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## Women and Girls of Color: Addressing Challenges and Expanding Opportunity

The White House Council on Women and Girls

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# Women and Girls of Color: Addressing Challenges and Expanding Opportunity

## Abstract

[Excerpt] In recent years, on indicators ranging from educational attainment to economic security to health and well-being, women and girls of color have made tremendous progress. The number of businesses owned by women of color has skyrocketed, and women of color have ascended to the upper ranks of workplaces across industries. Teen pregnancy rates for girls of color have plummeted, and high school and college graduation rates have risen.

Yet, these achievements may obscure the very real challenges and disparities that persist for women and girls of color. Girls of color still lag behind in their performance on standardized tests, and they are more likely to be suspended from school. Women and girls of color still face higher rates of poverty and receive lower wages for their work than their white peers, and they are more likely to become involved in the criminal justice system. Women of color still have some of the highest rates of heart disease, obesity, diabetes and other serious conditions, and they experience high rates of domestic violence. And when women are the primary or sole breadwinners for nearly half of all households of color, these disparities do not just affect them, but their families and communities as well.

Further, as President Obama recently noted, women of color “struggle every day with biases that perpetuate oppressive standards for how they’re supposed to look and how they’re supposed to act. Too often, they’re either left under the hard light of scrutiny, or cloaked in a kind of invisibility.” When addressing the challenges women and girls of color face – challenges that often lie at the intersection of race and gender – we often fail to fully acknowledge, and account for, this complexity.

President Obama created the White House Council on Women and Girls in the first months of his presidency precisely for the purpose of addressing issues like these. The Council’s mandate is to ensure that every agency, department and office in the federal government takes into account the needs and aspirations of women and girls in every aspect of their work. Since it was established, the Council has worked on a number of issues and policies that impact women and girls of color across the country. Highlights of these initiatives – as well as numerous others across the federal government – are detailed in this report.

As part of its efforts to address barriers and disparities that still exist for so many Americans and so many women and girls of color in particular, the Council is convening a Working Group on Challenges and Opportunities for Women and Girls of Color. This Working Group will bring together policy staff from the White House and across federal agencies – as well as experts, leaders and advocates from outside the government – to focus on issues including education, economic security, health, criminal and juvenile justice, violence, and research and data collection.

## Keywords

Women, girls, race, employment, poverty, opportunity, earnings gap

## Comments

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# WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR: ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AND EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY

November 2014



**The White House Council on Women and Girls**

# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>By the Numbers: Obama Administration Policy Impacts on Women and Girls of Color</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Policies, Programs, and Initiatives</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>1. Education</b> .....	<b>8</b>
a. STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math).....	11
<b>2. Economic Security</b> .....	<b>15</b>
a. Consumer Protection .....	16
b. Entrepreneurship .....	16
c. Equal Pay .....	17
d. Housing .....	19
e. Minimum Wage, Low-Income Workers, and Poverty-Prevention Efforts .....	21
f. Non-Traditional Occupations .....	23
g. Retirement .....	25
h. Workplace Discrimination.....	25
<b>3. Health</b> .....	<b>27</b>
a. Health Disparities .....	27
b. HIV/AIDS.....	29
c. Maternal and Child Health .....	30
d. Nutrition and Physical Activity.....	32
e. Research.....	33
f. Sexual and Reproductive Health.....	34
g. Teen Pregnancy .....	35
h. Workplace Safety .....	36
<b>4. Violence Against Women</b> .....	<b>37</b>
a. Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.....	37
b. Human Trafficking .....	43
<b>5. Criminal and Juvenile Justice</b> .....	<b>46</b>

## **Executive Summary**

In recent years, on indicators ranging from educational attainment to economic security to health and well-being, women and girls of color have made tremendous progress. The number of businesses owned by women of color has skyrocketed, and women of color have ascended to the upper ranks of workplaces across industries. Teen pregnancy rates for girls of color have plummeted, and high school and college graduation rates have risen.

Yet, these achievements may obscure the very real challenges and disparities that persist for women and girls of color. Girls of color still lag behind in their performance on standardized tests, and they are more likely to be suspended from school. Women and girls of color still face higher rates of poverty and receive lower wages for their work than their white peers, and they are more likely to become involved in the criminal justice system. Women of color still have some of the highest rates of heart disease, obesity, diabetes and other serious conditions, and they experience high rates of domestic violence. And when women are the primary or sole breadwinners for nearly half of all households of color, these disparities do not just affect them, but their families and communities as well.

Further, as President Obama recently noted, women of color “struggle every day with biases that perpetuate oppressive standards for how they’re supposed to look and how they’re supposed to act. Too often, they’re either left under the hard light of scrutiny, or cloaked in a kind of invisibility.” When addressing the challenges women and girls of color face – challenges that often lie at the intersection of race and gender – we often fail to fully acknowledge, and account for, this complexity.

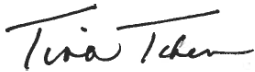
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As part of its efforts to address barriers and disparities that still exist for so many Americans and so many women and girls of color in particular, the Council is convening a Working Group on Challenges and Opportunities for Women and Girls of Color. This Working Group will bring together policy staff from the White House and across federal agencies – as well as experts, leaders and advocates from outside the government – to focus on issues including education, economic security, health, criminal and juvenile justice, violence, and research and data collection.

In detailing both the progress we have made and the challenges that still remain, this Report should serve both as a reminder of what is possible and as a call to action to do so much more.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Valerie Jarrett".

**Valerie Jarrett**  
Chair  
White House Council on Women and Girls

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christina Tchen".

**Christina Tchen**  
Executive Director  
White House Council on Women and Girls

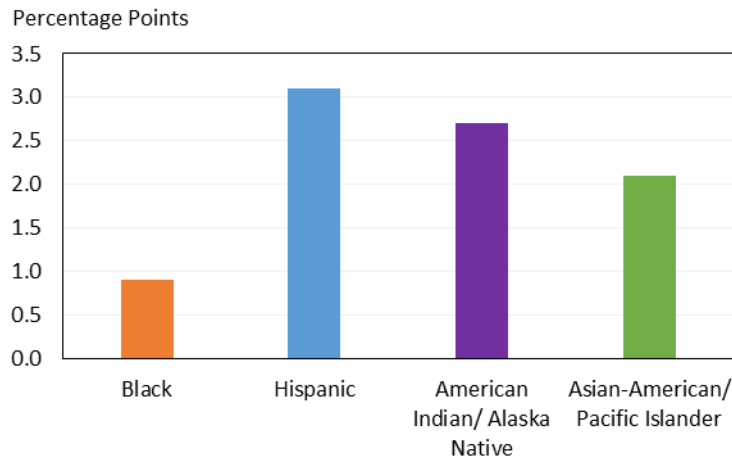
## By the Numbers

### Obama Administration Policy Impacts on Women and Girls of Color

#### Education

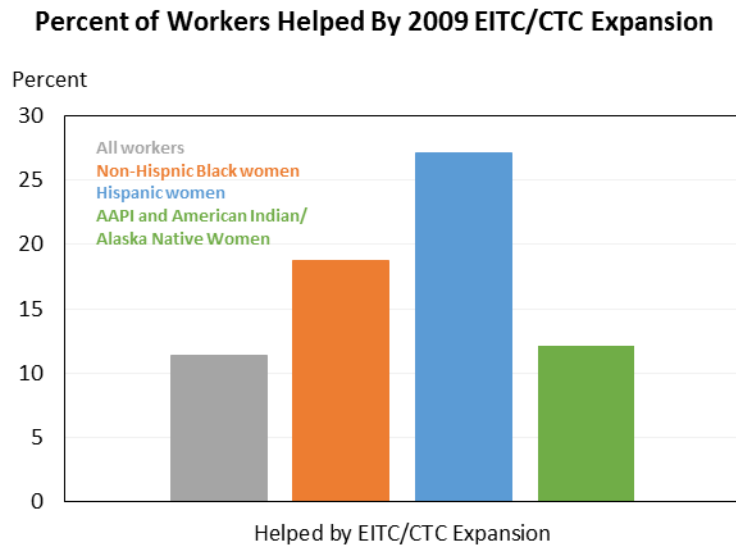
- Since 2009, both fourth and eighth grade math scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the largest nationwide assessment, have improved for all girls of color.
- Since 2009, the high school dropout rate has fallen by 16 percent for Black girls and 30 percent for Hispanic girls.
- Women of color make up 23 percent of all college students, yet they receive 34 percent of all Pell Grants, and in 2012, 3.2 million women of color received Pell Grants. President Obama has raised the maximum Pell Grant award to \$5,730 for the 2014-15 award year – a nearly \$1,000 increase since 2008.
- From 2009 to 2012, the graduation rate at four-year colleges and universities increased by 0.9 percentage points for Black women, 3.1 percentage points for Hispanic women, 2.7 percentage points for American Indian/Alaska Native women, and 2.1 percentage points for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women.

**Increase in Graduation Rates Among Women of Color at Four-Year Colleges, 2009-2012**



## Economic Security

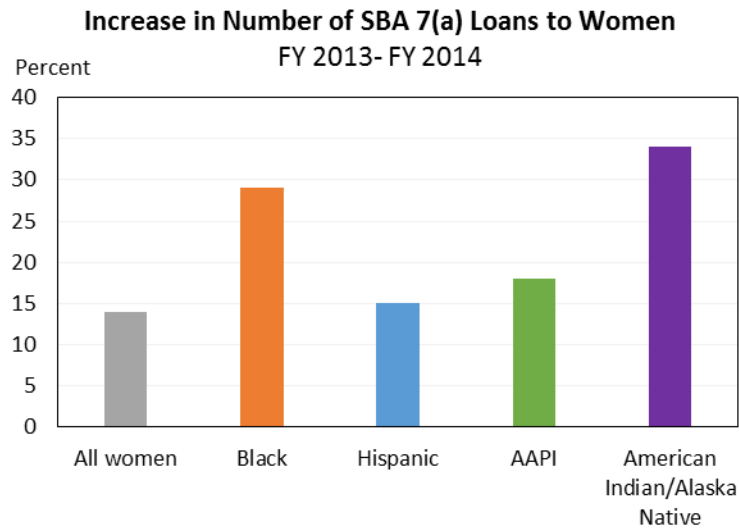
- The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) strengthen work incentives and help parents afford the costs of raising a family, providing families with an average tax cut of more than \$1,000 a year.
  - ❖ The EITC and CTC raise the incomes of about 2.9 million Black women and girls, 5.4 million Hispanic women and girls, 200,000 AAPI women and girls, and 800,000 American Indian/Alaska Native women and girls.
  - ❖ About 19 percent of non-Hispanic Black women, 27 percent of Hispanic women, and 12 percent of AAPI and American Indian/Alaska Native women benefit from expansions of the EITC and CTC compared with about 11 percent of all workers.



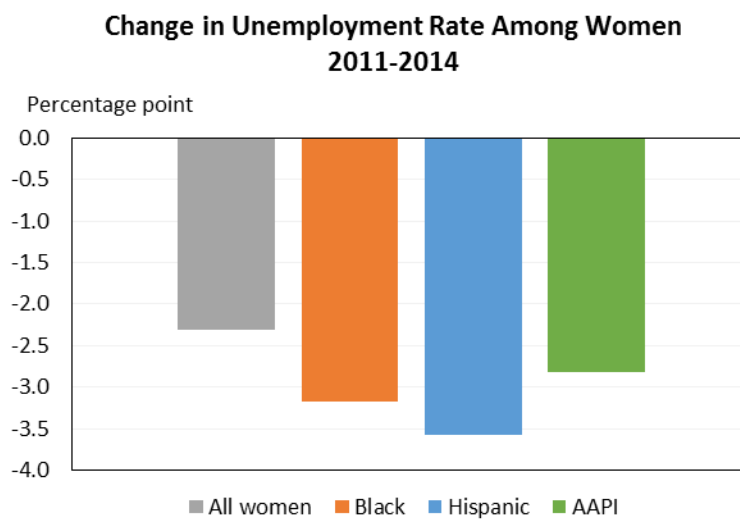
- Nearly two million people who work as home health aides, personal care aides, and certified nursing assistants who provide home and personal care services – nearly 50 percent of whom are women of color – now have minimum wage and overtime protections to ensure they are paid fairly for their work.
- Since 2010, poverty rates have fallen 0.2 percentage points for Black women and girls, 2.9 percentage points for Hispanic women and girls, and 2.2 percentage points for AAPI women and girls; rates have increased 3.8 percentage points for American Indian/Alaska Native women.



- Since 2009, the Small Business Administration (SBA) has approved loans for small businesses owners across the country, including 14,117 loans to women of color supporting \$5.8 billion in lending. From fiscal year 2013 to fiscal year 2014, through its 7(a) program, SBA increased the number of loans made to women overall by 14 percent, and to Black women by 29 percent, Hispanic women by 15 percent, American Indian/Alaska Native women by 34 percent, and AAPI women by 18 percent.



- While unemployment rates for women of color are still generally higher than for White women, over the past three years, 12-month average unemployment rates have fallen by 3.2 percentage points for Black women, 3.6 percentage points for Hispanic women, and 2.8 percentage points for AAPI women.



