



THE COUNCIL ON WOMEN AND GIRLS: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACCOMPLISHMENTS



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The White House Council on Women and Girls

Since the day he took office, President Obama has fought for policies that are important for women and will expand opportunity for all Americans. He's signed major legislation like the Affordable Care Act and Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. He's dramatically expanded fair pay and paid leave protections. And his administration has systematically encouraged cities and states to embrace policies like higher minimum wage and paid leave.

Underpinning these actions, President Obama and Vice President Biden have spoken out and driven a conversation about treating women fairly in America. They have pushed for cultural change that gives women the respect they deserve in schools and in workplaces, and joined advocates in dramatically changing our country's approach to sexual assault on campus and elsewhere. That conversation has spurred changes in cities and states, businesses big and small, schools from pre-K to college.

Across the Obama-Biden Administration, this work has been driven by the White House Council on Women and Girls (CWG), which the President created in March of 2009 to help develop and implement these policy priorities. The CWG comprises representatives from each Federal agency, as well as the White House offices, and coordinates efforts across Federal agencies and departments to ensure that the needs of women and girls are taken into account in all programs, policies, and legislation.

Below, we will explore some of the ways the Obama Administration has worked tirelessly to end violence against women and girls on all fronts.

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

Since the beginning of the Obama Administration, the President and Vice President have fought to support, protect, and empower all women in the United States and around the world.

This fact sheet highlights some of the major achievements of the Obama Administration on a wide range of issues relating to violence against women and girls, and covers the Administration's initiatives in the following areas:

1. **Ending violence against women;**
2. **Combating campus sexual assault in colleges and extending prevention and response to K-12;**
3. **Improving the Federal response to violence against women and girls in American Indian and Alaska Native communities;**
4. **Improving the Federal response to violence against older women and elder abuse;**
5. **Improving healthcare and housing protections for all survivors of violence;**
6. **Improving the criminal justice system response to domestic and sexual violence;**
7. **Addressing sexual assault in the military;**
8. **Combating human trafficking in the U.S. and increasing support for survivors;**
9. **Demonstrating historic support for LGBT survivors of violence;**
10. **Creating trauma-informed approaches to ending violence against women and girls;**
and

11. Addressing violence against women and girls as a foreign policy priority.

Ending Violence Against Women

“You cannot have a conversation about human rights and human dignity without talking about the right of every woman on this planet to be free from violence and free from fear.”

Vice President Joe Biden, April 2, 2013

From the beginning of the Obama-Biden Administration, the President and Vice President have taken a holistic approach toward combating violence against women and girls. In 2009, Vice President Biden appointed the first ever [White House Advisor on Violence Against Women](#) to direct the efforts of the White House to address domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. This Advisor, the first of its kind, not only promotes collaboration across the U.S. Government, but also serves as a White House liaison to the advocacy community, resulting in unprecedented levels of coordination among Federal agencies and advancements to combat violence against women of all ages.

The Administration has also prioritized funding for Federal legislation and programming to end violence against women and girls. In 2010, President Obama signed the reauthorization of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, which included the reauthorized Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, continuing support for state, tribal, and local community programs that provide shelter and supportive services for victims of domestic violence and their children, as well as continuing to fund a network of national, special issue, culturally specific resource centers on domestic violence, and the National Domestic Violence Hotline – which has been provided with over \$61 million by the Federal Government over the last 20 years, and was allocated \$12 million in the FY2017 Presidential Budget.

The Obama Administration has demonstrated its commitment to all women regardless of ethnicity, socioeconomic background, or sexual orientation. In March 2013, the President [signed the third reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act \(VAWA\)](#), which improved existing protections for immigrants and added new provisions for Native Americans and the LGBT community. The VAWA Reauthorization also integrated homicide reduction training into various VAWA programs and expanded VAWA housing protections. The legislation also increased resources to address sexual assault in state grants.

In September 2015, President Obama issued a Presidential Memorandum formally establishing the [White House Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable](#) (WH-LAIR). The WH-LAIR brings together 21 participating Federal agencies to inspire new collaborations to improve access to legal services for the Nation’s poor and middle class and to better engage civil legal aid providers as Federal grantees, sub-grantees, and partners. Research shows that legal aid [prevents elder abuse](#) and [domestic violence](#) by helping survivors escape their abusers through protective orders, obtain public benefits, secure alternative housing, and resolve child custody dispute matters.

In January 2016, the President announced new [commonsense steps to reduce gun violence and make our communities safer, including for victims of domestic violence](#). Attorney General

Loretta Lynch issued a memo directing U.S. Attorney's Offices around the country to engage in renewed efforts to coordinate with state, local, and tribal law enforcement and community groups to combat domestic violence and prevent prohibited persons from obtaining firearms.

The President's Budget reflects this commitment to ending violence against women. In 2009, in the midst of the recession, the [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act](#) provided the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) with \$225 million for grants to combat violence against women. And each year of the Administration, the President's Budget has maintained strong support for the Violence Against Women Act, the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, and the Victims of Crime Act. In the past few years alone:

- The President's 2015 Budget requested [\\$422.5 million](#) for the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), and an additional [\\$35 million](#) for the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative to support community teams to address the sexual assault kit backlog, and \$20 million for research under DOJ's National Institute of Justice analysis and related forensic activities in order to identify more effective and efficient strategies for reducing the backlog of sexual assault kits;
- The President's 2016 Budget requested [\\$473.5 million](#) for OVW, \$41 million to continue to fund the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative, and again requested \$20 million for research under NIJ. Violence against women-related programs received an increase in the Federal budget of more than \$750 million in 2016, including a significant increase in the allocation made from the Crime Victims' Fund through the Victims of Crime Act; and
- Building on the progress made in FY2016 and to ensure sustained funding for programs, the [President's FY2017 Budget](#) requested a record \$489 million for OVW. This OVW request included a \$6 million increase in campus grants, \$7.5 million increase in Legal Assistance Program funding, \$2.5 million increase in Tribal Special Domestic Violence Jurisdiction grants, and \$11.3 million increase in grants to Improve Criminal Justice Responses to Sexual Assault, Dating Violence, and Stalking Program (Arrest), which includes a Homicide Reduction Initiative and Domestic Violence Firearm Lethality Reduction Initiative. The FY2017 Budget also requested an additional \$1 million for the FVPSA program to establish an Alaska Native Tribal Resource Center on Domestic Violence, and an additional \$4 million for the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

Combating Campus Sexual Assault in Colleges and Extending Prevention and Response to K-12

"Violence against women is not a women's issue alone. It's a man's issue as well... So to all of the guys out there—you have to step up. That's how we can change the culture on campus and around the country to one that understands no means no."

