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*Robert Listenbee:* The afternoon session is now called back into order. Our first panel for the afternoon will focus on the issue of systems responses to rural and tribal violence. Systems responses to rural and tribal violence are complicated by many factors. These include jurisdictional issues involving native land, negotiations among tribal, state, and federal court, systems for both criminal and family issues (the Indian Child Welfare Act for example), distrust of federal and state services, and notable instances of systems failure such as the placement of American Indian, Alaskan native children in foster care outside their tribe.

Panelist will explore the challenges of services provisioned in rural and tribal communities with an emphasis on strategies to address them. Our first panelist will be Mato Standing High, Attorney General of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. Before becoming the Attorney General for the Rosebud Sioux Tribe in 2007, Mr. Standing High worked as in house counsel for the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, taught at Black Hill State University in Spearfish, South Dakota, and worked in private practice in Denver, Colorado.

He's currently a member of the South Dakota and Colorado State Bars and is admitted to practice in the Federal District for Colorado as well as Sicangu Oyate Bar Association for the Rosebud Sioux Tribal Courts.

Our second panelist will be Janell Rigimbal, Senior Vice President of Children and Family Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota. Ms. Rigimbal, a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor with Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota, has administered a variety of community based services for at risk youth and their families for the past 24 years.

She had designed, implemented, and maintained a variety of services including tracking, a supervision and mentoring program, attendant care (an alternative to jailing for juveniles), offender accountability conferences, a means of restorative justice, and Home Builders (an intensive in home family therapy model).

Our third panelist will be Ms. Annie Pelletier Kerrick, Idaho Teen Dating Violence, Awareness, and Prevention Project. Ms. Kerrick is an attorney at the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence. During her four years at the Coalition she has served as a Program Manager for the Idaho Legal Assistance for Victims

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*Mato Standing High, Robert Listenbee*

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*Mato Standing High:* Growing up in South Dakota in a different era it was terms the Mississippi of the north. We have the towns, which we call border towns, which are either within Indian country boundaries or right on the line. And it seems like the racism comes most prominently from those communities where we've been neighbors.

And what seems like the non-Indian lifespan you hear a lot of people say, "Well my family's been here for 150 years." It's like, *[Laughter]*, "Really? Well my family's been here for about 30,000." The experience there; it takes more of a personal experience. And again, I use my background as a way to get past all of that. You see people for who they are, not the color of their skin, not what their father did, not what their grandfather did, not what their relatives did.

But when you're able to experience life on those personal levels, I think that's the only way we're going to make progress because history has not been anything we can look to with favor. So it's going to take a little bit more advanced thinking, moving beyond the hurt and the pain that we've felt as Indian people, and trying to work together. I don't think it's going to be easy but I have hope that we can deliver on that.

*Robert Listenbee:* All right, thank you. At this time I'd like to just acknowledge the panel that we've had and the wonderful contribution they've made to our discussion.

*[Applause]*

At this point in time we're going to take a 10 minute break and we'll reconvene at 2:15 PM if we can. For the panelists, you may want to stick around. A lot of still have a lot of questions for you.

*[End of Audio]*

*Ann Pelletier Kerrick:* Response systems should focus on providing victim services and promoting healthy relationships as a way to end dating abuse, sexual assault and other abusive behaviors. A focus on prevention removes barriers and is critical to ending violence in our communities.

A comprehensive and effective primary prevention program should include: first, engaging and educating adolescents in schools and out of schools on relationship knowledge and skills, including the Fourth R curriculum that Janell mentioned. That should include knowledge on the importance of healthy teen relationships and warning signs of abusive or unhealthy relationships and it should include targeted or specialized curriculums for programs serving vulnerable youth or at risk youth.

Second, engaging and educating parents and care givers, teachers, coaches, and other influential adults on supporting healthy teen relationships and appropriately responding to abusive behaviors. Third, developing and implementing communication and marketing efforts that are youth led and developed, that are based in positive social norms, and that move at the pace of teens and technology. So they've got to keep changing with the times right?

