GEORGIA LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM®
Access to Justice and Opportunities Out of Poverty

For Immediate Release

Georgia Legal Services Program Highlights Legal Services During October's Domestic Violence Awareness Month - And Every Month

One in Three Women Will Be The Victim of Family Violence In Their Lifetime[i]
Already a 15% Spike In Calls to Domestic Violence Hotlines Since the Pandemic Began[ii]

ATLANTA (October 1, 2020) – As Domestic Violence Awareness Month begins, the Georgia Legal Services Program (GLSP) today issued a call to all Georgians to be vigilant and support victims in what often remains a silent threat. With increased stress on individuals and families and call volumes rising at Domestic Violence Hotlines during the COVID-19 pandemic, GLSP stands ready to provide free civil legal aid to low-income residents in the 154 counties outside metro Atlanta.

According to SAFEHomes, more than 35% of Georgian women will be victims of family violence in their lifetimes.[iii] Last year, 62,682 survivors made crisis calls to Georgia's domestic violence hotlines.[iv] In addition, in 37% of the fatalities, children witnessed the domestic violence incidents.[v] GLSP is a nonprofit that provides free civil legal services for people with lower incomes, creating equal access to justice and opportunities out of poverty. However, survivors need lawyers to access the legal system for protection when they need it the most.

"For family violence survivors, their homes can be the most dangerous place on earth because remaining means staying with the abuser," said Vicky Kimbrell, GLSP's Family Law Unit Director. "We ask Georgians to contact us or to refer any friends or neighbors facing domestic violence to our free services."

The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated the threat of domestic violence, where victims may not have the means to escape their abusers. The victim may not be able to afford to leave, or they have lost their job or housing, or they fear venturing out and getting sick and becoming one of more than 200,000 fatalities to date. These fears are magnified exponentially when these victims are also protecting their children. These victims now face two plagues – the coronavirus pandemic and violence while they are trapped in their homes.

"Especially during the pandemic, people need to know help is available. That can give them the support they need to take action to protect themselves and their children," added Kimbrell.

Since the coronavirus outbreak, Georgia's 24-hour Domestic Violence Hotline has recorded a 15% increase in calls.[vi]

Moreover, women of color are disproportionately impacted by family violence. According to a study completed by the Department of Justice, African American women experienced intimate partner violence at a rate 35% higher than that of other women and homicide rates were highest among black women compared to all other racial groups.[vii]

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Help is available. GLSP's Domestic Violence Project serves 154 of the state's 159 counties assuring holistic legal representation by providing attorneys in protective order cases, access to financial help with food stamps and Medicaid, help with housing representation if the landlord is threatening eviction, or advice and resources on divorces.

GLSP lawyers represent victims, collaborate with law enforcement, courts, and domestic violence and social service agencies to help meet the safety and financial needs of survivors and the community.

An Attorney Can Help, but Georgia Has Legal Deserts

Having a lawyer can help victims escape the violence. According to studies, protective orders can help victims end or reduce the violence 75% of the time.[viii] But, most of Georgia's lawyers are concentrated in the metro Atlanta area. Rural Georgia has been referred to as a legal desert. Two-thirds of the state's lawyers are in the five metro Atlanta counties. The remaining one-third of lawyers are spread across 154 counties. Fifty-nine counties have less than 20 lawyers; fifteen counties have two or less; and four counties have no lawyers. Rarely are any of those lawyers able to represent victims without costs.

This October, help GLSP get the word out to those that need help. For more information, contact Georgia Legal Services at 833-GLSPLAW (833-457-7529) or go to www.glsp.org. (In the five metro Atlanta counties, survivors can contact Atlanta Legal Aid at 404 524-5811.

About Georgia Legal Services Program

Georgia Legal Service Program (GLSP) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit law firm that provides free civil legal services for people with low incomes, creating equal access to justice and opportunities out of poverty. Founded in 1971, GLSP serves 154 of Georgia's 159 counties, excluding the five Metro Atlanta counties. GLSP has offices in ten locations across the state including Albany, Athens, Augusta, Brunswick, Columbus, Dalton, Gainesville, Macon, and Piedmont (Atlanta). Its administrative office is located in downtown Atlanta. To reach us, call 1-833-GLSP-LAW (833-457-7529) or visit our website at glsp.org. Follow GLSP on Twitter at @GeorgiaLegal, and Facebook at facebook.com/georgialegalservices.

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Social Tags: #GeorgialLegal, #DomesticViolenceAwareness, #ListeningFromHome, #NoMore

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[i] https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/2015data-brief508.pdf, p.12.

[ii] https://www.ajc.com/news/kemp-shares-number-for-state-domestic-violence-hotline-for-those-need/BkzywvKkdnEm4dYV9lDbXM/

[iii] http://safeshelter.org/learn/statistics/

[iv] https://gcadv.org/statistics/

[v] https://gcadv.org/statistics/

[vi] https://www.ajc.com/news/kemp-shares-number-for-state-domestic-violence-hotline-for-those-need/BkzywvKkdnEm4dYV9lDbXM/

[vii] https://gcadv.org/engaging-with-historically-marginalized-communities/

[viii] https://connect.springerpub.com/content/sgrvv/25/3/332 Civil Protective Order Effectiveness, Justice or Just a Piece of Paper