Vice President Joe Biden, April 23, 2015

In 2011, Vice President Biden made a commitment to work toward ending sexual assault on college campuses. In April of that year, the Vice President and former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced [new guidance](#) from the Department of Education (ED) to help schools, colleges, and universities improve the response to sexual assault on campus. The guidance clarified legal obligations under Title IX for schools receiving Federal funds to respond promptly and effectively to sexual violence, and provided examples of remedies and enforcement strategies that schools and the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) may use to respond to

sexual violence. In September of the same year, the Vice President released a video on Twitter and YouTube asking students how to make colleges campuses safer. As a result of the overwhelming response to “get men involved,” 11 [regional forums](#) were held around the country that focused on how to get men involved in ending violence against women. ED, and the Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD), collaborated with local communities to host these events. Additional guidance on Title IX obligations of schools to combat sexual assault and sexual harassment was issued by ED in April 2014.

In 2011, Vice President Biden founded the [1 is 2 Many campaign](#), focusing on the high rates of dating violence and sexual assault experienced by teens and young adults. In connection with 1 is 2 Many, the National Dating Abuse Helpline – a project of the National Domestic Violence Hotline – expanded to provide digital services, and created new mobile apps to help prevent sexual assault and support survivors. Increased support for the National Dating Abuse Helpline has continued throughout the Administration, with the President’s FY2013 Budget including an additional \$1.3 million to help the National Dating Abuse Helpline and the National Domestic Violence Hotline meet the growing volume of requests for help. Additionally, Federal agencies partnered with the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and HHS to create the “[Apps Against Abuse Technology Challenge](#),” a nationwide competition to help prevent dating violence and abuse by keeping young adults connected to trusted friends and providing easy access to resources such as local police and abuse hotlines. In September 2014, in conjunction with the 20th anniversary of the Violence against Women Act, the Vice President released a report entitled [1 is 2 Many: Twenty Years Fighting Violence Against Women and Girls](#). This report charts progress in the national response to violence against women and girls since VAWA’s passage in 1994 and highlights key contributions from this Administration.

In 2014, the Administration continued to not only work to end sexual assault, but also to improve support for survivors. In January of that year, the Office of the Vice President and the White House Council on Women and Girls released [Rape and Sexual Assault: A Renewed Call to Action](#), focusing on the problems related to campus sexual assault. Concurrently, the President and Vice President announced the creation of the [White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault](#), co-chaired by the Vice President’s Advisor on Violence Against Women and the White House Council on Women and Girls, with the goal of determining the best ways to address the prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses across the nation. In April, the Task Force released its first report: “[Not Alone](#)”. And the next month, After 27 listening sessions with stakeholders across the country, the report provided new recommendations for schools to prevent and respond to sexual assault and new steps for Federal agencies to improve enforcement of Federal laws.

The work of the Task Force is ongoing and includes urging schools to conduct climate surveys to understand the scope of the problem on campuses, recommending that schools have confidential advocates to support victims and provide information about reporting, providing schools information about promising best practices for preventing sexual assault, developing model Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) for colleges and universities to enter into with law enforcement and rape crisis centers, and developing training for school officials and campus health centers. The CDC also issued [Preventing Sexual Violence on College Campuses: Lessons from Research and Practice](#), as part of the “Not Alone” report, to share effective measures to prevent sexual violence, as well as successes and challenges in implementing primary prevention efforts for college populations.

In September 2014, President Obama and Vice President Biden unveiled [It's On Us](#), a new campaign to help put an end to sexual assault on college campuses. It's On Us has engaged approximately 600 colleges and universities, and nearly 350,000 people have signed the [It's On Us Pledge](#), committing to standing up against all sexual assault. It's On Us partners include institutions of higher education, media, sports leagues and conferences, sexual assault prevention organizations, non-profit organizations, and corporations. The Vice President and several other Senior Administration Officials have also hosted It's On Us events on college campuses across the country to highlight the importance of pledging to end sexual assault.

In April of 2015, Peace Corps launched its own effort in support of the It's On Us campaign. With the help of a Peace Corps interdisciplinary team dedicated to sexual assault education, prevention, and support for volunteers and staff, Peace Corps is promoting and educating volunteers and staff in 60+ countries to support It's on Us. In 2016, the Peace Corps will expand the It's on Us Campaign with a target of enlisting 1000 new followers and develop powerful campaign messages in 10 languages.

Throughout 2015 and 2016, White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault continued to release new resources for students and schools including but not limited to:

- A collection of guides and online training developed by ED's Office of Safe and Healthy Students for college campus health staff who care for students who have experienced sexual assault and other trauma. The White House released this toolkit during the Violence Against Women Act's 21st anniversary. The [Safe Place resource kit](#) covers a broad range of material introducing and endorsing trauma-sensitive practices with an emphasis on sexual assault trauma.
- A comprehensive [Title IX Resource Guide](#), issued by ED, includes detailed information for Title IX coordinators. Additionally, ED's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has offered technical assistance on more than 120 occasions to stakeholders, parents, and students.
- Guidance to help campuses enhance prevention strategies was developed at a meeting organized by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), in collaboration with OVW and ED's Office of the Under Secretary and Office of Postsecondary Education, which gathered prevention experts, researchers, and campus leaders. As a follow up to this meeting, CDC brought together pilot teams of state, community, and campus partners to develop prevention focused action plans for their home states.
- The [Campus Climate Survey Validation Study \(CCSVS\)](#), a landmark study that provides data on the prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault victimization on nine college/university campuses was released in January 2016 by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and OVW. The CCSVS results affirmed and expanded knowledge of data on campus sexual assault and provided further insight into specific areas, including the prevalence of sexual assault in LGBT communities, alcohol-induced sexual assault, and reporting rates. One of the main purposes of the CCSVS was to develop, test, and validate a campus climate survey instrument and methodology to efficiently collect valid school-level data on sexual assault that could be used by any school wishing to conduct its own survey. The [survey instrument and methodology](#) are now freely available for use by any school.
- A [comprehensive study on investigative and adjudication practices related to student-on-student sexual assault](#) began in January 2016 by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and is expected to last two years, with preliminary findings available in late 2016. This study will examine the policies and practices of 1,000 institutions of higher education with an in-depth look at 100 schools.

