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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Reports of increased domestic calls nationwide prompt local law enforcement to remind victims that they are never too busy to help

April 9, 2020 – Rochester, Minn. – As Americans are directed to stay at home as much as possible to help slow the transmission of coronavirus epidemic (COVID-19), law enforcement professionals are seeing an uptick in domestic reports locally and nationwide.

“Times of crisis and stress can heighten emotions and trigger abuse,” said Rochester Police Chief James Franklin, which can prompt more calls about domestic situations. “We are here and ready to respond to victim’s needs.”

Even before people were sheltering in their homes due to the coronavirus epidemic, an act of domestic violence occurred in the United States every 15 seconds, according to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. With people being forced to stay in their homes, victims may find it nearly impossible to escape an abuser with whom they may be co-sheltering.

According to Olmsted County Attorney Mark Ostrem, the vast majority of households are doing well. “Our community has responded very well to the shelter in place and other emergency restrictions,” Ostrem says. But he notes that no one is “immune” from this emergency. “Unlike other social challenges such as crime or homelessness, we are all experiencing this emergency.”

Residents are encouraged to call or text 911 for help if anyone in their home is experiencing abuse or violence. Victims are not forced to remain in an unsafe space because of the coronavirus emergency. Help and support are readily available.

“We are never too busy to respond to a call for help,” said Olmsted County Sheriff Kevin Torgerson. Neither are local social workers or advocates, he says. “We have the resources to remove an abuser from the home or find a safe place for the victim to stay. We want to help.”

Attorney Ostrem also reminds community members that our new routines and the stay at home order have changed the way media is reporting these days. “There are many stories that would normally receive media attention that simply aren’t happening due to the focus on the pandemic,” said Ostrem. He urges people to be mindful of the change in media reporting and how that new lens of information can skew negative.

“We should always give significant importance to domestic violence,” he said. “There are always too many domestic violence events. Maybe this new lens will help us turn that curve.”

If you or a loved one is a victim of domestic abuse, call:

- [The Women’s Shelter and Support Center](tel:507-285-1010) at 507-285-1010
- [Family Service Rochester Women’s Domestic Violence Group](tel:507-287-1010) at 507-287-1010
- [The National Domestic Abuse Hotline](tel:1-800-787-3224) at 1-800-787-3224

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