

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 30, 2012

March 30, 2012

MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

SUBJECT: Establishing a Working Group on the Intersection of HIV/AIDS, Violence Against Women and Girls, and Gender-related Health Disparities

Throughout our country, the spread of HIV/AIDS has had a devastating impact on many communities. In the United States, there are approximately 1.2 million people living with HIV/AIDS, including more than 290,000 women. Women and girls now account for 24 percent of all diagnoses of HIV infection among United States adults and adolescents. The domestic epidemic disproportionately affects women of color, with African Americans and Latinas constituting over 70 percent of new HIV cases in women. The spread of HIV/AIDS is, in and of itself, a primary concern to my Administration. However, gender-based violence and gender-related health disparities cannot be ignored when addressing the domestic public health threat of HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS programs often ignore the biological differences and the social, economic, and cultural inequities that make women and girls more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. In our country, women and girls are all too frequently victimized by domestic violence and sexual assault, which can lead to greater risk for acquiring this disease. Teenage girls and young women ages 16-24 face the highest rates of dating violence and sexual assault. In addition, challenges in accessing proper health care can present obstacles to addressing HIV/AIDS. Gender-based violence continues to be an underreported, common problem that, if ignored, increases risks for HIV and may prevent women and girls from seeking prevention, treatment, and health services.

My Administration is committed to improving efforts to understand and address the intersection of HIV/AIDS, violence against women and girls, and gender-related health disparities. To do so, executive departments and agencies (agencies) must build on their current work addressing the intersection of these issues by improving data collection, research, intervention strategies, and training. In order to develop a comprehensive Government-wide approach to these issues that is data-driven, uses effective prevention and care interventions, engages families and communities, supports research and data collection, and mobilizes both public and private sector resources, I direct the following:

Section 1. Working Group on the Intersection of HIV/AIDS, Violence Against Women and Girls, and Gender-related Health Disparities. There is established within the Executive Office of the President a Working Group on the Intersection of HIV/AIDS,

Violence Against Women and Girls, and Gender-related Health Disparities (Working Group), to be co-chaired by the White House Advisor on Violence Against Women and the Director of the Office of National AIDS Policy (Co-Chairs). Within 60 days of the date of this memorandum, the Co-Chairs shall convene the first meeting of the Working Group.

(a) In addition to the Co-Chairs, the Working Group shall consist of representatives from:

- (i) the Department of Justice;
- (ii) the Department of the Interior;
- (iii) the Department of Health and Human Services;
- (iv) the Department of Education;
- (v) the Department of Homeland Security;
- (vi) the Department of Veterans Affairs;
- (vii) the Department of Housing and Urban Development; and
- (viii) the Office of Management and Budget.

(b) The Working Group shall consult with the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS, as appropriate.

(c) The Department of State, the United States Agency for International Development, and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief Gender Technical Working Group shall act in an advisory capacity to the Working Group, providing information on lessons learned and evidence-based best practices based on their global experience addressing issues involving the intersection between HIV/AIDS and violence against women.

Sec. 2. Mission and Functions of the Working Group. (a) The Working Group shall coordinate agency efforts to address issues involving the intersection of HIV/AIDS, violence against women and girls, and gender-related health disparities. Such efforts shall include, but not be limited to:

- (i) increasing government and public awareness of the need to address the intersection of HIV/AIDS, violence against women and girls, and gender-related health disparities, including sexual and reproductive health and access to health care;
- (ii) sharing best practices, including demonstration projects and international work by agencies, as well as successful gender-specific strategies aimed at addressing risks that influence women's and girls' vulnerability to HIV infection and violence;
- (iii) integrating sexual and reproductive health services, gender-based violence services, and HIV/AIDS services, where research demonstrates that doing so will result in improved and sustained health outcomes;

(iv) emphasizing evidence-based prevention activities that engage men and boys and highlight their role in the prevention of violence against women and HIV/AIDS infection;

(v) facilitating opportunities for partnerships among diverse organizations from the violence against women and girls, HIV/AIDS, and women's health communities to address the intersection of these issues;

(vi) ensuring that the needs of vulnerable and underserved groups are considered in any efforts to address issues involving the intersection of HIV/AIDS, violence against women and girls, and gender-related health disparities;

(vii) promoting research to better understand the intersection of the biological, behavioral, and social sciences bases for the relationship between increased HIV/AIDS risk, domestic violence, and gender-related health disparities; and

(viii) prioritizing, as appropriate, the efforts described in paragraphs (a)(i)-(vii) of this section with respect to women and girls of color, who represent the majority of females living with and at risk for HIV infection in the United States.

(b) The Working Group shall annually provide the President recommendations for updating the National HIV/AIDS Strategy. In addition, the Working Group shall provide information on:

(i) coordinated actions taken by the Working Group to meet its objectives and identify areas where the Federal Government has achieved integration and coordination in addressing the intersection of HIV/AIDS, violence against women and girls, and gender-related health disparities;

(ii) alternative means of making available gender-sensitive health care for women and girls through the integration of HIV/AIDS prevention and care services with intimate partner violence prevention and counseling as well as mental health and trauma services;

(iii) specific, evidence-based goals for addressing HIV among women, including HIV-related disparities among women of color, to inform the National HIV/AIDS Strategy Implementation Plan (for its biannual review);

(iv) research and data collection needs regarding HIV/AIDS, violence against women and girls, and gender-related health disparities to help develop more comprehensive data and targeted research (disaggregated by sex, gender, and gender identity, where practicable); and

(v) existing partnerships and potential areas of collaboration with other public or nongovernmental actors, taking into consideration the types of implementation or research objectives that other public or nongovernmental actors may be particularly well-situated to accomplish.

Sec. 3. Outreach. Consistent with the objectives of this memorandum and applicable law, the Working Group, in addition to regular meetings, shall conduct outreach with representatives of private and nonprofit organizations, State, tribal, and local government agencies, elected officials, and other interested persons to assist the Working Group in developing a detailed set of recommendations.

Sec. 4. General Provisions. (a) The heads of agencies shall assist and provide information to the Working Group, consistent with applicable law, as may be necessary to carry out the functions of the Working Group. Each agency and office shall bear its own expense for carrying out activities related to the Working Group.

(b) Nothing in this memorandum shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

(i) the authority granted by law to an executive department, agency, or the head thereof; or

(ii) the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(c) This memorandum shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(d) This memorandum is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

(e) The Secretary of Health and Human Services is authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

BARACK OBAMA

#