- [“The Blueprint for Campus Police: Responding to Sexual Assault”](#) was released in March 2016 by the University of Texas School of Social Work as a deliverable of the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault. The Blueprint is intended to serve as a roadmap for campus law enforcement departments seeking to provide a more comprehensive response to sexual assault.
- In March 2016, ED’s office of Safe and Healthy Students released a new, free platform of web-based school climate surveys that will allow the nation’s schools to perform sophisticated analyses of school climate, enabling them to assess conditions for learning that range from safety to the quality of the instructional environment. The [ED School Climate Surveys \(surveys\)](#) and the [Quick Guide on Making School Climate Improvements](#) enable states, local school districts, and individual schools to collect and act on reliable, nationally-validated school climate data in real-time. These resources built on two Administration initiatives: President Obama’s [Now is the Time Plan](#), and his [My Brother’s Keeper Taskforce](#). As part of Now is the Time, ED announced efforts to place a high priority on helping schools create safer and more nurturing school climates.
- A new [Campus Safety and Security Data Analysis Cutting Tool](#) was released in May 2016 by ED’s Office of Postsecondary Education. The tool was redesigned to provide rapid, customized reports for public inquiries relating to campus crime and fire data, including a trend generator that allows members of the public to easily build tables that show trends over time. The data are drawn from the statistics submitted annually to the Office of Postsecondary Education by all postsecondary institutions that receive Title IV funding as required under the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act and the Higher Education Opportunity Act.

ED’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and the Department of Justice have made significant strides in their enforcement efforts on sexual assault. As of June 8, OCR currently has 244 sexual violence cases under investigation at 193 institutions of higher education.

The Administration remains committed to sustaining resources for work to address campus sexual assault, with the President’s 2017 Budget request allocating a \$6 million increase in funding for campus grants administered by the Department of Justice Office on Violence against Women.

Improving the Federal Response to Violence Against Women and Girls in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities

“Tribal governments have an inherent right to protect their people, and all women deserve the right to live free from fear.”

Vice President Biden, March 7, 2013

The United States has taken steps, both domestically and through diplomatic channels such as the United Nations, to address violence against Alaska Native and American Indian women and girls in the U.S., and indigenous women and girls globally. In 2010, the Department of Justice’s Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) began a partnership with the FBI Office for Victim Assistance and the Indian Health Service (IHS) to enhance the response to victims of sexual violence in Indian Country. The [AI/AN Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner-Sexual Assault](#)

[Response Team \(SANE-SART\) Initiative](#) continues to address the acute needs of tribal victims of sexual violence through focused efforts to build the capacity of tribal communities to provide coordinated, community-based, victim-centered responses.

[The 2013 Reauthorization of VAWA](#) included an historic provision to address flaws in the jurisdictional framework in Indian Country that left many acts of domestic and dating violence perpetrated by non-Indians unprosecuted. The Act recognizes tribes' inherent power to exercise "Special Domestic Violence Criminal Jurisdiction" (SDVCJ) over non-Indian perpetrators who commit acts of domestic violence, dating violence, or violations of certain protection orders in Indian Country. In FY2016, the Department of Justice's Office on Violence against Women (OVW) received its first appropriation to implement the SDVCJ grant program that was authorized by VAWA 2013. This program will provide grants to tribal governments that exercise special domestic violence criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians who assault Indian spouses, intimate partners, or dating partners, or who violate protection orders, in Indian Country. The President's 2017 Budget proposes doubling that amount, requesting \$5 million in Tribal Special Domestic Violence Jurisdiction grants.

In 2014, OVW designed a pilot project to fund [Tribal Special Assistant United Attorneys \(SAUSAs\)](#) to prosecute domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking cases in Indian Country. These cross-designated prosecutors maintain an active violence against women crimes caseload in both Tribal and Federal court, while helping to promote higher quality investigations, and improve training and inter-governmental communication.

In May 2016, NIJ released a new report: [Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men: 2010 Findings From the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey](#). This study examines the prevalence of violence against American Indian (AI) and Alaska Native (AN) women and men, using a large nationally representative sample. The results — which show high rates of violence for both women and men — provide the most thorough assessment on the extent of violence against AI and AN women and men to date. Findings from the study estimate levels of sexual violence, physical violence by intimate partners, stalking, and psychological aggression by intimate partners among AI and AN women and men, as well as estimates of interracial perpetration. Further, the President's 2017 Budget requested an additional \$1 million for the HHS Family Violence Prevention and Services Program to establish an Alaska Native Tribal Resource Center on Domestic Violence.

Internationally, to highlight the topic of violence and discrimination against indigenous women and girls, the United States delivered a [joint statement on behalf of 35 countries](#) at the June 2014 UN Human Rights Council (HRC) session. The Administration also supported highlighting this issue at the September 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples and in its outcome document.

In 2014, we provided over \$290,000 of voluntary funding to UN Women, to support field-based projects protecting indigenous women and children in Guatemala and Vanuatu from violence.

The United States held a side event on violence against indigenous women and girls at the June 2015 HRC session, as part of "[The Future She Deserves](#)" effort. This initiative, which Ambassador Hamamoto announced in February 2015, is designed to leverage Geneva-based institutions and multilateral meetings to advance the goal of making women and girls less vulnerable. One of its overarching objectives is preventing and responding to gender-based

violence. The other three goals are ensuring adolescent girls' access to health services, empowering women economically, and promoting leadership opportunities and gender parity within the United Nations.

Improving the Federal Response to Violence Against Older Women and Elder Abuse

"One of the best measures of a country is how it treats its older citizens. And by that measure, the United States has a lot to be proud of."

