

# 9. Violence & Abuse Prevention

---

9

## **Goal:**

**Reduce injuries, disabilities, and deaths due to violence.**

# Violence & Abuse Prevention

Health Goal for the Year 2010: Reduce injuries, disabilities, and deaths due to violence and abuse.					
	Indicator	Alaska Data Source	U.S. Baseline	Alaska Baseline	Alaska Target Year 2010
1	Reduce homicide deaths (per 100,000 population).	ABVS	5.7 (1999)	8.1 (1999)	4
	Alaska Native	ABVS		29.4 (1999)	4
2	Reduce child maltreatment (substantiated reports of child abuse, rate per 100,000 children < 18).	DFYS; state fiscal years	11.8 (1999)	20.6 (1997-2001)	10
3	Reduce physical assaults by intimate partners (per 1,000 population, ages 12 and over).	Council on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault	4.4 (1998) NCVS	Developmental	
4	Reduce the rate of forcible rape <sup>1</sup> (per 100,000 population).	UCR	32.7 (1999)	83.5 (1999)	30
5	Reduce aggravated assault rate <sup>2</sup> (per 100,000 population).	UCR	336 (1999)	448 (1999)	300
6a	Reduce the percent of mothers of newborns who are physically abused 12 months before getting pregnant.	PRAMS		9% (1998)	8.1%
6b	Reduce the percent of mothers of newborns who are physically abused during pregnancy.	PRAMS		5.0% (1998)	4.5%
7	Reduce physical fighting among high school students (percent of students who have been in a fight in the past 12 months).				
	High school boys: percent of students	YRBS	44% (1999)	43% (1999)	20%
	High school girls: percent of students	YRBS	27% (1999)	24% (1999)	20%
8	Reduce weapon carrying by high school students on school property: percent of students who carried a weapon on school property in the past 30 days				
	High school boys: percent of students	YRBS	11% (1999)	18% (1999)	3%
	High school girls: percent of students	YRBS	3% (1999)	4% (1999)	3%

<sup>1</sup> UCR definition of Forcible Rape: The carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will. Rapes by force and attempts or assaults to rape regardless of the age of the victim are included. Statutory offenses (no force used - victim under age of consent) are excluded.

<sup>2</sup> UCR definition of Aggravated Assault: An unlawful attack by one person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury. This type of assault usually is accompanied by the use of a weapon or by means likely to produce death or great bodily harm. Simple assaults are excluded.

**ABVS** - Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

**DFYS** - Alaska Division of Family and Youth Services. Rates are calculated based upon abuse cases from July 1 through June 30 of next year and on population estimates as of July 1.

**UCR**: Uniform Crime Report, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

**NCVS** - National Crime Victimization Survey

**PRAMS** - Alaska Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System

**YRBS** - Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Alaska sample for 1999 did not include Anchorage. High school data for 1999 are weighted and representative of the state student population excluding Anchorage.

## Overview

Violent crime rates have declined nationally since 1994, reaching the lowest level ever recorded by the National Crime Victimization Survey in 1999.<sup>1</sup> (See Appendix for definitions of crime measures). Rates of child abuse and neglect also decreased in the late 1990s, to a rate of about 12 per 1,000 children in 1999.<sup>2</sup> Deaths and injuries due to firearms decreased 29 percent and 47 percent between 1993 and 1998.<sup>3</sup>

Violence is still pervasive in the United States, however, and fear of violence affects the quality of life for people of all ages. Interpersonal violence has profound effects on the health of individuals, families, and communities. Research links family violence to developmental delays, behavioral and emotional disorders, juvenile crime, and substance abuse. Youth continue to be involved as both perpetrators and victims of violence. Elderly persons, females, and children continue to be the targets of both physical and sexual assaults, which are frequently perpetrated by individuals they know.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, women, children, and some minorities have not benefited from the recent reductions in violence as much as other Americans. Rape rates showed no change between 1996 and 1999.<sup>5</sup> Rates of other sexual assaults did not change significantly during the decade, and 34 percent of the victims in sexual assaults reported to the police were under 12 years of age. The number of men murdered by intimate partners has dropped by 69 percent since 1976, while the number of women killed by intimate partners was stable for 20 years and has declined slightly since 1993.<sup>6</sup> Victimization rates of American Indians/Alaska Natives and Asians did not change between 1993 and 1998, while the violent victimization of whites fell 29 percent and of African Americans fell 38 percent.<sup>7</sup>

The most familiar approach to violence is the criminal justice model. Media portrayals of violence – real and imagined – usually focus on crime and on legal intervention. Much of the public discourse on violence, whether the topic is homicide, school shootings, sexual assault, “hate crimes,” or child abuse, uses the language of the criminal justice system. The identification and punishment of the perpetrator are the crucial issues in the criminal justice model.

