



keep kids safe

prevention. healing. justice.

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20050

February 28, 2022

Call To Include Ending Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents as part of U.S. National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence

Dear President Biden:

As leading organizations working on prevention, healing, and justice for sexual violence against children and adolescents, and as many of us are survivors of abuse in childhood ourselves, we join together as the Keep Kids Safe Movement to applaud your Administration's inclusion of addressing gender-based violence as one of 10 interconnected priorities in the National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality. As the White House Gender Policy Council drafts the first-ever U.S. National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence, we believe it is important to: (1) apply a life-course approach and recognize that abuse in childhood and adolescence is, unfortunately, far too often a fundamental element in the life cycle of violence and; (2) include prevention, healing and justice measures in your measures and response to this crisis in your whole-of-government action plan.

Sexual violence against children and adolescents in the United States is rampant, constitutes a public health emergency, causes grave physical and psychological trauma, and exacts tremendous social, safety and economic costs on survivors as well as society. One in ten children will be abused before their 18th birthday in the United States. Research has determined an interrelationship between sexual violence against those under the age of 18 and victims of violence in adulthood. Research has also demonstrated that those who were sexually abused in childhood are more likely to end up in adult relationships where they are the victim of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. In some cases, victims of abuse may even become abusive themselves. This connection makes it critical that any plan to address gender-based violence not overlook sexual violence that occurs during the early stages of life.

On November 18, 2021, the members of the Keep Kids Safe Movement released the "U.S. National Blueprint to End Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents", which is focused on strategies for prevention, healing, and justice for sexual violence against children and adolescence. The Blueprint is a comprehensive collection of recommendations for policies and strategic funding investments that, if implemented, can make tremendous improvements in the

lives of children in the short- and long-term. We believe that the Blueprint provides unique insight into the scope, breadth and urgency of this crisis and provides executive branch recommendations for effective prevention, healing, and justice solutions from leading experts in the field. We ask they be considered for inclusion into the GBV Action Plan as well as in other Administration efforts and initiatives.

- Declare November 18 as the “National Day for Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Prevention, Healing and Justice.”
- Mobilize Financial Resources from existing funding, upcoming budget, and appropriations cycles as well as investments from the private sector, foundations, and others for domestic and global programs.
- Declare sexual violence against children and adolescents a U.S. public health emergency and authorize an annual Surgeon General’s report that defines the problem and progress in our national response.
- Convene a federal interagency Task Force on the prevention, healing, and justice of Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents, *chaired by the White House*, to develop and implement a National Plan to End Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents. The establishment of a senior leadership position in the White House with authority to coordinate with federal agencies and as a liaison to Congress will elevate the importance of the issue.
- Establish an interagency data working group to develop standard definitions for child sexual abuse prevention, healing, and justice that can be applied across the Federal government and to update data and statistics on the scope of the problem.
- Hold a National Summit on the prevention, healing, and justice of sexual violence against children and adolescents *convened by the White House*, supported by appropriate executive agencies, and attended by survivors and families, thought leaders, researchers, federal, state, and local leaders, and others from allied organizations around the U.S. to promote awareness and to generate executive and legislative recommendations and best practices from experts in the field.
- Mobilize the Federal government, State governments, civic groups, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector to launch public education and engagement campaigns to end stigmatization and encourage public awareness and action.
- Develop comprehensive national legislation to include policies, programs, and research that increase the reach of programs that protect survivors, reduce the cost of sexual violence to society, and provide access to justice for victims.

- Establish a diverse, bipartisan commission comprised of subject matter experts including researchers, practitioners, bipartisan policymakers and survivors and families to gather a comprehensive understanding of the crisis, the costs to society, and the potential for available solutions to better protect children against sexual abuse and alleviate the impact of abuse on children when it occurs.
- Expand U.S. support for global programs to end sexual violence against children and adolescents.

Should questions arise, if you need additional information, or if you or your staff would like to meet with members of this movement to discuss these issues, please contact Katy Flynn at Kflynn@Keep-Kids-Safe.org.

Sincerely,

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