

# Governor and Attorney General Draw Attention to Domestic Violence

*Survivors Gain Access to New Address Confidentiality  
Department of Correction Establishes Victim Services Unit  
New Funding Available Under Domestic Violence Fund*

WILMINGTON – State officials and advocates gathered in the Governor's office this morning as he signed a proclamation marking October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month, drawing attention to the start of a new Address Confidentiality Program in Attorney General Beau Biden's office, a new victim services unit in the Department of Correction and new funds now available to help non-profits increase services to domestic violence survivors.

"Behind every statistic is a personal story of abuse and victimization," said the Governor. The work to stop domestic violence goes on everyday by law enforcement, advocates, and many others. This is a battle we are going to have to wage for a very long time. If you are a survivor, know that there is help. If you know someone in a situation you suspect is dangerous, get them help."

"After facing the devastation of domestic violence, no one should have to live with the terrifying knowledge that their attacker could find them with a simple search," said Attorney General Biden. "The Address Confidentiality Program gives survivors the opportunity to recover, reclaim their privacy, and stay safe as they rebuild their lives."

In 2010, over 28,000 incidents of domestic violence were reported in Delaware, according to the State Bureau of Identification. 45-percent of those incidents were between intimate partners. State domestic violence and rape crisis

hotlines answered over 3,600 calls for help throughout the year, and over 3,200 petitions for Protection From Abuse orders were processed by Family Court.

### **Address Confidentiality Program**

The new Address Confidentiality Program, authorized by legislation sponsored by Senator Patricia Blevins, D-Elsmere, Representative Michael Barbieri, D-Newark, Representative Deborah Hudson, R-Wilmington, and Senator Liane Sorenson, R-Hockessin earlier this year, increases protections for domestic violence survivors. It allows victims of domestic violence sexual assault, and stalking, as well as those in the witness protection program, to keep their actual address private by using a Department of Justice authorized substitute address in its place. It was signed into law by the Governor shortly after its passage in the General Assembly and became operational on October 3.

“The Address Confidentiality Program provides an important safeguard for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Having a protected address gives invaluable protection to vulnerable people who are working to rebuild their lives,” said Senator Blevins, who also chairs the state’s Domestic Violence Coordinating Council.

“Domestic Violence Awareness Month provides a great opportunity to raise awareness about the prevalence of domestic violence in our communities and to call attention to the many services and resources available to help victims and their children,” said Carol Post, Executive Director of the Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence. “The Address Confidentiality Program will be a critical safety planning tool for victims who are at serious risk for re-victimization.”

Address Confidentiality Program participants’ street addresses will be disclosed only to law enforcement when it is necessary in an emergency. The Program is run by the Attorney General’s

Victim Witness Assistance Program at no cost to participants, and parents and guardians can apply on behalf of minors or incapacitated individuals. Similar programs have already been adopted in 17 other states. For more information, survivors can call the Attorney General's victim assistance at 1-800-870-1790.

Attorney General Biden also noted additional significant advances the state has made in recent years to protect vulnerable individuals and help victims recover. Delaware's Victims Compensation Assistance Program, which provides compensation to innocent victims of crime to assist with their recovery, was expanded under legislation passed this year. In 2010, the Department of Justice spearheaded legislation that extended Protection from Abuse orders from one to two years, or for the lifetime of the victim in certain cases. Strangulation was codified as a stand-alone felony, as well, giving prosecutors the tools to put perpetrators of this crime – a leading indicator of domestic violence deaths – behind bars.

### **New Victims Services at the Department of Correction**

Department of Correction Commissioner Carl Danberg announced today the establishment of a new victims unit at the DOC. The DOC has established a [Victim Services Unit](#) to assist victims and survivors in becoming both informed and involved so that they may experience less frustration and trauma with prison and probation personnel and be better prepared to participate in the corrections process if they choose. The DOC's Victim Services Unit phone number, which is staffed during regular business hours Monday through Friday, is (302) 857-5440.

Victims and survivors may also choose to register with [VINELink](#), the online version of VINE (Victim Information and Notification Everyday), a national victim notification network. This service allows crime victims and survivors to obtain timely and reliable information about criminal cases and the custody status of offenders 24 hours a day. Victims

and other concerned citizens can also register to be notified by phone, email or TTY device when an offender's custody status changes.

### **New Domestic Violence Fund**

The state's new Domestic Violence Fund, which comes from a fee charged for each certified copy of a marriage license/certificate, is now seeking applications for funding from non-profit agencies who help survivors of domestic violence who want to enhance or increase their services. Currently, approximately \$98,000 is available to programs in all three counties. The Delaware Criminal Justice Council (CJC) and the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) are administering the program. Applications are due by November 3, 2011.

### **24-hour Domestic Violence Hotlines**

**New Castle County 302.762-6110**

**Kent and Sussex Counties 302.422.8058**

**Bilingual Kent and Sussex 302.745-9874**