



**REAUTHORIZATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT
SPEECH OF HON. JANET RENO
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES**

Monday, October 2, 2000

Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care

2333 Ontario Road, N.W.

Education Room

Washington, D.C.

10:04 a.m.

STATEMENT OF HON. JANET RENO, ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Attorney General Reno: Thank you.

I am so happy to be here today because I get to announce funding for the partnership between Ayuda and Mary's Center, a partnership that is made possible by a grant under the Violence Against Women Act.

This project will provide battered women from traditionally under-served communities with the legal assistance that they so desperately need. Again and again, this is the comment that we hear, "We don't know where to go. We don't know what to do."

We are funding this project under the Domestic Violence Victims Civil Legal Assistance Grant Program, a \$28 million grant program that provides victims with lawyers who understand domestic violence, the processes and procedures that you need to access in order to deal effectively with it.

Ayuda's project will reach out to victims in very creative ways. And we have heard how we envision a domestic violence

case manager here at Mary's Center, and another on the traveling Mom-Mobile van. This is so important because people sometimes do not know to come here, or they are afraid to come. They want to -- they just want to lock themselves up and hope that it will go away. It is so important that we have that access.

And I think this is going to be an excellent addition. It will support the legal staff of Ayuda, which is doing so much with so little, and it will give them a real chance to do outreach and to have this as a base of operations.

This project is an example of how lawyers are working with community agencies and other disciplines. It is no accident that the Attorney General is here with the Secretary of HHS, because this is an Administration that has come together and said, "Lawyers aren't going to solve the problem by themselves. Public health people aren't going to solve the problem by themselves. We've got to work together."

And for the Center and for Ayuda to come together, I think, is an excellent example of how we can all be problem-solvers.

Six years ago, Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act. No single law has done more to help victims of domestic violence and violence against women. Since 1994, the Administration and Congress have provided \$1.5 billion in funding to support victims services and the works of police, prosecutors and the courts.

The VAWA grant programs have reached across the nation from large urban areas to small rural centers, from domestic violence shelters and rape crisis centers to legal service agencies.

The programs are making a difference. Violence against women by intimate partners fell by 21 percent from 1993 to 1998. There are many factors that contributed to this decline, but I think the VAWA has been one of the most significant factors.

But as the women here and on Ayuda's doorstep every morning know, violence against women continues to ravage too many homes in this country and in this city.

We cannot forget that nearly one-third of women murdered each year are killed by their intimate partners.

Over 1 million women are stalked each year. And more than 307,000 women were sexually assaulted in 1998 alone.

Yet, with all of this, with the success that VAWA has evidenced, the authorization for the VAWA grant programs comes to an end on Saturday. Congress must act quickly to extend and strengthen its protection for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking.

Legislation would authorize the Civil Legal Assistance Program which supports the project we are visiting today. The Senate bill also would provide critical protection for battered immigrants who face unique obstacles in escaping abuse and often hesitate to call the police or go to court. They are afraid because they do not know the system, and they think they will be deported. We cannot stand by and watch this happen.

I applaud the House for passing the VAWA. And I thank Eleanor Holmes Norton for her strong support.

But time is running out. We have to make sure that we do everything possible to see that the act is reauthorized by Saturday.

Both houses of Congress have worked hard on a bipartisan basis to draft the legislation that would reauthorize and strengthen the act. What we need now is final action on the legislation before Congress adjourns.

I would like to say a special thank you to the people here at Mary's Center and to Ayuda. Sometimes this is the most rewarding work, and you know it when you see success. But you see so many instances in which you cannot reach out and help the person as you would like to help them, because of

a lack of resources, or because of other circumstances.

I know how challenging it is. But I also want you to know that I think your work is that of the angels.

Thank you so very much.

[Applause.]

[Whereupon, at 10:12 a.m., the speech was concluded.]