

40 YEARS
OF SOCIAL SERVICE
AND COMMITMENT TO
SOCIAL CHANGE

**PEACE
OVER
VIOLENCE**
ONE ON ONE, ONE BY ONE

**DENIM
DAY**
IN LA & USA

**SEXUAL
VIOLENCE
PREVENTION
AND EDUCATION
CAMPAIGN**

THERE IS NO
EXCUSE
AND NEVER
AN INVITATION
TO RAPE

A Painful Truth: An Update on Sexual Violence Issues: 2011

A Painful Truth

An Update on Sexual Violence Issues: 2011

To be read in conjunction with *A Painful Truth: A Retrospective of Sexual Violence*.

Peace Over Violence is committed to keeping the issue of sexual violence current and accessible.

Introduction

Much has happened in the areas of sexual violence trends, response and prevention since the first edition of *A Painful Truth: A Retrospective of a Decade of Sexual Violence* was published in 2008. The retrospective has been a valuable tool to inform and educate stakeholders, advocates, and service providers about the historical events and diverse communities affected by sexual violence. Progress and policy are on a parallel continuum—continually changing and moving. We are dedicated to moving our publication along with the developments, not remain static. Peace Over Violence aspires to make *A Painful Truth* a living document that can keep records of the past, while constantly tracking the trends and truths of today. With that in mind, this update will provide more information about the current state of sexual violence and highlight some of the innovative advancements and developments in the field of sexual violence since 2008.

National Leadership:

During Sexual Assault Awareness Month, April 2011, the Office of Violence Against Women's (OVW) Director, Susan B. Carbon, sent out a letter about the commitment of the OVW to addressing sexual violence. She urges a focus on sexual violence—"In a country that has made such progress in addressing domestic violence, we feel the moral imperative to develop a national dialogue and national focus on ending sexual violence against all women."

A renewed focus on sexual violence was also reflected in October 2010, when the United States Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), the White House Council on Women and Girls, and the White House Advisor on Violence Against Women hosted two days of roundtables on sexual violence in the United States.¹ These dialogues launched an effort to combat sexual violence by improving criminal justice system response, expanding victims' services, and changing attitudes. This federal attention to sexual violence marks a renewed focus and effort to end sexual violence. The report reflects the reoccurring problem of societal blaming of victims and a systemic failing to hold perpetrators accountable. Barriers in advancing the issue of sexual violence were discussed, as well as increased education, bystander intervention, responsible media coverage, and the need for parity and adequacy in resource allocation between domestic violence and sexual violence issues.² These actions showcase the continuing need for a community shift in understanding of sexual violence, and highlight a current and strong national commitment to ending sexual violence.

Costs of Sexual Violence:

Studies show that rape is the most costly of all crimes to its victims. The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence estimates that rape costs \$127 billion a year, excluding the costs of child sexual abuse.³ Researchers estimate that each rape costs about \$151,423.⁴ The costs of sexual assault extend beyond the criminal justice and health systems—survivors have reduced income in adulthood, with an estimated lifetime income lost of \$241,600.⁵ Early and appropriate intervention can lower costs and improve outcomes for survivors. When victims receive advocate-assisted services following assaults, they get more helpful information and referrals, and experience less secondary trauma from interactions with medical and legal systems.⁶ Also, survivors with advocates present in the legal and medical proceedings fare better in the short and long-term, experience less psychological distress, physical health issues, self-blame, depression, and are more likely to have reported the assault to law enforcement.⁷ Early intervention and funding through the Violence Against Women Act has reduced the societal cost of violence against women—the net benefit of VAWA is estimated at \$16.4 billion. VAWA costs \$1.6 billion to implement, but averts about \$14.8 billion in victimization.⁸ Clearly, funding sexual assault services makes social and economic sense.

1 *Sexual Violence in the United States: Summary of the Roundtable Proceedings*. Sponsored in partnership by the United States Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women, the White House Council on Women and Girls, and the White House Advisor on Violence Against Women. (October 27-28, 2010, Washington DC) (published March 2011) at page 4.

