MAY 20, 2020 Albany, NY

Following Spike in Domestic Violence During COVID-19 Pandemic, Secretary to the Governor Melissa Derosa & NYS Council on Women & Girls Launch Task Force to Find Innovative Solutions to Crisis

In Recognition of the Scope and Threat of the Issue, the Task Force Will Identify Innovative Solutions that Center on Survivors and Look Beyond the Ways Services Have Been Provided in the Past

Recommendations Will Be Presented to Governor Cuomo by Thursday, May 28th

DV Reports Overall Are Up 30 Percent in April Compared to Last Year and Incident Calls to State Have Increased 15 Percent in March Compared to Last Year

12 Percent Increase in Intimate Partner Victimizations were Reported by Large Police Departments Outside of NYC for First Quarter of 2020 Compared to Same Period in 2019

Following a spike in domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, Secretary to the Governor Melissa DeRosaand the New York State Council on Women and Girls today announced the creation of a new task force to find innovative solutions to this crisis. The task force will identify solutions to help domestic violence survivors, with the specific goal

of looking beyond the traditional ways that services have been provided in the past. The task force will make recommendations to Governor Andrew M. Cuomo by Thursday, May 28th, and the Governor will make a final policy determination.

"Since the beginning of this pandemic New York has seen a dramatic increase in the number of domestic violence cases across the state," Governor Cuomo said. "While we have already taken aggressive actions to help some of our most vulnerable New Yorkers get the help they need and get away from their abusers, there is more that we can do to modernize the services we provide as we begin to enter a new normal. I look forward to reviewing the innovative solutions that Melissa DeRosa and the entire task force come up with and putting together a new action plan to help stop this dangerous uptick in domestic violence."

"During these unprecedented times, New York has led the way in providing survivors of domestic violence access to the critical services they need to get help," Melissa DeRosa, Secretary to the Governor and Chair of the New York State Council on Women and Girls, said. "Unfortunately, the reality is that we are still seeing an increase in the number of reported cases of domestic violence across NY as this pandemic continues - we need to do more to help women who are stuck in dangerous situations. I am proud to be working with this diverse task force to develop recommendations for the Governor so we can creatively address DV."

The task force will be chaired by Melissa DeRosa. The list of members is available below:

- Scott Berkowitz - Founder and President, Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN)
- Alejandra Y. Castillo, Esq. - CEO, YWCA USA
- Karma Cottman - Executive Director, Ujima, Inc: The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community
- Nathaniel M. Fields - President and CEO, Urban Resource Institute (URI)
- Ruth M. Glenn - President and CEO, National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV)
- Peg Hacskaylo - Founder and CEO, National Alliance for Safe Housing (NASH)
- Jim Henderson - Probation and Domestic Violence Expert, Battered Women's Justice Project
- Grace Huang, JD - Policy Director, Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence
- Tandra R. LaGrone - Executive Director, In Our Own Voices
- Cindi Leive - Senior Fellow, USC-Annenberg School of Journalism and Communications
- Tonya Lovelace, MA - CEO, Women of Color Network Inc (WOCN)

- David Mandel - Executive Director, Safe & Together Institute
- Karol V. Mason - President, John Jay College of Criminal Justice
- Joan S. Meier - Professor of Law, George Washington University Law School and Director, National Family Violence Law Center at GW
- Connie Neal - Executive Director, New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NYSCADV)
- Ana L. Oliveira - President and CEO, The New York Women's Foundation
- Leslye Orloff - Director, National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project at American University Washington College of Law
- Farzana Safiullah - CEO, National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRCDV)
- Lynn Hecht Schafran, JD - Legal Director and Director, National Judicial Education Program at Legal Momentum, The Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund
- Lucy Rain Simpson - Executive Director, National Indigenous Women's Resource Network (NIWRN)
- Joe Torre - Co-Founder and Chairman, The Safe at Home Foundation and Special Advisor to Major League Baseball (MLB)
- Patricia Tototzintle - CEO, Casa de Esperanza/National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Community
- Deborah D. Tucker, MPA - President, National Center on Domestic & Sexual Violence (NCDSV)
- Deborah J. Vagins - President and CEO, National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV)
- Troy Vincent - Executive Vice President of Football Operations, NFL and National Advocate to End Domestic Violence
- Carole Warshaw, M.D. - Director, National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health
- Joanne Zannoni - Executive Director, New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NYSCASA)

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the necessary social distancing guidelines, domestic violence victims are even more vulnerable and unsafe while isolated at home without being able to get away from their abuser and there has been a reported uptick in the number of domestic violence cases in the state. Calls to the state's domestic violence hotline are up 30 percent in April compared to last year and calls increased 18 percent from February to March 2020. State Police also report domestic violence incident calls were up 15 percent in March compared to last year. Additionally, a 12 percent increase in intimate partner victimizations were reported by large police departments outside of New York City for the first quarter of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019, according to the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services.

Since NYS on PAUSE went into effect, OPDV and many state agency partners have been

working diligently to pursue strategies for putting safety information in front of victims in places that such information would not normally be available, including on social media accounts of public utilities or tax/finance. Additionally, major efforts have been underway to get safety flyers with the Hotline number hung up in essential retailers, such as grocery stores, pharmacies and home repair stores, among others.

In April, the state launched a domestic violence hotline and a new text program and confidential online service to aid victims of abuse and provide potential lifesaving ways to get help. New Yorkers seeking help can call 1-800-942-6906, text 844-997-2121 or chat with a professional on the new confidential website at www.opdv.ny.gov. The text and online services will be staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with OPDV staff who are experts in the area of domestic violence.

Contact the Governor's Press Office

Contact us by phone: Albany: (518) 474 - 8418
New York City: (212) 681 - 4640

Contact us by email: Press.Office@exec.ny.gov