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Mayor Emanuel Announces Expansion, Upgrade of Domestic Violence Pilot Program

South East Side Police District Added to Pilot;

Includes Stronger Role for Advocates, Improvements in Technology, New Police Staffing

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, State's Attorney Anita Alvarez, Chicago Police Superintendent Garry McCarthy, the Chicago Metropolitan Battered Women's Network, and Family Rescue announced the city's domestic violence pilot program -- designed to build a more proactive and coordinated response between police, social services agencies, and prosecutors -- has now expanded to the 003 Police District. The expansion also brings key upgrades including a more expansive role for service agencies, improved technology to help determine risk, and new police resources in domestic violence court.

"No victim of domestic violence in the City of Chicago should ever have to face their struggle alone. This new partnership is helping us support more victims in a more effective way and helping them realize that they have an entire city standing behind them," said Mayor Emanuel. "We have made progress but there is a lot more work to do and this collaboration will help us work better as a city to break the cycle of violence and make sure that every victim has the support they need every step of the way."

"We are very pleased to be a partner in this unprecedented and expanding collaboration with the Mayor and the Chicago Police Department working to enhance the protection of so many vulnerable victims of domestic violence and their families," said State's Attorney Anita Alvarez. "Recognizing the unique dynamics of domestic violence cases, we are continuing to expand our efforts to identify high-risk households and my office remains committed to the full and effective prosecution of these cases."

The pilot program originally launched in the 14th Police District in May 2014, using an evidence-based assessment form to help police identify households at elevated risk for serious injury and coordinate a response by detectives, prosecutors and service agencies. Patrol officers use a new assessment form, including a series of questions designed to help determine if a victim is at elevated risk of injury. A special protocol is triggered if the victim is at elevated risk for injury, ensuring the household is prioritized for an immediate follow up investigation.

The early results from the 14th District pilot were promising:

- 53% increase in arrests for domestic violence despite a 9% decrease in domestic violence incidents compared to the same time in 2013

- 9% increase in referrals to the Domestic Violence Hotline initiated by CPD
- Individuals who contacted the Hotline for assistance reported very positive interactions with the police officers who answered the calls for service.

"When we combine data-driven law enforcement with social services we can help victims escape abuse that puts them in constant jeopardy," said Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) Commissioner Evelyn Diaz. "Our shared goal is to break the cycle of violence, and the continued expansion and improvement of this program are important steps toward that goal."

EXPANDED ROLE FOR ADVOCATES

Under the expansion, service agencies, namely Family Rescue and the Domestic Violence Hotline, will have an even more expansive role. When patrol officers respond to a domestic violence call, they will ask the victim the questions contained in an assessment form. With the victim's consent, officers will e-mail that assessment to service providers, allowing trained domestic violence workers to conduct an in-depth assessment of the victims' needs and offer safety planning plus a customized range of services, including counseling, shelter, or legal help.

"Since the implementation of the pilot, advocates at our agency have been able to connect with domestic violence victims within 24 hours of reporting the abuse to the police," said Himagiri K. Sarma, Program Director for the Family Rescue Court Advocacy Program. "This is a major step forward that greatly increases the chances that a victim will avail themselves of services, and of the court system."

In two incidents, an advocate was able to reach out to the victim less than a day after the incident, arranged to meet that victim in court that day, and assisted her in prosecuting the domestic violence case. Just 24-hours after the police report was made, the victim went to court with court advocate support, assisted the State in the prosecution of her case, and obtained an Order of Protection. The offender accepted a plea, and the case was complete. The quick connection between the advocate and the victim should lead to increased prosecution of cases, and increased use of other victim services.

IMPROVED TECHNOLOGY

Chicago Police Department (CPD) is also improving its technology as part of the expanded pilot, distributing new smartphones with integrated broadband wireless communications capabilities. These smartphones will connect police officers with advanced databases and allow them to immediately determine the history of previous calls for service at a given location, previously-reported incidents and arrests (including domestic violence incidents), and outstanding criminal warrants for offenders who may be at the scene.

"Through this partnership with service providers, victims' advocates and prosecutors, driven by the leadership of Mayor Emanuel, we are making a meaningful change in the lives of victims," said Superintendent McCarthy. "This important collaborative is a strong demonstration of what's possible when everyone comes together for the greater good."

NEW POLICE RESOURCES AND TRAINING

CPD detectives are also offering new resources in domestic violence court, including the addition of a Sergeant supervisor and a second detective. The additional detectives will assist in preparing

cases for felony charges, contacting victims and witnesses, and other duties to provide better service for victims of domestic violence.

Roughly 4,000 officers have participated in new Department-wide domestic violence training. The curriculum focuses on latest practices for domestic violence response including interview techniques, serving orders of protections, and psychological dynamics for domestic violence victims. Additionally, roughly 500 officers from the 3rd and 14th police districts have already participated in a two-week intensive training session on domestic violence.

The pilot program is the direct result of an inter-governmental domestic violence task force launched in December 2013 by Mayor Emanuel, State's Attorney Alvarez, CPD and DFSS. The task force is focused 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 is building off the work of the Domestic Violence Coordinated Response Council, which has developed police and practice in response to domestic violence in Chicago for years. CPD responds to approximately 200,000 domestic related calls for service annually or nearly 500 domestic calls each day. In 2013, there were more than 1,500 instances of aggravated domestic battery with a knife, gun or other dangerous weapon. Providing the best possible services for domestic violence victims and stopping this cycle of violence are major priorities for Mayor Emanuel.

It is essential that every Chicagoan actively seek 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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