



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 20, 2014

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

INTER-GOVERNMENTAL TASK FORCE ANNOUNCES THE LAUNCH OF A PILOT PROGRAM TO IDENTIFY AND SUPPORT HIGH RISK DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

Pilot Program in Chicago's 14th Police District Aims to Break the 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 Service (DFSS), partnering as an inter-governmental task force, announced today the launch of a pilot program to identify households at high risk for domestic violence incidents. CPD and service providers will elevate the response and support to those victims to offer additional assistance. The pilot will launch in Chicago's 14th police district.

"For the first time, this program will give us the ability to more easily identify and offer assistance to the most vulnerable domestic violence victims in the city," said Mayor Emanuel. "Everyone on the task force has a role to play in responding to domestic violence, but by working together to respond to our highest risk cases, we can all be more effective."

"We are extremely pleased to be a partner in this unprecedented collaboration with the Mayor and the Chicago Police Department working to enhance our protection of so many vulnerable victims of domestic violence and their families," said State's Attorney Anita Alvarez. "We come together in recognition of the unique dynamics of domestic violence cases and we have hit the ground running in our efforts to identify high risk households and to improve our efforts to investigate and prosecute these cases effectively."

Beginning with first responders and continuing with service providers and ultimately prosecutors, each task force partner will be adopting new and improved procedures to accomplish four specific goals:

- Identify households at an elevated risk for injury
- Elevate the law enforcement response to those households
- Proactively connect higher-risk victims to services such as counseling, case management, legal advocacy, legal representation and domestic violence shelter
- Prioritize higher risk offenders for prosecution

Patrol officers in the pilot district will complete a new assessment form that was developed by the task force to help to determine whether a victim is at elevated risk for injury. The risk assessment

used in the pilot is a series of questions designed to help identify whether a victim or family presents certain risk factors so we can make sure they are connected to the right resources.

A special protocol is triggered if the victim is at elevated risk for injury. This will ensure the household is prioritized for immediate follow-up for investigation, which may include follow up phone calls and well-being check-ins depending on the circumstances.

“Our officers respond to hundreds of domestic disturbance calls every single day, each of them a highly stressful situation that is often very dangerous for everyone involved, including the officers,” said Superintendent Garry McCarthy. “Our work through this pilot effort, in partnership with service providers, victims’ advocates and prosecutors, can make a meaningful change in the lives of victims – and begin to break the cycle of violence.”

Households at elevated risk will be referred to the State’s Attorney Targeted Abuser Call (TAC). TAC is a program that prioritizes prosecution of certain offenders based on their criminal background. These cases are given to more senior prosecutors at the State’s Attorney’s Office and receive additional level of supervisory reviews. Additionally, the State’s Attorney’s Office will connect the victims in these cases to service providers.

CPD, DFSS and service providers will work together to proactively respond to households who are at an elevated risk. Once those households are identified, service providers will prioritize those households to offer assistance with counseling, legal services, case management, and connection with service providers.

“The combination of data-driven law enforcement coupled with social services can literally mean the difference between a victim escaping a dangerous situation and starting a new life, or staying trapped in a dangerous situation that puts her in constant jeopardy,” said Department of Family and Support Services Commissioner Evelyn Diaz, “That is why DFSS and our social service allies are so pleased about the creation of this task force and how productive it has been.”

The new, state-of-the-art domestic violence-specific training for Chicago Police Officers developed by the task force and announced in December are now underway. The most recent promotional class of Sergeants and Lieutenants received seven hours of domestic violence training, exceeding state mandates. In addition, the task force collaborated on a training to improve domestic violence case reports, which has been delivered in six police districts so far this year.

CPD is also in the process of completing an interactive e-learning tool, in partnership with other task force members, to refresh instruction consistently across the entire department on the vital steps involved when responding to domestic violence incidents. This includes applicable laws, officer safety guidelines, procedures for interviewing victims and documenting evidence, serving orders of protection, and the psychological dynamics of domestic violence. This training will be mandatory to ensure that officers stay safe while providing exceptional service in response to the needs of domestic violence victims.

“As a survivor myself, I know how hard it is for many people to exit an abusive relationship,” said Ald. Deborah Graham, 29th Ward. “This pilot program will play a pivotal role in identifying households like mine was—where intervention to stop the destructive cycle was so sorely needed. I am so pleased to support this program, which will empower more Chicagoans to take action to

protect themselves and their children.”

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 Rahm 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.

###