



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

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*****PUBLICATION ADVISORY*****

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT RESEARCH FINDS ALASKA VILLAGE PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS MAKING IMPACT IN SEXUAL ASSAULT CASES INVOLVING MINORS

WASHINGTON – Research funded by the Office of Justice Programs’ National Institute of Justice found that Alaska Village Public Safety Officers improve the justice system’s response to sexual violence by increasing the likelihood that, in investigations involving minors, a case is referred for prosecution, according to an article published today by NIJ. The study by the University of Alaska Anchorage’s Justice Center examined the impact of the state’s Village Public Safety Officers on domestic violence cases in Alaska communities. Village Public Safety Officers are paraprofessional first-responders serving tribal communities in Alaska.

“Violence against Alaska Native women and children often occurs in remote villages that have limited resources,” said NIJ Director David Muhlhausen. “The research examined the impact of the state’s Village Public Safety Officers on these crimes and found an improvement in the administration of justice, such as reduced reporting time and improved evidence collection, when these officers are involved in certain investigations. These findings give us a better understanding of an issue that is of profound public safety concern in remote Alaska communities.”

The article summarizes the study, which analyzed more than 1,500 sexual assault and domestic violence cases in parts of western Alaska. Village Public Safety Officers are frequently involved as first responders in domestic violence incidents. Along with these officers, the study examined Alaska village police and tribal police officers and determined that all had positive impacts on the law enforcement response to sexual violence against women; although the effect was limited to sexual assault cases involving minors. In response to public safety concerns voiced by Alaska Native leaders, Attorney General William P. Barr last summer declared a law enforcement emergency in rural Alaska and directed more than \$10 million in Department of Justice funding to hire, train and equip officers serving those communities.

TITLE: *“Sexual Violence Against Alaska Tribal Women: Village Public Safety Officers Having Some Impact”*

AUTHORS: National Institute of Justice

WHERE: <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/sexual-violence-against-alaska-women-village-public-safety-officers-having-some>

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