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# National Institute of Justice

## S o l i c i t a t i o n

*Jeremy Travis, Director*

*March 1999*

### **Evaluation of Policies, Procedures, and Programs Addressing Violence Against Women**

**NOTE:** A separate solicitation for Research on Violence Against Women is being announced this Fiscal Year. Applicants may want to consider the Research Solicitation as well as this Evaluation Solicitation in order to direct their interest to the appropriate solicitation.

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:**

June 2, 1999

**U.S. Department of Justice**  
**Office of Justice Programs**  
810 Seventh Street NW  
Washington, DC 20531

**Janet Reno**  
*Attorney General*

**Raymond C. Fisher**  
*Associate Attorney General*

**Laurie Robinson**  
*Assistant Attorney General*

**Noel Brennan**  
*Deputy Assistant Attorney General*

**Jeremy Travis**  
*Director, National Institute of Justice*

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For grant and funding information contact:  
**Department of Justice Response Center:**  
800-421-6770

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**Office of Justice Programs**  
**World Wide Web Site:**  
*<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov>*

**National Institute of Justice**  
**World Wide Web Site:**  
*<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij>*

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# Evaluation of Policies, Procedures and Programs Addressing Violence Against Women

## I. Introduction

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) is soliciting proposals for the evaluation of policies, procedures, and programs that address violence against women. Violence against women includes family and intimate partner violence, sexual assault, stalking, and violence committed by acquaintances and strangers. **NIJ anticipates awarding up to 6 grants with a funding total of \$1,250,000.**

## II. Background

On September 13, 1994, President Clinton signed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Pub. L. No. 102-322, 108 Stat. 1905-1995, as part of the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act. For the first time the Federal government adopted a comprehensive approach to fighting domestic violence and sexual assault, combining tough new penalties with programs to prosecute offenders and services to help female victims of violence.

The VAWA gave NIJ responsibility for a number of Congressionally mandated studies and National evaluations. Included among them was a study calling for a National Academy of Sciences panel to develop a research agenda on violence against women. The panel's report, funded jointly by NIJ and the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has been published by the National Academy Press as *Understanding Violence Against Women*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>National Research Council, 1996, *Understanding Violence Against Women*, N.A. Crowell and A.W. Burgess, eds. Panel on Research on Violence Against

The report recommends a research infrastructure and research agenda that includes the nature and scope, causes and consequences, prevention, and intervention of violence against women.

*Understanding Violence Against Women* has provided NIJ with an agenda for an ongoing program to address violence against women research and evaluation issues. The recent National Academy of Sciences report, *Violence in Families: Assessing Prevention and Treatment Programs*,<sup>2</sup> also guides this research program and the field.

A number of program areas have been identified as potentially important in the successful reduction of violence against women. These include, but are not limited to (1) the training of criminal justice personnel, particularly judges; (2) prosecution strategies; and (3) intervention strategies for domestic violence offenders and victims of domestic violence. In addition, some controversial approaches have been introduced for managing and responding to violence against women, notably, State laws requiring mandatory reporting by health care professionals and mediation in domestic violence cases.

### Judicial Training

A critical part of successful law enforcement and prosecution rests with effective, informed

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Women, Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press. Can be purchased from the National Academy Press at 800 624-6242 or 202 334-3313.

<sup>2</sup>National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 1998, *Violence in Families: Assessing Prevention and Treatment Programs*, R. Chalk and P. King, eds. Committee on the Assessment of Family Violence Interventions, Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press. Can be purchased from the National Academy Press at 800 624-6242 or 202 334-3313.

decisionmaking by the judges before whom these cases are brought. According to *Understanding Violence Against Women*, judges and judicial processing are the least studied aspects of criminal justice, yet judges' decisions and court procedures have a profound effect on victim safety and on other aspects of the justice system<sup>3</sup>. For example, one study found that law enforcement officers were reluctant to make arrests in domestic violence cases in a jurisdiction where judges had been critical of law enforcement officers who made arrests for domestic violence.<sup>4</sup>

Judges' attitudes may similarly have an impact on prosecutors' willingness to prosecute. Judges' decisions may also directly affect a domestic violence case, for example, in determining pretrial release conditions, or in deciding whether to issue a warrant for the alleged offender's arrest. During the course of the trial, judges make decisions about continuances, the types of evidence allowed, whether or not to admit expert testimony, and which expert testimony to hear. Judges exercise considerable discretion in sentencing if the defendant is found guilty, specifically in terms of punishment. Judges decide whether to mandate some type of intervention for domestic violence offenders, and whether to enforce sanctions if the intervention program is not completed.

