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Mayor de Blasio, Office to Combat Domestic Violence Commissioner Pierre-Louis and Housing Authority Chair Olatoye Mark First Day of Work for City's First Ever Public Housing Domestic Violence Response 10-Member Team

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Multi-Agency Domestic Violence Approach will Collaboratively Strengthen Safety Net for Survivors at the New York City Housing Authority

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio, Office to Combat Domestic Violence Commissioner Rosemonde Pierre-Louis, and New York City Housing Authority Chair and CEO Shola Olatoye announced today the official first day of work of NYCHA Domestic Violence Response Team (NYCHA DVRT), an initiative of the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence to dedicate a new 10-member team to focus on domestic violence issues at NYCHA developments and directly link resident survivors to appropriate services. The first model of its kind in the city, this \$800,000 initiative will initially focus on the 15 housing developments that are part of the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety to reduce crime.

Starting today, OCDV will deploy NYCHA DVRT staff to conduct extensive grassroots outreach throughout the 15 targeted developments and surrounding communities, provide information about how to obtain domestic violence services, and directly connect residents to the dedicated NYCHA DVRT specialists in OCDV's Family Justice Centers in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens (Staten Island Center will open in 2015). NYCHA DVRT staff will also coordinate services for high risk victims at NYCHA, working with NYCHA, key City agencies and community partners to collaboratively strengthen the safety net for victims. Located in and operated by OCDV, the FJCs provide comprehensive services to victims of intimate partner violence, elder abuse, and sex trafficking in 25 languages with additional telephonic interpretation in over 150 languages.

"One of the reasons we are seeing an increase in the number of domestic violence incidents reported at NYCHA and Citywide is because more New Yorkers—both survivors and general public—are acknowledging this largely underreported problem more urgently and honestly," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. "Yet an alarming percentage of domestic violence-related murder victims citywide still have not had any prior contact with the police. And last year, only 25 percent reached out. That's why my administration is investing in reinforcing outreach at NYCHA, where domestic violence incidence is high, by making legal, health, housing and other resources more accessible to victims so they can be on a path to safety and stability and start rebuilding their lives."

“Thanks to Mayor de Blasio’s commitment to crime reduction and special focus on NYCHA, we have taken a major step toward reducing the domestic violence in public housing by implementing NYCHA DVRT,” said **OCDV Commissioner Rosemonde Pierre-Louis**. “This grassroots outreach and prevention program will help to raise awareness about the dynamics of an abusive relationship and connect residents to critical multi-agency services to ensure their safety. We want to make sure that all victims of domestic violence know that they are not alone and help is available. By uniting New Yorkers in this effort, we can make significant strides in ending domestic violence. ”

“NYCHA is shining the spotlight on domestic violence and speaking up about the prevalence of this problem in our developments because, in order to successfully address this issue, it must first come out of the shadows,” said **NYCHA Chair and CEO Shola Olatoye**. “Everyone deserves to feel safe in their homes and that’s why, along with Mayor de Blasio, the Office to Combat Domestic Violence and other City agencies, we’re committed to supporting residents with access to helpful services and providing staff with education and training.”

Domestic violence was responsible for 73 percent of the increase in crime in NYCHA over the last three years, a single statistic that prompted the de Blasio administration to design and implement NYCHA DVRT. The strong success of the Staten Island DVRT like model, which focuses on early intervention, prevention and connection to resources for high risk clients, provided the foundation for the NYCHA DVRT program citywide. In 2014, 14 percent of all citywide domestic violence-related major felonies occurred in NYCHA developments, while less than 5 percent of the City’s population resides there. In addition, 4 out of every 10 major felony crimes that occur in NYCHA developments are domestic violence-related.

OCDV has also been teaming up with NYCHA to provide ongoing training for NYCHA staff, helping them identify early signs of abuse and at-risk residents. More than 700 NYCHA staff members in the five boroughs were trained in September and October this year. After one training session, a NYCHA employee working at development quickly identified a resident abused by her husband. With subsequent outreach, the resident was referred to a Family Justice Center and connected with a case manager and supportive services.

Also, through partnerships with the Department of Youth and Community Development and NYCHA, OCDV’s Healthy Relationship Training Academy’s peer-led workshops will be offered at after-school programs operated at DYCD and NYCHA-run community centers at the public housing developments within the MAP. These workshops teach adolescents, young adults, parents, and service providers about teen dating violence and the dynamics of a healthy relationship.

Along with this OCDV initiative that will help improve the lives of survivors in public housing, NYCHA’s recent significant improvements in admissions and emergency transfer processes include quadrupling the types of crimes that can qualify as a “single incident” to enable a resident or applicant to obtain the domestic violence priority, as well as revising required medical documentation. Working with the Health and Hospitals Corporation and the Greater New York Hospital Association, NYCHA is developing guidelines that will accept emergency room visits, not just hospital admissions, as one form of documentation for the purpose of obtaining the domestic violence priority to access safe housing.

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