President Barack Obama, July 13, 2015

In 2015, the Administration expanded its commitment to combating violence against women of all ages by hosting several roundtables focused on understanding and supporting the unique challenges older adults face. For the first time, elder justice was put on the agenda of the [2015 White House Conference on Aging](#), expanding the work of the Elder Justice Coordinating Council. The White House also used the conference to consider how the White House Council on Women and Girls and the Office of the Vice President's Advisor on Violence Against Women could advocate for older women. In April 2015, the White House Council on Women and Girls convened expert stakeholders in the fields of aging, health, domestic violence and elder abuse, and economic security for a listening roundtable, "[Promoting Equal Futures Across the Lifespan](#)" and, in June of the same year, hosted a roundtable with the Office of the Vice President, "[Supporting Survivors across the Lifespan](#)," which convened advocates from leading sexual assault and domestic violence organizations across the country to identify gaps in services for older survivors and ways to improve the accessibility of programs. Furthermore, at the June 2015 United Nations Human Rights Council session, the United States co-sponsored an event marking [World Elder Abuse Awareness Day](#), during which the U.S. delegation outlined U.S. responses to address violence against older women, elder abuse as a public health challenge, and the financial exploitation of older adults.

OVW, through its technical assistance provider, the National Clearinghouse for Abuse in Later Life (NCALL), worked with elder abuse prosecutors throughout the country to create the [National Institute on the Prosecution of Elder Abuse \(NIPEA\) curriculum](#). Aequitas, an organization dedicated to fighting sexual violence of all kinds, has partnered with NCALL to offer this three-and-one-half-day course annually for the last three years. During the course, participants receive training on the dynamics of elder abuse and practical skills to successfully prosecute cases. By 2018, a prosecutor from every state will have participated in this institute. In December 2015, OVW and NCALL released [Addressing Harm to Indigenous Elders: Developing a Tribal Response to Abuse in Later Life](#), a new resource that assists tribes in assessing their readiness to address violence against indigenous elders by exploring their unique circumstances and cultures. The resource has been distributed to tribal programs across the country.

Finally, on June 9, 2016, OVW, through NCALL, released a new toolkit and guide, "[Working with Older Survivors of Abuse: A Framework for Advocates](#)" with principles and practical strategies for victim-service advocates. The final toolkit, which includes a self-assessment and a series of training modules, will be shared with national and local domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking victim services providers over the next year.

Improving Healthcare and Housing Protections for All Survivors of Violence

“We know that domestic violence doesn’t just stay in the home. It can extend into the workplace, with devastating effects on its victims and costs that ripple across the economy.”

Vice President Joe Biden, April 18, 2012

Healthcare

Through enacting and improving laws, convening working groups, and providing resources, departments throughout the Administration have worked tirelessly to ensure all individuals who have experienced sexual assault or violence have access to safe housing and the health care they need. In March 2010, the President signed the [Affordable Care Act](#), which prohibited insurers from denying health coverage or charging a higher premium for domestic violence survivors, providing individuals who have experienced domestic, sexual, and dating violence the economic security of affordable health insurance. The law also requires most health plans to cover preventive services, including screening and counseling for domestic or intimate partner violence, at no extra copay to the consumer.

In March 2012, the President ordering the establishment of a Federal working group on the [intersection between HIV / AIDS and violence against women](#). Led by the Office of the Vice President and the Office of National AIDS Policy, the group released a 56-point action plan in September 2013 and an [updated report](#) in October 2014. In July 2015, the working group was combined with the Federal Interagency Working Group on HIV and its recommendations were included in the new [National HIV / AIDS Strategy](#).

In a Presidential Memorandum to heads of executive departments and agencies dated April 18, 2012, the President directed the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to develop government-wide guidance to address the effects of domestic violence on the Federal workforce, in consultation with the Attorney General, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Labor, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and other interested heads of agencies. In response to this memorandum, OPM released guidance on developing agency-specific policies on domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking (DVSAS) in the workplace in February 2013. Additionally, OPM partnered with DOJ/OVW in creating an online training for all Federal managers and employees on the impact of DVSAS in the workplace. The training is entitled Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking in the Workplace and is now available on the [HRU.gov](#) platform.

In March 2014, the [Department of Treasury and the IRS released guidance](#) that allows survivors of domestic violence who remain legally married to their abuser to access a premium tax credit and helps make health care affordable for millions of Americans under the ACA. The Department of Treasury and IRS recognized that the current guidance, requiring those legally married to file joint income tax returns to receive this credit, forced many survivors of domestic violence to put themselves in harm’s way to receive their credit. The March 2014 guidance permits a married individual living apart from his or her spouse, who is unable to file a joint return as a result of domestic abuse, to claim a premium tax credit while filing a tax return with a filing status of “married filing separately.”

The Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office on Women's Health, the Administration on Children and Families, and the National Institutes of Health [co-hosted the Intimate Partner Violence Screening \(IPV\) and Counseling Research Symposium](#) in December 2013. Drawing participation from 200 expert researchers, survivor-advocates, Federal agency leadership, and physicians, the Symposium identified research gaps in screening and counseling for IPV in primary health care settings. The Symposium also shaped priorities in the national research agenda moving forward.

The Department of Justice also remains committed to underserved and voiceless survivors of assault, abuse, and violence. In April 2016, OVW released the [National Sexual Abuse Medical Forensic Examinations Protocol for Pediatrics](#) (Pediatric SAFE Protocol), which provides a comprehensive guide for an immediate response to child sexual abuse. Although the primary audience is medical personnel, the report contains detailed information on coordinated community responses and the roles of victim advocates, law enforcement, prosecutors, child protective services, and forensic scientists in response to child sexual abuse. The Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime, with funding from the National Institute of Justice, funded the Massachusetts Department of Public Health SANE Program to establish the [first telemedicine center to provide remote expert consultations by SANEs](#) to clinicians caring for adult and adolescent sexual assault patients.