Finally, in civil cases related to battering, judges make decisions about civil orders of protection and about child custody and visitation. Little research exists on the effects of these judicial decisions.

In the 1997 evaluation of the STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program,

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<sup>3</sup>*Understanding Violence Against Women*

<sup>4</sup>Ferraro, K.J. Policing woman battering. *Social Problems*, 36:61-74, 1989.

representatives from many participating States raised the issue of the mandatory training for judges.<sup>5</sup> Several mentioned that judges who most need training are the least likely to be required to attend training. Mandatory training of judges has been attempted in some States, and has been found to work in some States but not in others. The 1998 evaluation of the STOP Formula Grant Program shows that some programs were training judges as part of multidisciplinary teams.<sup>6</sup>

### **Interventions for Domestic Violence Offenders**

A potentially promising area of research that may inform interventions for domestic violence offenders relates to the Transtheoretical model of behavioral change that was developed for smoking cessation and weight control. The model presupposes that individuals go through a series of complex steps on their way to making positive changes in their lives. Progression through these steps is not linear, however, and generally involve relapses.<sup>7</sup> Further research is needed in the development of measures to assess the accuracy of this model and its applicability to programs for domestic violence offenders and other interventions to reduce violence against women.

**Prosecution Strategies.** Prosecution strategies vary across States. Some States encourage victim-initiated complaints, and in other cases, victim-initiated complaints are never

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<sup>5</sup>1997 Report: Evaluation of the STOP Formula Grants to Combat Violence Against Women. The Urban Institute: Washington, D.C., 1998.

<sup>6</sup>1998 Report: Evaluation of the STOP Formula Grants to Combat Violence Against Women. The Urban Institute: Washington, D.C. 1998.

<sup>7</sup>Brown, J. Working toward freedom from violence: The process of change in battered women. *Violence Against Women* 3:5-27, 1997.

prosecuted.<sup>8</sup> There are also varying policies with regard to whether or not the victim is allowed to drop the charges. "No drop" policies are thought to protect the victim from coercive violence aimed at pressuring her to drop the charges and signify the prosecution's commitment to hold domestic violence offenders accountable for their actions. Some research results suggest that the best outcomes occur when the victim is allowed to drop the charges, but declines to do so. Further work in this area is warranted.

**Mandatory Reporting.** As of August, 1996, 45 States and the District of Columbia had enacted laws requiring health care professionals to report certain injuries that could potentially have been caused by domestic violence.<sup>9</sup> These laws require, for example, that physicians report injuries that may have resulted from an illegal act, which would include domestic violence. Only 5 States have laws that narrowly require the reporting of injuries when domestic violence is suspected. The first of this type of legislation was enacted by California in 1994. However, some abused women's advocates have argued that mandatory reporting could undermine the autonomy of adult women, prevent them from seeking services, and possibly put them at increased risk. Thus an evaluation of the effects on abused women of State mandatory reporting laws is important.

**Mediation in Domestic Violence Cases.** Many State legislatures and family courts are increasingly turning to mediation to resolve

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<sup>8</sup>*Understanding Violence Against Women*, p 119

<sup>9</sup>Hyman, A., Schillinger, D., Bo, L. Laws mandating reporting of domestic violence: Do they promote patient well-being? *Journal of the American Medical Association* 273 (22): 1781-1787, 1995.

Chalk, R., King, P.A., (Eds) *Violence in Families: Assessing Prevention and Treatment*. National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 1998

disputes associated with divorce. However, advocates maintain that mandatory mediation puts battered women at risk for further abuse, while protecting their assailants from legal sanctions.<sup>10</sup> Custody mediation is now mandated in more than 33 States.<sup>11</sup> Statutory exemption from mediation provides battered women with total exemption in all States except for California, which only provides for separate mediation if requested by parties with a protective order.<sup>12</sup> In other States such as Minnesota, courts must determine that there is probable cause that one of the parties, or a child of one of the parties, has been physically or sexually abused by the other party, in order to satisfy the exemption requirement.<sup>13</sup> States also vary with regard to qualification requirements for mediators. Furthermore, in some States such as Massachusetts, if mediation fails to produce an agreement between the parties, the mediator may be asked to make a recommendation to the court. The result may be that the part with the least amount of power and financial independence could be disadvantaged by the process<sup>14</sup>.

