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New Survey Presents Snapshot of Domestic Violence in the U.S.

Economic Downturn Exacerbating Domestic Abuse

[BOSTON, MA] – In one 24-hour period, 2,018 victims of domestic violence and their children across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts received life-saving services from local domestic violence service providers. Domestic violence experts here answered 763 emergency hotline calls. At the same time, 301 requests for services went unmet, largely due to lack of funding.

These are just a few of the numbers from the latest survey, called Domestic Violence Counts, conducted by the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV). Forty-nine (49) domestic violence programs in Massachusetts provided data for the survey conducted on September 15, 2009.

“While Domestic Violence Counts provides a one-day snapshot once a year, the numbers show significant increases from 2008 to 2009 in requests for domestic violence services in the Commonwealth that are consistent with what we are hearing from our member programs over the past 12 - 18 months,” said Mary R. Lauby, Executive Director of Jane Doe Inc.

Though the economy does not cause domestic violence, factors associated with a sour economy can increase the severity and frequency of abuse. At the same time, options for survivors to escape can be more limited.

“The economy is exacerbating domestic violence,” said Sue Else, president of the National Network to End Domestic Violence. “I urge communities to come together to stop the violence once and for all. Domestic and sexual violence affect all of us and all of us must be part of the solution.”

Each year, NNEDV conducts a 24-hour survey of domestic violence programs across the county. Despite the difficulty to raise funds for vital services, domestic violence programs nationwide provided services to more than 65,000 adults and children in one day alone. Other national data include:

- More than 23,000 crisis hotline calls were answered.
- More than 9,200 requests for services went unmet, mostly due to funding shortfalls.
- Nearly 31,000 individuals attended 1,468 training sessions provided by local domestic violence programs to help prevent violence and intervene early in cases of abuse.

For the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, in one day alone:

- 683 domestic violence victims found refuge in emergency shelters or transitional housing provided by local domestic violence programs
- 1335 adults and children received non-residential assistance and services, including individual counseling, legal advocacy, and children’s support groups

Compared to the responses in 2008, programs in Massachusetts reported serving 30% more victims. Specifically, there was an increase of over 50% in the total number of victims receiving non-residential services (ie, individual counseling, legal advocacy, and children’s support groups) and an almost 40% increase in the total number of hotline calls received.



Lauby pointed out that the need to hear the stories behind these numbers. As one advocate from a local program in Massachusetts wrote:

“A woman sought help today after her abuser tied her up and beat her while his family watched. The abuser poured gasoline over her feet and threatened to set her on fire. Finally, a family member couldn’t stand it anymore and, when the abuser left, untied her and slipped her a cell phone. She called 911 and is now in a safe place. She is incredibly courageous, but she’s still extremely afraid.”

Across the nation on September 15, 2009, two women miscarried as a result of domestic violence. Four women were murdered by their intimate partners. Seven children were killed by their fathers in domestic violence homicides. Seven babies were born in domestic violence shelters.

“The 2009 numbers are shocking,” said Else. “We have come a long way, but these numbers remind us that we have a long way to go.”

In 2009, 1,648 local domestic violence programs, or 83 percent, submitted their 24-hour counts for September 15. The full National Domestic Violence Counts 2009 are available online at <http://www.nnedv.org/census>.

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Jane Doe Inc. is the Massachusetts state-wide membership advocacy organization dedicated to preventing and abolishing domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking; providing support for and advocacy on behalf of our members; improving options for victims/survivors of SA/DV and their children

NNEDV, a 501(c)(3) organization, is a leading voice for domestic violence victims and their allies. Its members include the 56 state and territorial coalitions against domestic violence. It works closely with them to understand the needs of domestic violence victims and advocacy programs. NNEDV has been a premiere national organization advancing the movement against domestic violence for the past 15 years, after leading efforts among domestic violence advocates and survivors in urging Congress to pass the landmark Violence Against Women Act of 1994. To learn more about NNEDV, please visit www.nnedv.org.