well. For example, in October 1998, Director Campbell led a delegation of United States experts to the United States - Russian Conference on Domestic Violence in Moscow, the first high-level meeting on this issue in Russia. In September 1998, Violence Against Women Office senior staff, together with the Department's Office for Victims of Crime, led a workshop at the World Conference on Family

Violence in Singapore. Other countries look to the United States Department of Justice for our leadership and technical assistance on strategies to develop laws, change policies and promote public discourse on violence against women within their own societies. Director Campbell has been a leader within this country and internationally not only on the issues of domestic violence and sexual assault, but also on trafficking in women, which, with increasing globalization, appears to be a growing form of violence against women in which women and girls are taken from one country to another and forced to work in dehumanizing conditions stripped of their rights, safety and dignity.

In addition to Director Campbell's work, the Department makes sure that everything the Department is learning about violence against women is in the hands of advocates, prosecutors, judges, and others who need it most. Through newsletters, reports, and an actively maintained and ever expanding Internet website, the Department ensures that information about violence against women research, programs, and intervention strategies is readily available and accessible.

The Justice Department's Violence Against Women Office Internet website address is [www.usdoj.gov/vawo](http://www.usdoj.gov/vawo)

The National Domestic Violence Hotline is a toll-free number that offers shelter referrals and assistance to anyone who is in need: 1-800-799-SAFE. Funded by HHS, the Hotline has answered 346,611 calls for help from February 21, 1996 to July 14, 1999.

Technical Assistance on the interjurisdictional enforcement of protection orders is available from the Full Faith and Credit Project, a project of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (800) 256-5883 and from the Battered Women's Justice Project (800) 903-0111, ext. 2.

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The 43-member National Advisory Council on Violence Against Women advises the Attorney General and the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services on outreach strategies and implementation of the VAWA and issues related reports. The Council's membership includes representation from law enforcement, business, health and human services, academia, the sports industry, victims service providers, advocates, and religious organizations.

The Advisory Council has produced two widely requested and disseminated pamphlets: "A Community Checklist: Important Steps to End Violence Against Women" and "Stop the Cycle of Violence: What You Can Do," handbooks on what individuals and communities can do to fight violence against women and assist victims. The National Advisory Council is currently developing an "Agenda for the Nation to End Violence Against Women in the 21st Century," which will guide communities in their efforts to address this problem as we enter the new millennium.

## PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

As we look to the future, the Department will focus not only on the need to continue and expand our current efforts but also on new and emerging issues, such as cyberstalking and trafficking in women, that we must address if we are to succeed in stopping violence against women. Our efforts will include the following:

### ◆ **The Civil Justice System's Response to Violence Against Women**

The Department is developing a strategy to raise awareness of domestic and sexual violence issues in civil matters, provide training to civil justice system personnel, and improve coordination among different civil courts hearing matters involving the same family and

between criminal and civil courts where domestic and sexual violence issues are present.

### ◆ **Underserved Populations**

The Department has a responsibility to ensure that efforts to improve the justice system's response to violence against women work for everyone in our communities. Race, ethnicity, income, and other factors may affect the way victims respond to violence and the options available to them for dealing with it. We must ensure that efforts to build a coordinated community response to violence against women address the needs of diverse and underserved populations, including racial or ethnic minorities, Native Americans, immigrants, the elderly, women with disabilities, and gays and lesbians.

### ◆ **Cyberstalking**

At the request of Vice President Gore, the Department has studied the problem of cyberstalking and will be reporting back with recommendations on how to protect people from this threat.

### ◆ **Trafficking In Women**

In response to a directive from President Clinton, the Department has reviewed laws and victim programs relating to trafficking in women and children and will be reporting back to the President.

### ◆ **Federal Legislation**

The Administration strongly supports a five-year reauthorization for the VAWA grant programs and looks forward to working with members of Congress to improve and strengthen the VAWA and our nation's response to these crimes.

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