### III. Areas of Research Required

**NIJ Research in Progress.** NIJ is currently supporting a substantial body of criminal justice evaluation work. Projects in progress are evaluating court, prosecution, police, and advocacy efforts largely as they relate to domestic violence. Evaluations are also

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<sup>10</sup>Gagnon, A. Ending mandatory divorce mediation for battered women." *Harvard Women's Law Journal*, 15, 272-294, 1992.

<sup>11</sup>Moss, Debra Cassens, Enter the divorce mediator. *A.B.A. Journal*, 27 (Aug 1, 1987).

<sup>12</sup>Gagnon supra note 10

<sup>13</sup>Gagnon supra note 10.

<sup>14</sup>Gagnon supra note 10

addressing the major programs of the Violence Against Women Office, Coordinated Community Responses to violence against women, and anti-stalking efforts. Programs, policies, and procedures currently being evaluated under NIJ-supported studies include:

- Implementing domestic violence prosecution no-drop policies.
- Extending knowledge of access to and satisfaction with domestic violence services.
- Impact evaluation of a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) unit in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

NIJ's current research portfolio on violence against women and family violence can be accessed at [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/vawprog/contents.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/vawprog/contents.htm) or a copy can be obtained from the Department of Justice Response Center at 800-421-6770 (or in the Washington, D.C., area at 202-307-1480).

**Research Requested.** Evaluation studies aimed at addressing gaps in the current understanding of policies, programs, and practices are encouraged. The following are among some of the areas of interest, but applicants are not restricted to them:

- Assessing the extent of judges' knowledge regarding domestic violence and/or sexual assault, and evaluating the impact of training in improving knowledge and awareness.
- Assessing the impact of training on judges' decisionmaking in both civil and criminal cases involving violence against women.
- Determining the impact of judges' training on the attitudes and practices of

law enforcement and other court personnel (prosecutors, for example) in their approach to domestic violence or sexual assault victims.

- Documenting the long-term outcomes of domestic violence cases decided by judges who had training versus those who did not, including: (1) increased victim safety; (2) increased victim satisfaction with the system and willingness to access other services and rebuild her life; (3) increased control over offender after sentencing; (4) greater willingness to process violations of conditions of release/probation/parole; (5) increased completion of court-mandated interventions for domestic violence offenders; (6) reduced offender recidivism; and (7) custody awards of minor children to batterers versus victims.
- Determining prosecution strategies that are most effective in reducing recidivism of domestic violence offenders, determining what prosecution response affords the most protection for the victim of sexual assault or domestic violence, and determining the relationship between successful prosecution strategies and training for prosecutors and other court personnel including judges.
- Determining effective prosecution strategies in sexual assault cases.
- Evaluating "readiness to change" or "stages of change" models with reference to the Transtheoretical model of change for offenders in the criminal justice response to domestic violence.
- Evaluating the impact of mandatory reporting by physicians and other health

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care providers of victims of domestic violence to law enforcement agencies.

- Evaluating the process and effects of mandatory divorce/custody mediation in cases involving domestic abuse, particularly with regard to equitable outcomes for the victims and their satisfaction with the outcomes.
- Assessing whether voluntary mediation can produce satisfactory outcomes for victims of domestic violence, and also what the specific requirements are for successful voluntary mediation.

The above list is not exhaustive and is not intended to limit the applicant.

**Up to six awards are anticipated for projects with award periods of up to 24 months.** The duration and the budget for proposed evaluations should be justified by factors such as the complexity of the design, the number of sites, and the size of the sample.

**Methodological Considerations.** In this solicitation, the need for innovation, particularly on qualitative measures, culturally sensitive measures, and the need for many different levels of data, are acknowledged. Victims, advocates, and knowledgeable criminal justice practitioners should be brought into the various stages of the research process wherever appropriate. In evaluations, outcome measures that go beyond reoffending need to be considered and utilized. New outcome measures could address stress, economic independence, quality of life, offending with a new partner, and victim and community safety. The use of data from a variety of systems (e.g., criminal justice, social services, and public health) is encouraged. Also, applicants must include a statement that demonstrates an understanding of the requirement to ensure the protection of human subjects of such research.

**Dissemination of Results.** NIJ is interested in expeditious and innovative methods to disseminate the results from all projects supported under this solicitation. Methods that would supplement the more traditional forms of dissemination are encouraged. Results of projects are expected to be reported to NIJ as they become available, and, at a minimum, through semi-annual progress reports. Applicants should provide a discussion of the types of reports or products that would become available over the course of the project.

