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MAYOR EMANUEL, STATE'S ATTORNEY ALVAREZ, AND CITY AGENCIES TO CREATE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TASK FORCE

State-of-the-Art Training for Police Officers, Proactive Law Enforcement Response, and Increased City Services to Help Stop Cycle of Domestic Violence

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez, the Chicago Police Department (CPD), and the Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) announced today the creation of an inter-governmental task force to address domestic violence in the City of Chicago. The task force will specifically focus on three goals: developing and implementing state-of-the-art training for Chicago Police Officers; developing a more proactive law enforcement response to high-risk domestic violence incidents; and increasing services for domestic violence victims and their families. The task force will build off the work of the Domestic Violence Coordinated Response Council, which has developed policy and practice in response to domestic violence in Chicago for years.

"Victims of domestic violence often suffer silently, and many remain in a cycle of violence for years, afraid to reach out or unsure of where to look for help," said Mayor Emanuel. "It's our job to help break this cycle and this task force will prioritize law enforcement training and develop strategies to detect high-risk incidents and intervene with quality services before it's too late."

"I welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with the Mayor, the Superintendent and Commissioner Diaz on these critical issues," said Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez. "Our joint training on the best practices to prepare cases for prosecution is a critical step in this long-term collaboration aimed at reducing domestic violence in communities across Chicago."

The task force is focusing first on developing state-of-the-art training for Chicago Police Officers, who are often the first responders to calls for domestic violence. Each year CPD answers approximately 200,000 domestic calls for service. These incidents result in 30 to 40 domestic violence homicides annually in Chicago. Officers are called to intervene in what can be highly stressful situations that are often very dangerous for everyone involved, including the officers.

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“Police officers are in a position to detect high-risk domestic incidents and they are also the first ambassadors of a criminal justice system designed to help victims,” said Superintendent Garry McCarthy. “Victims need to have confidence in that system in order to move forward with charges. The Department is committed to updating its training to make sure every officer is responding to domestic calls safely, professionally, and with empathy for the victims and their families.”

The domestic violence task force training will include three main components.

First, CPD is developing an E-Learning tool to refresh prior instruction on the most basic and vital steps involved in response to domestic violence incidents.

Second, CPD will collaborate with the Cook County State's Attorney's Office to train Chicago Police Officers on the best practices to ensure accurate and detailed domestic violence case reporting.

Finally, the Department of Family and Support Services and Chicago Metropolitan Battered Women's Network will partner with the CPD to create training focused on the psychological and emotional dynamics of domestic violence and its impact on families.

“Domestic violence is an emotionally complex crime,” said Dawn Dalton, the Executive Director of the Chicago Metropolitan Battered Women’s Network. “Our network of experts looks forward to working with the Police Department and the Department of Family and Support Services to develop state-of-the-art training on the dynamics of domestic violence and its impact on the Chicago community.”

DFSS has increased services for domestic violence victims during the past year. In addition to providing crisis counseling through the Domestic Violence Help Line, DFSS served an additional 1,800 victims with court advocacy services to help them navigate the court system and get orders of protection. DFSS expanded the Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange programs for an additional 100 families to provide a safe location for custodial and non-custodial parents to bring children for supervised visits. The City also recently broke ground on the first new domestic violence shelter in Chicago more than a decade.

“Increased services for victims of domestic violence and their families are essential as they move to the next stage of their lives,” said Evelyn Diaz, Commissioner of the Department of Family and Support Services. “This task force will continue to work together to ensure the victims and their families have the support they need.”

“Victims of domestic violence will now have a stronger voice in the City of Chicago,” said Alderman Deborah Graham, 29th Ward. “I applaud the Mayor’s efforts in continuing to find ways to encourage the focus of our Department of Family and Support Services and our Police Department, to better

understand and address the needs of women across our city.”

It is essential that every Chicagoan actively seeks to end domestic abuse of all types in the city. To report domestic abuse, call 9-1-1. For more information and support, anyone can call the domestic violence help line at 877-863-6338.

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