Note: 12-month moving average of non-seasonally adjusted data

## Health

- An estimated 12.5 million women of color – 5.1 million Black women, 4.9 million Hispanic women, and 2.5 million Asian American women – with private health insurance now have guaranteed access to women’s preventive services including well-woman visits, FDA-approved contraception, breastfeeding support, mammograms, domestic violence counseling, screenings for cervical cancer, prenatal care, and other services without cost-sharing.
- 658,000 women of color between the ages of 19 and 25 who would have been uninsured now have coverage under their parents’ employer-sponsored or individually purchased health plans.
- About 10.4 million women of color – 3.9 million Black women, 4.4 million Hispanic women, and 2.1 million Asian American women – no longer have lifetime limits on their health insurance plans.
- 4.8 million women of color on Medicare have benefitted from the Affordable Care Act (ACA) provision that closes the “donut hole” prescription drug coverage gap.

## **Policies, Programs, and Initiatives**

### **1. Education**

*In today's global economy, a high-quality education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity – it is a prerequisite for success – and while women and girls of color have made significant progress in educational attainment, opportunity gaps persist between them and their white peers.*

*While math and reading scores on the National Assessment of Education Progress, often called the “Nation’s Report Card,” have improved for girls overall since 2000, girls of color remain behind.<sup>1</sup> When it comes to graduation rates, since 2000, the high school dropout rate has fallen by half for Hispanic girls and by more than one-third for Black girls.<sup>2</sup> But while girls of color are more likely to graduate from high school than boys of color, Black girls are 14.6 percentage points less likely, Hispanic girls are 12.8 percentage points less likely, and American Indian/Alaska Native girls are 16 percentage points less likely to graduate than White girls.<sup>3</sup> And while women of color are more likely to graduate from college than men of color, Black women are 21.3 percentage points less likely, Hispanic women are 10 percentage points less likely, Pacific Islander women are 14.8 percentage points less likely, and American Indian/Alaska Native women are 22.5 percentage points less likely to graduate from college than White women.<sup>4</sup>*

*Girls of color also face unique challenges regarding school discipline. Black girls enrolled in public schools are six times more likely (12 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native girls are three and a half times more likely (7 percent), and Hispanic girls are twice as likely (4 percent) to be suspended from school than their White peers (2 percent).<sup>5</sup> Additionally, nearly one in five girls of color with disabilities receives an out-of-school suspension compared with just 6 percent of White girls with disabilities.<sup>6</sup>*

*In addition, gaps still exist for women and girls of color in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and careers. While in a recent survey, three quarters of teenage girls of color expressed interest in STEM,<sup>7</sup> women and girls of color are still underrepresented in STEM educational programs and careers. In 2010, just 10.6 percent of bachelor’s degrees, 7.9 percent of master’s degrees, and 3.9 percent of doctorate degrees in science and engineering were awarded to women of color,<sup>8</sup> and fewer than one in ten employed engineers and scientists are women of color.<sup>9</sup>*

*The Obama Administration has provided states and districts with new tools and resources to tackle these persistent gaps. Through competitive grants, new federal-state partnerships, guidance on a wide range of issues, and other efforts such as the First Lady’s Reach Higher Initiative, the Obama Administration is working to ensure that every student graduates from high school prepared for college and a successful career.*

***Supporting Improved School Disciplinary Policies:*** In the Summer of 2011, Education Secretary Arne Duncan and Attorney General Eric Holder announced the launch of a collaborative project—the Supportive School Discipline Initiative – between the U.S. Departments of Education (ED) and Justice (DOJ) to support the use of school discipline practices that foster safe, supportive, and productive learning environments while keeping students in school.

- In 2013, ED, DOJ, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) launched a Supportive School Discipline Webinar Series.
- In 2014, ED and DOJ jointly released a School Discipline Guidance Package to (a) clarify schools' civil rights obligation to not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin in the administration of school discipline, and (b) provide a set of principles to help schools improve school climate and discipline practices.
- In 2014, ED released the results of the 2011-2012 Civil Rights Data Collection, which includes school discipline data from every public elementary and secondary school in the country and certain juvenile justice facilities – including long-term secure facilities – and announced plans for future collection of juvenile justice data.
- ED and DOJ engaged with various philanthropies and other key stakeholders to commission a School Discipline Consensus Project, led by the Council of State Governments, to bring together practitioners from the fields of education, juvenile justice, behavioral health, and law enforcement to develop recommendations to address the school-to-prison pipeline, including recommendations for strengthening services to youth in confinement.

***Focusing Education Reform on Marginalized Groups:*** The Administration has partnered with 41 states and the District of Columbia to provide them with flexibility from certain requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by No Child Left Behind. In exchange for this ESEA flexibility, states and districts must develop rigorous and comprehensive plans designed to improve educational outcomes for all students, increase equity, and improve quality of education. These states are implementing college- and career-ready standards, strengthening the teaching profession, and using data to identify and intervene at schools with the largest achievement gaps. As a result, schools and districts must develop and implement plans to improve the educational outcomes of all students and eliminate achievement gaps.

***Changing the Odds of Marginalized Girls in Career and Technical Education:*** The Administration has worked to ensure that all students have access to high quality Career and Technical Education (CTE) opportunities. Efforts include the following:

- **Researching Barriers Preventing Women’s Full Access to Non-Traditional Occupations:** ED is commissioning a study led by the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education that will examine whether girls and young women in high school have access to high-

quality programs that prepare them for careers that are non-traditional for women. The study will explore the extent to which equity issues relating to, but not limited to, gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English language learner status, disability status, family composition and school locale are prevalent in secondary CTE. The study is expected to begin in 2015.

- **Hosting a Major Convening on Marginalized Girls, Including Girls of Color, and STEM and CTE:** Consistent with President Obama’s commitment to ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed, in January, 2015, ED, the White House Domestic Policy Council, the White House Council on Women and Girls and Georgetown University will convene thought leaders, policy makers, practitioners, researchers, advocates, and marginalized girls and young women to focus on increasing access to STEM and CTE opportunities. We will address barriers to access, including cultural competency, race and gender stereotypes, discrimination, and lack of sufficient resources to support programs in schools and communities. This convening will produce and inform policy and programmatic proposals to help disrupt patterns of gender-based occupational segregation by increasing young women’s and girls’ participation in programs that prepare them for high-skill, high-wage jobs, including non-traditional occupations. The aim is to develop a strategy to prepare students for in-demand careers in high-growth industry sectors.

***Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Students:*** Teen pregnancy rates for Hispanic and Black girls are more than twice as high, and rates for American Indian/Alaska Native girls nearly twice as high, as rates for White girls.<sup>10</sup> In June 2013, ED’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) issued a Dear Colleague Letter and Pamphlet on “Supporting the Academic Success of Pregnant and Parenting Students Under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.” The letter and pamphlet, which were sent to school districts, colleges and universities across the country, contain information on effective strategies to support students who become pregnant or father children, as well as guidance on educational institutions’ legal obligations under Title IX.

***Ensuring Equal Access to Athletics:*** Girls of color play sports in high school at much lower rates than their White peers. According to research from the National Women’s Law Center, just 64 percent of Hispanic and Black girls and 53 percent of Asian American girls play sports, compared with 76 percent of White girls.<sup>11</sup> OCR has issued extensive guidance on schools’ Title IX obligations to provide equal athletic opportunities. Additionally, OCR vigorously enforces Title IX to ensure that all students, including women and girls of color, have equal access to athletic opportunities in school. For example, OCR recently entered into an agreement to resolve Title IX violations in the athletic program at Indianapolis Public Schools, which enrolls more than 30,000 students, approximately 80 percent of whom are students of color. OCR found that the district denied equal athletic opportunities to girls with respect to accommodating their interests and abilities and providing locker rooms and facilities. The district agreed to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the athletic interests of female students; add athletic opportunities to address any unmet interest; and improve the athletic facilities, equipment and supplies provided to girls’ teams.

***Collecting Data on Civil Rights Issues:*** ED’s Civil Rights Data Collection gathers data on civil rights issues impacting students in every public school in the country, including school discipline, college and career readiness, teacher equity and early childhood education. The data is publicly accessible and can be disaggregated by race and sex, as well as by disability.

***Making College More Affordable:*** Women of color make up 23 percent of all college students, yet they receive 34 percent of all Pell Grants. President Obama has raised the maximum Pell Grant award to \$5,730 for the 2014-15 award year – a nearly \$1,000 increase since 2008. Under President Obama’s leadership, the number of Pell Grant recipients has expanded by 50 percent over that same time, providing college access to millions of additional low-income and middle-class students across the country. The Obama Administration’s landmark investment in the Pell Grant was enacted in the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010, which ended student loan subsidies for private financial institutions and banks and shifted over \$60 billion in savings back to students. In addition, in June of 2014, President Obama directed the Secretary of Education to ensure that student loans remain affordable for all who borrowed federal direct loans as students by allowing them to cap their payments at 10 percent of their monthly incomes. ED formally began its process to amend its regulations this fall with a goal of making the new plan available to borrowers by December 2015.

#### **a. STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math)**

***Providing Opportunities for Elementary and Secondary School Students in STEM:*** The Administration supports numerous efforts to provide STEM opportunities to elementary and secondary school students, including many girls of color. Examples include the following:

- **Race to the Top Grant Program:** ED’s Race to the Top Grant Program included a competitive preference for STEM. In order to receive competitive preference points, applicants had to include a high-quality plan to prepare more students for advanced study and careers in STEM, including by addressing the needs of underrepresented groups and girls.
- **2014 Teacher Quality Partnerships:** Through this \$35 million competitive program, the Administration awarded competitive grants to support the recruitment and development of new teachers through partnerships between institutions of higher education and high-need schools and districts. The initiative included a competitive preference priority for increasing the number of individuals from groups traditionally underrepresented in STEM teaching, including minorities, women and individuals with disabilities. A number of the new grant recipients serve high numbers of students of color.
- **Partnership Between General Services Administration (GSA) and Architecture, Construction and Engineering (ACE) Mentor Program:** Over the past several years, as part of continuing efforts to introduce and expand awareness of the design and construction

industries among inner-city high school students, GSA has inspired high school students to pursue these careers through a partnership with the non-profit ACE Mentor Program, mentoring several hundred students in high schools throughout the country. The program has had tremendous success in attracting and mentoring female and minority students amongst others, and according to research conducted through the program, female participants enroll in college engineering programs at double the rate of non-participants.

➤ **Activities Supported by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA):** NASA supports a number of STEM activities that have impacted girls of color. Highlights include the following:

- ❖ **The Afterschool Universe (AU) Curriculum:** This NASA-developed STEM curriculum has been evaluated and recommended by Great Science for Girls as one of seven curricula on their site which successfully stimulates girls' interest in STEM subjects and instills self-confidence in their abilities. From the beginning, in working to disseminate this curriculum, the AU team has sought partner organizations with high percentages of students who are underrepresented in the sciences.
- ❖ **Chattanooga Girls Leadership Academy (CGLA):** NASA Summer of Innovation (SOI) Pilot Program funded SOI activities at CGLA – the first all-girls public charter school in Tennessee – through a competitive solicitation that was designed to increase STEM engagement in underrepresented and underserved groups. Since 2012, CGLA has engaged 336 girls and boys, of whom 292 are girls of color, in at least 30 hours of NASA education activities through summer and afterschool programs. Activities have focused on topics such as aeronautics, engineering design, robotics and rocketry. CGLA students represent the diversity of urban Chattanooga: the student population is 66 percent Black and 28 percent Hispanic, and 97 percent of students are low-income.
- ❖ **NASA-Girl Scouts Initiative for Farmworker Daughters:** NASA Ames Research Center has partnered with the Northern California Girl Scouts to conduct STEM-related activities – including building robots – throughout the year. This encompasses programming geared towards farmworker daughters, many of whom are Hispanic.

***Ensuring Access to High School and College Courses and Programs in STEM:*** To increase access to STEM education opportunities, ED's Office for Civil Rights OCR created a STEM resources webpage in 2012 to make clear to schools, students, and parents that the civil rights laws enforced by OCR apply to STEM courses and programs. The webpage includes a technical assistance presentation for principal investigators, faculty, and administrators at postsecondary institutions with practical examples of how Title IX applies to STEM. The webpage also includes a 2008 Dear Colleague letter on Title VI access to advanced placement and other challenging

courses. OCR has also worked to enforce the federal civil rights laws to increase access to STEM: For example, in January 2014, OCR resolved a STEM education case in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. Seats were going unfilled in outstanding STEM-focused schools because the district was not advertising the course availability in Spanish, the home language of 80 percent of the district's English learner students. OCR's agreement in this case, affecting 38,000 students, required the district to form a committee, made up partially of community members, to identify and assess barriers to Hispanic students' participation in STEM programs. In addition, OCR has formed a partnership between ED's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) program and NASA to develop high-quality STEM program "challenges" that serve students from high-poverty and low-income schools, including traditionally underserved groups like students of color and girls. As it enters its second year of implementation, the project will expand from three states and 20 participating sites to up to seven states and approximately 70 sites. Best practices around providing high-quality STEM experiences to all students will be highlighted and shared with the more than 10,000 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program sites across the country.

***Providing Opportunities for College and University Students in STEM Fields:*** The Administration has supported efforts that are inspiring more women of color and others to pursue degrees in STEM fields, including the following:

- **NASA Pathways Intern Program:** This program provides college students with exciting, hands-on experience in science and engineering fields, helping them to secure employment in these fields upon completing their degrees. One-third of the women participating in this program are women of color.
- **Minority University Research and Education Project (MUREP):** MUREP enhances the research, academic, and technological capabilities of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions, and other Minority-Serving Institutions. MUREP assists with the recruitment and retention of underrepresented and underserved students, including women and girls and persons with disabilities. MUREP also hosts competitive undergraduate and graduate fellowships that require intensive research at a NASA Field Center and that will help increase the number of persons with degrees most relevant to the future NASA STEM workforce. In addition, the Harriet G. Jenkins Pre-Doctoral Fellowship Program – once a stand-alone competitive opportunity but recently consolidated into MUREP – has operated for thirteen years, supporting a total of 211 fellows, of which 128 were women.
- **Tribal ecoAmbassadors Program:** Since 2011, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Tribal ecoAmbassadors Program has created new STEM opportunities for more than 100 tribal college students. The program, which partners Tribal College and University professors and students with EPA scientists to solve pressing environmental issues, has helped more than 60 tribal college women develop professional monitoring and analysis skills that are critical for an environmental career.



