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October 23, 2009

ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN ANNOUNCES "SERVE TO PROTECT" INITIATIVE TO TACKLE STATE'S UNSERVED ORDERS OF PROTECTION ON BEHALF OF VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Simplifying Process for Local Law Enforcement Will Break Down Barriers to Effectively Protecting Victims

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced a new initiative to address gaps in the justice system that have resulted in the failure to serve nearly 20 percent of Illinois orders of protection - court orders intended to protect survivors of domestic violence from their abusers. Madigan unveiled the new "Serve to Protect" initiative, calling upon law enforcement officials throughout the state to join together to increase the service of orders of protection and, through this effort, to prevent domestic violence.

The Attorney General made the announcement during a Domestic Violence roundtable as part of Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Madigan's office hosted the roundtable to bring together law enforcement representatives and domestic violence advocates for a continued dialogue on issues facing victims of this devastating crime.

"The order of protection is one of the strongest tools to protect survivors from further abuse," said Attorney General Madigan. "But if these orders cannot be enforced because they were never served on the abuser, they offer hollow reassurance to the people who are devastated by this crime."

In Illinois, there are currently nearly 28,000 active orders of protection. These orders usually restrict the defendant's ability to contact or communicate with his domestic violence victim. After a court issues an order of protection, law enforcement officers must serve the order on the abuser. Once an order of protection has been served, law enforcement can arrest an abuser if he violates any of the order's terms. But if an order of protection is not served on the abuser, it does not take effect and, thus, leaves law enforcement unable to arrest an abuser when he violates the order.

Through the "Serve to Protect" initiative, the Attorney General's office will work with local law enforcement agencies throughout the state to identify any unserved orders of protection and improve the process for serving these orders.

The Serve to Protect campaign stems from Madigan's office's research and analysis on the issue of unserved orders of protection. Based on this research and analysis, Madigan convened a new law enforcement partnership in Cook County over the last several months. Specifically, in July, Attorney General Madigan created the Order of Protection Enforcement Group. This group, including the Cook County Sheriff, the Cook County State's Attorney, the Illinois Department of Corrections, the Illinois State Police, the Illinois Sheriffs Association, and advocates for domestic violence survivors throughout the State, has worked together to improve the service of orders of protection in Cook County.

For example, the analysis conducted by the Attorney General's office revealed that the defendants in hundreds of unserved orders of protection were prison or jail inmates or parolees. The Order of Protection Enforcement Group has been working to serve these orders and, as a result, hundreds of orders of protection have been served, decreasing by more than four percent the number of unserved orders in Cook County. In addition to working to serve orders of protection on inmates and parolees, the Order of Protection Enforcement Group is focused on identifying barriers that prevent service and enforcement of these orders and crafting solutions to these issues. The Serve to Protect initiative will implement the solutions to the problem of unserved orders of protection that are identified through the work of Madigan's office and the Order of Protection Enforcement Group.

"When a domestic violence survivor has the courage to seek the protection of our justice system and obtain an order of protection, we must ensure that the system does not fail her," said Attorney General Madigan. "By working in partnership with law enforcement

and advocates throughout the state, we can create a more effective and responsive criminal justice system and better protect survivors of domestic violence."

Domestic violence touches families all over Illinois. Every day, four women die at the hands of their husbands or partners in the United States. Over the course of their lifetime, one in four women will be abused by her partner. These numbers mean that thousands of women will have their lives devastated by violence.

The "Serve to Protect" initiative is the latest effort by Attorney General Madigan to improve the criminal justice system's response to domestic violence and bring this often hidden crime out from behind closed doors and into the open. Since becoming Attorney General, her office has held more than 40 training sessions on the domestic violence laws, including how to recognize the signs of domestic violence. The trainings have reached more than 2,500 law enforcement officers, as well as domestic violence advocates and other court personnel such as court clerks and probation officers.

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