Ending Violence Against Women

An Agenda For The Nation
We offer Ending Violence Against Women - An Agenda for the Nation as a comprehensive blueprint for individual, community and government action.

The National Advisory Council on Violence Against Women was established in 1995 to provide guidance to the implementation of the 1994 Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). VAWA, which became law with strong bipartisan support from Congress and the President, represents a powerful policy mandate to address domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking as serious public safety and public health threats. Under VAWA and related initiatives, significant federal resources have been provided to support collaborative local, state and federal efforts to reduce and eliminate violence against women.

The National Advisory Council brings together experts in the fields of domestic violence and sexual assault, including survivors, advocates, researchers, legal and health care practitioners, elected officials, and representatives from the media, sports, education, labor, social services and business. In late 1998, the Council was challenged by its co-chairs, the Attorney General of the U.S. Department of Justice and the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to develop a comprehensive national plan to end violence against women.

The Agenda and its accompanying Toolkit to End Violence Against Women have been developed through a combination of staff work and Council deliberation. To ensure that they reflect what can be learned from community efforts to date, the staff conducted hundreds of interviews with individual practitioners and policy leaders, including more than 100 focus groups and information sessions throughout the country. The recommendations this plan contains were reviewed by practitioners and policymakers at the local, state, and national levels, and the document is far richer from these contributions.

The National Advisory Council offers this Agenda as a tribute to those who have worked tirelessly to bring the issue of violence against women to our public consciousness, and most especially to the victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We honor those whose work in crisis programs, within the justice system, and in health care and social service agencies helps victims recover and find safety. We applaud business and labor leaders, educators, religious and spiritual leaders, policymakers and others who have demonstrated their commitment to ending violence against women by developing model policies, protocols and programs in communities throughout this country. We commend those men and women who have taken a public and private stand against violence.

We urge you to join them - and us - in continuing this work to end violence against women with renewed commitment and energy.

The National Advisory Council
This Agenda is an urgent call to action – we can and must end violence against women.

Daily we hear news reports of women and girls being raped, assaulted, stalked, terrorized, and brutally murdered, most often by someone the victim knows, someone she once trusted, the father of her children, a colleague, a friend, or an authority figure. Almost always by a man. The costs of this violence - to individual women and their children, families and friends, to their schools and communities, to the economy, and to society as a whole - continue to mount.

Violence against women shatters women's lives and undermines their potential. Despite this reality, this call to action is framed by hope. Hope that this Agenda and its accompanying Toolkit will provide new direction, support, and energy to community efforts to end violence against women. Hope that we can build on the lessons of past decades of grassroots leadership, the courage of survivors, and the recent momentum fueled by greater governmental and private sector recognition and resources. Hope that new allies will be mobilized to join those who have worked tirelessly to bring the problem of violence against women to our public consciousness.

Our first goal as a nation must be to end the threat and reality of violence against women altogether. However, given the current prevalence of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking in too many women's lives, we must at the same time do all we can to respond to the emotional harm and physical injury women suffer when victimized, support their recovery, and reduce their risk of future violence.

Sexual assault – Any unwanted sexual contact, including but not limited to incest, child sexual assault, stranger and non-stranger rape, marital or partner rape, sexual harassment, forced prostitution, exhibitionism, forced exposure to pornography, and voyeurism. The perpetrator often has physical, emotional, financial, or moral power over the victim. While adult women and children are the primary targets of sexual assault, adult men are also sexually assaulted. Sexual assault can occur as a single incident or in multiple episodes and is often accompanied by physical and emotional abuse.

NOTE: This document addresses violence against women, including sexual assault as it affects adult women. The needs of other sexual assault victims, including child victims of sexual assault, victims of sexual harassment, and male victims of sexual assault, are outside the scope of this report.

This Agenda focuses on violence against women. Why? It is certainly not the only type of violence raging in this country. Many forms of violence – homicide, child physical and sexual abuse, stranger assault, robbery, and stalking – strike both males and females. All violence is unacceptable and all victims of violence deserve the protection of our laws and the support of their communities. Why then do we focus on violence against women? We do so to direct our nation's attention to this particular form of violence whose pervasiveness, character, and impact cries out for our collective action.
All women pay the price of male violence: while not every woman directly experiences violence, there are few who do not fear it, whose lives are not in some way affected by its pervasive presence in our society. We see this in the choices women and girls make when they have the freedom to make such choices: where they feel safe working, what events they feel safe attending, and where and when they walk or jog.