- **Department of Energy (DOE) Scholarships:** DOE has a number of programs that promote women's and girls' participation and training in STEM fields. A number of colleges receive support from DOE; for example, since 2008, DOE's Office of Economic Impact and Diversity has provided \$350,000 to support 70 DOE STEM scholarships for exceptionally qualified young women at Spelman College to help them pursue their academic goals of earning a STEM degree. Students are also given the opportunity to participate in DOE's Minority Educational Institution Student Partnership Program, which introduces students to DOE workforce opportunities and STEM careers.
  
- **U.S. Patent and Trade Office (USPTO) Program at Historically Black Colleges and Universities:** In the spring of 2014, the USPTO collaborated with the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities to identify ways to implement and accelerate innovation and entrepreneurship programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The first program will begin this academic year at Howard University and aims to increase retention rates among groups underrepresented in STEM-related areas of study, including women and minorities.

## 2. Economic Security

*Women of color make up 35 percent of the female workforce in America and have made important strides in attaining economic security and professional success. In recent years, for example, an increasing number of women of color have pursued careers as entrepreneurs. While between 1997 and 2013, the number of women-owned businesses increased by 59 percent, the number of Black women-owned businesses increased by 258 percent; Hispanic women-owned businesses, by 180 percent; Asian American women-owned businesses, by 156 percent; and American Indian/Alaska Native women-owned businesses, by 108 percent.<sup>12</sup>*

*Yet, despite these gains, women of color still face significant economic challenges. While over the past three years, 12-month average unemployment rates have fallen by 3.2 percentage points for Black women, 3.6 percentage points for Hispanic women, and 2.8 percentage points for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women, unemployment rates for women of color are still generally higher than for White women.<sup>13</sup> Women of color are also still overrepresented in low-paying jobs, underrepresented in management positions, and too often lack access to critical supports like quality, affordable child care and paid leave. Only 47 percent of Black women, 45 percent of AAPI women, and 36 percent of Hispanic women report having access to some form of paid leave – including either formal policies or informal arrangements – to care for family members.<sup>14</sup>*

*Women of color also face significant wage gaps, with Asian American women still making 79 cents, Black women making 64 cents, and Hispanic women making 56 cents, for every dollar paid to White, non-Hispanic men.<sup>15</sup> In addition, women of color still experience higher than average rates of poverty – approximately 25 percent of Hispanic women, 29 percent of Black women, and 32 percent of Native American women live in poverty, compared with about 16 percent of all women<sup>16</sup>; and roughly 30 percent of Hispanic girls, 39 percent of Black girls, and 40 percent of Native American girls live in poverty, compared with 20 percent of all girls.<sup>17</sup> While disparities exist among various AAPI communities, overall, AAPI women and girls are less likely than other women to live in poverty, with poverty rates among AAPI girls at 9 percent and among women at 11 percent.<sup>18</sup>*

*President Obama has worked to promote greater economic security for all Americans with efforts to close the pay gap, raise the minimum wage, expand the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, increase access to child care and paid leave, support entrepreneurship and ensure retirement security. The Obama Administration also hosted the first-ever White House Summit on Working Families in 2014 to spur a national conversation about workplace policies and set a new agenda to bring American workplaces into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

## **a. Consumer Protection**

***Cracking Down on Fraud:*** Women are slightly more likely – and people in certain communities of color are significantly more likely – to be the victims of fraud. 11.7 percent of women are victims of fraud compared with 9.8 percent of men; and 17.3 percent of Black people and 13.4 percent of Hispanics have been victims of fraud, compared with 9.0 percent of non-Hispanic Whites and 6.2 percent of Asian Americans.<sup>19</sup> The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has devoted significant resources to identifying, locating and stopping fraud. These efforts have resulted in a number of settlements, court orders and refunds for affected consumers.

***Educating Consumers From Diverse Communities About Fraud:*** The FTC conducts extensive education and outreach initiatives to help consumers from diverse communities recognize and report fraud. For example, the FTC provides resources to help people spot immigration scams, and legal services providers, police departments and advocates order this information in bulk to distribute to their communities. The FTC has also created fotonovelas, illustrated brochures that tell stories based on complaints the FTC receives from Spanish speakers nationwide. In addition, the FTC works to disseminate information about consumer issues through advocates, legal service providers, and other community groups that serve women of color, including the NAACP, National Urban League, National Council of La Raza, League of United Latin American Citizens, the National Asian American Coalition and others.

## **b. Entrepreneurship**

***Increasing Access to Capital:*** Through the Small Business Administration’s (SBA) flagship 7(a) lending program, SBA guarantees a percentage of the bank’s risk, so the bank is more likely to approve a small business loan. From fiscal year 2013 to fiscal year 2014, SBA increased the number of 7(a) loans made to women overall by 14 percent and to Black women by 29 percent, Hispanic women by 15 percent, American Indian/Alaska Native women by 34 percent, and AAPI women by 18 percent.<sup>20</sup> SBA recently eliminated fees on loans under \$150,000, and between fiscal year 2013 and fiscal year 2014, the number of 7(a) loans under \$150,000 made to women overall increased by 24 percent, and loans made to women of color increased by 30 percent. Additional changes to SBA’s lending programs include modifying credit scoring in order to further expand access to capital for underserved companies. Since January of 2009, SBA has approved loans for small businesses across the country, including 54,264 loans to women totaling 20.1 billion, of which 26 percent – 14,117 loans totaling \$5.8 billion – were to women of color. In addition, the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) at the Department of Commerce has worked closely with businesses across the country, helping to secure \$19.4 billion in contracts and capital between 2009 and 2013.

***Expanding Opportunities for Government Contracting:*** SBA’s 8(a) program is a business development initiative for companies owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, including many women of color. Through the nine-year program term, companies receive business development assistance and grow through a combination of federal government

contract awards and managerial and technical support. Nearly one-third of the companies participating in this program, which generates billions of dollars each year in government contracts to small businesses, are women-owned. In addition, in 2011, SBA implemented the Woman-Owned Small Business Federal Contract Program, helping more women, including many women of color, earn federal contracts for their businesses. Between fiscal year 2012 and fiscal year 2013, the percentage of eligible contracting dollars awarded to woman-owned small businesses increased by 7.5 percent to more than \$15 billion.

***Helping More Women Acquire the Skills They Need to Start and Grow Their Own Businesses:*** The Women’s Business Center (WBC) network, administered by SBA, provides grants to nearly 110 Women’s Business Centers located across the country in nearly every state. The primary focus of WBC is to provide training and technical assistance to nascent and existing women-owned firms, and it is the only business counseling program offered by SBA with a statutory purpose of serving socially and economically disadvantaged women. In addition, MBDA runs a network of MBDA business centers across the country that provide technical assistance to promote the growth and global competitiveness of U.S. firms.

***Expanding Export Opportunities:*** The Export-Import Bank (Ex-Im Bank) provides dedicated, hands-on guidance to small businesses, including women and minority-owned companies, that seek to grow their exports and sales, but are lacking the commercial financing they need to expand. In fiscal year 2014 alone, Ex-Im Bank supported approximately \$2 billion in exports from minority and women-owned businesses.

***Providing Small Business Opportunities to Students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities:*** The Department of Transportation’s Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) works with Historically Black Colleges and Universities to coordinate internships for students interested in small business operations. For example, in 2009, OSDBU implemented the Pilot Entrepreneurial Women and Girls Training Program via a partnership between OSDBU and Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. Through the pilot, 28 young women were placed in various transportation-related positions, including at the Georgia Department of Transportation, Hartsfield International Airport, FAA and private transportation industry firms.

### **c. Equal Pay**

***Passing and Promoting Policies to Close the Pay Gap:*** President Obama has taken the following actions, helping women receive equal pay for their work:

- Signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act: The first bill President Obama signed into law, this Act extended the time period during which claimants can bring pay discrimination claims and enabled countless victims of pay discrimination to seek redress where they otherwise could not.

- Created the National Equal Pay Task Force in 2010 to crack down on violations of equal pay laws: This Administration has strengthened enforcement, overseen substantial monetary recoveries, and made critical investments in education and outreach for both employers and employees.
- Signed an Executive Order prohibiting federal contractors from retaliating against employees who choose to discuss their compensation: This Order provides a critical tool to encourage pay transparency so workers can discover violations of pay discrimination laws and seek appropriate remedies.
- Issued a Presidential Memorandum instructing the Secretary of Labor to establish new regulations requiring federal contractors to submit summary data on compensation paid to their employees, including data by sex and race. The Department of Labor (DOL) issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in August 2014, and the comment period for this proposed rule will end on January 5, 2015.
- Continues to call on Congress to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, commonsense legislation that would give women additional tools to fight pay discrimination.
- Called on Congress in his 2013 State of the Union Address to pass legislation to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 and index it to inflation, which would close the pay gap for women by about five percent.

***Enforcing Equal Pay Laws and Policies:*** In 2013, The Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) at DOL implemented new policy guidance that removed barriers to finding and resolving systemic, wage-based discrimination cases. In 2013, OFCCP closed 21 cases of pay discrimination, recovering over \$1.2 million for about 965 workers. Noteworthy achievements impacting women of color included the following:

- A \$290,000 settlement against Medtronic International Vascular Inc. – a manufacturing facility in Danvers, Massachusetts – for Hispanic production workers who were paid less than comparable white workers performing the same job.
- The recovery of \$265,000 from G & K Services Co. for predominantly Hispanic female laundry workers in Santa Fe Springs, California, who were steered into lower-paying jobs based on stereotypes about the kinds of work women and men should perform.

***Conducting Education and Outreach to Promote Equal Pay:*** DOL has conducted numerous efforts across America to educate people about the issue of equal pay and find local solutions. Examples include the following:

- Starting in 2011, DOL’s Women’s Bureau, in partnership with DOL’s Office of Public Engagement and Center for Faith-Based Neighborhood Partnerships, convened a series of briefings to highlight the plight of America’s most vulnerable workers. The series,

entitled “Vulnerable Women Workers,” assembled national women’s organizations, private foundations and government agencies to learn more about the working conditions and gender-based pay equity challenges of vulnerable workers, including vulnerable workers of color. Each briefing also examined best practices from the employer community and potential models for reform.

- In April 2012, the Women’s Bureau issued two publications on equal pay: 1) *A Guide to Women’s Equal Pay Rights*, which helps working women understand their rights under certain laws that govern equal pay and compensation, and 2) *An Employer’s Guide to Equal Pay*, which helps employers understand the primary federal laws that govern equal pay and compensation, provides tips to monitor pay practices and identifies resources regarding compliance with the laws.
  
- In June of 2013, the National Equal Pay Taskforce – which was established in response to President Obama’s pledge in 2010 to crack down on violations of equal pay laws and includes professionals from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Department of Justice (DOJ), DOL and the Office of Personnel Management – released a report entitled *Fifty Years After the Equal Pay Act*. Findings of the Report include the following: a significant portion of the wage gap cannot be fully explained by such factors as job characteristics and work experience; occupational segregation still leads to men and women working in different kinds of jobs; management positions have some of the largest pay differences; and there is a “motherhood penalty” for women with children resulting from stereotypes and biases about working mothers.

#### **d. Housing**

***Ending Housing Discrimination Against Victims of Domestic Violence:*** In 2010, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) released new rules implementing protections in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) for victims of domestic violence living in public and voucher-supported housing. In March 2013, President Obama signed the reauthorization of VAWA, which expanded these protections to sexual assault victims and extended the law to include additional federally subsidized housing programs. HUD has been working to inform the public of how these policy changes will impact tenants and housing providers in HUD-assisted housing and shelters. In just HUD’s three major rental assistance programs – public housing, multifamily project-based rental assistance, and Housing Choice Vouchers – 9.8 million tenants, of whom 3.36 million are women and girls of color, will be impacted. These efforts and HUD’s work to protect victims of domestic violence through the Fair Housing Act are already bringing justice for women who are victims of domestic violence. For example, in 2014, HUD announced settlement agreements with the owners and managers of properties in Berlin, New Hampshire and with the town of Norristown, Pennsylvania over allegations that victims of domestic violence were threatened with eviction or refused housing based on domestic violence-related 911 calls, in violation of the Fair Housing Act.

***Ending Lending Discrimination Against Pregnant Women and Women on Maternity Leave:*** Since 2010, HUD has conducted aggressive enforcement to eliminate discrimination in mortgage lending against pregnant women and women on maternity leave. HUD has directly helped more than 370 people and concluded more than 40 settlements related to maternity leave, including a recent settlement with Wells Fargo for \$5 million. These enforcement actions have led to policy changes at many lending institutions.

