



NYPD

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New York City Police Department
John Jay DV Conference: Opening Remarks
10/26/2016
Inspector Kathleen White

- **Good morning, everyone.**
- **Thank you for inviting me here today.**
- **I'm Inspector Kathleen White, the NYPD's Executive Officer of the Domestic Violence Unit.**
- **Before I deliver my prepared remarks, I want to start off by thanking the organizers from John Jay and the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence for planning of today's event.**
- **And thank you to all those participating in the panel later today.**
- **It's so important for all us to have these discussions on domestic violence.**



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- **As the executive officer of NYPD's Domestic Violence Unit, I'm here to ensure that reducing violent and aggressive behavior within domestic and intimate relationships remains one of the NYPD's top objectives....from our executives dictating policy all the way to the officers on patrol.**
- **I've worked in law enforcement for 33 years in many different assignments of roles and in that time I've found domestic violence to be one of the most difficult crimes to combat.**
- **That's because it often happens in the privacy of the victim's home.....a place where they are supposed to feel safe.**
- **It's also difficult to combat because it is cross-cultural.**



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- **It affects individuals in every community regardless of age....economic status....sexual orientation....gender.....race.....religion....and nationality.**
- **However, we.....not only as a Department but as a country....recognize this.**
- **The introduction of the Violence Against Women Act in 1994 helped local police agencies across the country develop domestic violence related programs.**
- **The Act provided funding and resources toward investigation and prosecution of domestic crimes. It also gave law enforcement more tools to combat Domestic Violence.**



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- **The NYPD created the Domestic Violence Unit in 1995.....a unit which reports directly to the Chief of Department, our highest ranking uniformed member of service.**
- **That goes to show you how seriously the NYPD treats domestic related incidents.....since my direct report is the Chief of Department.**
- **With the creation of the Unit, we began training officers to deal specifically with victims and perpetrators of domestic violence.**
- **Every year since 95', we learned and appropriately expanded the Unit.**
- **Today, 450 Domestic Violence Prevention Officers and supervisors are assigned to 85 domestic violence subunits in 76 precincts and 9 PSAs.**



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- **Additionally, our DVOs work very closely with investigators, district attorneys, and community partners to advocate for the victims and build cases against offenders.**
- **They are some of the hardest working cops in the city.**
- **Our DVOs and domestic violence detectives review nearly 280,000 Domestic Incident Reportsor DIRs..... a year.**
- **Those reports are not merely words on paper.....they tell a story.**
- **Our officers know that each DIR is potential victim.....a fellow New Yorker in need of OUR assistance.**



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- They meticulously review each and every report to determine which victim has a high propensity for increased violence.
- These reports are designed to increase our officers ability to efficiently conduct an initial risk assessment
- ...We include a series of questions to ask a victim or potential victim that will assist our officers determine the propensity or increased likelihood of continued violence.
- This includes, but is certainly not limited to, if the perpetrator abuses drugs or alcohol, the employment status of the perpetrator, and the perpetrator's criminal history and history of violence.



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- We believe that focusing on the perpetrator's history is particularly important.
- It helps us gauge his or her mental state and helps us determine the propensity for violence.
- You see, over the years, we learned that risk assessment and intervention is key to reducing volatile situations and stopping the cycle of violence we know all too well.
- The more information we know about the perpetrator AND the victim, the quicker we can react and diffuse any potentially harmful situation.
- Now, our officers don't base their assessment solely on DIRs....there are just too many variables in play.



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- That's why our DVO officers and investigators conduct follow-up home visits.
- Last year, our officers conduct nearly **154 THOUSAND** follow-up home visits a year.
- Of which, **81 THOUSAND**, or 52 percent, yielded positive contacts.....meaning they were able to make face-to-face contact with the victim.
- From analyzing reports and ACTUALLY witnessing the home life of the victim and offender, our officers can determine exactly how to handle each case.
- This includes affecting arrests, issuing orders of protection, and creating a safety plan for the victim.
- Our approach has seen positive results so far.



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- In 2015, we saw the lowest recorded number of domestic homicides to date.....
-and I owe it all to the talented and dedicated officers on the street, my support staff at One Police Plaza, our law enforcement partners, the district attorneys' office, and the many advocacy groups.
- Still, there is much work to be done.....especially since that **70 percent** of victims killed in domestic incidents did not file any previous domestic related incident.
- There are many, many victims still afraid to come forward and make a report.



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- **However, we're actively focusing on that issue through a series of initiatives and collaborative tactics I'll talk about in a few moments.**
- **Because if there is one message I want to convey to all of you here today is that the Department will spare NO expense in combatting domestic violence and it will NEVER be tolerated in New York City.**
- **Now, I don't want anyone in this room to think that our officers are focused solely on intimate partner relationships.**
- **We also work closely in combatting elderly abuse.**
- **We've found that we're increasingly coming to the aid of seniors who are victims of abuse in various ways.**



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- **The National Adult Protective Services Association determined that 90% of elder abusers are family members or some other individuals that the elderly patient trusted.**
- **They tend to fall prey to financial crimes, physical, and even sexual abuse.**
- **The elderly with cognitive impairments are particularly susceptible victims.**
- **Unfortunately, a 2011 New York State Study found that only 1 in 23 cases of elder abuse come to the attention of law enforcement.**
- **Therefore, we're re-educating our DVOs, investigators, and even patrol cops how to recognize elder abuse.**