Girls learn at a young age - from their parents and peers, as well as the media - how to shape their lives in an attempt to avoid violence. When workplaces, schools, housing, and neighborhoods are unsafe, whether from the violence or threats of a stranger, or someone known to the victim, women's freedom and well-being are compromised, their productivity and social contributions are often curtailed, and community vitality is diminished.

For many women, the impact of gender-based violence and inequality in this country is further compounded by racism and other forms of bias based on income, disability, sexual orientation, or immigration status. Women of color, language minorities, poor women, older women, migrant, immigrant and rural women, incarcerated women, and women with physical, developmental, and psychiatric disabilities have struggled more than others to have their experiences with violence understood and addressed. To be effective, intervention and prevention efforts must be culturally and linguistically appropriate, address violence across women's lifespan, and be rooted in communities themselves.

Five principles have organized and stimulated the Agenda for ending violence against women.

1. Violence against women requires our urgent response.

There is compelling evidence of the prevalence, incidence, and consequences of violence against women in the United States.

One in six U.S. women has experienced an attempted or completed sexual assault as a child and/or as an adult. The National Survey of Adolescents estimated that 15% of female adolescents had been victims of sexual assault at some point during their lives.
Researchers have estimated that 3.3 to 10 million U.S. children annually witness assaults by one parent against another. Problems among some children who witness domestic violence include a greater likelihood of aggressive and anti-social behavior, traumatic stress reflected in higher levels of depression and anxiety, and slower development of cognitive skills.

According to research, males perpetrate most violence against adults in the U.S.: 93% of the women and 86% of the men who were sexually and/or physically assaulted since the age of 18 were assaulted by a male. Over 87% of stalking perpetrators are male.

The public safety and public health costs of violence against women are high and the impact on society too great for the nation not to act.

Gender inequality and the acceptance of violence and control as a means to get one's own needs met both promote violence against women. Societal tolerance and indifference permit it to persist. Too many men feel entitled to use physical and sexual violence, intimidation, and coercion in their interactions with women.

Community-based support and services must be available to all women and girls across their lifespan, regardless of who she is, where she lives, or the type of violence she has experienced. At the same time, a broader and more effective range of sanctions, including social sanctions, must be developed and used to hold perpetrators accountable for their use of all forms of violence. Legal, medical, social services, and community-based interventions must be comprehensive and linguistically and culturally competent, whether directed to women who have been victimized or the male perpetrators of that violence.

3. Enhancing victim services and strengthening perpetrator sanctions are key components of community response.

To end violence against women, we must change commonly accepted attitudes and beliefs that give rise to men's abusive behavior toward women.

If we are ever to see an end to violence against women, increased resources and energy must be focused on prevention, without compromising victim services. Comprehensive early intervention and prevention efforts that target children deserve increased attention. Social behavior is learned at an early age. Young people must be encouraged to use non-violent means to resolve conflict, learn strategies of cooperation and collaboration, and be supported to develop healthy relationships.

October 2000
An Agenda For The Nation

Everyone has a role to play.

The gravity and complexity of violence against women requires the development of respectful partnerships that engage new allies and diverse communities. While governments and institutions have a particular responsibility to demonstrate leadership and provide resources, every organization and individual within a community can play a role in educating others, assisting victims, encouraging change in perpetrators, providing safety and protection for victims and their families, and challenging social beliefs, attitudes and behaviors which support violence against women.

Ending violence against women will require commitment and action on the part of federal, tribal, state and local governments, private institutions, communities, and individuals – both men and women. Neither laws, nor victim services, nor public awareness alone will end violence against women. It will take concerted, comprehensive, and coordinated action in six key areas to bring about an end to violence against women.

