



**LEMANU P. S. MAUGA**  
GOVERNOR

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LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

## **PROCLAMATION**

### **“Designating October 2021 as Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM)”**

**WHEREAS;** Domestic Violence Awareness Month calls American Samoa’s attention to the fact that domestic violence is widespread and has a physical and mental impact on all of its people, families, and community. It remains a critical problem within the territory; and

**WHEREAS;** Our community has seen the impact of domestic violence: psychological, emotional, spiritual, and physical disruption, disorder, and disharmony to the multiple dimensions of wellbeing between family members, and it does not discriminate; and

**WHEREAS;** World Health Organization reports globally approximately 1 in 3 (30%) of women have been subjected to physical violence by their partners. Samoan women experience violence by a non-partner at the age of 15. Sixty-two (62%) of Samoan women have experienced physical violence by a non-partner. Twenty-three (23%) of Samoan women who were pregnant reported being beaten during pregnancy. Fifty (50%) of Samoan women reported that their children had witnessed at least one incidence of violence.

**WHEREAS,** the impact on children in the South Pacific who have witnessed their mother’s abuse resulted in 51% of children showing aggressive behavior, forty-nine (49%) experiencing nightmares, nineteen (19%) percent repeating a school year, and eleven (11%) percent dropping out of school.

**WHEREAS,** the use of cultural factors has allowed abusers to continue to be violent against the women of American Samoa. Our Samoan women often are silent about the abuse due to shame that has been taught through colonial legacies and deep gender disparities. Victims consider the impacts on their families and village, leaving themselves to suffer silently from depression and anxiety. This silence can be overwhelming and suffocating that many have attempted suicide; and

**WHEREAS,** the principles of fa’aSamoa do not condone acts of violence against members of family or anyone, instead our fa’aSamoa should be our guide which prevention and intervention approaches are addressed with key concepts such as sacred spaces of covenantal relationships between family members, respect where behavior and language honors sacred spaces in relationships, family where sacred spaces are preserved and protected, and selfless love; and

**WHEREAS,** we ask the community to discard the belief that violence is a part of our Samoan culture. We ask the community to commit to learning the focus of the fa'aSamoa to strengthen families. We ask the community to be part of the solution and help support our community by sharing their stories and knowledge through 'le talanoa' (conversation). We ask the community to move away from violence and embrace practices that will help us to THRIVE; and

**WHEREAS,** During Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the;  
American Samoa Alliance Against Domestic & Sexual Violence,  
American Samoa Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence,  
American Samoa Community Cancer Coalition,  
American Samoa Community College,  
American Samoa Department of Education,  
American Samoa Department of Health,  
American Samoa Office of the Governor,  
American Samoa Legal Aid, Inc.  
Back on Track,  
Catholic Social Services,  
Congresswoman Uifaatali Aumua Amata,  
Department of Human & Social Services,  
Department of Legal Affairs,  
Department of Public Safety,  
Department of Youth and Women's Affairs,  
IMPACT & Queer Tiers,  
Intersections Inc.,  
LBJ Tropical Medical Center – Family Planning Program  
Mana Community Support Services,  
Office of Protection & Advocacy for the Disabled,  
Pae ma le Auli,  
SOFIAS,  
Territorial Administration on Aging,  
American Samoa Office of Veterans Affairs,  
other community/government agencies, faith-based organizations, along with numerous individuals are committed to eliminating domestic violence in our community. As partners we will provide community workshops focused on prevention and awareness about domestic violence to strengthen the response to domestic violence in American Samoa.

**NOW, THEREFORE,** I, LEMANU P. S. MAUGA, Governor of the Territory of American Samoa, by virtue of the authority vested in me, do hereby proclaim October 2021 as “Domestic Violence Awareness Month” and endorse the commitment to ending Domestic Violence in the community. The Samoan saying ‘A malu i fale, e malu i fafo’ is referred to as protection for the family, protection for all Samoan people.

I urge all of American Samoa to stand firm in condemning domestic violence and supporting survivors in finding the safety and recovery they need; and to support and trust in the efforts of first responders and service providers to hold perpetrators accountable, and protect victims and communities.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto set my signature on this first day of October, in the year of our Lord, two thousand and twenty-one.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lemanu P. S. Mauga', written over a faint circular stamp.

**LEMANU P. S. MAUGA**  
Governor of American Samoa