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Pennsylvania's Domestic Violence Programs Serve Close to 2,600 Adult and Child Victims in Just One Day

(March 8, 2010) HARRISBURG, PA – In one 24-hour period last year, when the state budget impasse was creating tremendous cash flow problems for local domestic violence programs that depend on state funding, Pennsylvania's network of programs still managed to provide services to 2,597 domestic violence victims and their children.

A 24-hour census of all 61 domestic violence programs across the Commonwealth, released today, revealed that on Sept. 15, 2009:

- 1,190 victims were safely sheltered;
- 1,407 victims benefited from other services, including counseling, legal advocacy and children's support groups;
- 950 hotline calls were answered;
- 1,473 people were trained in domestic violence intervention and prevention;
- 365 requests for services, including 247 requests for housing to escape an abuser, were unmet due to a critical shortage of funds and staff.

The census, conducted in all 50 states by the National Network To End Domestic Violence, is an unduplicated count of victims served on a single day. Nationwide, 1,648 domestic violence programs, representing 83 percent of identified local programs in the United States, participated and reported that they served more than 65,000 domestic violence victims.

Only six states ranked higher than Pennsylvania in the census for total people served: California, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, New York and Texas; and in number of unmet requests: California, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, New York and Texas.

“Behind each of these statistics is a frightened adult or child desperately seeking safety and freedom from abuse and hard-working program staff trying to meet their needs with ever dwindling resources. Sadly, the same economic pressures that are driving up requests for help are curtailing local programs' ability to respond,” said Peg Dierkers, executive director of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV).

Last year in Pennsylvania more than 100 domestic violence program workers were laid off, even as programs grappled with responding to 3,000 more requests for shelter than the year before. Meanwhile, legislation to create additional revenue for domestic violence services through a small increase in marriage license and divorce filing fees remained stalled in the General Assembly. Likewise, funding for services remained flat in the final budget.

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“Inadequate funding means lost opportunities to offer safety and protection to victims and their children and lost opportunities to reduce injury and prevent homicides,” Dierkers noted. The domestic violence homicide rate has been steadily rising each year in Pennsylvania (visit www.pcadv.org for the most recent fatality report). Dierkers urged decision-makers in Harrisburg to address the critical need for domestic violence services by enacting the pending revenue legislation and allocating adequate funding in the next budget.

The National Census of Domestic Violence Services Full Report and the Pennsylvania Summary are available online at www.nnedv.org/census.

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PCADV – the nation’s first state domestic violence coalition is a private, nonprofit, membership organization comprised of 61 community-based programs serving all 67 counties in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. PCADV and its member programs provide integral services to domestic violence victims and their children including 24-hour emergency hotlines, shelter, counseling, legal advocacy and representation, medical advocacy, children’s advocacy, transitional housing, and many other emergency and support services. To date, close to 2 million victims and their children have received services through the statewide network of programs. Since 1993, PCADV has received federal funding to operate the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence.

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