

# **10.1.07 - Zero-Tolerance Domestic Abuse Policy Announced**

**Governor Deval L. Patrick**

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**October 1, 2007**

### **As Delivered**

Thank you all for waiting, we had a rich conversation in the other room and I know that Diane and I, neither of us were quite ready to have it end. But let me first acknowledge Secretary Burke who is here, Secretary Bigby is here. Chairman Michael Costello has joined us as well. Under Secretary Mary Elizabeth Heffernan is here, where are you Mary? There you are, ok. Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy and Legislative Affairs Layla Demilia Shepherd is here as well, than you for being here. Sheredan Haynes the Executive Director of my own council to address domestic and sexual violence, thank you Sheredan for being here. And Mary Lauvy, the extraordinary Director of the Jane Doe. And a whole host of others who have given us a rich insight into a crisis.

There were 39 domestic violence deaths in the first nine months of this year. Just this summer, three in Brockton, leaving five motherless children. A grandmother in Everett. A mother in Norton, who was herself killed, her two daughters were wounded and miraculously survived, and then the perpetrator took his own life in front of a commuter train. Death is the most extreme result of sexual and domestic violence, but there are lots and lots of serious injuries and then the psychological impact on children, on neighbors, on communities, on those commuters on that train, who see those tragedies played out and that horror played out in front of them. Diane and I are here to bear witness to this tragedy and to ask all that are here to join us in bearing witness to these tragedies and to look for new strategies. Stronger, more effective strategies to bring this kind of thing to an end.

I want to thank all of the first-responders and the service providers, many of whom are represented here, who have so ably and so wisely, with, I've heard about it, insufficient resource, met this challenge in communities all over the Commonwealth. And we have, in order to call attention to them, and most especially to the victims, and maybe even more so to the strategies that can work to prevent these kind of tragedies, declare this month domestic violence awareness month, and we will work hard with those here and those represented here, to strike out on new strategies that can bring better results for the commonwealth. The department of justice has provided a grant of \$1.3 million for the Executive Office of Public Safety, the Municipal Police Training Committee and Jane Doe Inc., to collaborate on training Massachusetts police officers to respond to and prevent incidents of domestic violence. The Department

of Public Health has received funding to support the Massachusetts Rural Domestic and Sexual Violence Project, enhancing our ability to provide services to kids and families in further flung communities and to organize and implement violence prevention initiatives in the Commonwealth. The Department of Social Services is dedicating a portion of the fiscal year domestic violence expansion funds, to support strategies that most effectively reach women and men at imminent risk of serious harm, including homicide. DSS will also provide a half million dollars to the emergency housing stabilization fund for quick flexible cash assistance to prevent families from becoming homeless due to domestic violence or danger. We want to encourage communities to explore new ways of addressing domestic violence situations.

How do we reach out to victims of these crimes? How can we all take responsibility as family, friends, neighbors, members of community that see our stake in each other, to play a role and together develop solutions to domestic violence? How do we talk to children about this crisis, about what they see, about how it hurts them and about how they can get the help and the healing that they need. And how can we come together as a community to hold offenders accountable for this violence.

In Dorchester, through an innovative program called "Close to Home," neighbors are talking to neighbors about domestic violence and the toll it takes. Organizers are creating a community-based network of prevention and intervention designed by that community to foster neighborhood-wide responsibility to prevent and reduce the impact of domestic violence. In Newburyport, the Jeanne-Geiger Crisis Center has worked with the police, the courts and other partners to form a nationally recognized high risk response team, that is demonstrating significant results. It was born of a tragedy, described to us today. The death of Dorothy Guinta-Cotter's resulted the community coming together to examine what went wrong, what could be more effectively to intervene in potentially lethal situations and to save lives. There was a chilling account of the emergency response tape, the 9-1-1 tape, I think it was, that is now used in training of police officers to sensitize those first responders to what is actually happening.

This is not an academic issue. It's not some theory. It's people in horrible crisis, sometime at risk of and sometimes in fact, losing their lives. This team in Newburyport has been in place over two years now and is showing tremendous promise as the best practice.

Today, I'm directing the Lieutenant Governor, Secretary Burke and Secretary Bigby, working with the Sexual and Domestic Violence Council, which Sheridan Haines leads, to explore the Newburyport high risk protocol and the "Close to Home" approach to domestic violence as a public, civic issue, and as a first task of the new council to deliver to me a set of best practice recommendations, addressing both the public health and public safety aspects of domestic violence so we can implement and scale-up across the commonwealth, programs we know work.

To close, I want to point out that there are services available right now. If you are a victim of domestic violence or a family member or a friend, and if you don't mind, I'm going to ask the media outlets to help us get this word out, please know that there are free, confidential services available to you, 24 hours per day, seven days a week, every day of the year. Call the state-wide domestic hotline, SafeLink it's called, at 1-877-785-2020. Let me repeat. SafeLink can be reached at 1-877-785-2020. Or go to [Janedoe.org](http://Janedoe.org) to locate the domestic violence program nearest to you, and I thank the media in advance for letting us use you to help get this word out.