### ***Helping Families in Public Housing Gain Economic Independence***

- **Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Demonstration Program:** In 2013, HUD continued funding (\$1.89 million) the FSS Demonstration Program to gain a deeper understanding of the strategies that engender economic independence, specifically for families with children. The FSS program serves voucher holders and residents of public housing – many of whom are women of color – helping them increase their family’s income and savings through services and employment opportunities. The demonstration will track the progress of a group of FSS participants to determine the best strategies for enabling economic independence.
- **Family Options Study:** HUD is undertaking research to assess the effectiveness of various service and housing interventions in ending homelessness for families. HUD’s Family Options Study includes more than 2,200 homeless families – many of which are headed by women of color – from 12 communities who were randomly assigned to one of four interventions to be tested. In the FY13 budget, \$4.39 million was obligated to continue funding for this study.

***Working to Prevent Homelessness and Advance Well-Being and Economic Security for Veterans:*** Younger Veterans are at higher risk for homelessness, with young, female, Black Veterans at the greatest risk.<sup>21</sup> Through the HUD-VASH (Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing) voucher program, more than 73,000 Veterans have obtained housing vouchers since 2008. Another program, the Supportive Services for Veterans Families program, prevented more than 60,000 Veterans and their family members from falling into homelessness in 2013 alone. Also in 2013, the Veterans Employment and Training Service at DOL established the Women Veterans Program, implemented in collaboration with the Women’s Bureau. This program works to empower women Veterans to achieve economic stability and equality in the workplace. In August 2013, VETS announced the award of 22 grants, totaling more than \$5 million, to provide job training to about 1,900 homeless female Veterans and Veterans with families. These grants also supported career counseling, life skills and money management mentoring and help in finding housing. In addition, in 2014, as part of First Lady Michelle Obama’s Joining Forces initiative, the Administration announced a commitment by 222 mayors, six governors and 17 county executives to meet the goal of preventing and ending Veteran homelessness by the end of 2015. Since 2011, Veteran homelessness has fallen by 33 percent.

## **e. Minimum Wage, Low-Income Workers, and Poverty-Prevention Efforts**

***Fighting to Raise the Minimum Wage:*** While Black women and Hispanic women account for about 6 percent and 9 percent of the workforce, respectively, they account for 9 percent and 12 percent of all workers who would benefit from raising the minimum wage. President Obama has fought for an increase in the national minimum wage, signing an Executive Order that will raise the minimum wage to \$10.10 for federal contract workers, calling on Congress in his 2013 State of the Union Address to pass legislation to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 and index it to inflation, and calling on cities and states to raise their minimum wage. Since then, 17 states – including Alaska, Arkansas, California, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Maryland, Minnesota, Michigan, Nebraska, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont and West Virginia – and Washington, DC have raised their minimum wage, resulting in higher wages for an estimated 360,000 Black women, 1.2 million Hispanic women, and 320,000 AAPI and American Indian/Alaska Native women. 25 cities and counties across the country have also taken action to raise the minimum wage.

***Extending Minimum Wage and Overtime Protections to Home Care Workers:*** Fulfilling a promise by President Obama to ensure that home care workers are paid fairly for their work, DOL issued a final rule ensuring that the Fair Labor Standards Act’s minimum wage and overtime protections apply to most of the nation’s workers who provide essential home and personal care assistance to seniors and individuals with disabilities. Workers in these fields are among the lowest paid workers, and of the nearly two million workers who will be affected by this rule, nearly 50 percent are women of color. Under the new rule, many home health aides, personal care aides, and certified nursing assistants who provide home and personal care services will receive the same basic protections already provided to most U.S. workers. The rule will also help guarantee that those who rely on the assistance of home care workers have access to an increasingly professional workforce.

***Enforcing Minimum Wage Laws:*** The Wage and Hour Division (WHD) at DOL has stepped up targeted enforcement efforts in industries most at risk of labor violations, including janitorial, health care, hotel and motel, garment, and restaurant – industries that employ high numbers of women of color, migrant or seasonal laborers, and workers with limited English language skills. In fiscal year 2013, WHD investigations resulted in awards of more than \$249.9 million in back wages and helped more than 269,000 workers. Of those awards, more than \$83 million in back wages were won for more than 108,000 workers specifically in low-wage industries.

***Cutting Taxes for Working Families:*** During his first term in office, President Obama enacted, and Congress extended with bipartisan support through 2017, significant expansions to tax credits for working families. These include expansions to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC), which strengthen work incentives and help parents afford the costs of raising a family, and the American Opportunity Tax Credit, which helps working and middle-class families pay for college. Together, these improvements provide 26 million families with an average tax cut of more than \$1,000 each year, and the EITC and CTC expansions alone raise the after-tax income of about 2.9 million African American women and girls, 5.4 million Hispanic



women and girls, 200,000 AAPI women and girls and 800,000 American Indian/Alaska Native women and girls. And while Black and Hispanic women account for 6 and 7 percent of the labor force, respectively, they account for 10 and 16 percent of workers who benefit from expansions of the EITC and CTC. About 19 percent of Black women, 27 percent of Hispanic women, and 12 percent of AAPI and American Indian/Alaska Native women benefit from these expansions, as compared with about 11 percent of all workers.

***Seeking to Expand the Earned Income Tax Credit for Childless Workers:*** The EITC is a proven tool to increase and reward work, and many low-income families with children have benefitted from this credit. However, childless workers – including many women of color – can receive only up to \$500 and must be at least 25 years old, limiting the power of the credit to incentivize employment among this population. Consequently, President Obama has proposed doubling the maximum credit to \$1,000, raising the income eligibility standard to increase eligibility among full-time minimum wage workers, and lowering the age minimum from 25 to 21. This proposed expansion would be fully paid for within President Obama’s budget by closing tax loopholes and would raise the take-home pay of approximately 13.5 million workers, including 900,000 Black women, 1.1 million Hispanic women, and 400,000 AAPI and American Indian/Alaska Native women.

***Promoting Access to Child Care:*** The Administration has supported nationwide efforts to increase access to quality, affordable child care, including the following:

- **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009:** ARRA invested \$2 billion in the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) – a federal program that helps low-income families obtain child care – to provide assistance for an additional 300,000 children and families during the height of the recession.
- **Proposed Regulatory Changes:** In May of 2013, the Administration released a proposed rule that would raise the quality of the existing child care system and promote family friendly policies. For example, the proposed rule would allow families to receive 12 months of assistance before they need to re-apply for CCDF child care subsidies, and it would require states to let families keep their child care subsidy while searching for a job. The rule would also ensure that children are cared for in safe environments that meet minimum health and safety requirements.
- **Grants to Provide Child Care for Workers in Job Training Programs:** DOL will make funds available competitively for technical skill training grants to provide low-wage individuals opportunities to advance in their careers in in-demand industries, with \$25 million of the competition focused on addressing barriers to training faced by those with child care responsibilities. With the help of additional public or private funding that it will leverage, these dedicated funds will promote greater availability of activities such as co-location of training and child care services, access to unconventional training delivery times or locations, flexibilities related to scheduling and child care exigencies, and improved access to related child care services. These funds will give more working families a path to

secure, higher wage jobs by addressing the significant barriers related to finding and acquiring affordable, high quality child care – including emergency care – while attending skills training programs. For example, evidence shows that single parents who receive child care are much more likely to complete job training programs than those who do not have access to child care.<sup>22</sup> The new competition, which will be launched next year, will aim to increase participation and completion rates of those in training by supporting sustainable and innovative approaches that expand workers’ access to child care.

***Making Historic Investments and Reforms in Head Start and Early Head Start:*** Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the Administration invested \$2.1 billion in Head Start and Early Head Start, reaching an additional 61,000 children with quality early learning opportunities. In addition, Congress appropriated \$500 million for new Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships – an initiative first proposed in President Obama’s 2014 Budget – to increase access to high-quality infant and toddler care for tens of thousands of young children. The Administration has also worked to improve the quality of Head Start, including launching a new process designed to ensure that only the highest quality programs receive Head Start funding.

***Supporting Quality Early Learning Opportunities:*** The Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge competition has provided \$1 billion to 20 states to create statewide systems of early learning that raise the bar on quality; establish higher standards across programs; provide critical links with health, nutrition, mental health and family support; and enhance school readiness. In addition, in 2014, Congress appropriated \$250 million for Preschool Development Grants – grants that were first proposed in President Obama’s 2014 Budget – that will help states build, develop and expand high-quality preschool programs.

***Promoting Access to Paid Leave:*** DOL is targeting funds for Paid Leave Analysis Grants to allow up to five states to conduct research and feasibility studies that could support the development or implementation of state paid leave programs. The selection process will give priority to states that can demonstrate commitment to building a knowledge base needed to implement paid leave programs, and can present clearly articulated strategies for leveraging research to do so. DOL is also funding two new independent research studies related to employee leave that will examine how paid leave programs impact employers and workers.

## **f. Non-Traditional Occupations**

***Working to Stop Discrimination in Construction Trades:*** Women hold only 2.6 percent of construction jobs<sup>23</sup> – and the statistics for women of color are even worse, with Hispanic women holding just 0.4 percent of construction jobs; Black women, 0.2 percent; and AAPI and American Indian/Alaska Native women, just 0.1 percent each.<sup>24</sup> Yet, DOL has projected that, by 2022, the construction industry will add 1.6 million new jobs – many of them relatively high-wage jobs. The Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs at DOL has been focusing on preventing and remedying discrimination in the construction industry, including in federally funded and federally assisted Mega Construction Projects (MCP). These are projects that are valued at \$25 million or

more, are expected to last for at least one year, and will have a significant economic impact in their communities. Through its MCP Initiative, DOL convenes parties involved in large-scale, high-profile construction projects around the country – including construction prime contractors and subcontractors; unions; community leaders; and federal, state and local governments – to ensure coordination and compliance with equal employment obligations. Designed to address the historical underrepresentation of minorities and women in skilled construction trades, the MCP Initiative enables contractors to identify qualified women and minority workers through effective recruitment and training.

***Providing Opportunities in STEM Careers:*** The federal government supports a number of initiatives that promote access to opportunities in STEM careers, including the following:

- **Committee on Women of Color in Biomedical Careers:** The committee on Women of Color in Biomedical Careers – which is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Working Group on Women in Biomedical Careers, co-chaired by the NIH Director and the Director of the Office of Research in Women’s Health – was established to ensure that the unique career challenges faced by women of color are addressed, including recruitment, mentoring, retention and promotion. In order to accomplish these goals, the Committee created a Women of Color Research Network, a new social media site providing information, mentoring, and career development opportunities for women of color in biomedical careers and for all who support diversity in the scientific workforce. To date, the site has more than 1,300 active users.
- **The SEED Initiative (STEM, Energy, and Economic Development):** This initiative, led by the Department of Energy (DOE) in collaboration with HUD and the Department of Education (ED), is an innovative effort to create economic opportunity and energy-literate communities across the country. SEED is focused on public housing residents, many of whom are women of color, and it includes efforts to improve energy literacy among public housing residents and STEM-related educational programs for youth living in public housing. SEED also works to promote long-term economic opportunity for public housing residents by leveraging federal, state, and local resources to create training and pathways to energy and STEM jobs.

***Supporting Research on Participation in STEM Fields:*** This Administration has supported a number of research projects focused on understanding the supports and barriers for women and girls of color in STEM education and the workforce. For example, in 2009, NIH funded 14 grants – totaling an estimated \$16.8 million over four years – to support research on causal factors and interventions that affect the careers of women in biomedical and behavioral science and engineering. A number of these research projects focused on the needs, education and career trajectories of women of color.

## **g. Retirement**

***Making it Easier for Workers to Save for Retirement:*** 21 percent of Black women ages 65 and older live in poverty, as do 20 percent of Hispanic women, and 13 percent of Asian American women, compared with 9 percent of White women.<sup>25</sup> White households have six times the wealth, including retirement savings, of Black or Hispanic households.<sup>26</sup> And low-wage and part-time workers are just one-third as likely as high-wage and full-time workers to participate in an employer-based retirement plan.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, many women of color are at risk for an insecure retirement and want to be saving more, but lack access to a workplace retirement account or encounter barriers to signing up for one. To make it easier to save for retirement, President Obama has proposed in every budget since taking office to establish automatic enrollment in IRAs (or “auto-IRAs”) for employees without access to an employer-sponsored savings plan. In addition, rather than waiting for Congress to enact auto-IRA legislation, President Obama announced in his 2014 State of the Union address the creation of *myRA* – a simple, safe, and affordable “starter” retirement savings account targeted at workers without access to employer plans and offering the same investment return available to federal employees.

***Helping Women in Underserved Populations Plan for Retirement:*** The Administration for Community Living at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) established the National Education and Resource Center on Women and Retirement Planning, helping women in underserved communities – including low-income women, women of color, women with limited English proficiency, rural women and others – manage their finances and plan for retirement and long-term care. The Center provides relevant training and culturally-appropriate educational workshops, materials, social media resources, newsletters and manuals, and basic financial and retirement literacy tools, as well as strategies to prevent fraud and financial exploitation.

## **h. Workplace Discrimination**

***Fighting Discrimination by Federal Contractors:*** Since President Obama took office, compliance officers in the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) at DOL have reviewed 24,000 federal contractor establishments, which employ 9.5 million workers. Through scheduled compliance evaluations and investigations of individual complaints, DOL uncovered 465 cases of discrimination, recovered \$61 million in financial remedies, and negotiated more than 10,000 potential job offers for 100,000 workers who were unfairly subjected to discrimination. In fiscal year 2013 alone, nearly \$13 million and 1,500 job offers were recouped for 18,000 workers, including a number of women of color.

