

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Source: National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC)

## **Urgent Call to Evacuate Victims of Katrina by Nation's Anti-Sexual Violence Leaders**

[Enola, PA] A group of national anti-sexual violence organizations joined together in calling for our country's greatest rescue efforts. "This country must move immediately to complete the evacuation of all victims of Katrina in the New Orleans area by using every means, and any means, necessary to accomplish the job."

"We are calling for extraordinary and immediate action," adds Karen Baker, Director of the National Sexual Violence Resource Center. She continues, "although we understand the gigantic logistical and communication problems associated with a massive evacuation effort, we are distressed that days after the departure of Katrina from the area, people continue to exist in unspeakable conditions, in violent situations, starving, dying, afraid and totally hopeless."

Baker says, "although we were not invaded by a foreign government we have been invaded by the full force of Mother Nature and our citizens are suffering. We believe that the government has extraordinary abilities, resources and procedures that could be used. We urge everyone to pull out all the stops and get everyone out and to safety."

Marybeth Carter of the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (NAESV) adds, "the large refugee centers like the Astro Dome, while convenient and a first-step towards the goal of evacuation, are less than ideal. These large-scale shelters can become dangerous settings for so

many crimes. We have already heard of many rapes being committed among those still waiting to be rescued and among those in the refugee areas.”

Carter explains, “Alternatives for bringing people to safety include relocating people into smaller environments whenever possible. We believe that if churches, community buildings and other adaptable facilities across the nation would commit to housing 10 to 20 families for a three month period, this would be a more humane and safe way to help our neighbors, especially women and children vulnerable to sexual crimes in massive settings.”

People in the devastated areas and those in shelters who need assistance or support regarding sexual assault may not be able to contact the rape crisis centers in their area.

They may contact RAINN – 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

Or the Domestic Violence National Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

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