2 *Id.* At page 7-8.

3 *The Costs and Consequences of Sexual Violence and Cost-Effective Solutions*. The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (April 2011).

4 *Id.*

5 *Id.*

6 *Id.*

7 *Id.*

8 *Id.*

Campus Response to Sexual Assault:

During Sexual Assault Awareness Month in April 2011, Vice President Joe Biden, one of the co-authors of the Violence Against Women Act, launched a national initiative to encourage colleges, universities, and K-12 schools to take action to prevent sexual violence on campus.⁹ In a letter sent to school administrators the federal education department reminded schools of their obligation to prevent gender-based violence under Title IX. The letter admonishes schools to support survivors and recognize that a sex crime is far more significant than an alcohol-related misdemeanor; inform survivors of their rights to a full investigation and information about the outcome of the investigation; and promptly investigate all reported sexual assaults.¹⁰ Biden highlighted successful bystander education programs as an important component of sexual assault prevention in schools.¹¹

Forensic Examinations and DNA Evidence:

Since 2008, the backlog and untimely processing of DNA evidence in sexual assault cases has grown in public awareness in California and the nation. California is currently attempting to decrease backlogs and protect victims' rights through legislation.

Assembly Bill 322 introduced by Assembly Member Portantino would increase transparency in DNA backlogs by requiring local law enforcement agencies to report the number of rape kits collected and tested annually. The bill would also require the agencies to submit the rape kits for testing within 30 days, and would get rid of the rape kit backlog by January 2014.¹²

Another bill, Senate Bill 534, sponsored by the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA) and introduced by Senator Corbett would codify that victims of sexual assault are not required to participate in the criminal justice system or cooperate with law enforcement in order to receive a DNA rape kit exam, as required by the federal Violence Against Women Act.¹³ The bill will reaffirm federal law and take law enforcement out of the gate-keeping roll for approval of the exam.

On the national front, sexual assault rape kits have been highlighted in a 2011 article from the National Institute of Justice, *Solving the Problem of Untested Evidence in Sexual Assaults*.¹⁴ The article urges the local, state and national governments to "move beyond the crisis management of the moment to the adoption of systematic practices, procedures and protocols that will prevent such situations from ever arising again."¹⁵ This is just one example of the growing public concern and pressure on government to test DNA rape kits in an effective and timely manner.

Prison Rape:

State and federal correctional authorities reported 14,800 allegations of sexual assault in 2007 and 2008.¹⁶ One in seven of the allegations was substantiated after investigation.¹⁷ Although the Prison Rape Elimination Act passed in 2003, the real impact of the act is being felt now. National reports and shared lessons from grants, technical assistance for local correctional facilities, and the activism of organizations like, Just Detention International, continue to increase accountability for and improve response to sexual assault in the corrections community.¹⁸ Currently, sexual assault service organizations are advocating the US Attorney General adopt strong national standards addressing sexual violence in detention. The proposed standards require that all victims have access to forensics examination when medically or evidentiary appropriate and directs correctional authorities to make housing decisions for transgender inmates that include considerations of whether they would be safest in a facility aligned with their gender identity. Some key concerns about the proposed standards and suggested improvements are to extend the standards to immigration detention, to not use protective custody for

9 Joe Biden Urges Schools to Address Sexual Assault Epidemic: Ms Magazine Blog. (April 11, 2011) available at <http://msmagazine.com/blog/blog/2011/04/04/joe-biden-urges-schools-to-address-sexual-assault-epidemic/>.

10 *Id.*

11 *Id.*

12 AB 322 (2011).

13 SB 534 (2011).

14 Ritter, Nancy. *Solving the Problem of Untested Evidence in Sexual Assaults*. NIJ Journal No. 267, Winter 2010.

15 *Id.*

16 Beck, Allen and Guerino, Paul. *Special Report: Sexual Victimization Reported by Adult Correctional Authorities, 2007-2008*. NCJ 231172 (January 26, 2011).