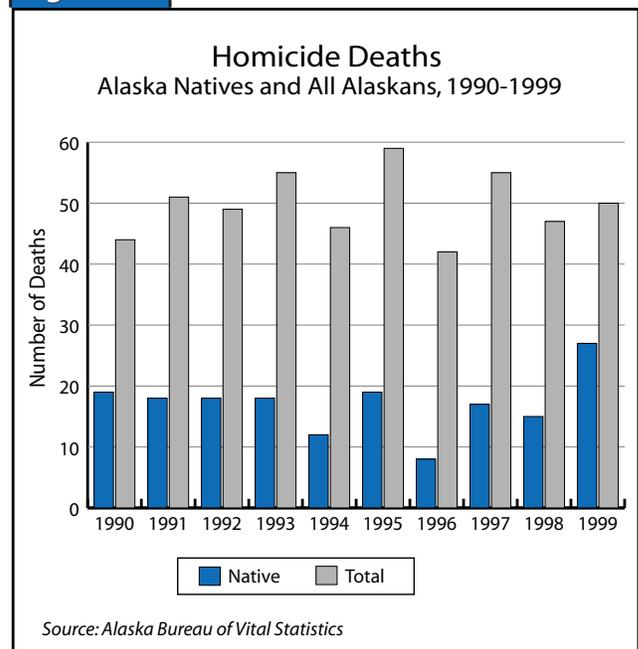
A public health approach to violence both complements and contrasts with the criminal justice approach. Techniques similar to those used in injury and disease prevention – surveillance, identification of risk and protective factors, and the development of interventions – are applied to violence prevention. Intervention strategies may modify individual behavior, the social and physical environment, or both. Evaluation of the intervention is a crucial component of the public health approach.

In the public health model, the root causes of violence are complex and include economic, oppression, and mental health issues.<sup>8</sup> Risk factors, such as access to firearms, alcohol abuse, and the effects of witnessing violence, are often targets for intervention. Prevention programs may include increasing protective factors, such as conflict resolution and parenting skills, through school and community education.

## Issues and Trends in Alaska

Between 1995 and 1997, the Alaska violent crime index decreased 15 percent.<sup>9</sup> However, Alaska’s rates for all violent crimes except robbery exceed the national average. In 1998, Alaska had the highest rate among the 50 states for forcible rape, and its rates of aggravated assault and murder were 9<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> highest, respectively.<sup>10</sup>

