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DEPUTY MAYOR FOR LEGAL AFFAIRS ROBLES-ROMAN, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ, MANHATTAN DISTRICT ATTORNEY VANCE, AND MANHATTAN BOROUGH PRESIDENT STRINGER CELEBRATE THE UPCOMING OPENING OF THE FOURTH NEW YORK CITY FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER

One-stop Service Center Will Provide Assistance to Manhattan's Domestic Violence Victims

Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence Commissioner Yolanda B. Jimenez, Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance Jr., Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, and Deputy Mayor for Legal Affairs Carol Robles-Román today celebrated the opening of New York City's fourth Family Justice Center, located in Manhattan, which will be fully operational in the coming weeks. Building on the experience of the three existing Family Justice Centers, the Manhattan Center will provide comprehensive multilingual services to victims of domestic violence and their children, as well as victims of elder abuse, sexual assault, human trafficking, and child abuse. In only one visit, victims can meet with a prosecutor; receive legal advice on federal immigration remedies, divorce and custody issues, and orders of protection; talk to a counselor; and apply for emergency housing – all while their children play safely in the next room.

“Our Administration has worked hard to keep New York the safest big City in the nation – and that includes making homes safer from domestic violence,” said Mayor Bloomberg. “Since 2001 intimate-partner homicides have been reduced by 43 percent and our network of Family Justice Centers has been a key component of that success.”

“Though we have seen a remarkable decline in street crime in the last decade, domestic violence continues to plague all of our City's diverse communities,” said District Attorney Vance. “This Center will centralize all of the resources we have to offer, integrating the efforts of advocates and law enforcement, to help victims break out of cycles of violence and have a safe place to turn. I thank Commissioner Jimenez, Deputy Mayor Robles-Roman, Manhattan Borough President Stringer, and City Council Speaker Quinn for their commitment to this project and to those affected by domestic violence on a daily basis. I also thank the many members of my Office who worked tirelessly to help make this Center a reality.”

“The opening of the Manhattan Family Justice Center is one of my proudest moments as Borough President, and I am deeply grateful to the Mayor's Office, the City Council and District Attorney Vance for their generosity and support,” said Borough President Stringer. “This center will serve as a beacon of hope for the thousands of survivors of domestic violence in this borough, and I

(more)

am glad my office could provide capital funding to make this sanctuary for victims and their families a reality.”

The Family Justice Center Initiative is part of the Bloomberg Administration’s overall effort to reduce domestic violence and provide comprehensive services to victims. As a result of the City’s focus on this issue, family related crimes have declined by 13 percent citywide since 2001.

The new Center is located at 80 Centre Street in close proximity to Criminal, Family and Supreme Courts. The District Attorney will co-locate its Special Victims Bureau at the Center, consisting of its Domestic Violence, Elder Abuse, Sex Crimes, Human Trafficking, and Child Abuse Units. This collaboration will expand the Center’s reach to a significant range of the City’s most vulnerable populations. The \$7 million cost of construction was covered by generous donations from Borough President Stringer, who provided \$3 million; the City of New York, which contributed \$2 million; and District Attorney Vance and the City Council, which provided \$1 million each.

“The Manhattan Family Justice Center will be a Family Justice Center in every sense of the word,” said Deputy Mayor for Legal Affairs Robles-Román. “All vulnerable victims, including teens, trafficked persons and the elderly will benefit from state of the art services.”

“By bringing critical services together under one roof, we will better support victims and encourage them to participate in the prosecution of their abusers,” said New York City Criminal Justice Coordinator John Feinblatt. “At the Center, law enforcement, social service providers, and civil attorneys will be able to develop comprehensive plans to keep victims safe.”

The creation of the New York City Family Justice Center in Manhattan will expand on the services already provided to victims of domestic violence at Centers in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. Additionally, the future home for the City’s fifth Center, in Staten Island, was announced last week. Collectively, since 2005, the Centers and the Staten Island Domestic Violence Response Team have assisted over 97,000 clients, and more than 20,500 children have visited the children’s rooms.

“We are here today to celebrate and express our gratitude to the private-public partnerships that have made the NYC Family Justice Centers possible,” said Commissioner Jimenez of the Mayor’s Office to Combat Domestic Violence. “Thousands of New Yorkers find safety at these Centers because of the generous support of our funders, the dedication of the on-site community based organizations, and the commitment of the City to provide victims and their children with quality services.”

In 2002, the Family Justice Center Initiative was initially supported by the Founders’ Circle, a diverse group of foundations and corporate citizens who were the first to commit financially to the Center. Many of these members continue to support the Centers today and include the Avon Foundation, the Joe Torre Safe at Home Foundation, Michael Bolton Charities, and Verizon Wireless. To date, over \$13 million have been raised via this public-private partnership from federal grants and through the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to aiding innovative City initiatives.

The Center's on-site partner staff from community-based organizations and City agencies will provide direct services at the Center with an aim to reduce the number of family violence incidents, recidivism, and homicides. This diverse spectrum of services includes:

- Civil legal representation for immigration and Family Court matters
- Prosecution of domestic violence crimes
- Safety planning
- Access to emergency shelter and housing
- Assistance with filing police and probation reports
- Public benefits
- On-site childcare
- Counseling for victims and child witnesses
- Support groups
- Services for the elderly and the disabled
- Financial literacy
- Language interpretation

Since January 2002, the City has been developing a more comprehensive and innovative approach to combat domestic violence and hold batterers accountable. The Police Department has more than doubled the number of successful home visits to domestic violence victims since 2001 and has enhanced training for police officers to obtain evidence that could be critical for prosecutions when they respond to a domestic incident. The City has increased the number of emergency shelter beds by 45 percent and transitional housing units by 57 percent for victims of domestic violence. Training is being provided to increasing numbers of front-line City agency staff to enhance awareness and understanding of domestic violence victims' needs and of available resources. Homeless shelters have implemented screening protocols designed to determine if clients need domestic violence services, and to place families in locations where they will be safe from a batterer.

Private funding of this innovative pilot has helped provide critical evidence of its effectiveness, leveraging the current public investment in the new Manhattan Center. Supporters of the FJC initiative include The Allstate Foundation, Andrea Jung, Avon Foundation, Brooke Jackman Foundation, Chapman Perelman Foundation, Joe Torre Safe at Home Foundation, Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, Michael Bolton Charities, Robin Hood Foundation, Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Tamara Mellon, Verizon Foundation and HopeLine by Verizon Wireless. For more information, go to www.nyc.gov/fund and follow the Fund on Twitter @NYCMayorsFund.

For help from the Family Justice Center near you or to support the Family Justice Center Initiative visit www.nyc.gov or call 311.

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