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**DHSS supports domestic violence victims, public safety statewide**

*Inter-agency partnership helps victims, law enforcement officers*

ANCHORAGE – A multi-agency partnership to help victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, and to hold perpetrators accountable, will continue with \$850,000 from the state Department of Health & Social Services. The coordinating agency, the Municipality of Anchorage, formally accepted the funding early this week

Since 2002, program partners report serving more than 16,000 Alaskans in 41 communities statewide. The program was named a “Best Practice” in the Police Executive Research Forum for 2010.

“We are committed to collaborating with community partners as we continue to battle domestic violence and sexual assault,” said DHSS Commissioner William Streur. “The Alaska Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Intervention Program has produced measurable results that increase safety for victims and vulnerable Alaskans.”

The program takes two approaches to increasing victim safety and offender accountability. First, the program funds a municipal clerk position that enters information about bail conditions into the Alaska Public Safety Information Network. Officers statewide can tap into this unique database and see if a driver they just pulled over is forbidden to be in contact with his or her passenger. This has led to a nearly fivefold increase in arrests for violating bail conditions, which often prohibit contact with the alleged victim.

Second, nonprofit partners provide a variety of services to victims and dependent family members, whether that’s an emergency flight out of a community, or care for children whose mother was killed. Programs have discovered tragic statistics among their participants through voluntary surveys: over 79 percent of victims reported more than 10 previous incidents of abuse, 85 percent were found to be in “severe to extreme danger.” Providing interventions including a flight of their community may literally be a lifesaver.

Program partners include the Anchorage Police Department, Anchorage Department of Health & Human Services, Municipal Prosecutor’s Office, Abused Women’s Aid in Crisis (AWAIC), Standing Together Against Rape (STAR) and Victims for Justice. Other results from the program include a 78.1% decrease in average time to serve a warrant in these cases and a significant reduction in recidivism, or repeat offenses, at 49.5%.

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