As a nation, we must -

1. Ensure that all women experiencing violence have a place to turn.

Many women who are sexually assaulted, abused by a partner, or stalked feel isolated and alone. The act of seeking help requires courage and often carries with it great risk. A woman may reach out to her doctor, a neighbor, her minister or rabbi, a welfare caseworker, her grocer or hairdresser, her teacher, her employer or union, her mother, father, sister or brother, or her friend. Each should be prepared to support and inform her decision-making and help seeking. To bring this reality about requires a strong commitment to broad-based public education and training for all those working in legal, health, education, social services, and welfare settings.

Domestic violence - Abusive or coercive patterns of behavior used to control an intimate partner and/or other family members, including the use of physical, sexual, psychological/emotional abuse, and economic coercion. This pattern of behaviors often includes a variety of tactics – some physically injurious and some not, some criminal and some not – carried out in multiple, and sometimes daily episodes. Domestic violence results in fear as well as physical and psychological trauma to victims and their children.
II. Enhance the health and mental health care systems' response to violence against women.

The health care system is an important component of primary and secondary prevention of violence against women. Through routine screening of female patients, particularly in reproductive health care settings, trained health care providers can identify victims of domestic violence and sexual assault who may not have sought help otherwise and refer them to community services. Yet, many emergency departments and primary care providers do not routinely identify patients with histories of sexual abuse or domestic violence, nor are they adequately trained to provide treatment services, documentation, and medical evidentiary exams for victims.

Adopting a systems approach to addressing violence against women requires the development of comprehensive policies and protocols and ensuring that they become expected practice throughout a health care system, from top policy makers to front line providers.

III. Provide equal and safe access to the justice system and the protections it affords.

The legal system should provide all victims of violence with equal and safe access to justice and protection. Crimes involving violence by someone the victim knew must be treated as seriously as crimes committed by strangers. All violent crimes against women, whether assault with a deadly weapon or violation of a protection order, must be taken seriously and responded to as threats to the safety of the entire community. A more effective array of formal and informal sanctions must be developed to hold men fully accountable for their use of violence and threat without compromising victim safety. The justice system must also address barriers to access by communities of color, language minorities, undocumented women concerned about deportation, and other marginalized communities who may fear law enforcement.
An Agenda For The Nation

Stopping sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking is a formidable task that requires the continued leadership of the criminal justice system, a community-wide commitment to coordination within and among agencies, policy development and implementation at every level, training for all personnel, financial and personnel resources, as well as a strong community stand against violence. While the Violence Against Women Act and other federal, tribal, state and local initiatives have provided new resources and technical assistance to improve criminal and civil court system response, communities must continue to develop and enhance comprehensive and coordinated responses.

IV. Increase women's access to meaningful economic options.

Increasing women's economic options and security is both an intervention and prevention strategy in our battle to end violence against women. Without the necessary economic supports, women too often remain economically dependent on an abusive partner, parent, or guardian. They remain trapped by poverty in unsafe homes in dangerous neighborhoods, or living on the streets with nowhere to go. They lack access to mental and physical health care to address the ongoing effects of sexual assault as a child or adult, or lack the means to leave a job or school where sexual assault, domestic violence, or stalking prevent them from learning or earning a living.

Creating a strong and effective economic safety net for women experiencing violence is a first step. Expanding job training and educational programs, providing employment opportunities that increase economic independence and stability, targeting economic development initiatives so that they benefit women and their families, and increasing the availability of safe, affordable housing are critical strategies. A comprehensive approach will, over time, increase their economic resources, and thus, their choices.

V. Invest in prevention and early intervention with children and youth.

Working with children and youth in institutions, community, and family settings provides both opportunities and obligations. Communities can seize opportunities to reach vulnerable families early and provide protections for at-risk family members, whether children, adolescents, or their abused parents. Community initiatives can help new parents become capable and nurturing caretakers and provide a full range of early childhood care and supports.

At the same time, communities must assume obligations to teach children, youth, and adults about effective and non-violent conflict resolution and challenge gender roles that place girls and women at risk. Those working with children and youth and their families must be willing to think and act across disciplines, across systems, and across roles. Communities must be provided the resources they need to initiate a full range of prevention and early intervention programs.
Children are the men and women of tomorrow. There is no greater investment we can make in the future of this country. We must commit to seeing the day when no child is sexually assaulted or abused, battered or bruised, no child has seen his or her mother brutalized or demeaned, sexually degraded or assaulted, and there are no juvenile offenders. The safety and well-being of every child, and the safety and well-being of his or her parents, must become priority community concerns.

