Gender Bias in Policing

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In December of 2015, the U.S. Department of Justice issued guidance for law enforcement agencies (LEAs) seeking assistance to improve their response to sexual assault and domestic violence. Entitled “Identifying and Preventing Gender Bias in Law Enforcement Response to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence,” the guidance identified specific ways that gender bias undermines the law enforcement response to these cases.

The document also outlines eight principles that can guide the development and implementation of a more effective response:

**Principle 1:** Recognize and Address Biases, and Stereotypes about Victims

**Principle 2:** Treat All Victims with Respect and Employ Interviewing Tactics that Encourage a Victim to Participate and Provide Facts about the Incident

**Principle 3:** Investigate Sexual Assault or Domestic Violence Complaints Thoroughly and Effectively

**Principle 4:** Appropriately Classify Reports of Sexual Assault or Domestic Violence

**Principle 5:** Refer Victims to Appropriate Services

**Principle 6:** Properly Identify the Assailant in Domestic Violence Incidents

**Principle 7:** Hold Officers Who Commit Sexual Assault or Domestic Violence Accountable

**Principle 8:** Maintain, Review and Act upon Data Regarding Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence

The guidance provides numerous examples and practice pointers on integrating these principles into departmental practices, training and supervision.

In her statement on the release of the guidance, Attorney General Loretta Lynch stated “Gender bias, whether explicit or implicit, can severely undermine law enforcement’s ability to protect survivors of sexual and domestic violence and hold offenders accountable.” She adds, “This guidance – developed in collaboration with law enforcement leaders and advocates from across the country – is designed to help state, local, and tribal authorities more fairly and effectively address allegations of domestic violence and sexual assault.”

The guidance can be found [online here](#).