And finally, designing and implementing school based policies that promote healthy teen relationships and that include procedures for the response, intervention, and treatment of adolescent dating abuse and sexual assault. And remember that middle school matters. Estes said this this morning, but it does matter. It's a critical time in life.

It's a time when young people are gaining their independence. They're beginning these relationships that will form what their relationships look like in the future. Middle school is an absolutely critical time to engage parents, teens, care givers, and other adults to support the development of healthy relationships.

In conclusion, adolescent dating, abuse, and sexual assault are prevalent. It's linked to other risk behaviors. It has long term detrimental effects both on victims and communities. Response systems, especially those in rural communities, are not meeting the needs of victims of adolescent dating abuse and sexual assault. Many barriers can be overcome through a more concerted effort to collaborate on a local and regional level to provide response services that are both accessible to youth and youth oriented.

Finally, all communities should be focusing on prevention, both as a way to respond and to end the crisis of adolescent dating abuse and sexual assault among our youth. Thank you.

*Robert Listenbee:* Thank you very much Ms. Pelletier Kerrick. At this time we'll have questions from the Task Force. Who would like to start? Dr. Cooper?

*Sharon Cooper:* Thank you all three for your observations and information. I'd like to ask this question really briefly to all of you. Do you feel that there is a role for technology in being able to bring services to rural communities? Technology: specifically in the areas of telemedicine and e-therapy to provide services for victims and/or survivors in your communities.

*Janell Rigimbal:* I'd be happy to answer that Dr. Cooper. I think there definitely is a role for that, just the reality of serving the rural people and knowing that technological resources are more and more available in rural communities. However I know there are stumbling blocks. We just had an instance in our own agency where our intensive in home family therapists who served the rural areas and spend an awful lot of road time had asked permission to be able to, upon occasion when the weather was bad in snow storms and those kinds of things where travel wasn't advised, to be able to consider using Skype as a method of interacting with their clients when that was available.

That was one of those hindrances of being told that that would not be billable because we weren't face to face in a client's home. Medical Services deemed that that was not appropriate. Yet, I know that telemedicine happens every day. But sometimes these roadblocks are put in for funding. So then we get into that situation of: would it be better to have contact with that family that day, even if it was using those means? I would say yes.

It's a hindrance when funding mechanisms don't recognize that and get in our way. We will certainly, in those instances, continue to talk with families and do what we can but it's a shame that we can't recoup our costs when those situations occur.

*Mato Standing High:* Thank you Dr. Cooper. I may be a little bit off the subject of what you directly asked but I see technology being extremely important to Native (here I go referring to us as Natives after I just said I wouldn't) to Indian people and Indian nations in terms of

addressing violence, for example, in our communities. We hear it way too often that kids would rather not go to school because they're going to be bullied.

Or they would rather be in our Juvenile Detention Center than be at home because of violence. In regards to the first point I mentioned, I believe we could use things like technology to assist those kids. Now I wouldn't want to create an environment where we lose personal contact because I think that's extremely important. But, for example, the child that wakes up in the morning and says, "I don't want to go to school today because I don't want to get beat up again."

Okay, he's the one that we're going to find in our truancy courts, maybe not because he is out doing things he shouldn't be but because he's afraid to go to school. Why not equip that child's home with some technology to allow him to still interact with his classmates, with his teacher? His teacher can see him on the other side. He's not truant, but he might be at home.

So I think technology is something that could really assist us. And again, not creating an environment where we lose that extremely important personal touch, but to give those who don't have the opportunity or are afraid to take that opportunity, to give them the same access that we all have. And that gets back to the point of a level playing field. I believe technology is extremely important and the way I see it (again looking at it in terms of historical factors that affect Indian people and where we're at today) this is the time that Indian people need to be in the loop of technology.

