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## Madigan urges action against domestic violence

Friday, October 23, 2009

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October 23, 2009 (CHICAGO) (WLS) -- Illinois' attorney general is calling on law enforcement officials to do more to stop domestic violence.

Attorney Gen. Lisa Madigan announced a new initiative Friday to address gaps in the justice system that have resulted in the failure to serve nearly 20 percent of Illinois' orders of protection, which are intended to protect survivors of domestic violence from their abusers.

Domestic violence touches families all over Illinois. Every day, four women die at the hands of their husbands or partners in the United States.

Madigan is calling on law enforcement officials throughout the state to join together to increase serving orders of protection. She made the announcement during a domestic violence roundtable as part of Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

"Across the state of Illinois, approximately 20 percent of the orders of protection are not actually served on the perpetrators," Madigan said. "If they are not served, they cannot be enforced."

Madigan says, across Illinois, there are currently nearly 28,000 active orders of protection. Approximately 5,500 of those have not been served.

"We have worked with Dept. of Corrections and state police, as well as the Cook County Sheriff's Office, to ensure that those orders will be served," said Madigan.

"We're going to be so committed working on this issue," said Tim Evans, chief justice of the Circuit Court.

"It isn't just a regular crime, and it's not just a piece of paper. This is potentially someone's life at stake here. These issues need to be addressed on an in and out basis," said Dawn Dalton of the Battered Women's Network.

Madigan's Order of Protection Enforcement Group is focused on identifying barriers that prevent service and enforcement of these orders.

"If the document is not served, it's a hole in the process because we can't hold an individual who violates that order of protection accountable for his acts," said Cook County State's Attorney Paul Pavlus.

When asked who was at fault, Palvus said, "I don't believe it's a single fall that you place on an agency or an individual. It's just&complex because you need the sheriff to serve them, and they have to locate them. And many times these individuals are in hiding."

"In addition, there's a short form that can be served by any member of law enforcement and not just the sheriff's office. Don't be embarrassed or ashamed. If this is happening to you, even before you got that order, let others know," said Madigan.

Madigan says a woman often seeks an order of protection when she is in danger the most, which is why it is important for the victims to confide in others.

According to Madigan, over the course of their lifetimes, 1 in 3 women will be abused by her partner, meaning thousands of women will have their lives devastated by violence.

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