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HUD STRENGTHENS PROTECTIONS FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
New Rule marks conclusion of National Domestic Violence Awareness Month

WASHINGTON – U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan announced today new, stronger affordable housing regulations that protect victims of domestic abuse as the nation concludes National Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

To read the final regulatory requirements under the *Violence against Women Act (VAWA)*, visit **HUD's website**.

"This rule recognizes the need to protect victims of domestic abuse from being evicted just because they were victimized. No one should be afraid of losing their home if they report abuse" said Donovan. "The Obama Administration has strengthened the existing interim regulation to further protect victims and ensures that current or former victims of domestic violence will not be turned down from HUD programs."

"The 2009 U.S. Conference of Mayors annual report on *Hunger and Homelessness* identified domestic violence as the third leading cause of homelessness among families," said HUD Assistant Secretary Sandra Henriquez. "This regulation protects victims housing so they are not forced to choose between staying with their abuser and becoming homeless."

VAWA, which was enacted in 2005, provided legal protections for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. These protections apply to families receiving rental assistance under HUD's public housing program, Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, and multi-family project-based Section 8 program. HUD published the VAWA Interim Rule in November 2008 and allowed for public comments until January 2009.

The rule announced today addresses many concerns advocates raised with the 2008 interim rule by clarifying and aligning HUD's statutory language with VAWA; providing more detailed guidance to housing authorities and Section 8 property owners on how to implement VAWA and making a commitment to provide further guidance in the future.

For example, guidance in the new rule requires that housing authorities or management agents exhaust protective measures before eviction. Evictions can only take place after the housing or subsidy providers have taken actions that will reduce or eliminate the threat to the victim, including, transferring the abuse victim to a different home; barring the abuser from the property; contacting law enforcement to increase police presence or develop other plans to keep the property safe; or seeking other legal remedies to prevent the abuser from acting on a threat.

The new rule also broadens the definitions of "actual and imminent threat," to help housing or subsidy providers understand that to use "imminent threat" of harm to other residents as a reason for eviction of the victim, the evidence must be real and objective – not hypothetical, presumed or speculative.

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HUD's mission is to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all. HUD is working to strengthen the housing market to bolster the economy and protect consumers; meet the need for quality affordable rental homes; utilize housing as a platform for improving quality of life; build inclusive and sustainable communities free from discrimination; and transform the way HUD does business. More information about HUD and its programs is available on the Internet at www.hud.gov and espanol.hud.gov.