We're going to be left out of this educational, technological enterprise just like we were left out of education the way it was presented to the major population historically. So I think now not only would it be extremely effective, but I think it's extremely important that Indians are brought aboard on this ship of technology. Thank you.

*Ann Pelletier Kerrick:* And while I can't to telemedicine I definitely can speak to something we're doing in Idaho that involves technology to reach rural youth. We have recently, out of my office, opened the Idaho Teen Dating Violence and Sexual Assault Legal Help Line. It provides civil legal services to youth throughout the state for youth aged 13-22 who have experienced dating violence or sexual assault.

I'm actually the attorney running that project. While we can't make court appearances we can help youth through issues like navigating with their school system what needs to be done to keep them safe. I can advise them on their rights regarding Civil Protection Orders and walk them through that process. And I can help in a multitude of other issues including discussing mandatory reporting laws in protecting confidentiality, services that would not be available in rural communities if we didn't use technologies available to us.

So I do agree that they're very, very important.

*Robert Listenbee:* Could you elaborate on the kind of technology you're actually using for that service.

*Ann Pelletier Kerrick:* It's very basic. We're just using a cellular telephone. And the reason I'm using cellular is so teens can text me.

*Robert Listenbee:* Do you provide them with the phones?

*Ann Pelletier Kerrick:* It's a – We provide a toll-free phone number. We haven't had the problem of people not being able to access a phone line, especially if they're attending schools. Counselors can call in for them or given that it's toll-free it's a little easier; although, I could see a potential barrier that a child may not have a safe phone line in their household.

*Robert Listenbee:* Other questions?

*Antonio Taguba:* Thanks all for coming here this afternoon. One of the common themes that we typically hear during these hearings and testimonies is the lack of resources or limited, scarce, or far removed. I remember sitting in this type of forum about a year ago. We had a briefing from the Department of Health and Human Services who indicated (and I still have the slides) that they had a \$7 Billion program on rural health with about 1,100 community based clinics and the like.

I was wondering if you have access to that in terms of medical counseling or even if that particular program is open for access to your concerns in the remote and isolated locations like tribal areas and the like? Because \$7 Billion, 1,100 clinics out there in the hinterlands would – The capability that may bring in terms of technology that may be misfocused or misdirected you might say coming from the federal government.

I think there's a great amount of capability that could be redirected given the proximity of your locations and your needs. Do you know anything about that or can you comment on that?

*Janell Rigimbal:*

I know that one of the articles I submitted with my written testimony, the Domestic Violence Intervention Network Partnership for Peace – I don't know if you've had a chance to look at that yet – does involve one of our community partners in our Safer Tomorrows project, the Community Violence Intervention Center.

Since I don't represent them directly I'm not sure exactly what the funding stream is that they've used to hook up with one of our rural medical providers and to make sure that, for example, through that clinic that folks have access to victims' advocates and others when there's domestic violence. And I think it may be a part of that initiative but I'm not certain.

In those cases I think it's very vital to be able to link up. I think that's one of the things that's been a common theme today and have probably heard in your Baltimore hearing as well: getting out of those silos. Health and Human Services and faith providers really takes an approach where we're all working together and the "no wrong door" kind of approach where if a victim comes in to a Health Care provider or their personal physician that that person knows enough to respond adequately.

Or if they're at the Public Health Department that happens, or if they come into a private, non-profit human service agency like my own, that we're aware enough of what each other is doing so that we can get individuals the help that they need.

*Antonio Taguba:*

I do just want to add this because I do recall that briefing as having the capability to provide medical services. They're staffed and I will share the information that I have with our staff members here because if there's a \$7 Billion project or initiative in Health and Human Services (you might say) that is national and also services are specific islands or territories and also the Caribbean, perhaps we can examine that and take a look at maybe redirecting perhaps, or including this issue of preventions and counseling and treatment and the like. Thank you.

*Robert Listenbee:*

Sarah Deer.