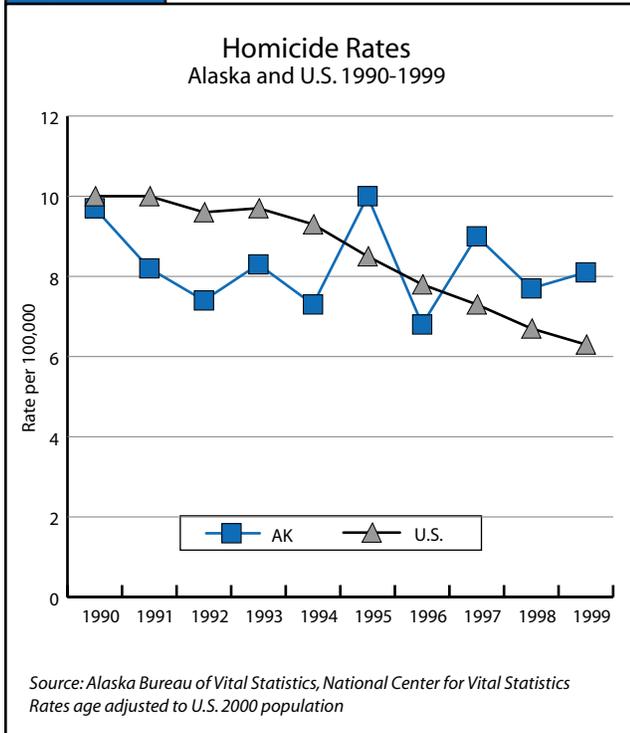
**Figure 9-1**



# Violence & Abuse Prevention

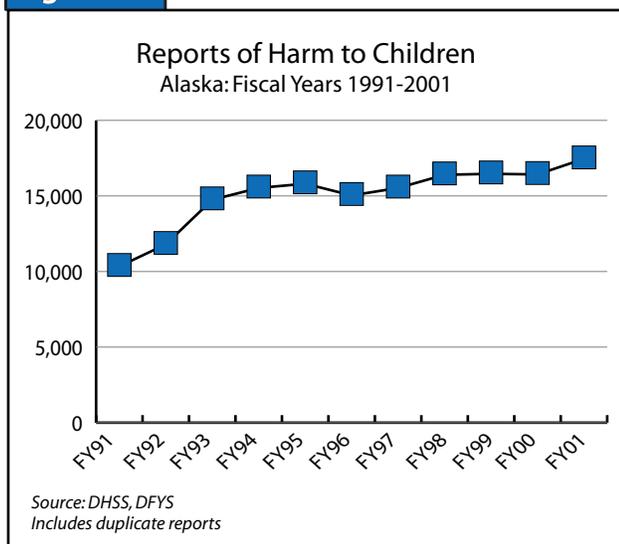
Homicide rates in Alaska fluctuate due to the relatively small number of deaths annually (Figure 9-1).

**Figure 9-2**



In general, age-adjusted homicide rates are similar to those in the United States as a whole, but do not show the downward trend evident in national rates during the 1990s (Figure 9-2).

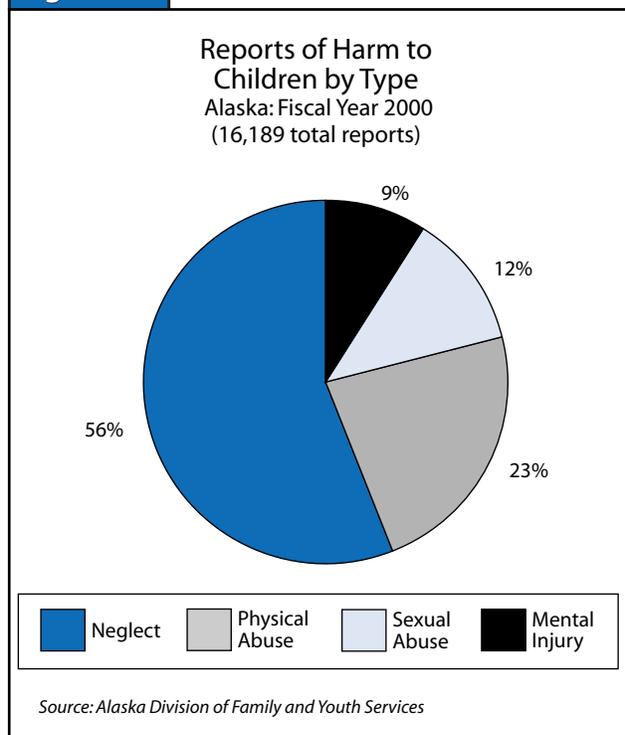
**Figure 9-3**



Seventy percent of Alaskan homicide victims are male. Alaska Natives are more likely than other Alaskans to be victims, accounting for 28 percent of homicide deaths in Alaska from 1976 to 1996.<sup>11</sup>

Firearms are the major instrument of serious and fatal injuries in Alaska. Sixty-five percent of homicides and 67 percent of suicides in 1998 involved firearms.<sup>12</sup> (Suicide is addressed in the *Mental Health Chapter 5*.) Firearms are also the major instrument of serious and fatal injuries to Alaskan children and adolescents.<sup>13</sup> Alaska Native males experience the highest rate of firearm deaths.