Prior to the passage of the Violence Against Women Act of 2005, victims of domestic violence were afraid to call the police or seek help because their landlords might find out about the assault and evict them. VAWA created new protections for victims in publicly assisted housing, but rules governing these provisions were never finalized. In October 2010, the Department of Housing and Urban Development ([HUD](#)) [released rules](#) to provide guidance to housing authorities and landlords to evict perpetrators of abuse, keep their properties safe, and make sure victims do not lose their housing due to crimes committed against them. Recognizing the added stigma that survivors of violence with HIV often face, in August 2015, HUD's Office of HIV/AIDS Housing, in collaboration with the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women, announced a new \$9 million [VAWA/HOPWA \(Housing Opportunities for People With AIDS\) Demonstration Project](#). Selected applicants will provide housing assistance and supportive services to low-income persons living with HIV/AIDS who are homeless, or in need of transitional housing or other housing assistance as a result of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking and for whom emergency shelter services or other crisis intervention services are unavailable or insufficient. On Tuesday, June 14, to coincide with the White House Summit on the United State of Women, HUD will announce the awarding of that \$9 million in funding.

In 2015, the Department of Justice's OVW and OVC, the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Special Needs Assistance Programs Office, and the Department of Health and Human Services' Family Violence Prevention and Services Program launched a Federal [Domestic Violence and Housing Technical Assistance Consortium](#) to better address the critical housing needs of victims of domestic violence and their children. The three Federal agencies together awarded a total of \$2.3 million in grant funding to four organizations to form a national consortium focused on fostering increased collaboration among domestic violence and homeless service providers and providing national training, technical assistance and resource development on domestic violence and housing.

Improving the Criminal Justice System Response to Domestic and Sexual Violence

“[Domestic violence] was frequently treated like a private matter. Victims were often just sent home from the hospital without intervention; children were left to suffer in silence. And as a consequence, abuse could go on for years. In many cases, this violence would only end with the death of a woman or a child. And we've come an incredibly long way since that time. We have changed laws. We've made progress in changing the way people think about domestic abuse.”

President Barack Obama, October 27, 2010

The Administration recognizes the importance of providing resources for victims searching for legal assistance without further victimizing survivors. OVC funded the [Wraparound Victim Legal Assistance Network Demonstration Project](#) to develop holistic models for wraparound legal assistance networks to offer free legal assistance for victims in the wake of their victimization. Legal services include civil legal assistance, representation in criminal proceedings, and immigration assistance for victims of human trafficking and battered immigrant women. OVC selected six demonstration sites to develop models that can be replicated by other jurisdictions in the future and a comprehensive, independent evaluation is being conducted through DOJ's National Institute of Justice. OVC expanded the holistic provision of legal services to crime victims by funding four additional legal networks and the National Crime Victim Law Institute, which provides training and technical assistance to all of the legal networks. Vice President Biden and then-Attorney General Holder also announced \$2.3 million in grants to twelve communities to reduce domestic violence homicides as part of OVW's new [Domestic Violence Homicide Prevention Demonstration Initiative](#) (DVHP Initiative). The DVHP Initiative attempts to help state and local jurisdictions reduce domestic violence homicides by identifying potential victims and monitoring high-risk offenders. This project built upon research on risk factors for homicide and uses evidence-based practices to screen victims for these factors and, if these factors are present, immediately connects them with the services they need. The effectiveness of this initiative is being evaluated by NIJ.

There is also an increased commitment to test sexual assault kits nationwide. The President's 2015 Budget requested [\\$35 million](#) for community teams to address the sexual assault kit backlog and \$20 million for research under NIJ's analysis and related forensic activities in order to identify more effective and efficient strategies for reducing the backlog of sexual assault kits. Similarly, in 2016, the President's Budget requested \$41 million to continue to fund the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative and again requested \$20 million for research under NIJ. In September 2015, Vice President Joe Biden, Attorney General Loretta Lynch, New York County District Attorney Cyrus Vance, and actress and founder of the Joyful Heart Foundation, Mariska Hargitay announced [over \\$79 million of grants](#) to 43 jurisdiction in 27 states, which is expected to result in the testing of approximately 70,000 previously untested sexual assault kits nationwide. [Beginning on October 1, 2016](#), BJA estimates that it will make up to 16 additional awards of up to \$2 million under Purpose Area 1 and up to three awards of up to \$1 million under Purpose Area 2 for an estimated total of \$35 million for a three-year project period.

Further, the Justice Department and FBI modernized the [FBI's definition of rape](#) in the Uniform Crime Report, which is used to collect our nation's crime statistics, to make it more inclusive, better reflect state criminal codes, and expand the forms of sexual penetration included in the

definition of rape. The revised definition allows for more opportunities for justice and has led to more comprehensive statistical reporting of rape nationwide.

The Administration has also made efforts to reduce instances of rape and sexual violence in the prison system. In [May 2014](#), the final DHS rule, [Standards to Prevent, Detect, and Respond to Sexual Abuse and Assault in Confinement Facilities](#) (DHS PREA), which was issued pursuant to the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003, took effect. Since May 2014, DHS has aggressively implemented DHS PREA, creating new zero-tolerance policies for sexual abuse and assault in DHS custody and developing additional policies and procedures to strengthen the Department's efforts to prevent, detect, and respond to sexual abuse in DHS immigration detention and holding facilities. Additionally, DHS distributed new detainee awareness and education materials in all immigration detention and holding facilities, deployed a nationwide hotline to serve as an alternative method for detainees to report sexual abuse directly to DHS, designed and implemented new comprehensive training for all employees who may have contact with detainees, and hired agency-wide Prevention of Sexual Assault Coordinators within Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to oversee the Department's implementation of DHS PREA and improve prevention and response practices.

To prevent gender-based bias in law enforcement responses and ensure equal protections for all genders, the Department of Justice issued [Guidance on Identifying and Preventing Gender Bias in Law Enforcement Response to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence](#). The guidance memorializes the principles contained in several landmark DOJ investigations of gender bias in the law enforcement response to domestic and sexual violence. Subsequently in May 2016, the Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime released a [\\$5 million solicitation on identifying and preventing gender bias in law enforcement response to domestic and sexual violence victims](#). This demonstration initiative was designed to implement the new guidance from the Justice Department on Identifying and Preventing Gender Bias in Law Enforcement Response to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence.

Finally, building on the progress made in 2016 and to ensure sustained funding for programs, the [President's FY2017 Budget](#) requested a record \$489 million for OVW. This OVW request includes \$7.5 million increase in Legal Assistance Program funding and \$11.3 million increase in grants to Improve Criminal Justice Responses to Sexual Assault, Dating Violence, and Stalking Program (Arrest), which includes a Homicide Reduction Initiative and Domestic Violence Firearm Lethality Reduction Initiative.

