



# NEWS RELEASE

## HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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### **Howard County Police to Launch New Domestic Violence Unit**

With the start of national Domestic Violence Awareness Month yesterday, the Howard County Police Department is announcing its plans to launch a new domestic violence unit to better serve victims impacted by this type of crime. The department was recently notified that it will receive federal grant funds to create the new team.

“This new unit will improve our ability to help and protect victims of domestic violence,” said acting Chief William McMahon. “We recognize that these investigations are best served by officers who are specially trained to understand the issues surrounding domestic violence cases.”

The unit, which will include a police supervisor, an officer and an administrative employee, will provide comprehensive investigation and follow-up of domestic violence cases in the county. It will be assigned to the criminal investigations bureau in the police department.

Officers in the unit will receive specialized training in domestic violence issues and will devote 100 percent of their time to these cases. They will provide victims and their families with access to appropriate social services and help them obtain protective orders, when appropriate. The unit also will work to increase the number of arrests for domestic violence and develop a tracking system to identify repeat offenders.

The team will work closely with the Domestic Violence Center of Howard County, which offers shelter and counseling services to victims. They also will coordinate with the state’s attorney’s office to assist with prosecution of cases, the sheriff’s office to continue combined efforts to serve protective orders, and Howard County General Hospital to ensure police are notified of domestic violence incidents.

The unit also will focus attention on foreign-born victims, who may not report domestic violence incidents due to language or cultural barriers. The team will develop strategies to overcome those challenges for immigrant residents.

“We think this project will have a significant impact on our citizens who are dealing with domestic violence in their lives,” said McMahon.

The grant will fund employee salaries, training and some equipment. The department will receive approximately \$400,000 over two years.

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