***Combatting Pregnancy Discrimination:*** DOL has released a new online map that will be a one-stop shop where working families can learn about the rights of pregnant workers in each state. The map allows families to see which states are leading the charge in protecting their rights and which are lagging behind, and it will continue to reflect any future changes in state and federal policy. DOL is also drafting a publication for release in 2015 on best practices for reasonable accommodation for pregnant workers and is planning a nationwide webinar on state-level

pregnancy discrimination laws. In addition, President Obama called on Congress to pass the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, which would require employers to make reasonable accommodations to workers who have limitations from pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions (unless it would impose an undue hardship on the employer). The legislation would also prohibit employers from forcing pregnant employees to take paid or unpaid leave if a reasonable accommodation would allow them to work.

### 3. Health

*Women of color have made important progress on a number of health indicators, but glaring disparities still remain. Teen pregnancy rates for girls of color ages 15-19 have decreased dramatically since 1990, falling by 56 percent for non-Hispanic Black girls, 47 percent for Hispanic girls, 54 percent for American Indian/Alaska Native girls, and 60 percent for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) girls.<sup>28</sup> Yet, rates for girls of color are still significantly higher than for White girls, with non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic teen pregnancy rates more than twice as high, and American Indian/Alaska Native rates nearly twice as high, as rates for White girls.<sup>29</sup>*

*Women of color are also at greater risk for a number of serious conditions, including diabetes, obesity, certain kinds of cancers and HIV/AIDS. While the rate of new HIV infections decreased by 21 percent among Black women between 2008 and 2010,<sup>30</sup> Black women still represent 63 percent of new HIV cases among women and the majority of women living with the disease,<sup>31</sup> and the rate of new infections for Hispanic women is more than quadruple the rate for non-Hispanic White women.<sup>32</sup> Certain populations of women of color also experience higher infant and pregnancy-related mortality rates, with babies born to Black women more than twice as likely to die than babies born to White women, and babies born to American Indian/Alaska Native women roughly 50 percent more likely to die.<sup>33</sup> And pregnancy-related mortality rates for Black women are three times those for White women.<sup>34</sup> In addition, women in some communities of color are less likely to receive important screenings; for example, Asian American women are less likely than women of any other race to be screened for breast and cervical cancer.<sup>35</sup>*

*These disparities stem from a number of factors – from socioeconomic challenges to inadequate access to quality, affordable health care – and addressing them is one of the core objectives of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Passed in 2010, the ACA, along with many other Administration programs and policies, is already improving the health and well-being of millions of women of color across the country.*

#### a. Health Disparities

***Passing the Affordable Care Act (ACA):*** The passage of the ACA in 2010 benefited women of color in numerous ways. An estimated 12.5 million women of color – 5.1 million Black women, 4.9 million Hispanic women, and 2.5 million Asian American women – with private health insurance now have guaranteed access to women’s preventive services without cost-sharing. These services include well-woman visits, FDA-approved contraception, breastfeeding support, mammograms, domestic violence counseling, screenings for cervical cancer, prenatal care and other services. In addition, more than 658,000 women of color between the ages of 19 and 25 who would have been uninsured now have coverage under their parents’ employer-sponsored or individually purchased health plans. And thanks to the ACA, about 10.4 million women of color – 3.9 million Black women, 4.4 million Hispanic women, and 2.1 million Asian American women – no longer have lifetime limits on their health insurance plans. The ACA also bans health insurance discrimination based on gender, ensures that federal surveys collect standardized data

on race and ethnicity to identify health disparities, and improves access to culturally appropriate care. In addition, under the ACA, community health centers – which disproportionately serve people of color and provide care to medically underserved areas – will receive \$11 billion in increased funding through fiscal year 2015.

***Reducing Disparities in Breast Cancer Mortality:*** Black women have the highest breast cancer death rates of all racial and ethnic groups and are 40 percent more likely to die of breast cancer than White women.<sup>36</sup> To help address such disparities, the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program is using evidence-based interventions, targeting outreach to underserved communities, assuring quality screening and providing direct services. 53 percent of the women screened by the program are racial and ethnic minorities.

***Reducing Chronic Disease Risk Factors:*** Heart disease is the leading cause of death for American women, accounting for one in every four deaths. Although women of all ages, races and ethnicities are affected, Black people and older individuals are at higher risk than others.<sup>37</sup> CDC's WISEWOMAN (Well-Integrated Screening and Evaluation for WOMen Across the Nation) program provides low-income, under-insured or uninsured women between the ages of 40 and 64 with screenings, lifestyle programs, and referral services aimed at reducing the risk of heart disease, stroke and other chronic diseases. This includes screening for hypertension and heart disease risk factors as well as free or low-cost community-based nutrition, physical activity and tobacco cessation resources. WISEWOMAN consists of 22 CDC-funded programs in 20 states and two Alaska Native tribal organizations. Between July of 2008 and July of 2013, 44 percent of women who participated in this program were members of racial and ethnic minorities. WISEWOMAN accomplishments include:

- Providing more than 217,000 screenings to almost 150,000 women for heart disease and stroke between 2008 and 2013. Results show an estimated 90 percent of WISEWOMAN participants have at least one of the five major risk factors for heart disease – hypertension, high cholesterol, diabetes, overweight/obesity and smoking.
- Providing nearly 250,000 lifestyle intervention sessions to more than 100,000 women between 2008 and 2013 to reduce their risk of heart disease and stroke.

***Understanding Infertility (Causes, Use of Assisted Reproductive Technologies, Impact of Race):*** Although Black women disproportionately experience conditions that affect fertility, they may be less likely to access infertility services. This multi-center study, funded by CDC and NIH at a total of approximately \$2 million over four years, aims to describe specific infertility diagnoses, association of infertility with sexually transmitted infections, and use of assisted reproductive technologies such as in vitro fertilization (IVF) among women attending infertility clinics, including how these factors vary by race. When complete, the results of the study will be used to inform efforts to address racial disparities in infertility and access to infertility services.

***Addressing Gestational Diabetes in Tribal Communities:*** Through a five-year cooperative agreement, CDC is funding the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors to develop a

Gestational Diabetes Mellitus (GDM) collaborative with four tribal organizations which focus on improving GDM surveillance and interventions to prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes through postpartum glucose testing and long-term follow-up.

***Promoting Minority Women Veterans' Utilization of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Benefits and Services:*** The Center for Minority Veterans (CMV) staff liaisons and Minority Veterans Program Coordinators conduct outreach to minority women Veterans to increase their awareness of, and encourage the utilization of, VA benefits and services. Special emphasis is placed on educating Veterans on the availability of gender specific medical care and other relevant VA benefits and services.

## **b. HIV/AIDS**

***Reducing HIV-Related Disparities:*** In 2010, the Obama Administration released the National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS), the first comprehensive national plan to address the domestic HIV/AIDS epidemic. NHAS sets forth a vision whereby “The United States will become a place where new HIV infections are rare, and when they do occur, every person regardless of age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or socio-economic circumstance, will have unfettered access to high quality, life-extending care, free from stigma and discrimination.” NHAS contains three health-focused goals: reducing new infections; increasing access to care and optimizing health outcomes; and reducing HIV-related health disparities and health inequities. Since the release of NHAS, one of its major successes has been to reduce new HIV infections in Black women by 21 percent.

***Implementing a National Framework to Eliminate Mother-to-Child HIV Transmission (EMCT) in the United States:*** More than 8,000 women living with HIV deliver infants each year in the United States, and approximately 200 of these infants are born with HIV. Of the mothers and infants, about 70 percent are Black and 15 percent are Hispanic. Work is being done in three main domains to improve care and services for women living with HIV and to eliminate mother-to-child HIV transmission: 1) an expert panel on reproductive health and preconception care is developing tools and strategies to reduce unintended pregnancies, provide quality reproductive health services and improve maternal health prior to pregnancy; 2) a group of more than 50 national stakeholders are working to implement a national framework for EMCT, and 3) a national resource center is providing technical assistance and capacity-building to implement and promote the Fetal and Infant Mortality Review HIV Prevention Methodology.

***Working to Improve HIV Testing Rates:*** The federal government supports a number of efforts to promote HIV testing, including the following:

- **Researching New Strategies to Increase HIV Testing Rates for Black Women:** CDC funded three community-based organizations and one university to compare the effectiveness of three strategies to recruit Black women for HIV testing: targeted outreach, alternate venues and social networks. The proportion of individuals newly



identified as HIV-positive did not differ significantly among the three strategies; however, the social networks strategy recruited women with greater risk behaviors and other characteristics associated with newly identified HIV infection and thus may be effective at reaching some high-risk women before they become infected.

- **Launching a Nationwide Campaign to Increase HIV Testing Among Black Women:** As part of its comprehensive efforts to address the HIV prevention needs of African American women and support the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, CDC launched “Take Charge. Take the Test.” in March 2012. This national social marketing campaign focuses on increasing HIV testing and decreasing HIV infections among Black women ages 18-34 who have unprotected sex with men. Since the campaign’s launch, it has generated the following results (through March 2014): 281,591,445 out-of-home impressions, including billboards and kiosks; 195,252,960 radio impressions; 3,400,043 internet ad impressions; 98,826 attendees at community events; 45,202 campaign materials distributed; and 3,536 HIV tests administered at community events. CDC released new campaign content in June of 2014 in support of National HIV Testing Day, resulting in nearly 700 social media posts on the campaign. 66.1 percent of the total social media posts came from Twitter, resulting in campaign messages potentially reaching 3,805,433 Twitter users.

***Reducing the Number of Confirmed Cases of Mother-to-Child HIV Transmission in Washington, DC to Zero:*** 2.5 percent of the population in Washington, DC is living with HIV,<sup>38</sup> far greater than the World Health Organization’s definition of 1 percent as a generalized epidemic. The greatest burden of HIV is among Black people, with a rate of 3.9 percent – 2.4 percent for Black women – and Hispanic women have a rate of 0.5 percent.<sup>39</sup> In response to this ongoing HIV crisis, D.C. has worked across all levels of government, including with the federal government, and collaborated with community-based organizations, medical providers, and other key stakeholders to expand testing, including among pregnant women. DC has also increased condom distribution, enhanced needle exchange efforts, developed a “treatment on demand” program and prioritized an evidence-based approach to the epidemic. As a result, DC has made significant progress in combatting HIV, especially in the area of mother-to-child transmission: there were no confirmed cases of babies born with HIV in DC in 2012.

### **c. Maternal and Child Health**

***Promoting Pre-Conception Health and Health Care:*** By supporting a national campaign called “Show Your Love,” the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) works to improve the health of women and babies through promoting preconception health and healthcare. The campaign’s main goal is to increase the number of women who plan their pregnancies and engage in healthy behaviors before becoming pregnant. The campaign aims to reach women of all racial and ethnic backgrounds and includes targeted materials to reach women of color in their communities.

**Promoting Prenatal Care:** In the United States, roughly one in three infant deaths is related to preterm birth.<sup>40</sup> The 2010 preterm rate was 17.1 percent for Black infants, 13.6 percent for American Indian and Alaska Native infants, and 11.8 percent for Hispanic infants as compared with 10.8 percent for White infants.<sup>41</sup> The federal government supports a number of initiatives to promote prenatal care that impact women of color, including the following:

- **Strong Start for Mothers and Newborns:** Women enrolled in Medicaid or the Children’s Health Insurance Program are more likely to have higher rates of pregnancy complications, poor birth outcomes and preterm birth than privately insured women. The Strong Start for Mothers and Newborns initiative is a two-part strategy that tests the following: 1) a nationwide public private partnership for reducing the rate of early active deliveries before 39 weeks gestation among all pregnant women; and 2) the effectiveness of specific enhanced prenatal care approaches to reduce preterm births for high-risk women enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP. To understand the impacts of psychosocial interventions on pregnancy and birth outcomes, prenatal care providers implemented three approaches to enhanced prenatal care – maternity care homes, birth centers, and group prenatal care – which expand access and continuity of care, promote care coordination, and augment clinical and psycho-social support services and resources. These programs serve diverse populations – including Black, Puerto Rican and American Indian women – with the highest rates of preterm birth.
- **CHOICES and CHOICES Plus:** Prenatal alcohol exposure is a leading preventable cause of birth defects and developmental disabilities in the United States. Tobacco use also confers serious risks for both mothers and developing infants. CDC supported the development and dissemination of the CHOICES and CHOICES Plus health interventions for preconception women to reduce alcohol- and tobacco-exposed pregnancies. In clinical trials conducted in diverse settings including primary healthcare facilities, jails, substance abuse treatment centers, and ob/gyn clinics, the CHOICES interventions were found to be effective in reducing these risks in more than 60 percent of the women served. The majority of women participating in the CHOICES studies were women of color, including 10 percent Hispanic and 50 percent non-Hispanic Black women in CHOICES and 47 percent Hispanic and 42 percent non-Hispanic Black women in CHOICES Plus. Effective and evidence-based, CHOICES interventions are now used nationwide to reach a diverse population of women.

**Supporting Evidence-Based Home Visiting Programs:** Health Resources and Services Administration, in close collaboration with the Administration for Children and Families at HHS, works with states to improve health and developmental outcomes for children and families who reside in at-risk communities through implementation of voluntary, evidence-based home visiting programs. These programs reach pregnant women, expectant fathers, and parents and caregivers of children under the age of five. A Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program provides grants to tribes, tribal organizations and urban Indian organizations to develop, implement, and evaluate home visiting programs in American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

**Promoting Breastfeeding:** Although breastfeeding rates among Black women are rising, there are still significant disparities between Black women and women of other ethnicities. In response to these disparities, the Office on Women’s Health at HHS created the “It’s Only Natural” communications campaign, which is designed to help new mothers choose to breastfeed and encourage them to seek support. This campaign helps Black women and their families understand the health benefits of breastfeeding — not just for babies, but for mothers too. The campaign’s website includes information on addressing breastfeeding myths, overcoming challenges, and finding support, as well as video testimonials from breastfeeding moms. In addition, the Affordable Care Act requires reasonable break times and a private place for breast pumping for covered employees who are nursing a child for one year after birth.

