



National Alliance to
End Sexual Violence

December 17, 2020

Dear Biden-Harris Administration Transition Team:

The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (NAESV) is the voice in Washington, DC for the 56 state and territorial sexual assault coalitions and over 1500 local programs working to end sexual violence and support survivors. The local programs we serve see the widespread and devastating consequences of sexual violence for survivors every day. We, along with the 47 undersigned state and territorial sexual assault and dual coalitions, urge you to create a new position at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in the Office of the Secretary, to serve as a Special Advisor on Sexual Violence, within the first 100 days of your administration. This position is critical to provide leadership and collaboration within HHS and across other agencies and the White House on the issue of sexual violence. The Special Advisor on Sexual Violence will ensure the needs of sexual violence survivors are met and will help to prioritize prevention of sexual violence.

According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey:

- 21% of women and 3% of men reported completed or attempted rape ever in their lifetime.
- Among victims of rape, 43% (11 million) of females and 51% (1.5 million) of males reported it occurred for the first time between the ages of 11-17.ⁱ

The estimated lifetime cost of rape is \$122,461 per survivor, or a population-based economic burden of nearly \$3.1 trillion (2014 U.S. dollars) over survivors' lifetimes. This estimate included \$1.2 trillion (39%) in medical costs; and \$1.6 trillion (52%) in lost work productivity among survivors and perpetrators.ⁱⁱ

The short- and long-term effects of sexual violence can undermine a person's physical and mental health. Based on an analysis of studies from 1980-2008, survivors of sexual violence have a significantly higher prevalence of anxiety, depression, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicide attempts.ⁱⁱⁱ According to the 2005 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance

www.EndSexualViolence.org 

(202)869-8520 

1875 Connecticut Avenue NW, FL 10, Washington, DC 20009 

System, survivors of sexual violence are more likely to suffer from asthma and joint conditions. Studies have also found an increased risk of cervical cancer and sexually transmitted diseases.^{iv}

Among both women and men, previous non-consensual sex was associated with health conditions such as high cholesterol, stroke and heart disease while sexually victimized women were more likely to report having had a heart attack or heart disease than non-victims.^v A study of Kansas adults found a significantly higher prevalence of health risk behaviors (heavy drinking, binge drinking and current smoking) among women who had experienced sexual assault.^{vi}

While many survivors encounter the problems of homelessness, substance abuse, mental health problems, trafficking experiences, and chronic health conditions, HHS has historically lacked specific expertise on the issue of sexual violence. The issue of sexual violence cuts across many HHS bureaus, programs, and offices: programs in the Family and Youth Bureau including Family Violence Prevention Services (FVPSA), Homeless & Runaway Youth, and Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention; the Office on Trafficking in Persons; the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; and the CDC where the Rape Prevention & Education Program (RPE) is housed.

For the past decade, our nation has experienced a deep reckoning with the devastating depth and breadth of the problem of sexual violence outside the realm of the judicial system and law enforcement. As new programs are contemplated at HHS to directly meet the needs of survivors, sexual violence expertise will be even more imperative.

The Biden-Harris Administration can reach farther in meeting the needs of survivors, preventing sexual violence, and providing the leadership necessary to eventually end sexual violence. To do that, HHS must have staff at the highest level of leadership with extensive knowledge of the problem of and solutions to sexual violence as well as experience in the anti-sexual violence field.

Sincerely,



Monika Johnson Hostler
President

Along with the undersigned coalitions:

- Alabama Coalition Against Rape
- Arkansas Coalition Against Sexual Assault
- Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence
- California Coalition Against Sexual Assault
- Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault

Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence
Coordinadora Paz para la Mujer, Inc. (Puerto Rico)
Day One (Rhode Island)
DC Coalition to End Sexual Violence (DCCESV)
Florida Council Against Sexual Violence
Guam Coalition Against Sexual Assault & Family Violence
Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence
Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Indiana Coalition to End Sexual Assault and Human Trafficking
Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault (IowaCASA)
Jane Doe Inc. (Massachusetts)
Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence
Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs
Louisiana Foundation Against Sexual Assault
Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Michigan Coalition to End Domestic & Sexual Violence
Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
Mississippi Coalition Against Sexual Assault
North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence
Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence
New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault
New Mexico Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, Inc.
New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault
New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence
Northern Marianas Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence
Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence
Oregon Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence
Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape
South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual As
Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence

Texas Association Against Sexual Assault
Utah Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance
Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs
West Virginia Foundation for Rape Information and Services
Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

i <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/2015data-brief508.pdf>

ii [http://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797\(16\)30615-8/abstract](http://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797(16)30615-8/abstract)

iii Ibid

iv Ibid

v Watson-Johnson, L, Townsend, J, Basile, K, Richardson, L. Cancer screening and history of sexual violence victimization among U.S. adults. *Journal of Women's Health* 2012.

vi <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2458-14-1286>