



FCADV

Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Increase in Domestic Violence Crimes Shows Need for Resources

For Immediate Release:

Contact:

Leisa Wiseman, Director
Eternal & Internal Affairs
850/425-2749 or 284-4352
wiseman.leisa@fcadv.org

Yesterday's report showing a 39-year low in Florida's crime rate was good news for most Floridians. But the lone area of exception – domestic violence – is clear evidence that the state must do better in preventing this shameless crime and supporting its innocent victims. The state's 2009 Annual Uniform Crime Report showed significant reductions in every major category of crime but domestic violence offenses. Overall, domestic violence represented 40.7 percent of all comparably reported violent crimes last year.

“These statistics are devastating, but we must remember they're not just numbers on a report – each report represents women, men and children whose lives have been turned upside down by someone who is supposed to love them,” said Tiffany Carr, President/CEO of the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence. “We must never forget that 232 people were killed by someone they once trusted, someone they once loved.”

The report, released Wednesday by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, reflects a stunning 15.6 percent increase in domestic violence-related murders and a 71.4 percent increase in domestic violence manslaughters. The domestic violence-related murders account for one out of every five murders statewide. Rep. Denise Grimsley (R-Sebring) responded to the report saying, “While we can be encouraged by the continued overall reduction in crime, the dramatic increase in domestic violence stalking, manslaughter and homicide is horrific and completely unacceptable. As Chair of the House Healthcare Appropriations Committee, I am committed to supporting Florida's certified centers but more importantly to protect those escaping domestic violence at their most dangerous time.”

Additionally, the FDLE report highlighted an increase of almost 32 percent in stalking, a typical precursor to homicide. More than 116,500 individuals reported a domestic violence crime during the past calendar year. “Domestic violence is an epidemic in Florida, and communities must come together and stop this heinous crime,” said Carr.

Carr pledged to continue working with legislative leaders to address the rising deficit in the state's Domestic Violence Trust Fund to prevent further domestic violence-related deaths. The trust fund is supported in part by fees on marriages and divorces, both of which have seen a drop-off in the current economic environment. As a result, Carr said, domestic violence centers are facing a \$3.8 million cut in funding. Last year, Florida's 42 certified domestic violence centers were forced to turn away more than 7,100 survivors and their children in need of emergency shelter due to a lack of beds, and hundreds more had to be sheltered at hotels.

“The demand for emergency services has never been greater, and the resources have never been less,” Carr said. “Florida’s domestic violence centers will be forced to shut down shelters, decrease services, and reduce bed space if the Florida Legislature doesn’t provide the means to address this deficit. People’s lives are very much at risk.”

The stunning data reflected in the 2009 Uniform Crime Report, coupled with the surge in demand for emergency shelter services, clearly demonstrates the critical needs facing Florida’s domestic violence centers, Carr said. “Florida’s certified domestic violence centers are in most cases the only safe haven and hope available to victims and their children fleeing violent homes,” she said.

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About the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence

FCADV serves as the professional association for Florida's 42 certified domestic violence centers and is the primary representative of survivors and their children in the public policy arena. The Coalition works to end violence by providing leadership, advocacy, education, training, technical assistance, public policy development, public awareness and support to certified domestic violence centers in Florida.