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**OVC's Federal Advisory Committee:  
Recommendations to Attorney General Holder**



Presented by representatives of OVC's National  
Coordination Committee on the  
American Indian/Alaska Native  
Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner-Sexual Assault  
Response Team Initiative

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**AI/AN SANE-SART Initiative**

- Established by OVC in 2010
- Formal, five-year partnership between OVC, FBI, and IHS
- Includes collaboration with OVW, BIA, U.S. Attorneys' Offices, tribal nations, and tribal organizations



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## AI/AN SANE-SART Initiative (cont.)

Includes the following inter-related components:

- National Coordinators at FBI and IHS
- Three tribal demonstration sites
- Tailored training and technical assistance
- A national strategy on enhancing the response to sexual violence in AI/AN communities
- Local evaluation efforts
- A federal advisory committee



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## Establishment of the Committee

- OVC chartered the National Coordination Committee on the AI/AN SANE-SART Initiative in 2011 with approval from Attorney General Holder
- Committee was re-chartered in 2013
- Committee was tasked with making recommendations to the Attorney General on how DOJ can improve its response to sexual violence in tribal nations





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## Nation Coordination Committee

- Models the membership of a SART
- Chaired by Sarah Deer
- Comprised of 13 members including:
  - Six national tribal organization representatives
  - Five federal agency representatives
  - An expert on sexual violence in Alaska Native communities
  - An expert on medical forensic sexual assault exams



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## Pre-Committee Work

- OVC and partners widely disseminated a framing paper to solicit ideas about committee membership, scope, and structure
- Three federal working groups (Alaska Native issues, child sexual abuse, and first responders) were convened to identify the biggest sexual violence response challenges in AI/AN communities
- OVC used information from the working groups and demonstration sites to create four issue papers that were presented to Committee members at their first meeting



## Nation Coordination Committee's Work

- The committee met six times between Dec. 2012 and Sept. 2014
- Additional meetings were also held
  - Feb. 2013: Three subcommittee meetings
  - Feb. 2014: Initiative staff and four Committee members met to draft report summarizing recommendations
  - Numerous individual meetings between Initiative staff, the Committee Chair, Committee members, and allied professionals



## Overview of the Committee's Report

- Intended to be a blueprint for improving how DOJ works with other federal agencies and tribes to respond to sexual violence in tribal nations
- Includes an introductory letter from the Committee to the Attorney General
- Addresses four issue areas, including an explanation of relevant topics and challenges
- Provides a note about the need for data collection and research
- Includes a list of suggested steps toward implementation





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## Committee's Report: Key Recommendations

- Issue #1: Federal Agency Coordination and Collaboration at the Local Level
  - Each federal District should establish specific, written guidelines for sexual violence response
  - Federal agencies should make participating in local, tribal MDTs and SARTs a priority
- Issue #2: Department of Justice Personnel Policy Changes
  - Create specific guidelines on hiring, training, and assessing DOJ employees assigned to Indian Country-related positions
  - Coordinate local orientations for DOJ employees with the tribal nations they will serve




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## Committee's Report: Key Recommendations



- Issue #3: Department of Justice Grant Solicitations and Funding
  - Initiate changes to federal grant solicitations to make them more responsive to tribal organizations' needs
  - Support amendments to VOCA
  - Special funding
- Issue #4: Public Safety and Public Health
  - Prioritize sexual violence response (staffing and evidence processing)
  - Support tribal law enforcement access to the NCIC
  - Recognize sexual violence as both a health care issue and a criminal justice issue




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## Committee's Opinions



- The Attorney General and the Administration have shown strong leadership in helping the DOJ fulfill its trust responsibility with tribal nations in response to sexual violence.
- The Committee's recommendations build on this important work and provide a roadmap for DOJ moving forward.
- Enhancing collaboration, transparency, and accountability are key to improving the response by federal agencies and employees.
- Tribes need and deserve dedicated sources of funding for victim assistance programs and amending VOCA is one means of addressing this issue.

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## Committee's Opinions (cont.)

- There is still a large disconnect between federal staff and tribes. Prioritizing sexual violence - including increased staffing and faster evidence processing - is a direct way to address this disconnect.
- Sexual violence affects the bodies, minds, and spirits of both victims and their family, friends, and community. As such, criminal justice responses must be holistic, victim-centered, and culturally relevant.
- The commitment and participation of federal agencies beyond DOJ is crucial to the successful implementation of the recommendations.



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## Committee's Request

Given that the Attorney General and federal agencies – in partnership with tribes – have the power to bring significant change to the quality of response to victims of sexual violence in tribal nations, the Committee asked that Attorney General Holder:

- Take immediate action to task DOJ components with implementing the recommendations, and
- Convene a Principal's Meeting with cabinet-level personnel from other federal agencies (or use other appropriate forums) to share these recommendations and encourage their implementation across the Federal Government.



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## The Committee's Report

The Committee's *Report to the U.S. Attorney General on Improving Federal Agency Response to Sexual Violence in Tribal Nations: Issues and Recommendations* can be read and downloaded at:

<http://ojp.gov/ovc/AIANSane-Sart/advisorycommittee.html>

If you have any questions about the Committee or Report, please contact Shannon May at 202-323-9468 or [shannon.may@ic.fbi.gov](mailto:shannon.may@ic.fbi.gov).





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## Thank You!

- Professor Sarah Deer, *Muscogee (Creek) Nation*, Committee Chair
- Honorable Peggy L. Bird, J.D., *Kewa/Santo Domingo Pueblo*
- AUSA Sarah Collins, J.D., *Oglala Sioux Tribe*
- Geri Wisner, J.D., *Muscogee (Creek) Nation*