17 *Id.*

18 Just Detention, *Prison Rape Elimination Act Factsheet.*, http://www.justdetention.org/en/factsheets/Prison_Rape_Elimination_Act.pdf [available March 15, 2011].

victims of sexual violence as it is punitive and stigmatizing, limit cross-gender supervision because most staff-on-inmate sexual abuse is cross-gender, simplify the grievance systems for survivors of sexual abuse, require outside monitoring of standards compliance, and do not house youth in adult prisons and jails.¹⁹ These standards should be finalized in the coming year, and many sexual assault agencies petitioned the Attorney General to include the additions outlined above in the new standards.

Men as Victims of Sexual Assault:

There is growing awareness that men and boys are victims of sexual assault. They face different experiences informed by traditional gender roles, social and cultural barriers, and a lack of services for men and boys. Founded in 2007, 1in6 provides help and healing to men dealing with the trauma of sexual assault.²⁰ Steve LePore, 1in6's Executive Director, established 1in6 to raise awareness of male childhood sexual abuse as a serious social issue, the effects of which he has seen first hand among so many of the runaway and homeless young men he assisted throughout his years in nonprofit service provision. The organization's name is based on the statistic: "1 in 6 men have experienced unwanted or abusive sexual experiences before age 16."²¹ And like with women, many men do not begin to understand the impact of child sexual abuse until adulthood. New resources and advocacy geared towards men and the impact of child sexual abuse on men over their lifespan has begun to shed light on this often ignored community of survivors. Experts working with male survivors of sexual assault call for sexual assault organizations/centers to review their services, training and supervision—top to bottom—and formulate an organization-appropriate strategy for serving the unique needs of male survivors.²² The services and how those services are communicated, such as through brochures, posters, websites, and waiting rooms need to be examined and adjusted to reflect the needs of male survivors. Outreach and services need to be adjusted to reflect the needs of male survivors. For example, since Peace Over Violence changed our name from the Los Angeles Commission On Assaults Against Women, we have experienced a ten percent increase in male survivors seeking services each year. Our new name is more friendly to male survivors. Existing sexual assault centers may need to reflect on their organizations' history and philosophy, such as their roots in the feminist movement, and begin to expand their organizational culture in order to help men without compromising women's services.²³

Sexual Assault in the Military:

To compound the continuing issue of sexual assault against women in the military, recent studies have brought to light that many men are sexually abused in the military. Sexual assault in the military has been largely acknowledged as a women's issue; sexual assault was classified solely as a women's health issue by the Pentagon until 2006.²⁴ But men are sexually abused in the military in alarming rates—nearly 50,000 male veterans screened positive for military sexual trauma at the Department of Veterans Affairs in 2010—that is up from 30,000 in 2003.²⁵ One Veterans Affairs psychologist reports that more than 11% of the men she works with eventually admit that they were sexually victimized.²⁶ Male-on-male sexual assault in the military is kept hidden by layers of homophobia, personal shame, and systemic and official denial. Victims are told that they are causing the attacks—they are the problem. As in cases of female sexual assault, high ranking officers want to cover up sexual assault incidents in order to improve their chances for promotion. Reporting sexual assault can ruin a military career. The Pentagon and military continues to struggle with how to help male survivors, improve reporting and investigation, and prevent male-on-male sexual assault. Improved systemic response is in the works but not yet a reality for male survivors, and female survivors continue to struggle with the same barriers in investigation and reporting that is complicated by a historical disregard for women in the military.

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ See <http://www.1in6.org/>.

²¹ Why 1in6? Statistic Factsheet, available at <http://www.1in6.org/man-educating-myself/about-1in6/>.

²² Jim Hopper, 1in6.org Advisory Board Member, McLean Hospital.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ Jesse Ellison. *The Military Secret Shame*. Newsweek. [April 11, 2011].

