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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**D.A. McMahon: Actions and Strategic Steps Taken to Tackle Rise in Domestic Violence**

*\*\*\* DA's Office recommits to helping and protecting domestic violence victims\*\*\**

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. – Staten Island District Attorney Michael E. McMahon today reaffirmed his office's mission to helping and protecting victims of domestic violence, noting the series of actions and strategic steps made in the past six months within the Richmond County District Attorney's Office to better address the dramatic rise in domestic abuse cases on Staten Island. Among several other changes (listed below), McMahon recently announced the creation of a separate and dedicated Domestic Violence Bureau, which will work exclusively on handling the surge in domestic violence cases. The office has also launched the new Victims Services Unit, with a dedicated Supervising Victim's Advocate that will prioritize the treatment of victims and ensure that they receive the attention and care they deserve.

"Domestic violence has spread into the homes of Staten Islanders in higher numbers than ever before, but the victims in these tragic crimes can take solace in knowing that my team and I are working to better serve their needs and tackle this serious issue," said District Attorney Michael E. McMahon. "Out of the 17 homicides we've had so far this year in the borough, it is troubling to think that 11 of those murders are believed to have been driven by domestic violence or related circumstances. With the measures we have already put in place, combined with the approaching opening of the Family Justice Center at the end of the month, my office is recommitted to fighting on behalf of domestic violence victims so that they do not have to suffer in silence."

**Below is an outline of the strategic steps and resources that the Richmond County District Attorney's Office has employed in the last six months to address the increasing domestic violence numbers:**

1. Family Justice Center will open by end of month.
2. Announced the creation of a "stand alone" Domestic Violence Bureau.
3. Created a Victims Services Unit, with a dedicated Supervising Victim's Advocate and an additional victim's advocate assigned to the Domestic Violence Bureau to prioritize treatment of victims.
4. Went to our NYPD Partners to identify persistent domestic violence offenders.
5. Crimes Strategies Unit has created mechanism within arrest alert system to report all domestic violence arrests in real time.
6. Implemented 30 day analysis of cases where victim does not want to go forward.
7. Increased community outreach through RCDA webpage, with PSAs and mailings to come.
8. Secured an additional \$50,000 for FY2016 for the Strong Steps Program for domestic violence

victims at CHASI; and \$100,000 for FY2017 for the same program, thus doubling the allocation this program has received in the past to help expand support efforts for victims.

9. Added a third misdemeanor ADA, a new paralegal, and a secretary to cover the increasing number of Domestic Violence cases and fully complement the Family Justice Center. We will add additional ADAs to the new Domestic Violence Bureau in the next couple of months as a result of additional funding from the City.
10. We have moved to a system of vertical prosecution in domestic violence cases, meaning a case will stay with one prosecutor from start to finish.
11. The new case management system allows quick analysis of domestic violence cases and trends; permits immediate review by supervisors of the paperwork in a case and the offender's RAP sheet is immediately available.
12. Several applicable continuing legal education courses and a mandatory review of domestic violence prosecution policies was held for all ADAs, which emphasized techniques to utilize in building evidenced-based cases and appropriate charging and pleas in cases of aggravated family offenses.

### **Facts on The new Domestic Violence Bureau and Victims Services Unit:**

The new Domestic Violence Bureau will be comprised of a Bureau Chief, a Deputy Bureau Chief and five ADAs, at both the misdemeanor and felony level, as well as additional legal staff to allow for more direct and involved supervision of domestic violence cases, which have contributed to the borough's ballooning homicide rate for the year. The new Victims Services Unit will be comprised of six Victim's Advocates whose mission is to provide support services to individuals who have witnessed or been victimized by crime on Staten Island. The advocates in this unit are dedicated to empowering and guiding victims and witnesses through the criminal justice process, a critical function of the District Attorney's office.

According to DCJS, from 2009 to 2014, Staten Island reported an astounding 64 percent increase in domestic violence victims, by far the most of any other borough. Currently, Staten Island is on pace this year to reach over 2,600 domestic violence arrests, which would be the highest recorded in the history of the borough. 11 of the 17 homicides that have occurred on Staten Island so far this year are believed to have been driven by domestic violence.

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