*Sarah Deer:*

My question has to do with victim blaming. And I'm thinking about victim blaming on two different levels: on a macro level

where we hear statistics about the high rates of violence in Indian country and it tends to sometimes send the message that somehow Indian people are defective or broken because we're so victimized, right?

And on a micro level I'm interested in terms of teen dating violence when we are able to provide curriculum explaining what healthy relationships are what they should look like and a woman or teen girls is the victim of domestic violence. Oftentimes that self-blame, "I should've known better. I had this curriculum and I should've looked out for that kind of relationship."

How do we guard against that victim blaming in the work we do?

*Ann Pelletier Kerrick:* That is a good and well-thought out question that I don't know if I have necessarily thought about from that perspective and that if we teach youth about healthy relationship and then they're involved in an unhealthy relationship that they could feel some sort of internal victim blaming. I guess all we can do is make sure that we're there as adults, as caring, influential adults to turn around and tell people, "It's not your fault."

And that, "We're there to support you and help you form healthy relationships in the future, that nothing you can do can make someone abuse you or can make someone treat you badly. It's not their right." I guess all of the information I could provide.

*Mato Standing High:* Thank you. Victim blaming is something we see a lot of. I don't know why. It puzzles me every time. We see a lot of rallying around people who are accused of committing horrible crimes to the extent where a lot of people are made to feel bad because they're doing their job. How do we stop it? I think it's about parenting. And it's funny, as she said, "It's not your fault," I was writing that down, "It's not your fault."

Along those same lines of it not being your fault, I also think there's a level of responsibility that everybody has to take for their own actions. When you make a mistake your family shouldn't be there to tell you, "You didn't make a mistake." Your family should be there to tell you, "You made a mistake but now it's time to move on and learn from that." And I think getting back to just the basic levels of beginning early with children and letting them know, "You are responsible for your actions."

So that if and when there are mistakes made that they can take accountability and responsibility. As an attorney, as an Attorney General, being in charge of our Prosecutor's Office, prosecuting crimes myself, I've seen a lot of it, so much so to the extent where it effects not just the victim and the perpetrator but their families as well. We have instances that date back a lot of years in our communities where just one conflict has led to greater things.

People don't like each other and they don't even know why they don't like each other. I think it's really about parenting. It's about starting at a young age, letting someone who was a victim know that, "It's not your fault," but also taking responsibility when you make a mistake and having that family support.

*Robert Listenbee:* Dr. Morans.

*Steven Morans:* I wonder if Sarah's question doesn't actually demonstrate exactly what the panel's been addressing in part, which is about silos. I wondered if you all would comment on it. The program that you're describing in terms of education and teaching also sets a certain standard, a community standard and builds in the supports that are necessary to maintain them. But earlier we were hearing about "further up the stream" and the risk factors that may make education and the standards not enough.

And I wonder if in a way this cross-fertilization that you were describing, Janell, in terms of the broad approaches goes to the issues of what for whom? And whether, in fact, some of our programs, because of the piece of the pie issues that Tony was referring to, that you all have been referring to, prevent us from thinking as holistically as we might. And I wonder if you all might respond.

*Janell Rigimbal:* You know one of the first things I first think about when I hear you ask that question is that our Safer Tomorrows project is very much raising up and prioritizing primary prevention. And we know that the best place to reach young people is in school. That's where they are for most of their time. And we know that that's kind of an uphill battle to be able to engage schools in wanting to address these issues, the relationship issues, because I think they struggle with they can't be all things to all people, or at least it's very easy to understand why they would feel that way.

They need to focus on just overall general education needs of our children. But I think we, as people in our professions, we as

people who care about his issue, need to help to continually point out the interconnectedness to people. For example, kids can't go to school ready to learn when they're full of fear or they're dealing with the emotional baggage of what violence has brought to their life. They can't concentrate when they're being bullied.

