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## U.S. Department of Education Asks School Leaders to Initiate New Efforts to Reduce Gender-Based Violence

FEBRUARY 28, 2013

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The U.S. Department of Education today issued a Dear Colleague letter to state school chiefs requesting immediate action to reduce gender-based violence in schools and to help ensure all students are safe. The letter and additional materials were released during a White House event on teen dating violence prevention, which was part of National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month, and the Obama Administration's efforts to raise awareness of gender-based violence.

"Our schools need to be safe havens for all students, and it is critical that we provide school leaders with tools and resources to help them become stronger partners in reducing teen dating violence and other forms of gender-based violence that our young people experience," said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. "Like bullying, teen dating violence has far-reaching consequences for the health and life outcomes of victims. We need to do everything we can to make sure all students are safe."

The letter to chief state school officers highlights that while strategies to improve school climate and reduce bullying are critical, they may not be adequate to reduce or respond to teen dating violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and stalking. The letter urges leaders to take action to specifically address these forms of gender-based violence.

To accompany the letter, the Department released a "What Schools Can Do" toolkit, outlining simple actions that communities can take, as well as resources available to support school leaders in reducing gender-based violence and its consequences. In addition, today the Department's National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments released a new training module – Get Smart, Get Help, Get Safe – to help school

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nurses, school counselors and school psychologists identify and respond appropriately to signs of abuse. The training module can be accessed by visiting: <http://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/index.php?id=1511>.

A copy of the letter sent to chief state school officers today can be found at: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/secletter/index.html>.

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