**Figure 9-4**



During the early 1990s, reported cases of alleged maltreatment of children increased (Figure 9-3). Education and increased public awareness may have contributed to the increase in reports. The majority of reports involved “mental injury” (Figure 9-4). The total number of substantiated reports increased slightly during the decade (Figure 9-5). The five-year running average for substantiated reports during fiscal years 1997-2001 was 20.6 per 1,000 children, higher than the 1999 United States rate of 11.8 children per 1,000.<sup>14</sup> Individual states vary in their definitions of “substantiated”, however, and differences in rates may not reflect actual differences in rates of child abuse.

The Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault began collecting statewide data on domestic violence, sexual assault, and other violent crimes in July 2000. Programs funded through the Council served 9,882 clients who were victims of domestic violence and 1,301 clients who had experienced sexual assault in 2000.

The Municipality of Anchorage analyzed a sample of the 29,408 reports of domestic violence made to the Anchorage Police Department from 1989 to 1999. Reported cases more than doubled (120% increase) during the decade; 84 percent of the cases involved a female victim and a male suspect.<sup>15</sup>

The Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), a survey of women who have recently given birth, provides the only population-based estimates on the prevalence of domestic violence in Alaska. In 1996-97, 10 percent of women who had recently given birth reported that they had experienced physical abuse during pregnancy or during the 12 months prior to the pregnancy. Teenagers and Alaska Native women were more likely to have experienced abuse.<sup>16</sup>

Adult Protective Services, in the Division of Senior Services, Alaska Department of Administration, investigates reports of harm to vulnerable adults and arranges for necessary services for their protection. In order to provide protective services, six workers statewide performed over 800 intakes, conducted over 500

investigations, provided information and referral in over 90 cases in 1999 (Table 9-1). There was an increase of 53 intakes from FY99.<sup>17</sup>

### Current Strategies and Resources

The Alaska Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault is an administrative, policy-making group of the Department of Public Safety. In Fiscal Year '01 the Council funded 21 community based victim service programs and 12 batterers intervention programs throughout Alaska. The Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault is a statewide coalition of 21 domestic violence and sexual assault programs.

The Alaska Family Violence Prevention Project (AFVPP), part of the Section of Maternal, Child, and Family Health (MCFH), has developed and delivered training to hundreds of health and social service professionals throughout the state, provides technical assistance for policy development, and maintains a clearinghouse of resource and training materials. AFVPP coordinates the "10 State" National Health Initiative on Domestic Violence Project. The Alaska Family Violence Prevention Project and the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault co-facilitated the 10 State National Health Initiative with 15 hospital and health programs around the state to develop a coordinated community response to domestic violence.

The AFVPP is conducting a statewide survey of health care providers who see children in their practices to assess domestic violence and its impact on children. The survey results will be used to develop a curriculum and training resources on screening for domestic violence during child health care visits and on the impact of domestic violence on child witnesses.

Healthy Families Alaska is a voluntary home visiting program for pregnant women and families of newborns who have life stressors that place their infants at risk for abuse and neglect. Healthy Families Alaska home visiting services, offered intensively over three to five years, are designed to support the development of strong infant-parent bonds, promote optimal mental and physical infant/child health, and promote family self-sufficiency and well-being. In 1994, the state legislature provided funding to MCFH to establish one Healthy Families Alaska program. Since then seven Healthy Families Alaska programs have been established in the following communities: Anchorage

**Table 9-1**

Adult Protective Services Intakes for FY 2000	
Allegations Investigated	Number of Intakes
Abandonment	10
Other Exploitation	16
Sexual Abuse	32
Violation of Assisted Living Regulations	43
Mental Abuse	76
Physical Abuse	90
Financial Exploitation	121
Self Neglect	304
Neglect	508
TOTAL	821
<i>Source: Adult Protective Services, Division of Senior Services, DOA</i>	

# Violence & Abuse Prevention

(2 programs), Wasilla, Fairbanks, Juneau, Dillingham, and Kenai. By June 2000, seven sites were providing services to 310 families.

The Anchorage Social Services Division's SAFE City Program develops community prevention and intervention programs for domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assault. The program provides educational materials and created the Interpersonal Violence Community Task Force.