They won't go on to be the productive citizens that I want them to be and be able to be. They can't be the parents they need to be until those issues are resolved. So the more we can recognize the big picture kind of thinking and be able to connect the dots for people and really advocate for that, I think we'll continue to operate in those, "That's not my business. That's somebody else's to deal with," and instead, holistically, look at children, look at all of society and the inner-connectedness, the circle of life as you use it and how it all impacts one another.

I think when take that global approach we'll start to make a broader difference.

*Steven Morans:* Thank you.

*Mato Standing High:* What she said.

*Robert Listenbee:* [Laughter] We have time for one more question. Okay, Dr. Lieberman.

*Alicia Lieberman:* Thank you all for your testimony. I would like to ask you: do you have suggestions for how to better enhance close collaboration between state and the Indian courts, tribal courts?

*Mato Standing High:* I'll answer (half-jokingly): erase history. We've heard the term "historical trauma" repeatedly in regards to the Indian populations today. I'm half – I'll use the term. I'm a half-breed so I was raised with both worlds, so to speak, influencing my life. That's been a good thing for me. I believe I can share that perspective because obviously I haven't been able to see one side or the other as all good or all bad.

In my lifetime it showed me a lot of the friends that I call "brother" today were the same ones that when I showed up at school in third grade with long hair and a quilled headband and my medicine pouch around my neck, talking with a partial New York accent because we'd just gotten back from upstate New York where we lived for a while, boy I was an easy target. But I wasn't a target and we were able to get past those issues as children.

So today, like I said, I'm proud to call a lot of those folks my friends and brothers. You've got to have a personal experience with the people that you're talking about. Only an Indian who has lived their life can tell you certain things about their life. Historically Indians have no reason to trust anybody: the federal government, that state government. So in terms of state and tribal cooperation –

*[Abrupt End of Audio]*

Project, the Center for Healthy Teen Relationships, and Start Strong Idaho.

As Program Manager for the Center for Healthy Teen Relationships and Start Strong Idaho, Ms. Kerrick provided technical assistance and support for domestic violence, dating violence and sexual assault prevention and response programs for adolescents.

We will start with Mr. Mato Standing High. Sir, welcome.

*Mato Standing High:* I think my microphone is on. Thank you, honorable and esteemed members of the Attorney General's Task Force, as well as government leaders, policy makers, experts, communities, and families. I share your concern for our future as a country, as states, as communities, and as tribal nations.

Children exposure to violence is an issue close to me personally and one which has emerged as one of the most critical issues facing our Sicangu Lakota Oyate, which translated into English means: the Rosebud Sioux Nation. Actually Sicangu means "burnt thigh" and there's history behind that. I'll leave that to you guys to educate yourselves on.

For us in Rosebud, our reservation, the question is not: who has been exposed to violence? It's who hasn't been exposed to violence? I have prepared comments, written testimony, which I'm sure you'll all enjoy reading at some point in your busy schedules, and I'm going to stray from those written comments a little bit. I'm not a script type person. We had this discussion on the panel. I don't think any of us really are and I'd rather speak from the heart.

So again, please, on your own time, read the comments we've submitted. I will mention a lot of those things because our Project Coordinator who prepared them would slay me if I didn't. One of the things I want to do is acknowledge the staff that I work with. I supervise approximately 50 employees, four different programs. And every single one of them is dedicated to making a better life for our children.

When I say "our children" I don't mean just Rosebud children. We have a lot of history within our culture and our tribe, as well as everybody else. We say that women and children are sacred and I think that goes without saying for any of our cultures. I think women and children are sacred for all of us. I believe that's why we're here today. With that, I want to tell you a little bit about

rosebud and having me speak for five minutes is near impossible. I'm going to do my best.

Right now in Rosebud we have about 24,000 tribal members. About 5,000 of those are children. We're located in south central South Dakota. We have over 900,000 square acres of land including our original boundaries. That's roughly the size of Connecticut. On many levels, growing up, I've realized that Indians - And I'll refer to myself as Indian, not Native American. I grew up as an Indian.

