



Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence Coalition Connection March 2003

The Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence is dedicated to the empowerment of all the state's survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

Our mission is to develop and promote efforts aimed at the elimination of all domestic and sexual violence in Michigan.

Office on Violence Against Women Convenes Focus Group on Standardization of Rape Exams

Reprinted from SATI E-News, February 26, 2003.

The U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women convened two focus groups within the past year to evaluate existing standards of training, practice and payment of sexual assault forensic examinations.

In the Violence Against Women Act of 2000 (VAWA 2000) (Public Law 106-386, section 1405), Congress required the Attorney General to evaluate existing standards of training and practice for licensed health care professionals performing sexual assault forensic examinations and develop a national recommended standard for training. In addition, the Attorney General is required to recommend sexual assault forensic examination training for all health care students. Congress also asked the Attorney General to develop a recommended national protocol for forensic exams and establish a mechanism for its nationwide dissemination. The goal of the focus groups was to gather input from relevant disciplines toward the creation of a "working draft" of the protocol, which will be the basis for further input and discussion.

Joanne Archambault, President of Sexual Assault Training and Investigations (SATI), welcomed the discussion. "As I travel around the country, it is obvious that guidance is needed in this area. Practices vary widely and protocols are sometimes nonexistent," said Archambault.

The two focus groups included representatives from the criminal justice (police, prosecutors, and forensic scientists), medical (doctors and nurses), and victim services professions. Kellie Greene, a rape survivor and the Executive Director of SOAR (Speaking Out About Rape), was among the focus group participants.

According to Greene, "The [focus group] communication has been open and extensive, and many excellent ideas have been shared. Services are truly better where they have good protocols in place, and it is clear that less-equipped facilities should strive to reach this level." But Greene noted, "there are many hurdles to be overcome in terms of funding, personnel, human and financial resources so these places [with less stringent standards] can get up to speed with the rest of the country."

Greene also said many of the focus group participants come from places that already have best practices in place. She believes it is important to get more input from localities that have

limited resources and are struggling to establish procedures for forensic examinations and analysis of the forensic evidence collected. “Best practices are in the minority,” Greene stated. “The majority [of the country] has very basic standards and they are the ones that will be most impacted by any change.” Overall, Greene is encouraged that a dialogue on this issue is taking place, and believes it is a significant and positive step forward.

While supporting the idea of a national standard for forensic exams, some sex crimes professionals are concerned that it could be used as a tactic by the defense. If a particular case does not follow the national protocol for forensic evidence collection, a defense attorney can call the evidence into question.

A date has not yet been determined for the release of the OVW “working document.”

New Report on Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

The Ms. Foundation recently released a report, *Beyond Surviving: Toward A Movement to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse*, which describes the obstacles to creating an effective prevention movement for child sexual abuse and concepts for creating new practices. The full report can be downloaded at www.ms.foundation.org/safety.pdf.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month Bilingual E-Toolkit Promotes Outreach to Latina Communities

Latinas are not a homogeneous group but rather a composite of various subcultures that can claim over two dozen countries of origin and a rich ancestry that includes mixtures of Spanish blood with Native American, African, German, and Italian, to name a few. The nation’s Latina population is more diverse than ever. While Mexican-Americans still remain the fastest growing Latina group, the second fastest growing group consists of primarily Central and South Americans, which doubled to 10 million in 2000 (U.S. News 5/11/98, The Dallas Morning News, 05/10/01.)

The National Violence Against Women Survey found that Latina women were less likely to report rape victimization than non-Latina women (Tjaden and Thoennes. November 1998. *Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey*).

In the year 2001, according to Ron Aciermo, Assistant Professor with the National Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center, Hispanics are less likely to report sexual assault due to the obstacles in obtaining victim services such as language barriers, cultural factors, and a fear of deportation.

In an effort to help bridge the gaps in community education and promote the active participation of Latina communities in sexual assault prevention efforts, Arte Sana offers a bilingual *Sexual Assault Awareness Month Bilingual E-Toolkit*.

To receive an electronic version of this Toolkit, contact Arte Sana at artesanado@yahoo.com.