Addressing Sexual Assault in the Military

"The issue of sexual assault in our armed forces undermines that trust. So not only is it a crime, not only is it shameful and disgraceful, but it also is going to make and has made the military less effective than it can be. And as such, it is dangerous to our national security."

President Barack Obama, May 16, 2013

The Administration has adopted a series of Executive Actions to address sexual assault in the military, including measures to improve command accountability, expand victims' rights

within the military justice system, increase training across the ranks, and provide new support for victims.

In May 2013, the Department of Defense (DoD) released the [Sexual Assault Prevention and Response \(SAPR\) Strategic Plan](#), which focused on sexual assault prevention, response, and the administration of military justice in response to sexual assault. The Secretary of Defense directed a series of executive actions to improve command accountability and victims' rights.

In April 2016, the Secretary of Defense released the [DoD Retaliation Prevention and Response Strategy](#) to streamline DoD's efforts to combat retaliation related to reports of sexual assault and complaints of sexual harassment, including protections for service member witnesses and bystanders who intervene, and first responders who experience retaliation related to their duties and responsibilities. The strategy targets five issue areas: standardizing definitions, improving data collection and analysis, building strong and supportive systems of investigation and accountability, providing comprehensive support to reporters, and creating a culture intolerant of retaliation. It is expected to be fully implemented in 2017.

Combating Human Trafficking in the United States and Increasing Support for Survivors

"Our fight against human trafficking is one of the great human rights causes of our time, and the United States will continue to lead it — in partnership with you. The change we seek will not come easy, but we can draw strength from the movements of the past. For we know that every life saved — in the words of that great Proclamation — is 'an act of justice'; worthy of 'the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God'."

President Barack Obama, September 25, 2012

The Administration has demonstrated a strong commitment to ending human trafficking across the United States and around the world, and in March 2012, President Obama [directed his cabinet](#) to double down on efforts to combat human trafficking. Building on the efforts of the [President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons](#), the Administration has pursued an ambitious agenda focused on four priority areas: rule of law, victim services, procurement and supply chains, and public awareness and outreach.

To bolster the rule of law, in 2014, President Obama signed the [Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act](#) into law. This law includes provisions to strengthen the child welfare system's response to sex trafficking by requiring states to develop policies and procedures to identify, document, and determine appropriate services for sex trafficking victims and those at risk for becoming sex trafficking victims. The [Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015](#), which established the Domestic Trafficking Victims' Fund, also provides protection and assistance for victims of trafficking through the launch of child abuse investigation and prosecution programs, and by providing services for victims of child pornography. The law also includes provisions that enhance anti-trafficking responses among runaway and homeless youth, child welfare, health care, and homeland security professionals. In January 2016, the White House introduced 11 newly appointed members of the first-ever U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking, which provides trafficking survivors a formal voice in Federal anti-trafficking policy, pursuant to the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act.

Additionally, the Departments of Justice, Homeland Security, and Labor have been collaborating on the highly effective [Anti-Trafficking Coordination Team \(ACTeam\) Initiative](#), which is dedicated to developing high-impact human trafficking investigations and prosecutions.

To increase the availability of crucial services to trafficking victims, the President has announced several new initiatives, including the launch of \$6 million in [Partnership for Freedom Innovation Awards](#) to challenge local communities to develop collaborative and comprehensive solutions to help trafficking victims, and increased training to local law enforcement partners and state agencies to ensure that they are well-equipped to detect human trafficking and appropriately assist victims. Additionally, in 2015, the Administration announced an unprecedented \$28 million in funding from DOJ and HHS for comprehensive victims services.

Following the Clinton Global Initiative in 2012, the White House launched the Tech vs. Trafficking Initiative, bringing together nonprofits, human trafficking survivors, academia, and technologists to brainstorm ways that technology could be used to combat human trafficking. Together, they [worked](#) to develop tools that survivors could use to connect to social services, encourage tech companies to work with law enforcement and nongovernmental organizations to better understand data on trafficking, and improve the state of technology that law enforcement and government agencies use to identify human traffickers and assist their victims.

Additionally, the Department of State's Trafficking in Persons office leads a yearly interagency process involving participation and coordination among agencies with a range of responsibilities that include criminal enforcement, labor enforcement, victim outreach and services, public awareness, education, trade policy, international development and programs, immigration, intelligence, and diplomacy. Coordinated efforts are essential to an integrated response to human trafficking that leverages resources and amplifies results. The Departments of Justice, Health and Human Services, and Homeland Security released the [Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States 2013-2017](#), which outlines more than 250 action items for victim service improvements, including trauma-informed and gender-responsive actions to strengthen coordination, collaboration, and capacity-building across 17 Federal agencies.

Complementing these efforts, the Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), through support from the TVPA and TVPRA, administers assistance to trafficking survivors under the Comprehensive Services for All Victims of Crime grants, as well as the Specialized Services for Victims of Human Trafficking grants program. OVC also supports states to lead coordinated approaches to anti-trafficking through the Enhanced Collaborative Model (Task Forces) to Combat Human Trafficking Program. In September 2015, Justice announced \$22 million in grant funding to combat human trafficking, almost half of which will fund 16 anti-human trafficking task forces made up of Federal, state, and local law enforcement.

In an effort to stem the supply of trafficked individuals, in 2012 the President signed an [executive order](#) to strengthen the U.S. Government's zero-tolerance policy on human trafficking in government contracting. Furthermore, in January 2015, the White House hosted a [forum dedicated to combating human trafficking supply chains](#). The event brought together leaders from the private sector, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the Federal Government to talk about what we can do together to prevent and eliminate any instances of trafficking-related activities in Federal contracts and in private-sector supply chains.

The Department of Defense, in April 2015, held its largest ever Operational Contract Support Exercise that evaluated current policies aimed at combating human trafficking via the supply chain in U.S. Pacific Command's area of responsibility. The Department is planning a similar exercise in April 2016 for U.S. Southern Command.

