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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Chester County Awarded Grant to  
Prevent Violence Against Women**

Chester County has been awarded the STOP Violence Against Women Grant to develop law enforcement and prosecution strategies to decrease violent crimes against women. This grant also helps to develop and enhance services provided to the victims of violent crimes. The agencies receiving funds under the grant include the District Attorney's Office, the Domestic Violence Center of Chester County, and the Crime Victims' Center of Chester County. The total award amount is \$250,000, beginning in January of 2019 and continuing through the end of 2020.

Chester County District Attorney Tom Hogan stated, "Protecting women from violence is a top priority in Chester County. We have used the cooperation of all law enforcement partners to stop such violence from happening and to punish the perpetrators when women are abused. This grant will allow us to continue and expand on our efforts to keep women safe."

The STOP Grant objectives are focused on the preservation of core services and activities, including specialized units of law enforcement that understand the context of sexual and domestic violence. They use that understanding to support victims in the criminal justice system. These specialized units also draw upon their training and experience to collect and preserve evidence, document injuries, record witness statements, identify primary aggressors, and document prior violence and intimidation by suspects. For instance, the victims of domestic violence often are

reluctant to testify against their abusers. These specialized investigators and prosecutors are able to work with the victims, connect them to victim advocacy services, and to ensure a strong prosecution that holds the abusers responsible.

Victim services are a fundamental part of the collaboration mandated by the STOP Program and a crucial channel to promote victim safety, autonomy, and recovery. This includes crisis intervention, supportive counseling, advocacy on behalf of victims, accompaniment to legal proceedings connected to the abuse, legal assistance, emergency housing, safety planning, sexual assault response teams, use of the domestic violence Lethality Assessment Program (LAP), victim compensation assistance, language services, services to underserved populations, and transportation assistance.

Training is part of the STOP Program to strengthen the criminal and juvenile justice systems' response to violence against women, increase the prosecution of violence against women, and augment the advocacy and services available to victims.

District Attorney Hogan added, "The LAP protocol is an example of a program that came out of and is sustained by the STOP grant. LAP uses a series of simple questions from police to victims to determine if a case of domestic abuse is likely to turn to extreme violence. LAP is a valuable tool for law enforcement to assess the potential lethality of a domestic violence situation and intervene before the violence escalates. Chester County police are some of the leaders for using LAP in Pennsylvania."

Two critical partners in the effort to stop violence against women are the Domestic Violence Center of Chester County (DVCCC) and the Crime Victims' Center of Chester County (CVC).

Dolly Wideman-Scott, Chief Executive Officer of the DVCCC, said "This award strengthens our partnerships and strategies to address violence against women. It also enhances our ability to connect and follow-up with victims referred to DVCCC by police through the LAP program by having our first dedicated LAP Advocate supported by this grant."

Christine Zaccarelli, Chief Executive Officer of the CVC, said "The STOP grant allows us the opportunity to strengthen our partnership with the DA's Office and DVCCC to continue our work to support victims of violence against women because we know that victims are better served when we work together. With this

grant we look forward to continuing our weekly walk-in center that was piloted in Coatesville this past summer and mobile counseling for victims with transportation hardships.” CVC offers weekly walk in hours at the Brandywine Center for Community Health every Thursday from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.

The Chester County STOP Collaborative Team will oversee implementation of the grant. The STOP Collaborative Team is a county-wide effort. Representatives from many disciplines in Chester County work together to stop violence against women and enhance services to victims. Law enforcement, prosecution, mental health, drug and alcohol, medical, and victim advocacy personnel work together to create, disseminate, and implement protocols to protect women and prosecute those who injure women.

The STOP Grant is awarded by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency.

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Approved for release:

Thomas P. Hogan