Domestic Violence Benefit CD Now Available

Top female performers, including 15 Grammy-nominated artists, have lent their talents to RESPOND II, a two-CD compilation benefiting families affected by domestic violence. All proceeds from the sales of RESPOND II, which is available at stores nationwide and through a variety of online sources, will be donated to the Family Violence Prevention Fund and RESPOND, Inc., one of oldest domestic violence service organizations in the country. The 32-song collection offers both well-known and up-and-coming artists performing country, bluegrass, R&B, folk, punk, Latin pop, and indie rock. The compilation is a follow-up to the acclaimed first Respond CD. RESPOND II can be ordered online through the Family Violence Prevention Fund’s Web site, www.endabuse.org.

National Helpline Expands Services

The National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC) announced that its victim service toll-free Helpline, for the first time since the Helpline was established 10 years ago, will be able to serve callers in Spanish and 180 other languages. By calling the NCVC Helpline, 1-800-FYI-CALL, victims of crime can receive help dealing with the impact of crime, accessing victim compensation, making safety plans, understanding their legal rights, finding an attorney, and locating local services. The National Center partnered with Language Line Services to provide professional translators for more than 180 different languages.

For more information on services provided by NCVC visit www.ncvc.org. Information on Language Line Services is available at www.language.com.

National Asian Women's Health Organization Releases Report on Violence Among Asian American Women

The National Asian Women's Health Organization (NAWHO) has released key findings from the first major study to examine the specific impact of sexual violence, intimate partner violence and stalking among Asian American women aged 18-34. This groundbreaking report entitled, *Silent Epidemic: A Survey of Violence Among Young Asian American Women*, issues a call for increased awareness, prevention and support programs for Asian American women, particularly on college campuses.

A California statewide study, *Silent Epidemic* reveals that young Asian American women are facing various forms of violence at higher rates than recorded data indicate, and lack strong systems of prevention, intervention and support. As a result of cultural barriers and beliefs creating a "code of silence" around violence, compounded by broader institutional barriers such as fear of dealing with the police and courts, Asian American women have become silent contributors to a devastating and ubiquitous public health crisis in the United States.

For more information about *Silent Epidemic* or to receive a copy, contact NAWHO at (415) 989-9747 or visit www.nawho.org.

Mark Your Calendars!

Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
Women of Color Institute and Annual Conference
June 21-25, 2003.

Domestic Violence: A Community Response

The University of Toledo College of Law will be hosting a **free** conference on April 7, 2003 called *Domestic Violence: A Community Response*. This one-day conference features former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno and will showcase what communities across the country are doing to create and sustain effective multidisciplinary collaborations. For further information, call (419) 530-2628 or visit www.utlaw.edu.

Sovereign Women Strengthen Nations

Sovereign Women Strengthen Nations: Ending Rape and Domestic Violence Conference will be held May 5-7, 2003 in Rapid City, South Dakota. Sponsored by Sacred Circle, this conference will gather Northern Plains and Great Lakes Native Nations and those serving Native People. Workshops will address sexual assault and domestic violence in Indian Country. Registration is

\$250. For more information contact Sacred Circle-National Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women at (877) 733-7623 or e-mail scircle@sacred-circle.com.

GHB National Conference

The GHB National Conference, sponsored in part by The National Association for Addiction Professionals, will be held May 9-11, 2003 in Orlando, Florida. *Gamma Hydroxy Butyrate – Spotlight on GHB* will feature three tracks of training focusing on medical issues, criminal justice issues, and school and community issues. For registration information, e-mail GHBFL03@aol.com or visit Project GHB Web site at www.projectghb.org.

Grantmakers-Grantseekers 2003

Grantmakers-Grantseekers 2003 will be held May 19-20, 2003 at the Lansing Center. Co-sponsored by the Council of Michigan Foundations and the Michigan Association for Evaluation, this event brings together representatives from both grant-seeking and grant-making organizations of all types. The conference features expert panels on challenging sector issues, and workshops focused on fund development, collaboration, and all aspects of effective nonprofit management. Registration materials are available by contacting Mike Corbin at (888) 242-7075, ext. 2412.

the calendar

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