VI. Identify and eliminate social norms that condone violence against women.

As a nation, we must challenge currently accepted attitudes that encourage men and boys to use power, control, and violence to denigrate and dominate women and girls, and that blame or isolate victims of this violence. Instead, we must adopt cultural values that support equality in relationships, respectful conflict resolution, healthy sexuality, and increase the safety and well-being of women and girls. These social change efforts must be both community-based and national in scope and reflect the diversity within communities. Strategies must be developed to build men's awareness of the attitudes and beliefs underlying violence against women, and encourage more men to join the imperative to end violence against women.

This Agenda is far-reaching, as is the problem of violence against women. It has implications for every sector of society. It requires the coordinated efforts of survivors, their families and friends, community leaders, sexual assault and domestic violence programs, the civil, criminal, and juvenile justice systems, as well as the health care and welfare systems, organized sports, the media, faith communities, college and university campuses, businesses, labor, the military, and those who work with children and youth.

The Toolkit to End Violence Against Women that accompanies the Agenda is designed to provide concrete guidance to individuals, communities, and federal, state and local policy leaders, and address key issues related to ending violence against women.

Four sections of the Toolkit address key elements in our nation's response to sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking.

**Strengthening Community-Based Services and Advocacy for Victims**

Sexual assault and domestic violence programs are urged to continue to bring their leadership and expertise to local, state, and national level efforts. Increased public and private support is needed to ensure the availability of crisis services for all women who need them. Communities are urged to expand and stabilize existing services, develop culturally and linguistically appropriate services, establish community partnerships, and strengthen informal networks women turn to for support.
An Agenda For The Nation

Improving the Health and Mental Health Care Systems' Response

Most women appear in health care settings for regular exams, treatment of specific problems, both caused by and independent of abuse, or for care of their children and other family members. Health and mental care providers may be the first and only professionals to see victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, or stalking. As the health care system is a crucial point of early intervention and prevention, improving the responsiveness of health care policy and practice to violence against women is critical to efforts to end violence against women.

Promoting Women's Economic Security

In order for more women to be free from the constraints of violence, all women must have access to viable economic options, including employment that provides a living wage and comprehensive benefits, affordable and safe housing, child care, financial assistance when necessary, and support, health care, and insurance. Both communities and federal governments are urged to work collaboratively to increase women's economic security.

Promoting Safety and Non-Violence on College and University Campuses

College and university campuses are urged to design and implement comprehensive, campus-wide responses to violence against women that coordinate victim services, campus law enforcement, health and mental health services, campus housing, student organizations, and disciplinary boards. Key to their success is the involvement of students, faculty, college administrators, campus security, fraternities, and other members of the campus community.

Promoting Safety and Non-Violence in the Workplace

Workplaces and labor organizations, small and large, are encouraged to take an active role in preventing and responding to sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking by developing written policies against violence, implementing security measures, and providing training for all employees. As employers and unions address these challenges, community-based sexual assault and domestic violence programs can be called on as collaborative partners.
An Agenda For The Nation

Stalking - A pattern of harassing or threatening behavior used to cause victims to fear for their safety, or the safety of their family, friends, or other associates, such as co-workers. Victims may be former intimate partners, family members, friends, acquaintances, or strangers. Stalking may be accompanied by physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.

Several Toolkit sections challenge communities to promote early intervention and prevention activities, and to engage new allies in efforts to end violence against women.

Intervention and Prevention with Children and Youth

Violence against women impacts millions of children each year and comes with other forms of violence, such as child abuse and youth violence, to devastate lives, destroy families, and compromise community cohesiveness. Crisis intervention services must be strengthened for children exposed to violence, including violence against their mothers. A broader array of primary prevention and early intervention programs targeting boys, girls, and young families can and should be developed in each community.

Campaigns to Mobilize the Public

Ending violence against women demands a multi-faceted approach designed to inform and effect change. Communitywide education campaigns can advance more thorough and accurate coverage and characterizations of violence against women, build a stronger network of community support for victims, and mobilize community action to promote change.