To both improve victims' services and increase public awareness of the impacts of trafficking, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) launched its diverse anti-trafficking efforts through the [Blue Campaign](#) in 2010, the unified voice for DHS efforts to combat human trafficking and assist victims, including women and children, who have endured violence domestically and internationally. Working in collaboration with law enforcement, government, and non-governmental and private organizations, the Blue Campaign provides training, enhances public awareness, and supports the prosecution of perpetrators. In collaboration with DHS, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) created [Blue Lightning](#), which provides U.S. commercial airlines with a voluntary mechanism to identify potential human trafficking victims and to notify Federal authorities. DOT has also mandated that all of its 55,000 employees take human trafficking awareness training.

The U.S. Department of Education also released a guide for educators on ways to identify and help prevent child trafficking in schools. [Human Trafficking in America's Schools](#) is a free guide for school staff that includes information about risk factors, recruitment, and how to identify trafficking. It also includes sample school protocols, policies, resources, and potential partnership opportunities.

Since April 2012, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Human Trafficking and Other Victim-Oriented Training has provided training and educational materials to more than 2,000 community-based organizations, nonprofits, and faith-based groups that represent and provide victim services to women and children. This training covers the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act, how to make [unaccompanied alien children \(UAC\) determinations](#), how to identify human trafficking indicators, and how asylum officers should respond if they suspect that an asylum applicant has been or is being trafficked.

In October 2012, the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration published Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 09-12 – [Human Trafficking: The Role of the Public Workforce System in the Delivery of Services and Referrals to Victims of Trafficking](#), to provide further information to the public workforce system about the importance of providing employment and training services to victims of human trafficking and to give updated guidance on how to deliver effective services. In 2015, the Department launched the four-year, nearly \$12 million ["BRIDGE Project," From Protocol to Practice: Building a Bridge to Global Action on Forced Labor](#), which works to fight forced labor of adults and children around the world.

Demonstrating Historic Support for LGBT Survivors of Violence

"So we can't stop. We've got to keep fighting. We've got to keep fighting for the human rights of people around the world – to those who face violence and intimidation every single day, and who live under governments that have made the existence of anybody who's LGBT illegal. We need to send a message to those folks."

President Barack Obama, June 17, 2014

In January 2013, the CDC released the [first set of national prevalence data on intimate partner violence \(IPV\), sexual violence \(SV\), and stalking victimization by sexual orientation](#), through the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey. The survey revealed that lesbians and gay men reported IPV and SV over their lifetimes at levels equal to or higher than those of heterosexuals. Sexual orientation in this study was based on respondents' identification at the time of the survey. The survey also found that bisexual women report a higher prevalence of rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner compared to lesbian and heterosexual women.

In October 2013, the [2013 Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act](#), for the first time in a Federal funding statute, explicitly barred discrimination based on actual or perceived gender identity or sexual orientation. This provision ensures that LGBT victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking are not denied access to the critical services supported by the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. The Department of Justice released a set of [Frequently Asked Questions](#) in April 2014 to help grantees better understand their obligations under this nondiscrimination provision.

Since 2013, the HHS Family Violence Prevention and Services Program (FVPSA) has funded a capacity building [Learning Center dedicated to Improving Service Accessibility for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Victims of Domestic Violence](#) to develop and identify effective approaches for serving LGBTQ survivors of intimate partner violence and their children – the first-ever national resource on this topic to be supported by HHS.

In February 2014, the Obama Administration mandated coordination with USAID's implementation of the President's December 6, 2011 memorandum on "[International Initiatives to Advance the Human Rights of LGBT Persons](#)" and, in particular, to lead ongoing efforts to ensure regular U.S. Government engagement with governments, citizens, civil society, and the private sector to build respect for the human rights and development of LGBT persons.

In April 2015, the Obama Administration [appointed Randy W. Berry as the U.S. State Department's first-ever Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBTI Persons](#), leading diplomatic dialogue on the human rights violations facing the LGBTI community globally, including discussion on hate crimes and acts of violence against LGBTI individuals.

Creating Trauma-Informed Approaches to Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

"Our course of action needs to adapt, to change with the times if we are here to keep a promise we have made to our daughters and granddaughters: to end domestic violence and sexual abuse. Not to reduce it. To end it."

Vice President Joe Biden, October 2010

In 2009, the Federal Partners Committee on Women and Trauma (Federal Partners) was launched by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This Committee recognizes that the effects of violence and trauma against women is a public health issue that touches the work of many agencies. The Committee focused on identifying the effects on each agency, developing a technical assistance agenda, and promoting evidence-based public health

practices. In 2011, the Federal Partners published its first report, [Women and Trauma: A Working Document](#). This report highlights “trauma-informed care,” a new approach to addressing trauma based on universal precautions and organizational sensitivities that provide important new tools for change.

In 2011, the Department of Labor’s Women’s Bureau published [Trauma-Informed Care for Women Veterans Experiencing Homelessness: A Guide for Service Providers](#) to address the psychological and mental health needs of women veterans. The guide, written for service providers, offers observational knowledge and concrete guidelines for modifying practices with the goal of improving re-entry outcomes for women veterans.

In September 2013, the Federal Partners, with support from HHS, produced [Trauma-Informed Approaches: Federal Activities and Initiatives: Federal Partners Committee on Women and Trauma – A Working Document /Second Report](#) a groundbreaking report that represents one of the largest interagency collaborations in Federal Government history, documenting the projects, programs, and initiatives of more than three dozen Federal agencies, departments, and offices. With agencies’ commitment to implementing gender-responsive, trauma-informed approaches, this report addressed the growing national interest in this issue, the work of the Federal Partners Committee, and the specific progress that participating agencies have made over the three years since the Committee published its first report in 2011.

In July 2014, HHS’ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) released [SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach](#). This guidance provides a framework for developing a trauma-informed approach, key assumptions and principles, guidance for implementing a trauma-informed approach, and next steps for trauma in the context of community.

Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls as a Foreign Policy Priority

“Addressing gender-based violence in all of its forms – from domestic violence, to genital cutting, to early and forced marriages – all of that needs to be on the agenda too. Because girls around the world deserve so much better.”