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- **We know that in cases of domestic abuse.....but especially in elderly abuse.....early recognition and response to cases of neglect may save lives and reduce suffering.**
- **We teach them to be aware of signs of neglect.....like dehydration, malnutrition, over or under medication, and even poor hygiene.**
- **We train our officers to seize evidence, document what they observe and smell, and alert the proper officials for follow-up visits.**
- **If handling domestic violence cases seems like a daunting task for our officers.....that's because it is.**
- **In order to stay at the forefront of combatting this issue, we've increased our technological capabilities for our officers.**



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- **This helps them respond to each incident and build cases in a more efficient, more precise manner.**
- **Last year, every uniformed member in the Department received a cell phone.**
- **As our officers respond to a scene, they can scan names or date of births of perpetrators...**
- **...review Department databases for previous incidents, complaints, or arrests...**
- **...or even check for warrants or gun licenses.**
- **These phones allow our officers to take high quality photos that can be used as evidence to build cases against perpetrators and keep them in jail or prison.**



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- **But most importantly, these phones provide a direct link from a victim to our Domestic Violence Officers or investigators.**
- **By doing this, it will encourage victims of domestic violence to come forward and report any crime or abuse to our police officers.**
- **We also encourage reporting by raising awareness.**
- **During the month of October, which is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the Department hosted training conferences, and sponsored events that place an emphasis on offering information and resources to the victims in nearly**



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ALL of our precincts and PSAs.

- **Additionally, we'll continue to get the word out through a social media push on all of our Department platforms and accounts.**
- **As we inform the public of domestic violence, and encourage the victims to report any abuse against them, we'll be able to better provide them with the support and hope they need.**
- **As the Department continues to develop and redevelop it's strategies to combat domestic violence, I've found that collaborating with our community partners and advocates is key to prevention.**
- **We work closely with all our partners, but the Department and Safe Horizons developed several initiatives that will raise awareness and advocate for the victim while simultaneously working to prevent violence in the homes.**



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- **The Crime Victim Advocate Program** also known as CVAP is our first and most recent example.
- This joint program places Safe Horizon CVAP personnel directly into the precincts and PSAs to provide guidance to our officers and advocacy for the victims.
- By the end of this year, **26 local commands** will be participating in this program, with 85 precinct and PSA participating by 2018.
- Additionally, we have initiatives geared toward protecting children exposed to domestic violence.
- We know that children who are exposed to domestic violence incidents often grow-up to become offenders themselves.



- In the 23rd Precinct of Upper Manhattan the **Child Trauma Response Team** is a program in which the the local DVOs work in conjunction with Safe Horizons staff to coordinate home visits within 72 hours after an incident.
- This program has additional clinical staff to intervene with children who have witnessed serious domestic violence, with the goal of breaking the cycle of violence.
- The home visit will include a child trauma specialist to assist in safety planning and a mental health assessment.
- Following this initial outreach, a wide array of support services are offered to the child or children and the caregiver through a series of therapy sessions.



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- **By providing therapy sessions and addressing the needs of the children, we WILL break the cycle of violence.**
- **Additionally, we installed the Domestic Violence Homicide Prevention Initiative in the 75th Precinct in Brooklyn.**
- **The 7-5 records and average of 10 THOUSAND DIRs a year.....the highest number of domestic violence incidents in the city.**
- **This initiative is an additional collaborative effort with the Brooklyn District Attorney's office to provide officers and advocates with additional risk assessment tools.**



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- It also helps high-propensity victims of violence navigate through the legal process so we can develop a safe AND efficient plan to focus on their safety.
- Finally, we recognize that in some instances it's difficult to break down cultural barriers when investigating domestic violence.....it's just a fact of life.
- The **Early Victim Engagement Project**, or EVE, in the 67th Precinct works with local community advocacy groups.
- Some communities are hesitant to report incidents of abuse to the police due to their immigration status, religious beliefs, or cultural upbringings.



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- **The EVE program** is designed to develop trust by bringing local community leaders and advocates, who best understand a particular neighborhood's culture, into the fold.
- All our initiatives place an emphasis on collaboration.
- If there is one thing I learned in the 30 years I've been in law enforcement it's that collaboration between the Department.....the District Attorneys' Office.....our community partners.....and victim's advocates are key.
- And I know it's key to combatting and reducing domestic violence in the city.
- Because none of us can do alone.....what ALL of us can do together.



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- **That includes the members of the media in attendance today.**
- **We can talk about all our great programs.....all of our great advancements and collaborative efforts.**
- **However, we rely on YOU to help get the word out to the victims about the resources available to them.**
- **I hope today's event will give you a better understanding on the issues facing domestic violence and how the Department adapted its police tactics to handle it.**
- **I thank you once again for inviting me to speak at this event.**



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- **By keeping a transparent channel of communication, we can continue to innovate and develop unique ways to protect the victims.**
- **After all, that's why we're here today: to defend ALL victims from domestic violence.**
- **In closing, thank you and I hope you all enjoy the rest of today's speakers and the upcoming panel.**