It seems like these politically correct terms aren't ones that come from the groups themselves. I don't know where the term came from, but I'll refer to myself as Indian because, again, that's how I grew up. It's hard for me to change midstream to start calling myself Native American. So forgive me there. But we're the forgotten people. We are the founders, I'll say, of this country if there is such a thing.

We've been here for thousands and thousands of years, yet when we look at national issues and things like you only hear about us in terms of sport mascots or the romantic image of an Indian on horseback and those sorts of things. For example, watching CNN just the other day, I can't remember what statistics that they showed, but it was for white, African Americans, and Latinos. What about Indians?

So in terms of children, when are they ever going to have an example in the system, of all systems, to show that we are part of this country? I'm glad that we were chosen for the Defending Childhood Initiative because that's a step in the right direction. And I'm glad that you've given us the opportunity to address these sorts of issues.

I grew up in Spearfish, South Dakota. I was one of three out of 120 graduating kids that was not white, non-Indian. And the three of us minorities were all Indian. I heard growing up, "Why are Indians in the state they are? How come they don't just get a job? And why is alcohol such a problem?" Everything is not a level playing field and I'm here to tell you that.

So when you look at the opportunities that our children have aside from just growing up in communities that are entrenched in violence for many different reasons, you can't say it's a level playing field for all those children because it's not.

I think a lot of you on the panel probably understand where I'm coming from.

From the get go, I believe we just have a disadvantage starting out. Especially – You know children don't – Well, we do believe that our children choose us as parents. We don't create them. They choose us. So in that light they kind of do choose where they land and I think in certain circumstances at a very young age, that spirit's broken.

I know we're supposed to be talking about systems response and I've got these notes and all these other things I want to talk about. I'm already down to two minutes and I told you I'm having a hard time. The things we found in Rosebud are very disturbing. We average two child victims a day, and that's just what we know about. I think all of you understand and most of the people in this room understand when it comes to violence, not only against children, but against women, it's majorly underreported.

What we know is that on average there are two child victims a day. Our population is about 24,000 people. In terms of making changes, while we are really honored to be chosen for the Defending Childhood Initiative grant and the money, I don't think it costs money to love. And I think that's what this is about.

It doesn't cost money to tell a child that you love them. It doesn't cost money to tell a child that you care about them. It doesn't cost money to tell a child that you want to see them have a better life for themselves even though the odds are stacked against them in terms of what they don't have economically and what they don't have in terms of family support.

So I believe the key is in parenting and breaking the cycles that we've faced. Again, for Indians, we're in a unique position because of the different federal policies we've run into, everywhere from literally extinction of our race, to another policy approach to Indians that says, "No, well, that one was wrong. Now we're going to switch it back to you guys govern yourselves and we'll figure that out."

So we've been kind of pawns in this game all along. And as somebody mentioned earlier, I honestly believe also that this is the first generation where we can start to heal. We're in a unique position in terms of the work that we're doing. I would like to thank you guys for the opportunity.

Again, I only scratched the surface of what I'd like to say but thank you for all the wisdom you bring to the table. I am very honored to be able to bring a message on behalf of our children. I also wanted to extend a thank you to our indigenous populations locally here as well of all of mankind in welcoming us. Thank you for your time.

*Robert Listenbee:* Thank you very much Mr. Standing High. There will be an opportunity for questions and I think that many of the panelists here would like to ask you some very specific questions, in part, based upon the testimony that you submitted to us in advance. We'll get back to you very shortly. At this time we'll hear from Ms. Janell Rigimbal.

*Janell Rigimbal:* Thank you. Chairman Listenbee, Chairman Torre, and members of the Task Force, I'm so pleased to be here with you all today. Having been born and raised in a small farming community in northwest Minnesota and having devoted my career thus far to serving children and families in a private, non-profit setting, serving a very rural North Dakota, I'm especially pleased that the Task Force is choosing to focus on exploring issues relative to rural populations because they truly are their own culture in and of themselves and they are an underserved population, one that oftentimes becomes overlooked.

