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June 20, 2013

TOOLKIT NOW AVAILABLE TO PREVENT LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER-INVOLVED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

*Florida State University Researchers Developed Online Training, Supported by Verizon Foundation Grant*

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — A new toolkit developed by Florida State University researchers to prevent domestic violence involving law enforcement officers is now available to all criminal justice agencies in the Southeast in the first phase of a plan to make the toolkit available to agencies across the nation.

The National Prevention Toolkit on Officer-Involved Domestic Violence is a first-of-its-kind national initiative that aims to prevent domestic violence in the homes of criminal justice officers. The centerpiece of the toolkit is an online training curriculum that is available free to law enforcement agencies.

Funded by the Verizon Foundation, the Institute for Family Violence Studies at Florida State University’s College of Social Work partnered with the state’s criminal justice community to create the toolkit, which is based on a Florida pilot prevention program launched in 2009.

The Florida project garnered national attention after more than 40,000 officers in the state completed the training and reported that they are learning and implementing prevention strategies to reduce officer-involved domestic violence. In October 2012, the Verizon Foundation funded the institute’s development of the National Prevention Toolkit on Officer-Involved Domestic Violence, drawing from the Florida model.

“Domestic violence is a public health issue,” said Karen Oehme, director of the Institute for Family Violence Studies at FSU’s College of Social Work. “It crosses racial, socioeconomic and occupational categories, and all of our nation’s dedicated and conscientious officers deserve to have every tool at their disposal for making their families and communities safer. We appreciate the Verizon Foundation and all of our partners who have helped pave the way for the National Prevention Toolkit.”
In the first phase of the national initiative, the online training and support materials will be provided to agencies in 10 states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

The goals of the initiative are to:

- Educate officers about the dynamics and impact of officer-involved domestic violence
- Support a law enforcement culture that prioritizes prevention efforts and officer / family wellness and also disapproves of officer-committed domestic violence
- Encourage officers to ask for help when they need it before violence occurs
- Disseminate a multimedia campaign reinforcing the key message: “Preventing Violence Begins at Home”

Daphne Levenson, executive director of the Alabama Association of Chiefs of Police and the Gulf States Regional Center for Public Safety Innovations, praised the effort.

“When FSU invited us to participate in the vetting of the toolkit, we jumped at the opportunity to work on this training and make it available to our officers,” she said. “Instead of reacting to officer-involved domestic violence, a proactive solution is needed to ensure healthy law enforcement families. We’re looking forward to utilizing this excellent resource.”

Quincy, Fla., Police Chief Walter McNeil, immediate past president of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, has supported the initiative since the launch of the Florida pilot program.

“I’m proud to be a supporter of the National Toolkit,” he said. “Officer-involved domestic violence is of particular concern because its effects are felt by the entire community. This free, high-quality training is a great asset to ensure officers’ families and communities are protected.”

Darrel Stephens, executive director of the Major Cities Chiefs Association, which includes 63 of the largest cities in North America and 57 in the United States, representing 30 states plus Washington, D.C., also supports the project.

“Experience tells us that education and training are vital resources in the prevention of domestic violence and victimization,” he said.

Content in the National Prevention Toolkit training curriculum includes:

- Dynamics of officer-involved domestic violence
- Warning signs
• Emphasizing professionalism
• Why reporting is essential
• Pre-employment screening
• New officer training
• Supporting a healthy law enforcement culture
• National and state-by-state resources

In addition to the online training, the initiative includes a comprehensive resource site and multimedia materials such as videos, posters, pens and other materials.

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