A Role for the Media, Advertising, and Entertainment Industries

As centerpieces of mass culture in this country, the challenge for the media, advertising, and entertainment industries is to utilize their influence to send messages that promote positive attitudes regarding the status and value of women and girls, gender roles, and nonviolence.

Engaging Communities of Faith

Religious, spiritual, and faith-based groups and organizations can reach large numbers of people with messages of safety and support for victims, and are especially important to communities that have been traditionally underserved by other prevention and intervention efforts. Faith, spiritual, and religious leaders are urged to use their positions to communicate that there is no foundation in religious doctrine for violence against women.

The Role of Sports

The popularity of professional and amateur sports makes it an important vehicle for supporting efforts to end violence against women and promoting healthy relationships between men and women. The sports industry is challenged to use the visibility of male and female athletes and the popularity of sports to reinforce messages consistent with our nation's commitment to end violence against women.

October 2000
An Agenda For The Nation

The remaining sections highlight the role of the U.S. government in promoting the safety and well-being of women.

Challenge to Congress and the Executive Branch

In order for the full potential of the Agenda to be realized, the federal government must continue to provide strong, visible leadership to efforts to end violence against women. Congress is called upon to enact laws and policies that advance the safety and well-being of women and their children, and increase appropriations for intervention and prevention programs, research, training and technical assistance. Executive Branch agencies are urged to continue and expand their support for and guidance of community efforts to end violence against women.

Nation-to-Nation: Promoting the Safety of Native Women

Indigenous women are stalked, sexually assaulted, and battered at high rates in this country. As sovereign nations, tribes must be supported by federal and state governments to address violence against women in a manner consistent with their unique tribal traditions. The safety of Native American women in Indian country depends on an effective tribal justice system that is working in partnership with federal law enforcement, and services designed and operated by indigenous women.

Promoting International Justice

There are many avenues for U.S. leadership on international efforts to prevent violence against women, including working in collaboration with other governments to develop laws, policies, and practices regarding trafficking in persons, and related to documented or undocumented survivors of violence who enter the U.S. (willingly or unwillingly). The U.S. can also provide humanitarian assistance that is directed towards promoting women's fundamental social and economic equality abroad.

The Role of the Military

The Department of Defense has the unique responsibility of preserving national security. A part of securing the national defense is preventing violence against women by members of the military and upholding the rights of women service members, civilian family members, and civilian employees to be protected from sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking.

Ending Violence against Women

http://www.epa.gov/womensadvocacy.htm

October 2000
Ending violence against women will require the full engagement of elected and appointed officials, community leaders, professionals working in a wide range of settings, and individuals. We all have a role to play -

We can each educate ourselves and others about the realities of violence against women.

While sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking are each distinct types of violence against women, they are also intrinsically interconnected, particularly in individual women's lives. Stalking often precedes or follows sexual assault or domestic violence. Sexual abuse is often a component of domestic violence. Many women experience multiple forms of violence throughout their lives or within their relationships. These realities require both specialized and coordinated responses.

We can take responsibility for developing caring relationships with young people, and for teaching children non-violent ways of interacting with each other and their community. We can make sure the institutions in our community, particularly the ones serving youth and families, reflect these values, and pass on these skills.

We can insist that the civil, criminal and juvenile justice systems, health and mental health care systems, domestic violence and sexual assault programs, housing providers, religious, spiritual and faith-based groups and organizations, child care, welfare, and educational institutions work with one another and with communities to ensure that women and children have the services and support they need.

We can demonstrate by our own words and actions that we will not tolerate or accept violent behavior or behavior that disrespects, threatens, or harms others.

We can obtain a copy of the Toolkit to End Violence Against Women and actively support its implementation.

We can talk to individual women and children who may be at risk to let them know we care, that we want to help, and that we are willing to get involved.

We can support, with our time and our money, only those types of media and entertainment that do not promote violence against women and girls. We can encourage others to do the same.

And we can dedicate personal and institutional resources to ending violence against women and children.

Acting together, we will end violence against women.

The terms "abuse" and "violence" are used interchangeably throughout this document. As used here, the term "violence" also includes the threat of violence.