I also have a unique perspective because my agency is a key partner in the Grand Forks, North Dakota demonstration site for the Defending Childhood Initiative, which we call locally, Safer Tomorrows. With 21 percent of the U.S. population residing in rural areas, it's so important not to leave them behind. It's also important to recognize that rural children are just as likely to be impacted but less likely to be helped. And I think that's something we just cannot lose sight of.

I think oftentimes there is an idyllic stereotype that we don't deal with these things in rural America, but so often we do. And it may look different but it has the same lasting impact, and yet is harder for us to treat and deal with. Rural residents often do feel like they're left behind. They have less access to service. They have increased cost to seek service. It's already been noted about increased transportation costs, lack of public transportation in the rural areas, but we also have to recognize the time away from work and school has devastating impact on folks.

I've talked to many parents over the years that are at risk of losing their jobs and some who have lost their jobs just because of the time away from work. To have to choose between getting their

children the help they need and being able to make a living is a choice that I would hope none of us would have to make. Also in the rural areas there certainly is a desire for local services, yet those rural areas have unique privacy issues due to the nature of their environment, which sometimes is kind of a push/pull as well.

They'd like to be served in their home community, but yet because of stigma and just knowledge of service issues, that even becomes difficult for people. Providers certainly have barriers to serve the rural. A lack of qualified professionals to deliver specialized services is not at all something unique to us. And the increased cost of doing business in rural communities is very apparent to me as an Administrator.

Certainly travel costs are a huge part of our budgets that are sometimes difficult to fund. We have a hard time recruiting staff because of the toll that sometimes the extra travel takes on staff. The demand to serve folks in the rural area is high and yet they burn up a lot of road time, which then the rest of their job is still there when they return to the office. So it makes for a difficult working environment for many.

And also, as a provider, we don't always have the critical mass to deliver services too. Therefore the cost of service is driven up and one that we do not want to put the burden on the consumer. So it creates a unique business environment when you look at trying to serve the rural people. So these concerns of rural residents and the barriers faced by providers can result in those impacted by childhood exposure to violence going untreated, which can result in obviously more severe issues and a decreased likelihood of positive outcomes for rural residents.

At times we also see a widening of the net where families look first to systems such as law enforcement and the Juvenile Justice System and public welfare systems for assistance just because of lack of resources which results in families losing the opportunity to self-determine and at times fuels a progression further into the system rather than out of it due to the lack of choice and access.

Many providers don't even attempt to serve in rural communities. I find that personally alarming. Just noting the scarcity of resources and needing to focus their attention on the more populated centers due to the cost benefits of doing business, rather than recognizing the high cost to rural residents by them going unserved. To me, this creates a perfect storm of economics versus ethics.

New strategies and ideas are needed. A greater focus on primary prevention and early intervention is just good sense, but especially critical in rural America where we should be doing all we can do to stop issues before they occur. And we know that there are many research based and effective methods of prevention that are out there. I would just list our Health Families newborn home visitation program as one that's uniquely suited because it's paraprofessional based to reach out to rural America.

We know these things work but we need to have the discipline and the will to forgo the quick fix and to be willing to focus on prevention. We also need to look at increase school based resources, recognizing schools are the center of communities, especially in rural areas. We need to resource them to respond, look for ways to partner with them, and increase supportive personnel to be able to infuse them with evidence based approaches and curriculums.

Things such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and other things like the Fourth R. Those are two particular things that our Safer Tomorrows project is looking at implementing. We also need to recognize that net widening does in fact occur and help assure funds in rural areas are available for effective juvenile diversion. We also need to refocus energy from an overdependence on zero tolerance policies that move kids away from the support of a school environment and closer to school dropout.