**Working to Prevent Mother-to-Child Transmission of Hepatitis B:** Hepatitis B disproportionately affects AAPIs: while AAPIs make up less than five percent of the U.S. population, they account for more than 50 percent of Americans living with Hepatitis B. An estimated 25,000 infants are born to Hepatitis B-positive women annually in the United States, and with no intervention, 40 to 90 percent of these infants will acquire Hepatitis B. CDC provides assistance to identify women infected with Hepatitis B, treat their newborns at birth, and provide case management to ensure the infants are vaccinated on time and receive post-vaccination testing to see if they have been protected against infection. The total amount of funding provided to immunization awardees in calendar year 2013 was \$17,823,797. CDC also issued recommendations and provided tools for providers and hospitals to improve screening and reporting practices.

#### **d. Nutrition and Physical Activity**

**Providing Nutrition Assistance for Low-Income Women and Children:** The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides federal grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for more than eight million low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, infants, and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk. WIC improves the health of pregnant women and new mothers and their infants, and due to WIC’s strong breastfeeding promotion programs, the proportion of breastfeeding women participating in WIC now exceeds that of non-breastfeeding postpartum women. Of the women who participate in WIC, 35.6 percent are White, 37.7 percent are Hispanic, 19.9 percent are Black, 4.3 percent are AAPI and 1.7 percent are American Indian/Alaska Native.

**Promoting Physical Activity:** First Lady Michelle Obama’s *Let’s Move!* initiative to address childhood obesity impacts children across the country, including many girls of color. Examples include *Let’s Move!* in Indian Country – which works with tribal governments, businesses and non-profits to improve the health of Native American youth – and a commitment from Goya, the largest Hispanic-owned food company in the United States, to educate consumers and children about healthy eating. In addition, the Up2Us Coach Across America (CAA) program – which is an AmeriCorps program funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service – trains and

supports coaches to work within sports-based youth development organizations in largely urban and low-income neighborhoods across the country. Approximately 42 percent of the youth with whom CAA coaches work are girls of color, and 29 percent of CAA coaches are women of color. By providing a highly trained coach who serves as a positive role model, CAA is able to help these girls and other youth develop life skills and adopt a healthy lifestyle. Evaluation results show that at the end of the program, 92 percent of girls of color reported high competence on a set of life skills – including self-awareness, positive identity, situational awareness, future focus, discipline and social confidence – and 54 percent of girls of color reported increasing their physical activity during program participation.

## e. Research

***Supporting Research on Diseases Affecting Women of Color:*** The federal government supports research on a number of diseases that affect women of color. Examples include the following:

- **Diabetes Prevention Program:** Diabetes is a leading cause of death for women of color. A major research study – the Diabetes Prevention Program at NIH – found that lifestyle changes and a diabetic medication called metformin (Glucophage) both reduced the incidence of persons at risk when compared with a placebo. The study continues as the Diabetes Prevention Program Outcomes Study with long-term data collection and analyses of outcomes.
- **Study on the Relationship of Breast Cancer Subtype, Ancestry and Risk Factors in Hispanic Women:** In fiscal year 2012, the Office of Research on Women’s Health at HHS provided funds for a Supplement to a National Cancer Institute grant on breast cancer. One of the goals of the study is to research risk factors associated with a certain kind of tumor more commonly found in Hispanic women compared with non-Hispanic White women. The study examines the relationships between molecular tumor subtype, individual ancestry and risk factors for breast cancer.

***Working to Ensure that Women and Minorities Are Included as Subjects in Clinical Research:*** NIH has a policy to ensure that women and minorities are included as subjects in clinical research. In fiscal year 2012, women comprised 57 percent of enrollment in NIH-funded clinical trials, and 36.5 percent of participants were from underrepresented groups.

***Publishing the Women of Color Health Data Book, Fourth Edition:*** Announced in July of 2014, the *Women of Color Health Data Book, Fourth Edition*, is the most up-to-date resource informing health care providers and researchers in biomedicine and health policy about the unique health features of women of color. This publication presents data on race and ethnicity and disease with relevant discussions of historical, cultural and demographic factors that affect the health of women of color. It is available at: <http://orwh.od.nih.gov/resources/policyreports/pdf/WoC-Databook-FINAL.pdf>.

***Using Data to Assess Health Outcomes:*** Healthy People 2020 is a long-standing national health promotion and disease prevention initiative that uses data to assess health outcomes. Objectives that focus specifically on women, girls and minority populations are included throughout Healthy People 2020 in topic areas such as Maternal, Infant, and Child Health; Family Planning, Injury and Violence Prevention; Heart Disease and Stroke; and others. Data are updated regularly on the [healthypeople.gov](http://healthypeople.gov) website to reflect the progress being made and to identify where disparities continue to exist.

## **f. Sexual and Reproductive Health**

***Evaluating Efforts to Reduce Risk Behavior Among Female Sex Workers:*** The purpose of this systematic review supported by CDC was to evaluate programs aimed at reducing sexual and drug-related risk behavior among female sex workers. The female sex workers in the interventions included in this review were predominately women of color, including 63 percent Black women and 15 percent Hispanic women. Findings indicate that interventions are needed to address structural and psychosocial factors that affect these individuals, including mental health issues, recovery from victimization and lack of economic resources. Examples of needed interventions include substance abuse treatment and long-term support for sobriety; safe housing; educational opportunities and job training; pregnancy prevention education and pre-conception counseling; and HIV, STD and hepatitis risk reduction education.

***Protecting Alaska Native Individuals from Cancer with the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine:*** Since 2006, CDC has been working with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Southcentral Foundation and the State of Alaska to promote and evaluate HPV vaccine use among Alaska Native people. This effort includes research to inform development of educational materials and promote vaccination, evaluate vaccine response and safety among Alaska Native teenagers, and determine the proportion of genital and other cancers that can be prevented using the HPV vaccine in the Alaska Native population.

***Improving Access to Comprehensive Family Planning Services:*** As part of the Health Care Innovation Awards, the Center for Medicaid & Medicare Innovation is testing efforts that improve the health of populations through prevention, wellness and comprehensive care. One of these efforts, the Washington University School of Medicine Contraceptive Center of Excellence, will provide access to a highly reliable birth control method – long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) – to women at highest risk for unintended pregnancies. Typically, LARC is not readily available to low-income women due to relatively higher costs. The program expects to result in a 10 percent reduction in unintended pregnancy and a 15 percent reduction in costs related to unintended births. The program is expected to serve 10,000 women, of whom an estimated 75 percent are women of color.

***Working to Reduce the Incidence of Congenital Syphilis:*** The rapid ethnographic assessment program at HHS is designed to provide swift insight into health systems issues and recommendations for program action. Between 2009 and 2011, the program conducted

independent rapid ethnographic assessments to better understand factors contributing to persistent high rates of congenital syphilis in Arizona and Louisiana. In Arizona, providers described numerous barriers to health care experienced by Hispanic women immigrants and missed opportunities within the health system to screen pregnant women for syphilis. In Louisiana, providers identified colleagues' inexperience with syphilis cases among Black women, low Medicaid reimbursement, lack of coverage for treatment, and difficulty obtaining benzathine penicillin, which is the recommended treatment for syphilis. These assessments led to recommendations to strengthen existing structures and policies.

### **g. Teen Pregnancy**

***Preventing Teen Pregnancy:*** This Administration supports a number of initiatives to prevent teen pregnancy, including the following:

- **The President's Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative 2010-2015:** The purpose of this program, funded by the Office of Adolescent Health (OAH) at HHS and administered through CDC, is to demonstrate the effectiveness of innovative, multicomponent, communitywide initiatives in reducing rates of teen pregnancy and births in communities with the highest rates, including Black and Hispanic youth ages 15 to 19. Program goals are to reduce the rates of pregnancies and births to youth in the target areas; increase youth access to evidence-based and evidence-informed programs to prevent teen pregnancy; increase linkages between teen pregnancy prevention programs and community-based clinical services; educate stakeholders about relevant evidence-based and evidence-informed strategies to reduce teen pregnancy; and provide data on needs and resources in target communities.
- **Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program:** OAH funds grants to support the replication of evidence-based program models that are medically accurate, age appropriate, and have proven through rigorous evaluation to prevent teen pregnancy and/or associated sexual risk behaviors. In 2010, OAH awarded \$75 million in competitive grants to 75 grantees. Grantees have served more than 110,000 young people each year in 37 states and the District of Columbia. OAH also provides funding to support research and demonstration programs that will develop, replicate, refine and test additional models and innovative strategies for preventing teen pregnancy. In 2010, OAH awarded \$15 million in competitive grants to 18 grantees to implement and rigorously evaluate new programs to prevent teen pregnancy for youth ages 10 to 19, with a particular interest in reaching high-risk, vulnerable and culturally under-represented youth populations. Grantees reach approximately 15,000 youth annually.
- **Personal Responsibility Education Innovative Strategies (PREIS) Grants:** Personal Responsibility Education Innovative Strategies (PREIS) grants support research and demonstration programs that 1) develop, replicate, refine and test new models and innovative strategies for preventing adolescent pregnancy, and 2) target services to

identified populations under the Personal Responsibility Education Program. These populations include high-risk, vulnerable, and culturally underrepresented youth populations, such as youth in foster care, homeless youth, youth with HIV, pregnant women or mothers who are under 21 years of age and their partners, and young people residing in areas with high youth birth rates.

***Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Teens, Women, Fathers and Their Families:*** Through the Affordable Care Act, OAH administers the Pregnancy Assistance Fund, a \$25 million competitive grant program. This program gives grants to states and tribal entities to provide expectant and parenting teens, women, fathers, and their families with a seamless network of supportive services to help them complete high school or postsecondary degrees and gain access to health care, child care, family housing and other critical supports. The funds are also used to improve services for pregnant women who are victims of domestic violence, sexual violence and stalking.

## **h. Workplace Safety**

***Protecting Employees in Nursing and Residential Care Facilities:*** In 2010, nursing and residential care facilities – which employ many women of color – experienced one of the highest rates of lost workdays due to injuries and illnesses of all major American industries.<sup>42</sup> In response, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) launched a new program in 2013 to increase inspections at nursing homes and residential care facilities. OSHA has also joined with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to develop a set of new targeted educational resources for hospital workers and their employers about safe work practices. In addition, in fiscal years 2012 and 2013, OSHA provided over \$600,000 in funds to organizations to provide education and training to nurses, nursing assistants and other health care workers in the identification and prevention of serious job hazards.

***Protecting Employees in Nail Salons:*** The more than 375,000 nail technicians working in salons across the United States – 40 percent of whom are AAPIs – face numerous health hazards every day, including exposure to chemicals from glues, polishes, removers and other salon products; muscle strains from awkward positions or repetitive motions; and risk of infection from contact with client skin, nails and blood. To help protect nail salon employees from these risks, in fiscal year 2012, OSHA launched an outreach and education initiative to the hair and nail salon industries, including publishing new educational resources and websites on the risk of formaldehyde exposure from hair smoothing products and the dangers of muscle strains, infectious diseases and chemicals in nail salons. Its publication, *Stay Healthy and Safe While Giving Manicures and Pedicures: A Guide for Nail Salon Workers*, is available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese and Korean. In addition, in fiscal years 2012 and 2013, OSHA awarded over \$400,000 to organizations to provide health and safety training and education on the identification and prevention of job hazards in the nail salon industry, including chemical and ergonomic hazards. The training was offered in multiple languages.

## 4. Violence Against Women

*Far too many women in America experience domestic violence and sexual assault, and women in some communities of color face particularly high rates of these crimes. An estimated 51.7 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native women, 51.3 percent of multiracial women, 41.2 percent of non-Hispanic Black women, 30.5 percent of non-Hispanic White women, 29.7 percent of Hispanic women and 15.3 percent of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women experience physical violence by an intimate partner during their lifetimes.<sup>43</sup> An estimated 32.3 percent of multiracial women, 27.5 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native women, 21.2 percent of non-Hispanic Black women, 20.5 percent of non-Hispanic White women and 13.6 percent of Hispanic women are raped during their lifetimes.<sup>44</sup> In addition, an estimated 64.1 percent of multiracial women, 55.0 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native women, 46.9 percent of non-Hispanic White women, 38.2 percent of non-Hispanic Black women, 35.6 percent of Hispanic women and 31.9 percent of AAPI women experience sexual violence other than rape during their lifetimes.<sup>45</sup> And a study by the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Bureau of Justice Statistics of 42 federally funded human trafficking task forces found that 94 percent of victims of sex trafficking are female, and roughly three quarters are people of color.<sup>46</sup>*

*Women and girls of color may also face additional barriers to receiving support and justice. Survivors may fear or distrust police, or they may find that service providers do not offer the culturally relevant help they need. Many survivors do not report the crime to authorities or seek help because of social or geographic isolation, racism, social stigma or language barriers.*

*In 2010, President Obama and Vice President Biden announced unprecedented coordination across the federal government to combat violence against women. A first-of-its-kind interagency workgroup was established to bring together federal expertise in justice, social services, women's health, economic advocacy, and other sectors to focus on domestic and sexual violence. As a result, federal agencies have developed a host of new initiatives to reach individuals affected by domestic and sexual violence, including women of color.<sup>47</sup> The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) also directs specific resources to serve marginalized populations and develop culturally specific approaches to domestic violence and sexual assault.*

### a. Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

***Funding Culturally Specific Programs to Address Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Dating Violence and Stalking:*** Under VAWA, DOJ's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) funds grants to provide culturally specific services in communities of color. Through these grants, community-based providers partner with domestic violence and sexual assault programs to develop services that are relevant and driven by community needs. DOJ funds national training and technical assistance efforts through the National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault, the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community, Black Women's Blueprint, Casa de Esperanza, Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence, National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, Monsoon United Asian Women of Iowa, and



Asista Immigrant Assistance among others. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) also funds the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community and the National Latin@ Network to advance effective, culturally specific remedies for domestic violence. Over the past five years, HHS has provided \$43 million in grants to develop these services.

