

The Administration's Record on Violence Against Women

Combating Sexual Assault and Dating Violence

- On January 22, 2014, the President and Vice President announced the creation of the interagency White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault. The task force is charged with sharing best practices along with increasing transparency, enforcement, and public awareness to protect and support survivors.
- The Obama Administration also worked with Congress to ensure that the 2013 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) helps address the needs of college students. The legislation increases institutional accountability by clarifying standards for institutional disciplinary procedures. The legislation also combats the root of the issue by requiring all institutions of higher education to train all incoming students and employees in how to prevent sexual assault.
- In 2013, the Secretary of Education sent a Dear Colleague to all chief state school officers calling upon them to take action against sexual assault, intimate partner or teen dating violence, stalking, and other forms of gender-based violence. Secretary Duncan urged schools to educate their communities about prevention and identification, and develop locally tailored responses to address incidences of this violence. The package included best practices for addressing teen dating violence and training modules for school employees.
- In 2011, the Office of the Vice President, the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development collaborated to hold town hall meetings in ten regions of the country to promote the role of men in speaking out about violence against women.
- The Vice President launched the 1is2many initiative in September 2011 on Twitter and through the White House website with a call to college students to take actions against dating violence and sexual assault.
- In 2011, the Department of Justice announced the expansion of the National Dating Violence Helpline to respond to calls, chats and texts for from teens and young adults 24-7. The Department of Justice provided funding to enable this expansion as a part of the Vice President's call to federal agencies to better serve teens and young adults.
- In July 2011, Vice President Biden launched the "Apps Against Abuse" technology challenge – a nationwide competition to develop an innovative software application, or "app," that provides young adults with tools to help prevent sexual assault and dating violence. The winners, *Circle of 6* and *On Watch*, were announced by the Vice President on November 1. More information about these apps can be found at the [HHS website](#).
- On April 4, 2011, Vice President Biden and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan introduced comprehensive guidance to help schools, colleges and universities better understand their obligations under federal civil rights laws to prevent and respond to the problem of campus sexual assault. This historic guidance explicitly stated that sexual violence was a form of discrimination prohibited by Title IX. It helped inspire a wave of student activism and gave other student leaders the tools to reform campus responses to sexual violence.

Providing Life-saving Services

- DOJ's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) has launched the Sexual Assault Demonstration Initiative in six sites to improve victim services in areas where there is not a specialized rape crisis center. By 2015, this project is expected to provide lessons and models that can be replicated in other communities.
- On March 13, 2013, Vice President Biden and the Attorney General announced new demonstration sites to twelve communities as part of the new Domestic Violence Homicide Prevention Demonstration Initiative (DVHP Initiative). The DVHP Initiative helps state and local jurisdictions reduce domestic violence homicides by effectively identifying potential victims and monitoring high-risk offenders.
- In August 2011, as part of the Affordable Care Act, the Department of Health and Human Services announced historic new guidelines that will ensure women receive preventive health services without additional cost, including domestic violence screening and counseling.
- Over the past four years, and at the Administration's urging, Congress doubled funding for VAWA's Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP). Under SASP, and among other services, local rape crisis centers, mental health professionals, and social service providers help survivors navigate the criminal justice system

Expanding VAWA to Protect All Survivors

- The Obama Administration also worked with Congress to ensure that the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) addresses the needs of victims who have historically been overlooked. VAWA 2013 included new protections for LGBT victims and encourages states to develop services for LGBT communities. Despite opposition from some in Congress, the Administration also successfully fought to protect the U visa program that allows immigrant victims to safely report crimes, including sexual assault. VAWA 2013 also included a landmark provision recognizing the authority of tribes to prosecute domestic violence crimes committed on tribal lands regardless of the race of the perpetrator.

Improving the Law Enforcement Response to Sexual Assault

- In April 2013, the Justice Department released a revised version of the National Protocol for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examinations (SAFE Protocol, 2d). The SAFE Protocol provides a best-practices guide to conducting medical forensic examinations and promotes high-quality, sensitive, and supportive exams for survivors of rape and sexual assault.
- The Department of Justice is working to increase arrest and conviction rates by supporting multidisciplinary sexual assault teams; these are specially trained law enforcement officers, detectives, prosecutors, healthcare providers and victim advocates, all working together to support survivors and increase the odds of successful prosecutions. These specialized units have proven effective in combatting domestic violence and are a promising model for addressing sexual assault.
- In January 2012, the Department of Justice modernized the FBI's Uniform Crime Report definition of rape. The new definition is more inclusive, better reflects state criminal codes, and focuses on the various forms of sexual penetration understood to be rape. For the first time, rapes of men and boys will be included in our national crime statistics. The old definition- which only covers rape of women by force- did not capture the true impact of this crime. The revised

definition includes any gender of victim or perpetrator, and includes instances in which the victim is incapable of giving consent because of temporary or permanent mental or physical capacity, including due to the influence of drugs or alcohol, or because of age

- In July 2010, the President signed the Tribal Law and Order Act, which helps to address crime in tribal communities and places a strong emphasis on decreasing violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women

[Working to Reduce the Rape Kit Backlog](#)

- In 2011, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) funded pilot projects in Detroit and Houston to inventory their untested kits and develop protocols for submitting these kits to crime labs. Final reports are due later this year, but preliminary results from Detroit show what can happen when old rape kits are tested: from a sample of 569 kits, 32 serial offenders were identified and five prosecutions initiated.
- A major lesson from this project is that testing alone is not enough; when jurisdictions test large volumes of rape kits, they also need the resources to follow-up on the leads – which means having community-based teams of trained detectives, victim advocates, and prosecutors available and working together to successfully pursue the new cases. The President's fiscal year 2015 budget includes \$35 million to build and support these community based-teams.

[Leading by Example in the Workplace](#)

- In April 2012, President Obama announced new efforts to help combat and prevent domestic violence in the federal workplace. The presidential memorandum requires federal agencies to develop policies to address the effects of domestic violence and provide assistance for employees who may be experiencing domestic violence. These policies will also serve as a model for private sector employers. [Read the memorandum here.](#)

[Addressing HIV/AIDS and Violence against Women and Girls](#)

- In March 2012, President Obama signed a presidential memorandum establishing an interagency working group to address the intersection of HIV/AIDS, violence against women and girls, and gender-based health disparities. Co-chaired by the White House Advisor on Violence Against Women and the Director of the Office of National AIDS Policy, the Working Group developed 56 action items for agencies across the Federal government. [Read the working group report here.](#)

[Responding to Sexual Assault in the Military](#)

- Secretary Hagel has directed a series of executive actions that will improve command accountability, expand victims' rights within the military justice system, and improve victim treatment by their peers, co-workers, and chains of command. Most notably, Secretary Hagel directed each service to provide legal counsel for all victims of sexual assault. This landmark reform will ensure that victims are provided with personalized legal advice and representation throughout the legal process. In December 2013, President Obama instructed Secretary Hagel and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Dempsey to continue their intensive focus on this issue and directed them to conduct a full-scale review of their progress by December 2014. Based on the results of this report, the President and DOD will consider additional reforms that may be

required to eliminate this crime from the ranks and protect the men and women who serve our nation.

[Working with Men to Change the Culture](#)

- In 2011, the Department of Justice launched the VAWA Engaging Men in Preventing Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence program – which funds multi-faceted strategies to engage men as allies and influencers of other men. Using social media combined with hands-on mentorship, the program aims to develop new male leaders willing to speak up about violence against women and girls.