First Lady Michelle Obama, September 24, 2014

In August 2012, President Obama issued an [Executive Order on Preventing and Responding to Violence Against Women and Girls Globally](#) to further enhance the Administration’s efforts to advance the rights and status of women and girls, to promote gender equality in U.S. foreign policy, and to bring about a world in which all individuals can pursue their aspirations without the threat of violence. The Order created an interagency working group co-chaired by the Secretary of State and the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and directed departments and agencies to implement the new [United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence \(GBV\) Globally](#). The 2016 Update to the GBV Strategy reflects key stakeholder input from civil society and government interagency research, policies, and programs.

Annually, the [State Department](#) and [USAID](#) contribute approximately \$150 million to support projects all over the world that have supported women’s groups and broader community

members in providing access to justice, psychosocial, and economic services for survivors, funding for the economic sustainability of shelters, offering vocational and life-skills training, linking service providers to strengthen the chain of response, and addressing the intersection of conflict, health, and disaster situations with GBV prevention and response. Programs have worked on addressing and responding to female genital mutilation/cutting, child, early and forced marriage, acid throwing, intimate partner violence, and sexual violence, among many other forms of gender-based violence.

USAID has reached more than five million survivors of GBV with vital, sometimes life-saving services in more than 40 countries worldwide, and has awarded more than \$17 million in dedicated incentive funds to support innovative pilot programs, research, and scaled best practices to address GBV in 15 countries.

In 2011, the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) launched the interagency Gender-Based Violence Initiative (GBVI) in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, and Tanzania. The GBVI aimed to integrate gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response into existing HIV prevention, care, and treatment programs at health facility, community, and policy levels. The GBVI focused on multiplying the effects of PEPFAR investments to integrate GBV prevention and response into existing HIV programs. This included developing national guidelines, strengthening coordination across sectors, and building the capacity of and linkages between clinic- and community-based services in GBV prevention, as well as response, within the context of existing HIV prevention, care, and treatment.

In 2013, the United States Government launched [Safe from the Start](#), a joint effort by USAID and the Department of State to strengthen the humanitarian system's response to GBV at the onset of a crisis. Through Safe from the Start, the United States committed to furthering the goals of the international Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, and went on to lead the groundbreaking initiative from 2014-2015. In 2015, the United States launched the [Call to Action Roadmap](#), a five-year plan of action to coordinate international efforts to achieve this goal. Through [Safe from the Start](#), the United States has allocated nearly \$40 million since 2013 to support targeted GBV services as well as capacity building and coordination around the world. These efforts galvanize collective action to ensure that GBV is considered a priority in every humanitarian response.

In 2014, the State Department launched the [Gender-Based Violence Emergency Response and Protection Initiative](#), a public-private partnership between the U.S. Department of State, Vital Voices, and the Avon Foundation, to provide urgent assistance to survivors of GBV, including harmful traditional practices, as well as individuals under credible threat of imminent attack due to their gender or gender identity. The short-term emergency funds cover urgent needs such as relocation, medical and psychosocial care, emergency shelter, legal assistance, and other costs. In addition to urgent support for individuals, the initiative supports integrated training for governments, judiciaries, and key civil society actors in implementing laws that address GBV, as well as targeted advocacy programs for civil society groups working to address cultural attitudes and norms around GBV.

While there is no way to know the true scope of the number of women and girls who have experienced GBV as a result of the conflict in Iraq, we do know that thousands of women and children, mainly from the Yezidi minority community, were taken captive during attacks by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) against northern Iraq in the summer of 2014. As part

of humanitarian and stabilization efforts, the U.S. government, as well as international partners, continue to provide vital assistance to women and children who survived various forms of GBV, including ISIL captivity and abuse. U.S.-funded programs include life-saving SGBV, health, and psychosocial support services, as well as livelihood assistance, and women's and girl's centers. We are also building prospects for accountability for GBV crimes. In addition, the U.S. Government supports efforts throughout Iraq to strengthen resilience capacities, manage the symptoms of severe distress and exposure to traumatic events, and enhance social cohesion among IDPs, returnees, and host communities.

Guided by the belief that successful economies and political systems require the participation of women, President Obama has challenged other heads of state to break down barriers to women's political and economic participation. In response, the Secretary of State launched the [Equal Futures Partnership](#) on behalf of the United States along with 12 other founding members (Australia, Bangladesh, Benin, Denmark, Finland, Indonesia, Jordan, the Netherlands, Peru, Senegal, and Tunisia; as well as the European Union). The United States pledged to make progress in four key areas, including "Breaking the Cycle of Violence and Ensuring Economic Security for Survivors of Violence."

The United States has co-sponsored resolutions on [ending early and forced marriage](#) (EFM) at the Human Rights Council and in the UN General Assembly's Third Committee. In 2012, the State Department began reporting on the minimum age of marriage and the rate of marriage under 18 in its [Annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#) and adopted new guidance and training for consular officers to assist U.S. citizens living abroad who are forced into marriages. By strengthening reporting on this issue, the United States signals to countries that child marriage is a threat to the fundamental human rights of girls and women.

[The Department of State launched the Accountability Initiative](#) to further its longstanding commitment to support prevention of, and accountability for, sexual violence in countries affected by conflict. During the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Secretary of State announced the Accountability Initiative to "help survivors secure justice—to build the capacity of partner governments to prosecute the sexual violence crimes in countries that are ravaged by war and violence and insecurity." This program seeks to decrease impunity for sexual and gender-based violence in conflict-affected environments, scale judicial capacity, and promote public confidence in the rule of law. Under this Initiative, the United States has committed \$8.35 million for projects in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Liberia.

In February 2016, President Obama released the [first Presidential statement](#) denouncing female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C) both domestically and internationally. The Department of State works to combat this harmful practice through a variety of diplomatic, programmatic, and public diplomacy efforts, as outlined in the [U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender Based Violence Globally](#) and the [U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls](#).

Since 2014, the State Department has supported a \$1.5 million comprehensive project to prevent and respond to FGM/C in Guinea titled "Accelerating the Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting", which worked to strengthened institutional, community, and family prevention and protection mechanisms for at least 65,000 girls and women in Guinea exposed to FGM/C practices at all geographical levels in the country's eight regions. Working with over 2,500 direct beneficiaries, the project included multimedia awareness campaigns to promote behavior change against FGM/C at societal, institutional, community, and individual levels.

The project also trained a broad spectrum of community leaders, including from the religious, traditional, health, and education sectors to actively engage in promoting and monitoring the abandonment FGM/C.