

DOC to Establish Workgroup to Implement Prison Rape Elimination Act

Chief Information Officer Paul DiPaolo will chair a multidisciplinary workgroup to develop a DOC plan to implement the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003. This important legislation was signed by President Bush on September 4, 2003, and Senator Kennedy was a lead sponsor of this initiative. The overall goal of the Prison Rape Elimination Act is to eradicate sexual assaults in all correction facilities in the United States.

The DOC workgroup includes Tim Hall, Assistant Deputy Commissioner, Southern Sector; John Marshall, Assistant Deputy Commissioner, Northern Sector; Susan Martin, Director, Health Services Unit; Bernard Brady, Acting Superintendent, OCCC; Mark Reilly, Chief, Office of Investigative Services; Rhiana Kohl, Executive Director, Strategic Planning and Research; Michelle Donaher, Director, Female Offender Services; Peter Pepe, Superintendent, MCI Concord; Jody Adams, Counsel, Legal; Gerilyn Riley, Regional Training Manager, Division of Staff Development.

The workgroup will develop a strategic plan to ensure that the DOC:

- Has comprehensive written operational policies and practices in place that include preventing sexual violence in prison, investigating incidents of it, and meeting the needs of victims of it.
- Defines sexual violence to include inmate on inmate violence, inmate on staff violence and staff on inmate violence.
- Develops a process to rate the effectiveness of DOC programs and strategies to prevent, investigate and respond to sexual violence in prison.
- Address the need for available data and information on the incidence of prison sexual violence.

The purpose of the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 (PL 108-79) is to:

- Establish a zero-tolerance standard for the incidence of prison rape in prisons in the United States;
- Make the prevention of prison rape a top priority in each prison system;
- Develop and implement national standards for the detection, prevention, reduction and punishment of prison rape;
- Increase the available data and information on the incidence of prison rape, consequently improving the management and administration of correctional facilities;
- Standardize the definitions used for collecting data on the incidence of rape;
- Increase the accountability of prison officials who fail to detect, prevent, reduce and punish prison rape.
- Protect the Eighth Amendment rights of federal, state and local prisoners;
- Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of federal expenditures through grant programs such as those dealing with health care; mental health care; disease prevention; crime prevention, investigation and prosecution; prison construction, maintenance and operation; race relations; poverty; unemployment; homelessness;
- Reduce the costs that prison rape imposes on interstate commerce.

More information on this important initiative will follow over the coming months.