***Working with Historically Black Colleges and Universities to Prevent Sexual Assault:*** Administration initiatives to address sexual violence on campus include the following:

- In 2011 and 2013, OVW funded Black Women’s Blueprint to provide culturally relevant training and technical assistance to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to help reduce violence against women on campus. Among other goals, this project seeks to build a community among HBCU grantees through peer-to-peer sharing of information and resources.
- Black Women’s Blueprint and the National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault are working with OVW to develop a Culturally Specific Bystander Intervention Curriculum for HBCU campuses as part of a Comprehensive Primary Prevention Model. The goal of this effort is to empower students, faculty, staff and administrators to prevent violence against women at HCBUs. To date, this project has received over \$800,000 in funding.
- In 2014, President Obama created the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault to address the high rates of sexual assault experienced by college students. Students and representatives of HBCUs participated in listening sessions at the White House with federal agencies and played a key role in making recommendations to the Task Force. HBCU alumni associations also contributed to the process. On April 29, 2014, the Task Force issued its first report addressing steps schools should take to collect better data, develop comprehensive sexual misconduct policies, respond more effectively when a student is assaulted, and prevent sexual assault from happening in the first place. The Task Force will continue its work with HBCUs and other schools to implement these recommendations.

***Preventing and Addressing Violence Against Women in Indian Country:*** The Administration has taken unprecedented steps that are helping to combat the high rates of violence experienced by Native American women. Efforts to address domestic violence and sexual assault in Indian Country include the following:

- **Enforcement Efforts:** In 2013, President Obama signed the reauthorization of VAWA, which included a landmark provision recognizing tribes’ inherent right to prosecute people who commit domestic violence in Indian Country, regardless of the perpetrator’s status as Indian or non-Indian. Three tribes – the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation of Oregon, the Pascua Yaqui Tribe of Arizona, and the Tulalip Tribe of Washington – have begun exercising special domestic violence criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians as part of a pilot project announced earlier this year. The tribal provisions in

VAWA build upon the foundation of the Tribal Law and Order Act, passed in 2010, which strengthens tribal law enforcement and the ability to prosecute and fight crime more effectively. Together, these key pieces of legislation are building a better criminal justice system, bolstering tribal control and authority, and ultimately saving the lives of Native American women.

- **Grants to Tribal Governments and Tribal Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalitions:** Under VAWA, OVW funds grants to tribal governments to help tribes respond to violent crimes against Indian women, enhance victim safety and develop education and prevention strategies. Since 2009, OVW has distributed more than \$217 million to help tribal communities reduce violent crimes against Indian women, improve services and help keep victims safe. Under VAWA, OVW also supports tribal domestic violence and sexual assault coalitions to provide education, support and technical assistance to member Indian service providers and tribes. Since 2009, OVW has provided over \$18 million in grants to enhance the capacity of tribal organizations and Indian service providers to develop culturally appropriate responses to end violence against Indian women.
- **Federal Advisory Task Force on Violence Against Indian Women:** The 2005 reauthorization of VAWA created an Attorney General-appointed Federal Advisory Task Force on Violence Against Indian Women. Task Force members include representatives from tribal governments, national tribal domestic and sexual violence nonprofit organizations and other national tribal organizations. The Task Force, first convened in 2008 and managed by OVW, is charged with assisting in the development and implementation of the National Institute of Justice national baseline study to examine violence against women in Indian country. The study is required to examine domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking and murder committed against Indian women and evaluate the effectiveness of federal, state, tribal and local responses.
- **American Indian/Alaska Native Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner-Sexual Assault Response Team (SANE-SART) Initiative:** The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) at DOJ is partnering with the FBI's Office of Victim Assistance and the Indian Health Service to enhance the response to tribal victims of sexual violence. The SANE-SART Initiative addresses the comprehensive needs of these victims. From the outset of the project in 2010, OVC and its federal and tribal partners have focused on building the capacity of tribal communities to provide coordinated, community-based, victim-centered responses to sexual violence. The five-year project encompasses three demonstration sites and involves coordinators at the Indian Health Service and the FBI, training and technical assistance, and support from the Attorney General's federal advisory committee and multidisciplinary groups – all committed to institutionalizing sustainable, culturally relevant, evidence-based practices to meet the needs of tribal victims of sexual assault.

***Using Technology to Serve Spanish-Speaking Victims of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault:*** OVC made two awards through its “Vision 21: Using Technology to Expand National and International Access to Victim Services” initiative, supporting the use of technology to provide services to Spanish-speaking victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. One awardee, the National Network to End Domestic Violence’s “Apoyo Tecnológico” (“Technology Help & Support”) Project, will expand access to victim services for Spanish-speaking victims by providing direct assistance through an e-mail hotline, increasing Spanish language resources on WomensLaw.org, and conducting outreach to Spanish-speaking victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking and their families, communities and advocates. The other awardee, the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), is expanding culturally appropriate crisis assistance and referral services in Spanish through the National Sexual Assault Online Hotline; developing a database of culturally and linguistically appropriate referrals for in-person long-term support; and utilizing HelpRoom, an online peer support platform for ongoing services.

***Working to Discover Best Practices and Expand Services for Sexual Assault Survivors:*** Victims of sexual assault have contact with a range of professionals, including law enforcement officials, prosecutors, court personnel, health and mental health professionals and others. Victims’ experiences with representatives from these fields can have a profound effect on their recovery and their willingness to engage with the legal, healthcare and social service systems. In 2011, OVW launched the Sexual Assault Demonstration Initiative to explore the challenges in reaching sexual assault survivors and to assess what tools, service models, and agency structures are best equipped to reach more sexual assault survivors with comprehensive quality care. This \$2.7 million initiative funded six sites including the Gila River Indian Community and the New York Asian Women’s Center. In addition, over the past five years, the Administration has successfully called on Congress to double funding for VAWA’s Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP), the first funding stream to focus specifically on rape and sexual assault. SASP provides funding for a wide array of services, such as crisis intervention, counseling, rape crisis centers, medical and social services, 24-hour sexual assault hotlines and medical and legal advocacy. SASP also includes funding for organizations serving culturally specific communities.

***Addressing the Intersection of Violence and HIV/AIDS:*** More than three-quarters of new HIV infections in women in the U.S. are among women of color,<sup>48</sup> and 55 percent of women living with HIV have experienced intimate partner violence.<sup>49</sup> In 2012, President Obama issued a Presidential Memorandum creating an Interagency Federal Working Group (Working Group) on HIV/AIDS, Violence Against Women and Girls, and Gender-related Health Disparities. Last year, the Working Group developed a 56-point action plan bringing federal agencies together to improve screening for HIV among women who have experienced violence; improve outcomes for women living with HIV; understand factors contributing to increased exposure to violence among this population; expand education and prevention efforts; and address research gaps about the intersection between HIV/AIDS, violence, and trauma in order to develop and scale up effective interventions. The action plan includes specific steps to improve outreach, testing, and health outcomes for Black and Hispanic women and girls facing high rates of both violence and HIV/AIDS. Examples of action steps include:

- OVW and the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS program announced a new \$1.49 million initiative that will award funds to support transitional housing for women living with HIV who are experiencing sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence or stalking.
- Health Resources and Services Administration has collaborated with Administration for Children and Families to disseminate HIV and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) screening and counseling tools to Ryan White programs, Federally Qualified Health Centers, rural health programs, maternal and child health programs and National Health Service Corps providers.
- The Office of Population Affairs has trained staff from Title X-funded family planning clinics about the intersection of HIV/AIDS, IPV, and family planning, and the importance of screening for both HIV and IPV. This program increased the numbers of individuals who receive both HIV and IPV screening, counseling, and appropriate follow-up care in Title X family planning clinics.

***Supporting Programs to Prevent Domestic Violence-Related Homicides:*** The rate of intimate partner homicide has dropped significantly since the passage of VAWA, but an average of three women a day are still killed by their intimate partners.<sup>50</sup> Based on the 75% of female homicides in which the relationship of the victim to the offender is known, the rate of Black women killed by intimate partners is estimated to be nearly twice that of White women.<sup>51</sup> In March of 2013, Vice President Biden and Attorney General Holder launched the Domestic Violence Homicide Prevention Demonstration Initiative in twelve communities to explore using evidence-based tools to identify risk factors and intervene early to connect victims with services. In September of 2014, the Attorney General announced phase II of this project to evaluate the effectiveness of two promising domestic violence homicide prevention models – the Domestic Violence Lethality Assessment Program and the Domestic Violence High Risk Team model. The sites participating in phase II are required to adapt tools and develop interventions that are culturally relevant and appropriate for their communities and to participate in the evaluation overseen by the National Institute of Justice. DOJ is also working with the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community, Casa de Esperanza, the Asian Pacific Institute on Gender Based Violence and other experts to support the effective implementation of these tools with culturally specific populations.

***Working to Reduce Teen Dating Violence and Sexual Assault:*** In a recent survey of high school students, 11.5 percent of Black girls, 12.2 percent of Hispanic girls and 9.1 percent of White girls reported being physically forced to have sexual intercourse.<sup>52</sup> Since 2010, DOJ has made 118 grants totaling more than \$45 million to support prevention efforts and victim services for youth who have experienced or witnessed dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. These grant funds also support training for professionals and encourage communities to engage men as leaders and role models to prevent domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is

currently piloting a teen dating violence prevention program focused on high poverty, high crime areas in Baltimore, Chicago, Ft. Lauderdale and Oakland.

***Combatting Sexual Assault and Harassment in Schools:*** In April 2011, the Department of Education's (ED) Office for Civil Rights (OCR) issued groundbreaking guidance to educational institutions that receive federal funds on their obligations to respond to sexual violence under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX). Although OCR had previously addressed sexual violence at institutions through individual investigations and resolution agreements, this was the first time ED issued guidance identifying sexual violence as a civil rights issue. In 2013, ED sent a key policy letter from Secretary Duncan to guide Chief State School Officers in their efforts to create safer communities by raising public awareness of gender-based violence, educating communities about how violence affects women and youths, and encouraging new efforts to prevent and respond to violence. In 2014, OCR issued a questions and answers document in response to requests from schools and students for further guidance and clarity on their obligations under Title IX to address sexual violence as a form of sexual harassment. These documents build upon ED's 2001 guidance about sexual harassment of students by school employees, other students, and non-employee third parties, and ED's 2010 guidance on the steps schools must take to prevent and remedy bullying and harassment on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin and disability. ED and DOJ are also engaging in enforcement actions to ensure that schools are complying with their civil rights obligations to address and respond to sexual assault and harassment.

***Expanding Services for Victims of Domestic Violence and Their Children:*** In December 2010, President Obama signed the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, which provides funding for nearly 1,700 shelters and service programs for victims of domestic violence and their children. It also supports the National Domestic Violence Hotline, whose staff answers more than 23,000 calls each month, linking victims with the resources they need to rebuild their lives.

***Assisting Victims of Domestic Violence in the Immigration System:*** VAWA includes protections for immigrant victims of crime, including victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and trafficking. The Obama Administration fought to maintain these provisions in VAWA reauthorization and has taken a number of important steps to further assist victims of domestic and sexual violence with respect to immigration and citizenship issues. Examples include the following:

- **Providing Assistance to Victims:** The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Victim Assistance Program has 26 full-time Victim Assistance Specialists in its offices across the United States, as well as more than 250 collateral-duty Victim Assistance Coordinators. The ICE Victim Assistance Program connects victims to community-based groups to provide medical, mental health and legal assistance, case management and other services. In recognition of the unique challenges of interviewing trafficked minors and other child and special-needs victims, ICE's Forensic Interviewing Program currently employs four full-time Forensic Interview Specialists. These specialists are available to

conduct developmentally appropriate, legally defensible, culturally sensitive forensic interviews for all ICE investigations, domestically and internationally.

- **Ensuring Enforcement Efforts Do Not Discourage Victims, Witnesses and Plaintiffs From Pursuing Justice:** In June of 2011, ICE released a policy memo instructing ICE officers, special agents, and attorneys to exercise all appropriate prosecutorial discretion to minimize any effect that immigration enforcement may have on the willingness and ability of victims, witnesses, and plaintiffs to call police and pursue justice.

***Preventing, Detecting and Responding to Sexual Abuse and Assault in Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Holding Facilities:*** DHS is committed to protecting the safety and security of all individuals in its custody. Building upon substantial safeguards already in place, DHS has published regulations and implemented measures to prevent, detect and respond to sexual abuse and assault in DHS confinement facilities.

