

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month

A Message from Acting Director Glenn R. Schmitt, National Institute of Justice

This is the fifth year April has been dedicated to raising awareness about sexual violence. The theme for 2006 is: "It's About Time to Prevent Sexual Violence," which stresses that through effective collaboration, sexual violence is preventable. One in six American women has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape. Ten percent of sexual assault victims are men, and 70% of all sexual assault victims known to law enforcement were juveniles.

Though rates of sexual assault have decreased in past years, we know that sexual assault is one of the most underreported crimes in our country. It is imperative that we do more to let victims know that they are not alone, that the victimization is not their fault, and that help is available. During the month of April, NIJ and its Federal partners within the Department of Justice, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Defense, honor and extend our deepest gratitude to all those who work so tirelessly to raise awareness about sexual violence, support survivors, and dedicate their lives to serving and advocating for those affected by this devastating crime. Thank you for your dedication, compassion, and tenacity in working to eliminate sexual violence.

We also want to recognize the courageous survivors of sexual assault who have experienced the horror of this crime and have struggled to heal and move on with their lives. They are the true inspiration for our work and have our utmost respect and admiration.