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Dear Community Leaders,

As you may know, in the last two weeks there have been seven domestic violence related murder-suicides in our state, resulting in the deaths of five Oregon women, and three of their children. Another young woman fights for her life in the intensive care ward. In each of these cases, the perpetrator also took his own life.

These tragedies have occurred across the state, in both urban and rural communities. All of our hearts go out to the victims, and their families, friends and co-workers. In the aftermath of these incidents, many individuals are asking what they can do about domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking right now, before one more life is devastated by violence. As a community leader, you may be getting questions about where people can go for help.

An Alliance of domestic violence service providers has generated a list of ideas and suggestions that may be helpful to you in your role as community leader in responding to these questions. As a member of the Alliance, I volunteered to pass this information along. I hope it may be helpful to you, and please feel free to contact me if I can be of any assistance or provide more information.

Below is the information from the Alliance. We truly appreciate your work on behalf of vulnerable people in Oregon.

Sincerely,

Jayne Downing

Executive Director

Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service

www.mvwcs.com

www.maryleonardlawsociety.org

What Can You Do About Domestic and Sexual Violence?

Take Action Now. Make a Difference for the Future.

As a leader in our community, you can make a difference! The following are some suggestions from those who work with victims and survivors on a daily basis in Oregon:

Immediate Response:

1. **Victim Support:** If you talk with someone who discloses abuse, there are three simple and easy things to say that can help: *"You deserve to be safe. This is not your fault. There is help available."* Refer victims in Marion County to Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service at (503) 399-7722 (or toll free at 1-866-399-7722). Outside of Marion County refer victims to their local service provider or the national 24-hour confidential domestic violence hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE. Remind them they can call 911 immediately in an emergency.
2. **Community Action:** Speak out in your community about the effects of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. Send a clear message that by joining together, our communities can make a difference for victims and their children. As a community leader, you have a unique opportunity to indicate the importance of a coordinated community response to end violence. Victim advocates, law enforcement, prosecutors, child welfare caseworkers, health care providers, civil attorneys, educators, and others all have an essential role to play in preventing violence and providing safety. Coordination of these roles is vital - ask how your community's response is coordinated. Contact your local domestic violence service provider if you would like help in speaking out.
3. **Program Support:** Visit your local domestic violence crisis program and learn what they are doing right now to end violence in your community. Offer your help. (A list of programs in each county can be found on the DHS website at <http://www.dhs.state.or.us/abuse/domestic/gethelp.htm>).

Beyond the Immediate Response:

1. Help build a long-term coordinated community response to domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking throughout Oregon;
2. Get training on domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking, and encourage others to be trained as well. This training is most important for anyone working with or providing services to people who may be victims. Your local crisis program can provide this training, often free of charge;
3. Propose and support legislation that provides shelter and core safety and prevention services to victims, and holds abusers accountable. Examples include:
 - Adequate state funding for shelters and services to victims, to ensure that assistance is available to victims on an equitable basis across the state;
 - Placing domestic violence advocates in DHS Child Welfare offices, to ensure that safety is available for victims and children at the point of crisis;
 - Requiring employers to have workplace violence policies in place to provide training regarding appropriate response to these issues;
 - Establishing a statewide policy person to coordinate our state's response to violence;
 - Providing prevention education and safety response training in our schools.

Thank you for your concern.

Together, we can help keep Oregonians safe.

Brought to you by Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service
and the Oregon Alliance to End Violence Against Women.

Please feel free to contact us for more information or with any questions.
Contact persons: Jayne Downing 503-378-1572 or Sybil Hebb, 503-936-8959