Instead assure schools develop alternative discipline techniques and approaches to embrace the troubled child, often who are victims of violence rather than push them out. Safety is always the goal but an overreliance on zero tolerance is not the answer. Instead we need to better develop primary prevention, threat assessment processes, and restorative justice techniques to repair the harm and heal relationships, which is especially important in rural communities where those relationships are long lasting.

We also need to look at ways to get additional private and public resources into rural communities, possibly reexamine formula funding that doesn't always recognize the increased costs to carry out rural services, and encourage greater corporate and private foundation support in rural areas, perhaps incentives to expand generosity to rural neighbors rather than only in their own backyard. Without it sustainability seems impossible in the rural areas.

And finally I'd like to recognize the many strengths and resilient nature of the rural people themselves. They're well-connected to one another. Their easily identifiable leadership is there for the asking and they're willing to do what it takes. We need to better connect to them to serve effectively using collaboration, technology, and new models of service delivery.

I trust that these hearing and this Task Force will raise awareness of this vital issue and know that with all the hard work and commitment of those of you around the table and all of us that we can go beyond awareness and move into action, because that to me is the most important step. Thank you.

*Robert Listenbee:* Thank you very much. At this time we'll hear from Ms. Pelletier Kerrick.

*Ann Pelletier Kerrick:* Good afternoon Task Force members.

*Robert Listenbee:* Good afternoon.

*Ann Pelletier Kerrick:* I'd like to tell you how honored I am to be here, especially to talk about two issues which I feel like are often overlooked when we talk about children's exposure to violence. And that's adolescent dating abuse and peer to peer sexual assault. I work at the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence which oversees two programs.

One is the Center for Healthier Teen Relationships which used to be called the Idaho Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Project and that's funded through the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women. The second program we run is Start Strong Idaho which is funded through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Both programs promote healthy teen relationships as a way to reduce and respond to adolescent dating abuse and peer to peer sexual assault.

Both of these issues are very important. They're prevalent, they're widespread, and they should be addressed with the same level of attention as other types of violence to which children are exposed. Rates of physical, emotional, or verbal abuse in relationships experienced by adolescent girls greatly exceed estimates of other types of youth violence, including school fights and bullying. Furthermore, adolescents 12 -19 years old experience the highest rates and sexual assault.

These victims are more likely to suffer from depression, post-traumatic stress disorders, be involved in other risk behaviors such as smoking, drinking, drug use, and they're more likely to contemplate suicide and attempt suicide. Youth who have experience dating violence or sexual abuse often cannot find the services they need or services that are identifiable to teens as being accessible and relevant.

Those living in rural communities face even greater barriers, including the just general unavailability of comprehensive victim-centered services in rural communities, lack of access to services (which we've discussed) especially when there's no system of public transportation and the services are available in the next city or county, a general lack of awareness of the effect and extent of dating abuse and sexual assault, and finally the difficulty of providing confidential services in small, tight knit communities and in the face of parental rights and mandatory reporting laws.

To overcome many of these barriers the Center for Healthy Teen Relationships and Start Strong Idaho focuses on building collaborations within the rural communities that support both prevention and response of adolescent dating abuse and sexual assault. While collaborations can't overcome all of the barriers identified, they can assess localized gaps and services and identify ways to overcome barriers and gaps using resources that are available locally or regionally.

Collaborating partners should include youth. When you're talking about youth, youth need to be at the table. Schools, community based victim service organizations, law enforcement, health care professionals, legal service providers, youth organizations, faith based organizations. Faith based organization cannot be overlooked when you're dealing with rural communities. Often those are the gathering grounds for the whole community.

And finally, you have to have other organizations that address other risk behaviors. Again we can't be siloing. We have to look at all of the problems as a whole and come together, including organizations that address suicide and bullying. Any prevention or response strategy for youth should be developed in meaningful collaboration with youth. I've already mentioned this. Regular feedback from youth should be sought especially from those involved in activities promoting healthy relationships and in those accessing services to ensure that services and activities are both, relevant, developmentally appropriate, and easy to navigate.

*[End of Audio]*