## **b. Human Trafficking**

***Providing Services to Trafficking Survivors:*** In March of 2012, President Obama directed his Cabinet to redouble the Administration's efforts to combat human trafficking, which afflicts far too many communities, both here at home and around the world. In response, the Administration has been working across the federal government and with partners in Congress; local, state and foreign governments; and civil society to deliver on an ambitious counter-trafficking agenda. As part of these efforts, in January of 2014, the Administration released the first-ever Government-wide strategic action plan to strengthen services for trafficking victims – a plan that is comprehensive, action-oriented and designed to address the needs of all victims. The plan will improve coordination across federal agencies, expand and support evidence-based victim services, and promote culturally-appropriate, trauma-informed services to ensure that all victims of human trafficking in the United States are identified and have access to services they need to recover and rebuild their lives. Efforts to provide services to trafficking survivors include the following:

- **Grants to Organizations:** DOJ gives grants to organizations that provide an array of services to trafficking victims, including intensive case management, medical care, dental care, mental health services, sustenance and shelter, translation and interpretation services, legal and immigration assistance, transportation and other services. In fiscal year 2013, \$4,711,493 worth of grants were allocated through this program.
- **Enhanced Health Care System Responses:** Recognizing that trafficking victims often move through the healthcare system while seeking treatment for injuries or medical conditions resulting from trafficking, HHS launched a national initiative to strengthen screening, increase training, and develop service protocols for healthcare workers to better identify trafficking victims and provide assistance.

- **U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Trainings:** USCIS conducts numerous in-person and web-based trainings and presentations in cities and regions across the United States on combating human trafficking and on immigration relief options for victims, which allow them to access needed services; obtain legal employment; and assist with any federal, state, local, tribal and territorial law enforcement investigation and prosecution. Participants include federal, state, and local law enforcement, NGOs, immigration advocates, attorneys, judges and others.
- **Enhanced Collaborative Model to Combat Human Trafficking:** DOJ gives grants to support anti-trafficking task forces through which local law enforcement agencies coordinate with victim services providers and U.S. Attorney's Offices to address all forms of human trafficking. In fiscal year 2013, \$6,499,931 worth of grants were allocated through this program.

***Prosecuting Human Trafficking:*** In 2011, the Administration formed the Anti-Trafficking Coordination Team (ACTeam) Initiative – an interagency collaboration among DOJ, DHS and the Department of Labor (DOL) – to streamline federal criminal investigations and prosecutions of human trafficking offenses. In addition, over the past four years, DOJ has increased the number of human trafficking prosecutions by more than 38 percent in forced labor and adult sex trafficking cases, while also increasing the number of convictions in child sex trafficking cases by 30 percent.

***Raising Awareness About Human Trafficking:*** The federal government has supported efforts to raise awareness about human trafficking, including:

- **Human Trafficking in America's Schools:** To help schools address human trafficking, the Department of Education's (ED) Office of Safe and Healthy Students (OSHS) plans to supplement its existing factsheets by publishing a guide, *Human Trafficking in America's Schools*. The guide was developed to help school officials understand how human trafficking impacts schools; recognize the indicators of possible child trafficking; and develop policies, protocols, and partnerships to address and prevent the exploitation of children. This document builds upon related resources developed by OSHS to address and prevent sexual assault and violence, including a teen dating violence factsheet for schools and Secretary Duncan's letter to Chief State School Officers on teen dating and gender-based violence.
- **The DHS Blue Campaign:** This comprehensive campaign has developed, and continues to refine, its outreach materials targeted to a wide range of audiences, including materials specifically addressing the trafficking of women and girls of color. These materials raise awareness about human trafficking and educate communities about indicators of human trafficking and resources available to support investigations and protect victims.
- **Transportation Leaders Against Human Trafficking (TLAHT):** The Department of Transportation (DOT) has led the development of TLAH, which now includes more than

90 transportation organizations working to put an end to human trafficking in the United States and around the world. In addition, in 2013, all DOT employees participated in a training to learn the signs of potential trafficking. DOT has also worked closely with DHS to launch the Blue Lightning initiative with Amtrak, Delta, JetBlue and others.

***Strengthening Protections Against Human Trafficking in Federal Contracting:*** To strengthen the U.S. Government's existing zero-tolerance policy on human trafficking in government contracting, in September of 2012, President Obama issued Executive Order 13627, which outlines prohibitions on trafficking-related activities for federal contractors and subcontractors, requires compliance measures for large overseas contracts and subcontracts, and provides federal agencies with additional tools to foster compliance. The White House Office of Management and Budget and the Departments of State and Labor are supporting a project to identify areas of greatest risk of trafficking both in global supply chains and for U.S. federal contracts; develop tools to help government contractors and agencies understand and analyze the potential risk of trafficking in corporate supply chains; and help agencies implement controls and training to improve monitoring and compliance to prevent trafficking.

***Using Big Data to Combat Human Trafficking:*** Recently, advanced web tools developed by DARPA's (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) Memex program have helped federal law enforcement make substantial progress in identifying human trafficking networks in the United States. These tools comb the "surface web" we all know, as well as "deep web" pages that are also public but not indexed by commonly used search engines. By allowing searches across a wide range of websites, the tools uncover a wealth of information that might otherwise be difficult or time-intensive to obtain. Possible trafficking rings can be identified and cross-referenced with existing law enforcement databases, helping police officers map connections between sex trafficking and other illegal activity. Already, the tools have helped detect trafficking networks originating in Asia and spreading to several U.S. cities.



## 5. Criminal and Juvenile Justice

*Women and girls of color are still overrepresented in the criminal justice system. While incarceration rates for Black women have fallen by nearly 44 percent since 2010, rates for Hispanic women have risen slightly.<sup>53</sup> And while White women comprise 49 percent of the prison population, and Black and Hispanic women comprise only 22 percent and 17 percent respectively, the incarceration rate for Black women is twice as high, and for Hispanic women is nearly one and a half times as high, as the rate for White women.<sup>54</sup> Other women of color, including Native American women and women of more than one race, are nearly twice as likely to be imprisoned as White women.<sup>55</sup>*

*In recent years, girls have become more likely than ever before to be involved in the juvenile justice system, and while residential placement rates for girls of color are 86 percent lower than for boys of color, black girls are three times more likely, Hispanic girls are 20 percent more likely, and Native American girls are nearly five times more likely to be held in residential placement than White girls.<sup>56</sup> Girls most often enter the system as a result of repeat status offenses – acts that are only illegal when committed by minors, such as truancy, underage drinking, or curfew violations – or violations of probation conditions associated with status offenses.*

*Women and girls in the justice system are likely to have experienced homelessness; family instability; school failure; and sexual, physical and emotional violence. A recent study also found that women in jails have high rates of mental health conditions, with a majority of participants meeting the diagnostic criteria for serious mental illness, lifetime post-traumatic stress disorder, and/or substance use disorder. The study also found that trauma and mental illness were associated with the onset of criminal behavior.<sup>57</sup>*

***Improving the Juvenile Justice System’s Response to Girls:*** Supporting the needs of girls in the juvenile justice system means recognizing girls’ unique pathways into the system, addressing their specific needs through gendered approaches, and holding systems charged with their care accountable. Examples of Administration efforts include the following:

- **Girls in the Juvenile Justice System Program:** This program, run by the Department of Justice’s (DOJ) Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention (OJJDP), funds community-based prevention and diversion programs that propose to use evidence-based strategies targeting the special needs of status-offending girls at risk of becoming involved – or currently involved – in the juvenile justice system. One such initiative is the National Girls Institute (NGI), which works with girls’ alliances and coalitions, states, and national experts to actively address the needs of girls who encounter the juvenile justice system. Through NGI, OJJDP has hosted educational roundtables across professions to build a strong intergenerational network of advocates and practitioners committed to working on behalf of girls. NGI is also developing a toolkit for state, tribal, and local organizations wishing to develop a comprehensive program for at-risk and system-involved girls. The toolkit will include gender-responsive assessment tools, staff training curricula, talking points for raising public awareness, factsheets for professional and

stakeholder groups and other resources. NGI received \$776,000 in funding in fiscal year 2014.

- **Grants to Prevent Victimization and Delinquency Among Native American Girls:** OJJDP provides grants to programs that help prevent victimization and delinquency among Native American girls. These programs provide Native American girls with culturally appropriate skills needed to resist substance abuse, prevent teen pregnancy, combat sexual abuse, foster positive relationships with peers and adults and learn self-advocacy. For example, the Osage Nation Prevention Program Intervention for Tribal Youth (ON Program) is designed to increase understanding about the needs of Osage girls through assessments and community focus groups; increase peer mentoring through recruitment and training of adult female mentors to work with girls ages 12 to 17; and increase by 25 percent mother-daughter participation in activities promoting healthy relationships.
- **Support for the PACE Center for Girls:** The Social Innovation Fund – a White House initiative and program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) – supports the PACE Center for Girls, a gender-responsive prevention, early intervention and education program in non-residential centers in 17 Florida counties through the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. PACE focuses on middle and high school girls involved in, or at risk of becoming involved in, the juvenile justice system. Comprehensive case management, counseling and therapeutic treatment, a life skills management curriculum, and a full course of core academic subjects help troubled young women gain the knowledge and skills to stay out of the juvenile justice system and lead successful lives. Funds from CNCS and the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation are currently supporting a randomized controlled trial to test the impact of PACE.

***Combatting Gang Culture:*** In gangs, sexual violence is often used as a weapon to victimize young women, and young women and girls of color are among the populations at highest risk. Established at the direction of President Obama in 2010, the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention is a network of communities and federal agencies that work together to share information and build local capacity to prevent and reduce youth violence. The Forum, along with the Department of Education’s (ED) Office of Safe and Healthy Students, works with ten cities to identify trends and patterns that could prevent violence and other risky behaviors and to support the cities’ efforts to improve school safety and climate. Participating localities include Boston, Camden, Chicago, Detroit, Memphis, Minneapolis, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Salinas and San Jose. In addition, DOJ awarded a grant to the National Council on Crime & Delinquency to examine the individual, family, and community factors that keep girls from becoming involved in gangs and gang-related crime. This study will help close the knowledge gap on girls’ involvement in gangs and will inform evidence-based intervention strategies that are gender-specific and based on girls’ motivations for gang involvement.

**Revising Charging Policies for Low-Level, Non-Violent Drug Offenders:** 53 percent of women in federal prison have been convicted of drug crimes as their primary offense, including 38 percent of Black women, 42 percent of Native American women and 42 percent of Asian American and Pacific Islander women. In August of 2013, Attorney General Holder announced DOJ's new Smart on Crime Initiative, which includes a series of changes to strengthen the federal criminal justice system; address problems and inefficiencies within that system; and make the system smarter, fairer, and more effective for everyone in this country. Among those changes was the Attorney General's decision to modify federal charging policies to provide that certain low-level, nonviolent drug offenders without ties to large-scale organizations, gangs, or cartels will no longer be charged with offenses that impose mandatory minimum sentences.

**Supporting Incarcerated Mothers:** Within the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), women of color<sup>58</sup> comprise 29.5 percent of the total population of female inmates, and women of Hispanic ethnicity (who are included within multiple racial categories) constitute 31 percent of all female inmates.<sup>59</sup> Approximately 56 percent of all federal female inmates are mothers.<sup>60</sup> Efforts to support incarcerated mothers include the following:

- **Universal Children's Day:** In December of 2013, the BOP held its first ever Universal Children's Day, and nearly 8,500 children visited more than 4,000 federal inmates. This event is now an annual event at all BOP facilities and provides an opportunity for parents to strengthen their parenting skills and foster positive parent-child interactions.
- **Mothers and Infants Nursing Together (MINT):** The BOP offers a community residential program called Mothers and Infants Nurturing Together (MINT) for women who are pregnant at the time of commitment. The MINT program is based in residential reentry centers and promotes bonding and enhanced parenting skills for low-risk female inmates by providing these mothers with at least three months to bond with their newborn child before returning to an institution to complete their sentences. Women who participate in this program participate in pre- and post-natal classes on such topics as childbirth, parenting, and coping skills. In addition to services specifically related to parenting, MINT sites also offer chemical dependency treatment, physical and sexual abuse counseling, budgeting classes, and vocational and educational programs.
- **Video-Visiting with Children:** BOP has partnered with Hope House, a non-profit organization in Washington, DC, to offer mothers incarcerated within the Secure Federal Facility in Hazelton, West Virginia, an opportunity to meet with their children bi-weekly through a video feed directly to the prison. In addition, in early 2015, the BOP will launch a pilot program to test video-visiting; the pilot will begin with a women's institution and, if successful, will be extended to all BOP institutions nationwide.

**Protecting the Civil Rights of Incarcerated Individuals:** DOJ's Civil Rights Division enforces laws regarding the civil rights of people who are incarcerated, protecting prisoners from abuse by staff and by other prisoners, ensuring that prisoners have access to adequate medical and mental health care, and providing for environmental health and safety. If a pattern or practice of

unlawful conditions deprives individuals confined in facilities of their constitutional or federal statutory rights, the Division can take action pursuant to the Civil Rights for Institutionalized Persons Act (CRIPA). In addition, the Division can address the conditions of confinement for juveniles pursuant to the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. § 14141). At the end of fiscal year 2013, the Division had active CRIPA and 14141 matters and cases in 93 facilities in 25 states, district and territories. These matters involved investigations to address patterns or practices of failing to protect women prisoners from sexual assault; issues with access to medical, mental health and educational services; and the abuse of solitary confinement in prisons, including those housing women and girls.

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