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For Immediate Release

April 29, 2014

FACT SHEET: Not Alone – Protecting Students from Sexual Assault

One in five women is sexually assaulted while in college. Most often, it happens her freshman or sophomore year. In the great majority of cases, it's by someone she knows - and also most often, she does not report what happened. And though fewer, men, too, are victimized.

The Administration is committed to putting an end to this violence. That's why the President established the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault on January 22, 2014, with a mandate to strengthen federal enforcement efforts and provide schools with additional tools to combat sexual assault on their campuses.

Today, the Task Force is announcing a series of actions to: (1) identify the scope of the problem on college campuses, (2) help prevent campus sexual assault, (3) help schools respond effectively when a student is assaulted, and (4) improve, and make more transparent, the federal government's enforcement efforts. We will continue to pursue additional executive or legislative actions in the future.

These steps build on the Administration's [previous work](#) to combat sexual assault. The Task Force formulated its [recommendations](#) after a 90-day review period during which it heard from thousands of people from across the country -- via 27 online and in-person listening sessions and written comments from a wide variety of stakeholders.

Helping Schools Identify the Problem: Climate Surveys

As we know, campus sexual assault is chronically underreported - so victim reports don't provide a fair measure of the problem. A campus climate survey, however, can. So, today:

- **We are providing schools with a toolkit for developing and conducting a climate survey.** This survey has evidence-based sample questions that schools can use to gauge the prevalence of sexual assault on campus, test students' attitudes and awareness about the issue, and craft solutions. We call on schools to voluntarily conduct the climate survey next year and, based on what we learn, we will further refine the survey methodology. This process will culminate in a survey for all schools to use.
- **We will explore legislative or administrative options to require colleges and universities to conduct an evidence-based survey in 2016.** A mandate for schools to periodically conduct a climate survey will change the national dynamic: with a better picture of what's really happening on campus, schools will be able to more

effectively tackle the problem and measure the success of their efforts.

Preventing Sexual Assault – and Bringing in the Bystander

The college years are formative for many students. If we implement effective prevention programs, today's students will leave college knowing that sexual assault is simply unacceptable. And that, in itself, can create a sea change.

- **The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conducted a systematic review of primary prevention strategies for reducing sexual violence, and is releasing an advance summary of its findings.** This review summarizes some of the best available research in the area, and highlights evidence-based prevention strategies that work, some that are promising, and those that don't work. The report points to steps colleges can take now to prevent sexual assault on their campuses.
- **The CDC and the Justice Department's Office on Violence Against Women will pilot and evaluate prevention strategies on college campuses.** This work will build on the CDC's systematic review, and will identify and fill gaps in the research on sexual violence prevention.
- **Getting Bystanders to Step In and Help Is a Promising Practice.** Bystander intervention programs work to change social norms, and teach everyone to speak out and intervene if someone is at risk of being assaulted. These programs are among those the CDC found most promising.

Helping Schools Respond Effectively When A Student is Sexually Assaulted: Confidentiality, Training, Better Investigations, and Community Partnerships

By law, schools that receive federal funds are obliged to protect students from sexual assault. It is the Task Force's mission to help schools meet not only the letter, but the spirit, of that obligation. And that can mean a number of things – from giving a victim a confidential place to turn for advice and support, to providing specialized training for school officials, to effectively investigating and finding out what happened, to sanctioning the perpetrator, to doing everything we can to help a survivor recover.

- **Many survivors need someone to talk to in confidence.** While many survivors of sexual assault are ready to press forward with a formal complaint right away, others aren't so sure. For some, having a confidential place to go can mean the difference between getting help and staying silent. Today, the Department of Education is releasing new guidance clarifying that on-campus counselors and

advocates can talk to a survivor in confidence. This support can help victims come forward, get help, and make a formal report if they choose to.

- **We are providing a sample confidentiality and reporting policy.** Even victims who make a formal report may still request that the information be held in confidence, and that the school not investigate or take action against the perpetrator. Schools, however, also have an obligation to keep the larger community safe. To help them strike this balance, we are providing schools with a sample reporting and confidentiality policy, which recommends factors a school should consider in making this decision.
- **We are providing specialized training for school officials.** School officials and first responders need to understand how sexual assault occurs, the tactics used by perpetrators, and the common reactions of victims. The Justice Department will help by developing new training programs for campus officials involved in investigating and adjudicating sexual assault cases and by launching a technical assistance project for campus officials. The Department of Education will develop training materials for campus health center staff to improve services to victims.
- **We will give schools guidance on how to improve their investigative and adjudicative protocols.** We need to know more about what investigative and adjudicative systems work best on campus. The Justice Department will undertake this work, and will begin evaluating different models this year with the goal of identifying the most promising practices. The Department of Education's new guidance also urges some important improvements to the disciplinary process.
- **We are helping schools forge partnerships with community resources.** Community partnerships are critical to getting survivors the help they need: while some schools can provide comprehensive services on campus, others may need to partner with community-based organizations. Rape crisis centers in particular can help schools better serve their students. We are releasing a sample agreement between schools and rape crisis centers, so survivors have a full network of services in place.

Improving and Making More Transparent Federal Enforcement Efforts

To better address sexual assault at our nation's schools, the federal government needs to both strengthen our enforcement efforts and increase coordination among responsible agencies. Importantly, we also need to improve communication with survivors, parents, school administrators, faculty, and the public, by making our efforts more transparent.

- **On Tuesday, we are launching a dedicated website - www.NotAlone.gov - to make enforcement data public and to make other resources accessible to students and schools.** On the website, students can learn about their rights, search enforcement data, and read about how to file a complaint. The website will also help schools and advocates: it will make available federal guidance on legal obligations, best available evidence and research, and relevant legislation. Finally, the website will have trustworthy resources from outside the federal government, such as hotline numbers and mental health services locatable by simply typing in a zip code.
- **The Department of Education is providing more clarity on schools' legal obligations.** The Department of Education is releasing answers to frequently asked questions about schools' legal obligations to prevent and respond to sexual assault. Among many other topics, the new guidance makes clear that federal law protects all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, immigration status, or whether they have a disability. It also makes clear questions about a survivor's sexual history with anyone other than the alleged perpetrator shouldn't be permitted during a judicial hearing, and also that a previous sexual relationship doesn't imply consent or preclude a finding of sexual violence. And that schools should take steps to protect and assist a survivor pending an investigation.
- **The Departments of Justice and Education have entered into an agreement clarifying each agency's role.** Both agencies have a critical role to play in enforcing the laws that require schools to prevent and respond to sexual assault on their campuses. The agencies have entered into a formal agreement to increase coordination and strengthen enforcement.

Next Steps

The action steps highlighted in this report are the initial phase of an ongoing plan and commitment to putting an end to this violence on campuses. We will continue to work toward solutions, clarity, and better coordination. We will review the legal frameworks surrounding sexual assault for possible regulatory or statutory improvements, and seek new resources to enhance enforcement. Campus law enforcement agencies have special expertise- and they, too, should be tapped to play a more central role. And we will also consider how our recommendations apply to public elementary and secondary schools - and what more we can do to help there.

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