



NATIONAL NETWORK
TO END DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE

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NNEDV

Memorandum

To: Laurie Robinson
 From: Sue Else, President and Tralonne Shorter, Public Policy Director (202) 543-5566
 Date: December 12, 2008
 Subject: NNEDV Policy Recommendations for the U.S. Department of Justice

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you on Friday, December 5th and share NNEDV's key concerns to the U.S. Department of Justice Transition Team. This document outlines in greater detail NNEDV's policy recommendations for the U.S. Department of Justice and we urge your consideration when developing your priorities for the Obama-Biden Administration.

Introduction

An enormous opportunity awaits the Obama-Biden Administration. We know from experience that during harsh economic times, demand for victim services increases significantly including, relocation assistance, counseling, emergency shelter, legal services, transitional housing and childcare. This is the time to engage more federal agencies in coordinated work to end violence against women. It is a time to match legal justice with economic justice so that victims can make real choices to leave or respond to the abuses they have experienced.

The National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) stands ready to help the Administration provide services and develop strong implementation systems to address domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking. NNEDV, a constituent membership program, represents the 56 state and territorial domestic violence coalitions, their 2,000 member programs and the millions of individuals and families across America affected by domestic and sexual violence. NNEDV also collaborates with other national organizations to ensure that policies that prevent and end violence against women are enacted. NNEDV is uniquely positioned to link the Administration to the grassroots work in the community through the state leaders who constitute our membership. NNEDV's members are the first to spot emerging trends and are relied upon to help develop state-wide policies that ensure consistent and effective responses to domestic violence and, in many states, sexual assault.

NNEDV Policy Recommendations for The Department of Justice

- **Support full funding of the Violence Against Women Act.** The economic crisis is forcing states to cut funding for crucial victim services programs even as requests for services increase. The Department of Justice must request full funding for VAWA so that the full range of services victims need remain available.
- **Ensure that the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund is maintained and used for its original Congressional intent.** The President should request an adequate annual VOCA cap to ensure stable and sufficient funding to victim service providers and should firmly support only the authorized use of VOCA funds. VOCA funds should not be tapped to meet administrative



shortfalls in the DOJ budget. Further, the President should request a specific line item for management and administration for the Office of Justice Programs, to ensure that no VOCA Funds are needed for such purposes and that VOCA Funds are only used for victims and victim services.

- **Require the Executive Office of the U.S. Attorneys (EOUSA) to prioritize domestic violence and sexual assault cases in Indian country.** In years past, the EOUSA prioritized investigation and prosecution of crimes of violence against women. Over the years, that focus has been lost. It is time for the EOUSA to make prosecution of federal VAWA-related crimes a priority, particularly in cases where Native American women are victimized.¹
- **Support White House Leadership with Federal Agency Coordination.** The President should create an Interagency Council on VAW staffed by the Director of the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) and a parallel position from the Department of Health and Human Services. This Interagency Council will develop consistent Administration-wide agency policies and implementation, work with other relevant Interagency Councils, liaise with the high-level point person on VAW in the White House and consult with and obtain advice from the field on a regular basis.
- **Ensure the seamless integration of policy on domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking throughout all federal agencies.** Different government offices and agencies have different policies on violence against women issues, creating conflicts and confusion among grassroots and state-level service providers. All federal agencies should promote a consistent response to violence against women in consult with the field.
- **Provide little disruption as possible in the federal grant funding process as the transition gets underway.** Keep Cindy Dyer, the current Director of the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), in place at least during the transition period of the new Administration.
- **Provide consistent funding to the field.** Grassroots programs and state-level domestic violence and sexual assault coalitions rely on consistent funding and grant administration. The Office of Justice Programs and the Office on Violence Against Women must create a nimble system of timely announcing and awarding grants to the field. Additionally, OJP and OVW have had a history of refusing to re-fund grantees who have performed well and met all deliverables and requirements; OJP and OVW must find a way to provide continuing support to grantees who have been meeting grant performance requirements so that these programs are not subject to catastrophic funding shortfalls through no fault of their own.
- **Increase commitment to serving victims from communities of color.** Federal laws, including the Violence Against Women, have expanded access for victims of domestic violence to seek shelter and services. Yet, many victims of color remain unable to access services that are responsive to and representative of their unique cultural and linguistic needs. The Department of Justice is poised to play a key leadership role in ensuring that the implementation of the Violence Against Women Act includes specific efforts to ensure that the distinctive needs of communities of color remain a priority.

¹ The Department of Justice should consult with the National Congress of American Indians and Sacred Circle: The National Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women regarding violence against Indian and Alaska Native women.



- **Revive the National Advisory Committee on Violence Against Women.** Currently the National Advisory Committee on Violence Against Women functions more as a symbolic representation of the field and is an inefficient use of time and resources. We urge the Attorney General and the Secretary of Health and Human Services to revive this Committee and give it the authority to provide meaningful policy guidance to federal agencies concerning the Violence Against Women Act.
- **Work in partnership with the Department of Labor to develop and enforce federal workplace policies to protect federal workers experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking.** The Department of Justice can make a powerful statement about the importance of workplace protections for victims of these four crimes by promoting model federal personnel policies.
- **Recognize that all victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking need access to all federally funded services.** Immigrant and tribal victims deserve the same level of services as those available and accessible to U.S. citizens in the States. Victim service providers and the justice system should not be penalized for providing help to immigrant victims.
- **Ensure that the privacy of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking is protected and that confidentiality of records relating to their needs is inviolate.** The Department of Justice must ensure that federal information data systems provide privacy protections for the safety of victims of these four crimes and that information about victims is not posted on the Internet.
- **Track and respond to the impact that the current economic crisis is having on victims.** The Department of Justice should analyze how the economic crisis has impacted programs (prosecutions, courts, law enforcement, and social and health care services as well victim services) on which victims rely, as well as investigate how the mortgage and credit crisis may contribute to increased need for services.
- **Have the National Institute of Justice perform a meta-analysis of relevant existing research and statistics on violence against women.** This meta-analysis should provide information about gender frequency, age frequency, arrest issues, the impact of poverty and rates of homicide and recidivism to better inform the field.