²⁵ *Id.*

Arrest Rates:

Reports from 2008 and 2009 demonstrate that many California counties have shockingly low arrest rates for forcible rapes. California arrested 23.6% of forcible rapes in 2009, while New York has been reported to have a 70% arrest rate.²⁷ This suggests that there is a systemic problem in gathering evidence and prosecuting sexual assault. Examination of DNA evidence is part of the solution, as well as sharing the successes and innovations that led to high arrest rates in some California counties and other parts of the nation.

Sex Offender Management:

The Office of the Attorney General and the California Sex Offender Management Board (CASOMB) are leading the charge to improve the sex offender database. The California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA) is bridging the gap between sex offender treatment providers, policy makers and victim advocates, to ensure that treatment methods are victim-centered and lead to increased public safety. Some of the key recommendations, featured in CASOMB's January 2010 Report, include using a hybrid model of residence restrictions to mitigate the potential increased public safety risks associated with homeless/transient sex offenders; implementing the multidisciplinary containment model; funding victims services; sharing best practices; and improving coordination of services with the Department of Mental Health.²⁸

Promoting Healthy Relationships:

Promoting healthy relationships and educating teens about dating violence and sexual violence has become an important prevention strategy that serves as one of many links between sexual violence and domestic violence service providers and advocates. In collaboration, both issues recognize the opportunity to instill healthy relationship skills, increase awareness about controlling behavior, and include youth as leaders and valued voices in the prevention of both domestic and sexual violence. More national and state funding and support for teen dating violence prevention has led to greater awareness about the issue. Since 2008, Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Week grew to the entire month of February as Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month. The issue has gained more awareness and recognition, and local, state and national grant opportunities for preventing teen dating violence have increased. For example, *Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships*²⁹ launched in 2008 and is the largest initiative ever funded to target 11- to 14-year-olds and rally entire communities to promote healthy relationships as the way to prevent teen dating violence and abuse. The initiative uses four key strategies: engaging youth in and out of school, engaging teen influencers, changing policy and environmental factors, and implementing communications/social marketing strategies.³¹ Strategies and lessons learned from initiatives like *Start Strong* will help inform and improve prevention as advocates work towards a future with no sexual violence.

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ AB 322 [2011]; See *Crime in California 2009*, available at <http://ag.ca.gov/cjsc/publications/candd/cd09/preface.pdf>.

²⁸ CASOMB Recommendations Report January 2010, available at http://www.casomb.org/docs/CASOMB%20Report%20Jan%202010_Final%20Report.pdf.

²⁹ Peace Over Violence is one of 11 national *Start Strong* sites. The grant is provided by Blue Shield of California Foundation as part of *Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships*, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

³⁰ About Start Strong, available at <http://www.start-strongteens.org/about>.

³¹ *Id.*

Recommendations and Promising Practices:

Based on the new information released and developing trends in response and prevention of sexual violence, we make the following recommendations:

- + **Look at sexual assault trauma throughout the life span:** Organizations, institutions and individuals must realize that the trauma from sexual assault comes up again and again throughout the survivor's life. Sexual assault services are not about fixing the trauma or closure—communities should remain sensitive to the idea that healing is a process not a destination.
- + **Keep it personalized:** The field must continue to work with diverse communities and address specific needs. Innovation should continue through embracing the needs of new communities, and recognizing the different barriers, influences, and social stigmas surrounding sexual violence for different individuals. It is important to remember that no community, no group, is free from the impact of sexual violence.
- + **Prevention is key:** Promote innovation and study effective sexual assault prevention campaigns, programs and strategies. These strategies should target not only survivors and perpetrators, but bystanders and environments that passively condone sexual violence.
- + **Keep sexual assault in the spotlight:** In many areas sexual assault has become the ignored violence against women issue, with more funding and attention going to domestic violence. Sexual violence must be acknowledged and discussed—even if those discussions make the public uncomfortable. One of the most powerful things communities can do to prevent sexual assault and provide appropriate interventions is reduce the stigma and victim-blaming associated with sexual violence and take the dialogue to the public.

Acknowledgements

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