



May 5, 2008

On behalf of the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission, I am pleased to provide this initial draft of the Commission's adult prison and jail standards, and supplemental standards for facilities that hold immigration detainees. The Commission, created in 2003 by the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), is charged with studying federal, state, and local government policies related to the prevention, detection, and punishment of prison sexual abuse. The development of standards is a central component of our work to support the elimination of sexual abuse in our nation's correctional and detention facilities. We look forward to hearing from many perspectives during this public comment period.

Since its inception, the Commission has held eight public hearings, met with hundreds of experts, visited numerous correctional and detention facilities, and worked with diverse stakeholders including corrections professionals, medical providers, researchers, rape survivors and their families, advocates and legal experts. We have been consistently impressed by the initiative and commitment demonstrated by corrections leaders and staff who have been working to implement PREA since its passage. In addition to spearheading work at the federal, state, and local levels, they and others have shown dedication to this Commission's goals by helping us to draft standards that will make America's confinement facilities safer for inmates, staff, and the public. These standards, as directed by statute, relate to training, inmate classification, reporting of incidents, investigation and resolution of complaints, preservation of evidence, medical and mental health care for victims, and data collection.

In preparing our standards, the Commission engaged in a thorough and transparent process to evaluate the causes of sexual abuse in confinement and the best strategies for preventing abuse and improving response efforts. Beginning in early 2007, we established expert committees comprising diverse stakeholders from the justice, health care, research, and advocacy communities to guide the development of the draft standards. Expert committees were created in the subject areas of Classification and Technology, Reporting, Confidentiality, Data Collection, Investigations, Medical and Mental Health Care, Evidence Collection, and Training. Separate expert committees were also convened to discuss the particular issues relevant to facilities with custody of juveniles or immigration detainees, individuals detained in lockups, and individuals in community corrections. We are sincerely grateful to the expert committee members who have shared their experience, knowledge, and time with us in this endeavor. These standards could not exist without their support and commitment to the goals of PREA.

The draft recommended standards for adult prisons and jails, and supplemental standards for facilities that hold immigration detainees, are available for public comment through Monday, July 7, 2008. Draft versions of the Commission's standards for juvenile, community corrections, and lockup facilities are forthcoming, and will be available for public comment beginning in June 2008. At the conclusion of the public comment periods, Commission staff will review and

integrate public feedback into the draft standards for final approval by the Commission. The standards, along with the Commission's final report, will be presented to the President, Congress, and the U.S. Attorney General. Within a year of receiving the Commission's report, the Attorney General will use the Commission's recommended standards as a basis for the promulgation of national standards to establish zero-tolerance of sexual abuse in confinement facilities.

We appreciate your interest in the Commission and our work and encourage you to submit your feedback. The best way to provide your comments is via the public comment form available on the Commission's website at www.nprec.us. You may also mail or fax comments to the following address:

National Prison Rape Elimination Commission
ATTN: Public Comment Period
1440 New York Avenue, NW Suite 200
Washington, DC 20005-2111
FAX: (202) 233-1089

Each of you is important to the national effort to eliminate sexual abuse, and we appreciate your dedication to making America's confinement facilities safer for inmates, staff, and the public. Your comments will assist us in further improving and strengthening these standards. Thank you for your time and input – we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Reggie B. Walton", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Reggie B. Walton, Chairman