The Alaska Children's Trust promotes and provides financial support for community programs to strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect. The Trust has awarded grants to over 30 non-profit community programs.

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development does not endorse specific curricula for school safety and violence prevention but provides school districts with current materials and research based approaches through its website, "School Safety and Crisis Response Planning" ([www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/schoolhealth/schoolsafety.html](http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/schoolhealth/schoolsafety.html)).

Adult Protective Services is located in the Department of Administration, Division of Senior Services. Adult protective service workers interview the vulnerable adult, family members, guardians, and other pertinent persons and agencies, make intake determinations and do care planning, take emergency action if appropriate, assess clients' mental capacity, file guardianship and conservatorship petitions if appropriate, perform temporary case management and case consultation, arrange for general relief financial assistance and help clients locate assisted living homes, and provide other supportive services.

Adult Protective Services receives reports of harm from a wide variety of sources including hospitals, care coordinators, friends and relatives of vulnerable adults, doctors, home health agencies, and law enforcement agencies. Most reports come from Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau and can be investigated with a face to face contact with the vulnerable adult as mandated by law. However, reports from rural areas must be investigated through telephone contact and through informal designation agreements with other social services and law enforcement agencies. As with child protection, reports of harm against the elderly and other vulnerable adults will likely increase as elder abuse receives more recognition in Alaska.

## Data Issues and Needs

Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) provide state level statistics on crimes reported to the police. While these numbers are useful, they underestimate several types of violent crimes and provide limited demographic information on victims and perpetrators. Victimization surveys, such as the Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), rely on interviews with a nationally representative sample of households. Information is collected on crimes suffered by individuals and households, whether or not the crime was reported to police. Victimization surveys consistently find higher rates of violent crime than police reports and may be more accurate for unreported crimes such as rape and assaults by intimate partners and family members.

The scope of the NCVS makes it difficult to apply survey information to sparsely populated areas such as Alaska. National surveys are unlikely to represent the experience of rural Alaskans or culturally distinct communities such as Alaska Native villages. Researchers at the University of Anchorage Justice Center are currently studying possible applications of victimization surveys to Alaskans.<sup>18</sup>

The State of Alaska Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault is charged with collecting state-wide data on these and other violent crimes. A new data system, implemented in July 2000, will provide more detailed information than is currently available about intimate partner violence and sexual assault.

Professional experience tells us that alcohol and substance abuse is a factor in much of Alaska's violent crime and child abuse and neglect cases. More Alaska specific data on the links between violence and alcohol is needed.

Frequent administration of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) throughout the state is essential for monitoring attitudes towards violence and violent behavior in adolescents.

## Related Focus Areas

A variety of objectives in other *Healthy Alaskans* chapters are linked to objectives in *Violence and Abuse Prevention*.

- *Injury Prevention*
- *Substance Abuse*
- *Mental Health*
- *Maternal Child Health*
- *Disability*

Storing firearms unloaded and locked may reduce the risk of suicide and homicide. Reducing the number of adolescents having access to alcohol can reduce physical fighting, homicide and suicide. The greatest reduction in domestic violence and in child abuse and neglect will come from a reduction in binge and chronic drinking in adults. Mental Health is linked to *Violence and Abuse Prevention*. Some people with untreated mental illness may exhibit violent behavior. More often, people with mental illness are likely to be the victims of violence. Reducing assault, partner abuse, rape, and attempted rape, goals in *Violence and Abuse Prevention*, would also reduce mental health problems among survivors of violence, especially children. Decreases in suicide attempts will decrease injuries such as firearm, poisoning, and head and spinal cord injuries. *Maternal, Infant, and Child Health* and *Violence and Abuse Prevention* have linkages. Reducing maltreatment of children is an important violence and abuse indicator. Finally, a decrease in violence will decrease the number of people with disabilities, relating this chapter to the *Disability* chapter.

