
Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Violence against women has been defined in the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women:

“Violence Against Women (VAW) is any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”

In year 2000, the Department of Social Welfare and Development reported that in the first six months of 2000 there were 4,468 reports of women in "especially difficult circumstances". Nearly half of the cases are reported to have involved physical abuse, maltreatment and battery while 14 percent reportedly involved sexual abuse.

When crime, drugs, and violence spill over from the streets into the schools, providing a safe learning environment becomes increasingly difficult. Creating such an environment where students can learn depends on a partnership among students, parents, teachers, and other community institutions. School violence can be prevented by taking action to protect students, particularly women students, who can be victims of discrimination and violence.

To help improve safety of women students within educational institutions, it is important that school administrations establish offices that focus on formulating policies and guidelines on how to promote school security and student safety by training school personnel in conflict resolution, problem solving, drug prevention, crisis intervention, cultural sensitivity, classroom management, and counseling skills.

This bill seeks to address violence in educational institutions by mandating the creation of a women's desk in all such institutions. Its aim shall be to serve women students by protecting them against all forms of violence in a comprehensive and personalized manner which adheres to

the national policies on women's protection. A women's desk will also focus on receiving complains of violence against women and strive to help victims recover.*

Miriam Defensor Santiago
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* This bill was originally filed during the Thirteenth Congress, Third Regular Session.

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1 AN ACT
2 INSTITUTIONALIZING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF
3 A WOMEN'S DESK IN ALL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

4 SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Women’s Desk Act.”

5 SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to promote the
6 protection of rights of all women students to ensure that they are protected from all forms of
7 violence. Pursuant to this policy, the State shall address violence in educational institutions by
8 mandating the creation of a women’s desk in all such institutions, the aim of which shall be the
9 protection of women against all forms of violence in a comprehensive and personalized manner
10 which adheres to the national policies on women’s rights and welfare.

11 SECTION 3. *Definition of Terms.* – For the purpose of this Act, the term

12 (A) “Women’s desk” means an office within an educational institution which focuses
13 on receiving complaints of violence, in any form, against women.

14 (B) “Educational institution” means any educational institution whether public or
15 private as well as state universities with special charters.

16 (C) “Women’s desk officer” means any person in charge of managing the women’s
17 desk.

18 (D) “Women victims of violence” means women students who are victims of any form
19 of violence, the violence occurring in school or outside the learning institution.
20 This shall also include women employees of the educational institution.

1 SECTION 4. *Establishment of a Women's Desk in every Educational Institution; Goals.*

2 – It is hereby ordered that a women's desk shall be established in every educational institution
3 throughout the country.

4 The goals of establishing a women's desk in every educational institution are the
5 following:

6 (A) The adoption of a systematic approach to the management complaints by women
7 students of being victims of any form of violence;

8 (B) The establishment of an office within every school to focus particularly in receiving
9 complaints of violence of any form against women students. The women's desk
10 office will also provide needs of women survivors of violence such as counseling and
11 advice.

12 SECTION 5. *Services Provided by Women's Desks.* – The services to be provided by
13 women's desks are the following:

14 (A) Support services such as counseling and referrals to other agencies for the provision
15 other needs such as shelter to the women victims of violence;

16 (B) Coordination with agencies for medical services needed by women victims of
17 violence;

18 (C) Provide basic information on gender sensitivity and violence against women;

19 (D) Development of institutional guidelines to protect women against any form of
20 violence;

21 (E) Provide psychosocial intervention such as individual and group therapy, crisis
22 counseling and stress management activities;

23 (F) Initiate advocacy efforts such as production of materials for dissemination on issues
24 relevant to abuse of women, personal advocacy for the individual and networking
25 with other concerned agencies; and

26 (G) Conduct researches/studies to fully understand the scope of the problem of violence
27 against women.

1 SECTION 6. *Qualifications for Women's Desk Officers.* – Qualifications for women's
2 desk officers shall be formulated by the respective school administrations in coordination with
3 the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Commission on Higher Education
4 (CHED) and the Department of Education (DepEd). Provided, that all women's desk officers
5 shall at least be a graduate of any four year social science course and has basic training in
6 psychology.

7 SECTION 7. *Guidelines for Implementation.* – The Department of Social Welfare and
8 Development, the Department of Education, and the Commission on Higher Education shall be
9 responsible for the drafting of the Implementing Rules and Regulations, including penalties for
10 violations of the provisions of this Act, within 60 days after its adoption.

11 SECTION 8. *Implementing Agencies.* – The implementing agencies for this Act shall be
12 the following, in coordination with the respective school administrations:

13 (A) Department of Social Welfare and Development

14 (B) Department of Education

15 (C) Commission on Higher Education

16 SECTION 9. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part hereof, is held invalid or
17 unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain
18 valid and subsisting.

19 SECTION 10. *Repealing Clause.* – Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive
20 order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to, or inconsistent
21 with the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified or amended accordingly.

22 SECTION 11. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
23 publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved.