



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104

Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5534

www.adph.org

Landmark state plan addresses violence against women

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Carol Gundlach
(334) 832-4842, ext. 12

Julie Lindsey
(334) 264-0123

Violence against women is a significant public health problem and criminal justice concern which has an important impact upon our communities. Each year there are more than 1,000 rapes and 20,000 cases of domestic violence reported to the Alabama Criminal Justice Information Center, yet only an estimated 16 to 20 percent of these violent incidents are ever reported.

For the first time, a comprehensive state plan to address violence against women has been formulated by the Council of Violence Against Women. This plan was developed by the Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the Alabama Coalition Against Rape with support from the Alabama Department of Public Health, and collaboration with the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs and the Governor's Office.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "Today I would like to announce, along with Judge Fry and John Hall, the results of our partnership, a major step in our ongoing efforts to address this issue: A State Plan to Address Violence Against Women."

Judge Jimmy Fry, deputy director of ADECA, said, "We are pleased that Alabama is one of 10 states selected to develop a unified state plan to address violence against women. The process of developing it was very inclusive, and its recommendations represent a consensus of what we want to do."

John Hall, chair of the Council on Violence Against Women, said, "Work groups from the courts, law enforcement, health officials and of boards and staffs have studied various issues, policies and statistics concerning violence in Alabama. More than 200 creative proposals have been reviewed, and all of them have been adopted."

This plan outlines a series of recommendations regarding the roles and responsibilities of every aspect of our society including law enforcement, the judicial system, health care providers, victim service agencies, and communities. These systems are increasingly involved in combating violence against women.

The recommendations were developed by the Council on Violence Against Women. Its membership is reflective of state and local entities responding to or impacted by violence against women including law enforcement officers, prosecutors, physicians and others.

Many work group recommendations incorporated in the plan were echoed by other committees, such as the need for training in several areas related to domestic and sexual violence.

Judicial recommendations include designation of case files, allowing victim advocates in the court system, utilizing and enforcing protection orders and conditions of release, developing safety plans for courthouses, developing protocols by local courts and making appropriate referrals to certified intervention programs.

Prosecution recommendations are similar to the judicial recommendations and include providing victims with information regarding the status of the case and consulting with victims regarding case decisions, encouraging the use of evidence-based prosecution techniques, holding perpetrators accountable and enhancing victim safety.

Law enforcement recommendations include developing history files on chronically violent defendants, designating domestic violence calls as high priority, encouraging collection of all relevant evidence to increase usage of evidence-based prosecution, interviewing all parties separately and providing relevant information to victims.

Health care recommendations include developing a policy regarding domestic violence screening of patients, developing protocols for appropriate response to domestic and sexual violence cases, providing information regarding domestic and sexual violence in curricula used by medical educational institutions, and providing sexual response teams in as many communities as possible.

Recommendations of the **Prevention and Intervention Response to Youth Intimate Violence** included developing anti-violence media campaigns targeting youth, providing information to schools regarding resources for victims, providing training for university personnel on domestic and sexual violence, and developing policies for appropriate responses to sexual and domestic violence on college campuses.

The Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence recommends expanding services for victims of domestic and sexual violence, and developing policies regarding appropriate response to victims.

Coordinated Community Response recommendations include developing domestic violence task forces in every county and collaboration with various agencies.

9/4/02