***Attendance at an annual 2-day Grantee meeting is required. Applicants should budget travel and per diem expenses for a trip to Washington, D.C., for each year of the grant to participate in these grantee meetings.***

NIJ is streamlining its process to accommodate the volume of proposals anticipated under this and other Crime Act solicitations. Researchers can help in a significant way by sending NIJ a nonbinding letter of intent by April 26, 1999. The Institute will use these letters to forecast the number of peer panels it needs and to identify conflicts of interest among potential reviewers. There are two ways to send these letters. You can reach NIJ by Internet by sending e-mail to [tellnij@ncjrs.org](mailto:tellnij@ncjrs.org) and identifying the solicitation and section(s) you expect to apply for. You can write a letter with the same information to Program Evaluations on Violence Against Women, 810 Seventh Street NW, Washington, DC 20531. A separate solicitation on Research on Violence Against Women is also being announced in the current Fiscal Year.

## IV. How to Apply

Those interested in submitting proposals in response to this solicitation must complete the

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required application forms and submit related required documents. (See below for how to obtain application forms and guides for completing proposals.) Applicants must include the following information/forms to qualify for consideration:

- Standard Form (SF) 424-application for Federal assistance. **The budget amount for the entire length of the project must be placed in box 15 of the SF 424.**
- Assurances
- Certificates Regarding Lobbying, Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters: and Drug-Free Workplace Requirements (one form)
- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
- Budget Detail Worksheet
- Budget Narrative
- Negotiated indirect rate agreement (if appropriate)
- Names and affiliations of all key persons from applicant and subcontractor(s), advisors, consultants, and advisory board members. Include names of principal investigator, title, organizational affiliation (if any), department (if institution of higher education), address, phone, and fax
- Proposal abstract
- Table of contents
- Program narrative or technical proposal
- Privacy certificate
- References
- Letters of cooperation from organizations collaborating in the research project
- Resumes
- Appendixes, if any (e.g. list of previous NIJ awards, their status, and products [in NIJ or other publications])

**Proposal abstract.** The proposal abstract, when read separately from the rest of the application, is meant to serve as a succinct and accurate description of the proposed work. Applicants

must concisely describe the research goals and objectives, research approach, and method for achieving the goals and objectives. Summaries of past accomplishments are to be avoided, and proprietary/confidential information is not to be included. Length is not to exceed 400 words.

Use the following two headers:

## **Project Goals and Objectives:**

## **Proposed Research Design and Methodology:**

**Page limit:** For grants exceeding \$50,000 the limit is 30 double-spaced pages. Note this limit applies only to the "Program Narrative" part of the application, but not to the other components listed above.

**Due date.** Completed proposals must be received at the National Institute of Justice by the close of business on June 2, 1999. Extensions of this deadline will not be permitted.

**Award period.** In general, NIJ limits its grants and cooperative agreements to a maximum period of 12 or 24 months. However, longer budget periods may be considered.

**Number of awards.** NIJ anticipates supporting up to 6 awards under this solicitation.

**Award amount.** Awards totaling up to \$250,000 each will be made available under this NIJ solicitation. Larger awards should be justified by the complexity and cost of the design.

**Applying.** Two packets need to be obtained: (1) application forms (including a sample budget worksheet) and (2) guidelines for submitting proposals (including requirements for grant recipients). To receive them, applicant can:

- Access the Justice Information Center on the web:

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<http://www.ncjrs.org.fedgrant.htm#NIJ>  
or the NIJ web site:  
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding.htm>

These web sites offer the NIJ application forms and guidelines as electronic files that may be downloaded to a personal computer.

- Request hard copies of the forms and guidelines by mail from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at 800-851-3420 or from the Department of Justice Response Center at 800-421-6770 (in the Washington, D.C. area, at 202-307-1480).
- Request copies by fax. Call 800-851-3420 and select option 1, then option 1 again for NIJ codes. Code is 1023.

**Guidance and information.** Applicants who wish to receive additional guidance and information may contact the U.S. Department of Justice Response Center at 800-421-6770. Center staff can provide assistance or refer applicants to an appropriate NIJ professional. Applicants may, for example, wish to discuss their prospective research topics with the NIJ professional staff.

**Send 3 copies (one with original signatures) of completed forms to:**

National Institute of Justice  
Evaluation of Policies, Procedures  
and Programs Addressing  
Violence Against Women  
810 Seventh Street NW,  
Washington, D.C. 20351  
**[overnight courier ZIP code 20001]**