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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROTECTIVE ORDERS AVAILABLE 24/7

New Court/ Attorney General/ Police/ Advocate partnership to extend protection

(Washington, DC) – Metropolitan Police Chief Cathy L. Lanier, Attorney General Linda Singer and Chief Judge Rufus King, along with Elisabeth Olds, co-Director of Survivors and Advocates for Empowerment (SAFE), announced today the launch of the After Hours Temporary Protection Order Pilot Program for residents of the Sixth and Seventh Police Districts. Over half of the domestic violence victims in the city seeking protection orders each year live in these two police districts.

To date, protection orders have only been available during business hours. Starting May 1, 2007, victims most in need of a court order of protection during court off-hours will get the assistance they need by filing an Emergency Temporary Protective Order (ETPO) that will remain in effect until the end of the next business day – allowing the victim time to return to court to request a Temporary Protection Order.

Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) officers responding to domestic violence calls in Sixth and Seventh Districts will no be able to inform victims about the ETPO process on the scene if the alleged perpetrator is not on the scene (and thus cannot be arrested), and if the officer believes that the victim is in immediate danger or subject to future bodily harm.

If the victim decides to pursue an ETPO, he or she will meet a pair of SAFE advocates at the Seventh District police station where the advocates and police officers will assist the victim through the process. An Assistant Attorney General will then review the petition, and the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) will contact a Superior Court judge. The judge will then speak with the alleged victim, and if the judge believes that an ETPO is merited, will authorize the desk sergeant to issue the order.

“This is another great collaborative effort to expand the protections available to victims of domestic violence in the District of Columbia. The Superior Court has previously teamed up with MPD, Office of Attorney General, and the advocacy community on the Intake Center at Superior Court and the Satellite Domestic Violence Intake Center at Greater Southeast Hospital,” explained Chief Judge

Rufus G. King III. “We are pleased to be able to offer greater protection, especially during the especially vulnerable and violent weekend hours, through this new program,” he added.

“Not surprisingly, perpetrators of domestic violence do not confine themselves to business hours,” observed Attorney General Singer. “Domestic violence is a crime that happens 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This program will help ensure that victims have access to protection when they most need it.”

Chief Lanier agrees. “MPD had been the only resource available to victims of domestic violence on weeknights, weekends, and holidays. Now, victims will receive the crisis intervention, advocacy and support services they need no matter the time of day or night – freeing up officers to come to the aid of more residents.”

“The wonderful thing about this collaboration between SAFE’s On Call Advocacy Program, the Metropolitan Police Department, the Court, and the Office of the Attorney General is that we can all deploy our resources in a coordinated way to prevent victims from waiting in fear until the court opens. SAFE’s On Call Advocacy Program and MPD have been working diligently to close the gaps in services after business hours, and the After Hours TPO provides a very important tool for victims and for law enforcement to create safe homes and hold offenders accountable,” said Olds, SAFE’s co-Executive Director.

The ETPO program will be in operation from 5pm to 5am each business day and from 5pm Friday through to 5am Monday on weekends. In addition, the program will operate 24-hours per day on holidays. For more information, see <http://www.dccourts.gov/dccourts/superior/dv/index.jsp> , (mpd website), or <http://www.dccadv.org/safeprogram.html> .

The United States Attorney’s Office has generously agreed to allow use of its space at the police station for this purpose. During regular business hours, victims can already seek assistance at the Domestic Violence Intake Centers located at Greater Southeast Hospital, 1328 Southern Avenue, S.E., Room 311, or the D.C. Superior Court, 500 Indiana Avenue, N.W. Room 4242. SAFE and MPD have been partners in providing after hours advocacy services since November 2006 through the OCAPP program.

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