

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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## **Sexual and Domestic Violence Advocates Examine Homicide Reduction and Victim Confidentiality**

With potential cuts in state funding looming overhead, sexual assault and domestic violence advocates will gather on **Friday, October 30, 2009 at the Seaport Hotel in Boston** for in-depth conversations on supporting victims of rape and sexual assault and continuing the reduction in domestic violence homicides in the Commonwealth.

Throughout Massachusetts local rape crisis centers are reporting an increase in calls for services, with some areas seeing an increase in police reports as well. The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program tally for forensic exams reached 1,578 in Fiscal Year 2009, representing a 50% increase in the number of Pedi-SANE cases over the prior year. Recent cases such as the sexual assault at Massachusetts General Hospital and the gang rape in Richmond, California, raise public concerns about safety both at the system and societal levels.

While domestic violence programs and law enforcement agencies have reported dramatic increases in requests for services and police response, the number of domestic violence homicides in Massachusetts slowed down in the fall of 2008. The correlation of these numbers is significant. Mary R. Lauby, Executive Director of Jane Doe Inc., explains that these gains may be put in peril by 9-C cuts to be issued in the coming days. "There's no question that what happened here was an accident. All indicators suggested more not fewer homicides. But thanks to a concerted effort among victim advocates, law enforcement, health care and others, there has been a concrete and critical shift to make both policy and practice more victim-centered, resulting in improved responsiveness and prevention of homicides. We need to keep all the players at the table to make similar headway when it comes to all acts of sexual and domestic violence."

Lauby notes that keeping this work going will be tougher with fewer resources. "Timing couldn't be worse," she added, "since we know that the current economic downturn has created more of a need for these services."

Panels of experts will offer perspectives and inform federal policy as well as state and local policy and practice on two specific topics: 1) reduction of domestic violence homicides in Massachusetts and 2) sexual assault and confidentiality.

MA Department of Public Health Medical Director **Dr. Lauren Smith** will be the moderator of the first panel, which will feature **Middlesex District Attorney Gerald Leone**, Framingham Police Department Deputy Chief Ken Ferguson, Essex County Assistant District Attorney, Mary Alice Doyle, Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center Associate Director Kelley Dunne; Community Advocacy Program Director Sue Chandler; and JDI Communications Director Toni Troop. These

speakers represent the range of efforts that have made a tremendous difference in turning around the domestic violence homicide rate over the past year and a half.

**First Lady Diane Patrick** will moderate the second panel, featuring Lucia Zuniga, SANE Program Director; Marianne Winters, Praxis for Change and JDI Consultant; Colby Bruno, Manager Attorney Victim Right's Law Center; Lisa Kidwell, Detective UMass Amherst Police; and Lysetta Hurge-Putnam, Executive Director Independence House.

Speakers will share real life stories as examples of what has worked and what still needs to be addressed to ensure victim safety and to hold offenders accountable.

*Following this invitation only afternoon session, Jane Doe Inc. will turn to other business – electing its new officers for the coming year. The day will end with a reception featuring the day's guest, White House Advisor on Violence Against Women, Lynn Rosenthal.*

For more information about these topics or to schedule an interview, please contact JDI's Director of Communications, Toni K. Troop, at [ttroop@janedoe.org](mailto:ttroop@janedoe.org) or 617-212-7571.

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