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PRESS RELEASE

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THE CITY OF SCHENECTADY ADOPTS NEW SAFETY POLICY

Albany, NY – The city of Schenectady is the second municipality in the state to adopt a Domestic Violence and the Workplace Policy, which is designed to provide a safer work environment for victims of domestic violence and their co-workers.

The Schenectady City Council voted unanimously to adopt the policy last night. The city of Albany is the only other municipality in the state to have adopted these safeguards for its employees; all state agencies have promulgated a policy, according to the New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (OPDV).

“The adoption of this kind of policy is a good business decision: it enables government employers to retain and support valuable staff and reduce employee absences,” OPDV Executive Director Amy Barasch said. “I want to commend the Schenectady City Council for being a leader in recognizing the role that government, as an employer, can play in assisting domestic violence victims to get safe and stay employed. I encourage other municipalities around the state to follow suit, and offer my agency’s support to them to make it happen.”

The model policy is multifaceted and allows employers to empower their staff by training employees on domestic violence awareness and prevention; developing personnel procedures that respond to the needs of domestic violence victims; and creating workplace safety plans and measures to hold accountable those who may use municipal resources to commit acts of domestic violence.

Collectively, these steps are designed to provide a safer workplace environment for victims of domestic violence and their co-workers; increase employee productivity, reduce

absenteeism and improve employee retention; lower health care costs; and lessen the potential for legal liability.

Acting Mayor Gary McCarthy said, "Domestic Violence can have a devastating effect not only on the victim, but also on their family and loved ones. Schenectady is proud to be able to implement this policy to provide a safer workplace for its employees."

Carole Merrill-Mazurek, Schenectady YWCA's Director of Women's Services, said, "The YWCA has worked with the City of Schenectady's police force and elected officials as a team since the early 1970's on domestic violence issues, implementing policies to protect families affected by domestic violence and educate the workforce about domestic violence. The first shelter was established here in 1976, today the program includes: shelter, counseling, and advocacy services. The Domestic Violence and the Workplace Policy is another example that this community wants its citizens to not only live in a safe environment but also work in a safe environment."

The Domestic Violence in the Workplace Policy has made a difference at the state level: in 2010, 270 state employees reported that they were victims of domestic violence and 184 referrals were made to domestic violence service providers. More information about the State's response to domestic violence can be found in the 2010 Domestic Violence Annual Report: <http://www.opdv.state.ny.us/statistics/reports/dvannual10/dvannualreport10.pdf>

For more about the State's Domestic Violence and the Workplace Initiative, go to <http://www.opdv.state.ny.us/professionals/workplace/index.html>

Also last night, the Schenectady City Council voted to designate October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month in the City, and will join with the state's effort to "Shine the Light on Domestic Violence" on Wednesday, October 19. The city is urging residents to wear purple on October 19 and the City Hall Clock Tower will be illuminated purple during the entire month of October.

Now in its fourth year, the campaign encourages public, private and non-profit entities to raise awareness of the issue by embracing the color purple – the symbolic hue for domestic violence awareness – by shining purple lights on buildings or other structures in their community, wearing purple or sponsoring awareness events. In 2010, more than 270 organizations and individuals across the state participated in the Shine the Light on Domestic Violence campaign.

For more about the State's "Shine the Light on Domestic Violence" campaign, go to http://www.opdv.state.ny.us/public_awareness/campaigns/shinethelight/shinethelight11.html

The New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (OPDV) is a state agency charged with improving the response to and prevention of domestic violence. OPDV provides guidance to Executive level staff on policy and legislation, conducts statewide community outreach and awareness, and trains professionals on addressing domestic violence in a wide array of disciplines.

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