



CYRUS R. VANCE, JR.
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

DISTRICT ATTORNEY – NEW YORK COUNTY

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**MANHATTAN DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE FORMS
FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND "WORK-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE TEAM"**



Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance, Jr. today announced a new effort to engage survivors of work-related sexual violence, encourage reporting of these incidents, and deploy specially-trained sex crimes prosecutors to swiftly investigate such reports. Staffed by 15 Assistant District Attorneys and a social worker, the Work-Related Sexual Violence Team will be led by Assistant D.A. Vanessa Puzio, a supervising attorney with more than 12 years of experience in the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault.

District Attorney Vance said: “Work-related relationships grant predators unique access to people who are vulnerable to sexual abuse and assault due to the power imbalance inherent in so many work hierarchies. When an act of work-related sexual misconduct constitutes a crime, it is not enough that the abuser loses his job or his industry cachet – justice demands, and survivors deserve, that criminal abusers be held accountable in court. I would like to

thank the profoundly courageous survivors who have come forward in recent weeks, as well as the members of our Work-Related Sexual Violence Team for taking on this critical assignment. They are serving on the front lines of justice as this historic moment of reckoning arrives. I encourage anyone who believes a sex crime has occurred in Manhattan to call our Sex Crimes Hotline at 212-335-9373.”

Assistant D.A. Vanessa Puzio said: “I’m honored to lead our new Work-Related Sexual Violence Team, particularly at such a pivotal moment for women in the workplace. It is important that survivors know that we are more than a faceless telephone number at a government office downtown. The brave women and men who contact our Team will be treated with the humanity, sensitivity, and diligence that survivors of sexual violence deserve.”

New York City Public Advocate Letitia James said: “For years, too many women and men have been the victims of work-related sexual violence, crimes that often go without recourse. It is incumbent upon us to create an environment where victims can feel safe speaking out and where perpetrators are held accountable for such acts. This new Work-Related Sexual Violence Team will provide the legal teeth needed to investigate and prosecute for these crimes and I want to thank District Attorney Cy Vance for making the safety of New Yorkers top priority.”

Gloria Steinem, activist and author, said: “I’m grateful to District Attorney Cy Vance, Assistant D.A. Vanessa Puzio, and everyone on the staff of this new and innovative Work-Related Sexual Violence Team. It puts New York City in the leadership of the country, and more important, increases the safety and dignity of women in the workplace. From the executive suite to the night cleaning crew, justice may be only a phone call away.”

Forensic Experiential Trauma Interviews

District Attorney Vance also announced that Assistant District Attorneys will receive specialized training in Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview (FETI) techniques throughout 2018. [FETI](#) is a trauma-informed interviewing practice designed to minimize the use of questions which cause survivors to relive their assaults.

Manhattan D.A.’s Office’s Commitment to Sexual Assault Survivors

In 2015, District Attorney Vance [invested \\$38 million](#) in criminal forfeiture funds to help end the national backlog of untested rape kits. As of November 2017, more than 51,000 rape kits in 20 states have been tested with the District Attorney’s grants, resulting in new arrests and convictions for sexual assaults around the country.

Manhattan Sex Crimes Unit prosecutors regularly conduct trainings to help New Yorkers better identify and report sexual assault, including specialized trainings for college students and nightlife personnel. The D.A.’s Office also conducts public service campaigns relating to sexual violence, including a campaign to raise awareness of “[upskirting](#),” the unlawful, voyeuristic act of photographing a person without her knowledge or permission.

Sex Crimes Hotline

District Attorney Vance and the Work-Related Sexual Violence Team encourage anyone who believes a sex crime has occurred in Manhattan to call the District Attorney's Sex Crimes Hotline at 212-335-9373. In addition to survivors, others who become aware of work-related sexual misconduct – including company executives and human resources personnel – are encouraged to call the Hotline.

The Hotline is a safe place to report crime regardless of your immigration status. Interpreters are available to assist non-native English speakers and individuals who are D/deaf. If you are unsure whether conduct falls within the statute of limitations or otherwise constitutes a crime, you should still call the Hotline. Callers can leave secure messages on the Hotline 24/7/365. If you are in immediate danger, please call 911.

The Work-Related Sexual Violence Team will work in close collaboration with the New York City Police Department's Special Victims Division. Survivors of sexual violence committed anywhere in New York City can also call the NYPD's hotline at 212-267-RAPE.

District Attorney Vance thanked his staff for their work in creating this initiative: Chief Assistant D.A. Karen Friedman-Agnifilo; Executive Assistant D.A. Audrey Moore, Chief of the Special Victims Bureau; Assistant D.A. Martha Bashford, Chief of the Sex Crimes Unit; and Assistant D.A.s Jennifer Gaffney and Shannon Lucey, Deputy Chiefs of the Sex Crimes Unit.

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