Some victims and survivors choose to identify themselves using one of these two terms. For the purpose of clarity, we have chosen to use "victim" throughout the majority of this document.


National Advisory Council on Violence Against Women

Organizational affiliation of Council members is listed for identification purposes only. The views expressed herein are the views of the individual Council members and not necessarily those of the organizations they represent.

Gail Abarbanel, Director
Rape Treatment Center
UCLA Medical Center, Santa Monica

Larry A. Bedani, M.D., Humane President
The American College of Emergency Physicians

Carl C. Bell, M.D., President and CEO
Community Mental Health Council

Alana Bowman, Deputy City Attorney
City of Los Angeles

Ruth A. Brandwein, Ph.D., Professor
School of Social Welfare
State University of New York at Stony Brook

Sarah Buel
Domestic Violence Clinic
University of Texas School of Law

Lem Burnham, Ph.D., Vice President
Player and Employee Development
National Football League

The Honorable Karen Burstein

Jacquelyn C. Campbell, Ph.D., R.N., F.A.A.N.
Anna D. Wolf Professor and Associate Dean
School of Nursing - Johns Hopkins University

Carol Cartwright, President
Kent State University

Jerome Chazen, Chairman
Chazen Capital Partners

Vicki Coffey
Vicki Coffey & Associates

Ellen R. Cohen, President and CEO
Houston Area Women's Center

Carl Cohn, Ed.D., Superintendent
Long Beach Unified School District

Catherine O'Reilly Collette, Director
Women's Rights Department
American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees

Nancy Dickey, M.D., Former President
American Medical Association

Rev. Marc M. Fortune, Founder and Senior Analyst
The Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence

Linda Gordon, Ph.D., Florence Kelley Professor of History
New York University

The Honorable Paul Helmke
Barnes & Thornburg

Joan A. Kuriyama

Joyce Laderer, Ph.D., Senior Fellow
The Brookings Institution

The Honorable Cindy S. Lederman
Eleventh Judicial Circuit
Juvenile Justice Center

Judy Perry Martinez, Senior Paralegal

Helen R. Neubauer, Deputy Director
Human Development - The Ford Foundation

Brian Kenji Ogawa, D. Min., Director
Crime Victims' Institute
State of Texas Office of the Attorney General

Ruben B. Ortega

The Honorable Vincent Roppiti,
Chief Judge
Delaware Family Court

Jane Randel, Director
Corporate Communications
Liz Claiborne, Inc.

The Honorable Susan D. Reed,
Criminal District Attorney
Bexar County Justice Center

Jerome R. Rossi, Executive Vice President
The Marsh & McLennan Group

Dahlaa Rumbaugh, Executive Director
Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape

Suan Schechter, Clinical Professor
School of Social Work
University of California

Gene Stadtler, Director
Western Region Healthcare
Policy Services, Employees International Union

Esta Soler, Executive Director
Family Violence Prevention Fund

Norman H. Stamper, Ph.D.
Seattle Police Chief Retired

Diane M. Stuart, M.S., State Coordinator
South Dakota Violence Against Women Council

Robin Hassler Thompson
Robin H. Thompson & Associates

Sara Terry, Ph.D., R.N., Chairman
Chairman and Associate Professor
Dept. of Behavioral & Community Health
University of Maryland School of Nursing

The Honorable Paul Helmke

Maureen Connolly, STAFF

Susan Schechter, Clinical Professor
School of Social Work
University of California

Gerrie Schipske, Coordinator
Western Region Healthcare
Policy Services, Employees International Union

Sheila Wellstone, Executive Director
Women's Organizing and Leadership Institute

Tammy Young, Director
Domestic Violence Prevention for the State of Alaska

Ex-Officio Members:

Noel Brennan, Deputy Assistant Attorney General
U.S. Dept. of Justice

Bonnie J. Campbell, Director
Women Against Violence Office
U.S. Dept. of Justice

Wanda K. Jones, Dr. P.H.,
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health
U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

Catherine Pierce, Deputy Director
Program Development
Women Against Violence Office
U.S. Dept. of Justice

Aem Rosewater, Regional Director
Former Counselor to the Secretary
U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services

http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ova/awadvisory.htm