Gov. Shumlin, Domestic Violence Task Force release recommendations

Report addresses prevention of violence

MONTPELIER – Gov. Peter Shumlin today released the recommendations of the Governor’s Task Force on the Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence. Established in November 2011 by gubernatorial executive order, the Task Force was charged with evaluating Vermont’s existing public and private domestic and sexual violence programs, identifying gaps in prevention services, and recommending ways to increase coordination among public and nonprofit programs in order to strengthen prevention efforts throughout the state.

"Our hearts go out today to the friends and family of Colleen Scarola of Burlington. We are all wishing her a full recovery," Gov. Shumlin said. The Governor said this case highlights the need for an increased focus on domestic violence and sexual assault prevention efforts. "I am grateful to the members of the Governor's Task Force on the Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence for their hard work and common sense recommendations."

"All Vermonters deserve to be safe and live lives free from sexual and domestic violence," the Governor continued. "We need to address the spectrum of violence from child abuse, to the alarming rates of assaults on women on college campuses, up through elder abuse occurring in our communities."

The Task Force’s report included seven recommendations:

1. Support the creation and implementation of a comprehensive state plan to prevent domestic and sexual violence.

2. Support and develop a statewide, multi-pronged violence prevention campaign.

3. Build capacity for bystander engagement strategies for all ages.

4. Increase the engagement of men in domestic and sexual violence prevention.

5. Strengthen Vermont college campuses’ response to prevention of domestic and sexual violence.
6. Enhance data collection and accessibility through the creation of a central data collection site.

7. Establish a Violence Prevention Program coordinator at the state level.

"Vermont has done an amazing job putting a response to domestic and sexual violence in place, where perpetrators are held accountable and victims are supported. Now it is time for us to invest in the social change efforts needed to curb violence before it happens in the first place, which is why the Task Force recommends increased focus on prevention," said Bethany Pombar, Chair of the Task Force and Prevention Specialist at the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. "These actions will build on and expand Vermont’s primary prevention efforts – approaches that take place before violence has occurred – on both the community and state levels. Vermont is ready to lead the nation in prevention of domestic and sexual violence."

In conducting the research, the Task Force surveyed prevention practitioners to establish the current landscape of Vermont’s violence prevention programs, studied successful social change campaigns in other areas, such as seatbelt usage, polled men’s attitudes about violence against women, reviewed prevention work already taking place on college campuses, talked to employers, reviewed state and national data, and examined military practice.