---

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Characteristics of Crime. January, 2001. Available on-line at [www.ojp.usdof.gov/bjs/cvict\\_c.htm](http://www.ojp.usdof.gov/bjs/cvict_c.htm) . Accessed June 5, 2001.
- <sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Press release: HSS reports new child abuse and neglect statistics. April 2, 2001. Available on-line at [www.hhs.gov/new](http://www.hhs.gov/new). Accessed 4/27/01.
- <sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Surveillance for fatal and non-fatal firearm-related injuries – United States, 1993-1998. MMWR: April 13, 2001. 50(SS02);1-32.
- <sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2010.
- <sup>5</sup> U.S. Deptment of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistic. Rape rates showed no change from 1996 to 1999. August 27, 2000. Available on line at [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/glance/rape.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/glance/rape.htm). Accessed June 5, 2001.
- <sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Homicide trends in the United States. January 4, 2001. Available on-line at [www.ofp.usdoj.gov/bjs/homicide/intimates.htm](http://www.ofp.usdoj.gov/bjs/homicide/intimates.htm). Accessed June 5, 2001.
- <sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Violent victimization and race, 1993-98. March 26, 2001. . Available on-line at [ww.ofp.usdoj.gov/bjs/homicide/intimates.htm](http://ww.ofp.usdoj.gov/bjs/homicide/intimates.htm). Accessed June 5, 2001.
- <sup>8</sup> Cohen, L., and Swift, S. A public health approach to the violence epidemic in the United States. *Environment and Urbanization* (5)22, pp. 50-66. October, 1993.
- <sup>9</sup> Alaska Department of Public Safety. Alaska Crime Trends:1995-97. August 1998.
- <sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Justice. Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics 1999.
- <sup>11</sup> Alaska Justice Forum. Victimization among American Native People. 16(4), Winter 2000.
- <sup>12</sup> Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics. 1998 Annual Report.
- <sup>13</sup> Section of Community Health & Emergency Medical Services, Alaska Division of Public Health. Serious and fatal child and adolescent injuries in Alaska: 1991-1994. October, 1997
- <sup>14</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Administration on Children, Youth and Families. Child Maltreatment 1999. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001.
- <sup>15</sup> Municipality of Anchorage. Analysis of police action and characteristics of reported domestic violence in Anchorage, Alaska 1989-1998. October 30, 2000.

# Violence & Abuse Prevention

<sup>16</sup> Maternal, Child, and Family Health. Domestic Violence in Alaska. Family Health Dataline. 5(2), April, 1999

<sup>17</sup> Alaska Department of Administration, Division of Senior Services, Adult Protective Services 2000.

<sup>18</sup> University of Alaska Anchorage, Justice Center Research. Measuring adult criminal victimization in Alaska.

## References and Sources

### Alaska

Alaska Childrens Trust

[www.educ.state.ak.us/EarlyDev/trust/home.html](http://www.educ.state.ak.us/EarlyDev/trust/home.html)

Alaska Family Violence Prevention Project

[www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/mcfh/programs/afvpp.htm](http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/mcfh/programs/afvpp.htm)

Alaska Justice Forum

[webserver.cts.uaa.alaska.edu/just/research/index.html](http://webserver.cts.uaa.alaska.edu/just/research/index.html)

Alaska State Troopers: Informtion for Victims of Domestic Violence

[www.dps.state.ak.us/ast/dv/index.htm](http://www.dps.state.ak.us/ast/dv/index.htm)

Department of Administration, Division of Senior Services, Adult Protective Services

[www.state.ak.us/local/akpages/ADMIN/dss/aps.htm](http://www.state.ak.us/local/akpages/ADMIN/dss/aps.htm)

DHSS: Division of Juvenile Justice

[www.hss.state.ak.us/djj/](http://www.hss.state.ak.us/djj/)

DHSS: Division of Family and Youth Services

[www.hss.state.ak.us/dfys/](http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dfys/)

Municipality of Anchorage, Safe Cities Program

[www.muni.org/healthssd/safe.cfm](http://www.muni.org/healthssd/safe.cfm)

State of Alaska Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

[www.dps.state.ak.us/Cdvsa/](http://www.dps.state.ak.us/Cdvsa/)

### National

Toolkit to End Violence Against Women

[toolkit.ncjrs.org/](http://toolkit.ncjrs.org/)

National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center

[www.safeyouth.org](http://www.safeyouth.org)

Network of Violence Prevention Practitioners

[www2.edc.org/nvpp/](http://www2.edc.org/nvpp/)

US Department of Justice

[www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/)