For Immediate Release

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Added Layer of Enforcement for Protective Orders Goes Live Today

MINNEAPOLIS— A new way of transmitting information between the Minnesota Judicial Branch and Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) goes live in Hennepin County and throughout the state of Minnesota today. This change could be great news for anyone needing to file a Harassment Restraining Order (HRO), as these protective orders will now be visible to law enforcement officers through the BCA’s Criminal Justice Data Communications Network (CJDN or “Hot Files”).

Advocates at the Sexual Violence Center (SVC) are encouraged by this change. SVC Advocates receive extensive training to provide support during times of crisis, throughout the healing journey, and aid in navigating the criminal justice process. Advocates frequently meet with victims and survivors of sexual violence to provide emotional support and technical assistance in the petition process for protective orders.

Many victims of sexual violence do not meet the requirement of continued abuse necessary to obtain an Order for Protection (OFP), and while violation of both an HRO and an OFP is a crime— enforcement of violations has not been consistent. OFPs have traditionally been visible through law enforcement databases, making them much less complicated to enforce and thus more efficient as a protection effort. If a victim/survivor is experiencing repeated attempted contact, they’re able to call 911 and the responding officer can see that this person has an active OFP and may be in need of protection. This straightforward process is not the same for harassment restraining orders.

Currently, a victim of violence who has obtained an HRO must physically carry that court order with them if they expect enforcement. An HRO is only known to a police officer if shown to that police officer. This interruption in service to victims creates additional danger in what is already a traumatic situation. Liliana Marin, Crisis Intervention Specialist at the Sexual Violence Center noted that “by having all protective orders visible to law enforcement, officers can do their job with more ease; from serving the paperwork to the other party or citing and arresting someone for a violation.”

Nicole Weiler, Director of Systems Change at SVC and Coordinator of the Hennepin County Sexual Assault Multidisciplinary Action Response Team (SMARTeam), says, “this improvement is yet another step in the right direction for Minnesota’s response to victims and survivors of sexual violence. Centering victim/survivor’s needs, prioritizing their safety, and creating clear and simple processes to ease bureaucratic overwhelm is at the heart of a trauma-informed sexual assault response.”
If you are a victim/survivor with an HRO issued before December 12, the MN State Court Administrator’s Office reports that existing data will be entered and passed to the BCA beginning in January 2020, with a hopeful completion date of July 1, 2020.

If you are a victim/survivor in need of a protective order, consider reaching out to your community advocacy program. This change requires a new set of paperwork to apply for protective orders, which are accessible on the Minnesota Judicial Branch Court Forms webpage. An advocate can assist you with your petition, provide emotional support as you share your story, and ensure you are using the correct forms. You can schedule a one-on-one appointment with a Sexual Violence Center advocate at 612-871-5111.

About SVC:
Since 1985, the Sexual Violence Center has been a community-based advocacy program serving victim/survivors of sexual violence 12 years of age and older. We provide a range of services in Carver, Hennepin, and Scott counties, including a 24-hour crisis line at 612-871-5111, in-person counseling, facilitated support groups, crisis support in hospitals, navigation of the criminal justice system, support during law enforcement interviews, and accompaniment to legal proceedings. We further serve the community through education and training programs for community partners and coordinating three dedicated county-wide Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs) to ensure a more victim-centered response to all victims of sexual violence.