NORTH DAKOTA COUNCIL ON ABUSED WOMEN'S SERVICES
COALITION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT IN NORTH DAKOTA
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LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAIN ON STATEWIDE SEXUAL ASSAULT MODEL POLICY

Responding to sexual assault cases can be challenging for law enforcement – from knowing how to interact with a victim to best investigation practices and procedures. Soon, more than 120 law enforcement officials will be better equipped to respond to these cases. Sheriff and police departments across the state are joining other victim service providers this week in Casselton and Bismarck to train on an innovative model policy they helped create.

"Law enforcement has been a part of the process in developing this policy – a key step in improving their response to victims of sexual assault," said Janelle Moos, Executive Director of the North Dakota Council on Abused Women's Services (NDCAWS). "NDCAWS will continue to offer technical assistance so law enforcement across the state can adapt this model policy based on their specific agency and community needs."

NDCAWS started working on the North Dakota Model Law Enforcement Sexual Assault policy in 2009 with grant funding from the Office of Violence Against Women. Partners on a multidisciplinary advisory committee represented the North Dakota Department of Health, the Rural Crime and Justice Center, Minot State University, and the Tribal Judicial Institute, University of North Dakota. The model policy was adapted from work and research conducted by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). The new policy follows the success of a similar domestic violence model policy published in 2005, which was distributed across the state for law enforcement agencies to customize and incorporate into their departments as protocol when responding to domestic violence calls.

Although having a departmental policy for sexual assault is not a statutory mandate, preliminary research revealed that only 21 out of 98 responding law enforcement agencies across the state had a sexual assault model policy of their own – but about 61 agencies were interested in a potential model policy and training that could be adapted to their individual organizations.

Training for law enforcement agencies runs today and Aug. 22 in Casselton and Aug. 23-24 in Bismarck. Participating agencies for the Casselton training include the Cass County Sheriff's Office, Fargo Police Department, Grand Forks Police Department, Grand Forks Sheriff's Office, Jamestown Police Department, Lamoure County Sheriff's Office, Lisbon Police Department, Northwood Police Department, and the Valley City Police Department. Participating agencies for the Bismarck training include the Benson County Sheriff's Office, Bismarck Police Department, Burleigh County Sheriff's Department, Burlington Police Department, Cavalier County Sheriff's Office, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Kidder County Sheriff's Office, McHenry County Sheriff's Office, McLean County Sheriff's Office, Minot Police Department, Rugby Police Department, Steele Police Department, and the Watford City Police Department.

A copy of the full model policy is available on the NDCAWS website at http://bit.ly/Pufvfc and on the Office of Attorney General website at http://www.ag.nd.gov/BCI/BCI.htm.

COMPREHENSIVE RESOURCES FOR MEDIA:
NDCAWS 2011 statistics about Sexual Assault in North Dakota:
http://www.ndcaws.org/facts/sexual_assault/sexual_assault_stats.html
Investigating Sexual Assaults Concepts and Issues Paper, International Association of Chiefs of Police, Revised 2005.
http://www.theiacp.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=z5xGuy0ksGo%3d&tabid=87