Office of the Jefferson County Attorney
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December 2, 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Jefferson County Attorney secures increase for domestic violence victim support

Federal grant of $176,185 funds victim advocates in the office's Domestic Violence Intake Center and is part of more than $1.5 million in recent federal grants given to local government agencies to serve DV victims

LOUISVILLE–Domestic violence victims in Louisville will continue to have a place to go for immediate legal action and protection, thanks to Jefferson County Attorney Mike O'Connell and $176,185 in federal grant money.

This is the largest award the Jefferson County Attorney's office (JCAO) has ever received from the national Victim of Crimes Act (VOCA). The grant funds three of the JCAO's victim advocates, including one advocate whose sole focus is victims who are at a high risk of deadly abuse. This year's increase of nearly $24,000 will go toward training on intimate partner/family violence and operating expenses, including the cost of interpreter services and increased pension obligations.

The JCAO's award from VOCA was one of four federal grants totaling more than $1.5 million announced Monday by Jefferson County partners. O'Connell joined Congressman John Yarmuth, Mayor Greg Fischer and representatives from the Louisville Metro Police Department, the Louisville Metro Criminal Justice Commission and the Center for Women and Families to share details of the additional services to victims of domestic abuse in the next three years. The awards include a $750,000 Improving Criminal Justice Responses (ICJR) award, of which the JCAO is a beneficiary of training opportunities for its prosecutors and advocates.

"We must find ways as partner agencies to leverage our work together and seek additional funding in the face of budget shortages," O'Connell said. "Only through partnerships like these can Louisville fully support victims throughout their journeys as survivors."

JCAO victim advocates work out of the Domestic Violence Intake Center (DVIC) at the Hall of Justice. Opened in April 2001, the DVIC was the result of local criminal justice and community partners' commitment to supporting

victims seeking legal action. Founding partners included the Jefferson County Attorney's office, the office of the Circuit Court Clerk (OCCC), LMPD, the Jefferson County Sheriff's office, the Center for Women and Families and the National Council for Jewish Women, among others.

In 2009, O'Connell's first full year in office, the DVIC was relocated to an expanded space of approximately 2,500 square feet. Prior to expansion, only victims seeking both an emergency protective order (EPO) and criminal complaint received services in the DVIC. After expansion, EPO clerks from the OCCC moved all functions permanently to the DVIC.

Now, all domestic violence victims seeking any type of offered legal service are directly assisted in the DVIC. The DVIC processes EPOs 24 hours a day and Jefferson County Attorney's office staff serve victims 108.5 hours each week, from 6 a.m. – 12:30 a.m. each week day and 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. on weekends. Combining all services in one centralized location has resulted in significant increases in clients obtaining needed advocacy services. DVIC advocates served 4,450 victims in 2018.

O'Connell operates two specialty units for criminal prosecution: domestic violence and DUI. The office's domestic violence prosecution unit handled 3,858 DV and sexual assault cases in 2018. Nearly 40 members of O'Connell's staff are involved with domestic violence cases on a daily basis.

"These awards of $1.5 million show the incredible commitment and expertise that my office and other local partners provide to victims of domestic violence in Louisville," O'Connell said.

The Center for Women and Families honored O'Connell with its Public Service Award in 2017. O'Connell joined a list of notable recipients of the award, including Jerry Abramson, David Armstrong, Judi Patton, Anne Northrup and John Yarmuth, that was first given in 1991.

About VOCA funding

The Crime Victims Fund (the Fund), established by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA), is a major funding source for victim services throughout the nation. Millions of dollars have been deposited into the Fund annually from criminal fines, forfeited bail bonds, penalties, and special assessments collected by U.S. Attorneys' Offices, federal U.S. courts, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. To date, Fund dollars have always come from offenders convicted of federal crimes, not from taxpayers. For more information, visit http://ojp.gov/ovc/