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DISTRICT ATTORNEY ANNOUNCES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE GRANT

The Merced County District Attorney's office has been selected to receive \$300,000 in federal economic recovery act funds to enhance their efforts to respond to and prosecute cases involving violent crimes against women, District Attorney Larry D. Morse II announced today.

The program partners the District Attorney's office with Valley Crisis Center to provide services and resources to victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, Morse said. Valley Crisis Center began serving domestic violence victims last year after the demise of A Woman's Place, Morse noted.

The purpose of the program, Morse said, is to provide crisis intervention, emergency services, advocacy, courtroom support, and related assistance for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence and their families.

Lisa DeSantis, Victim Witness Coordinator for the District Attorney, said violence against women "remains a major problem in Merced County and we need to see these crimes as a community issue that we all have a stake in solving."

Jeannette Pacheco, Administrative Services Director for the District Attorney and author of the grant, said the federal funds "will enable the District Attorney to add three additional staff members in our Victim Witness Assistance Program and two desperately needed advocates to the staff of Valley Crisis Center."

The grant is authorized by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and is supported by the federal Violence Against Women Act which encourages the development and strengthening of criminal justice partnerships.

"I have tremendous staff like Ms. Pacheco and Ms. DeSantis who continue to seek new avenues to provide vital victim and witness services during a time of great fiscal challenge," Morse said. "We are all grateful for this infusion of federal money that will literally help us protect the safety of the most vulnerable among us and provide comfort and assistance to those who have been victimized by violent crime," he added.

If you or someone you know has been a victim of sexual assault or domestic violence, call the 24-hour crisis hotline at (209) 722-4357. For additional information, please contact the District Attorney's Victim Witness Assistance Program at (209) 385-7385 or access our website. All calls and inquiries are confidential.