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### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICE CALLS, INCIDENTS RISE IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY DURING COVID-19 CRISIS; *Help remains available for those living in violent households***

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (April 16, 2020) — An analysis of 911 calls and filed police reports revealed that since the COVID-19 crisis emerged and restrictions were increasingly imposed from March 11, 2020 onward, domestic violence incidents increased by 8-9% in Montgomery County, according to Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele.

The determination of an increase in domestic incidents comes not from anecdotal evidence, such as the domestic strangulation homicide last week in Pottstown, but from a detailed analysis of thousands of 911 calls and police reports over the January 1 to April 12 periods during 2019 and 2020. The Montgomery County Detective Bureau analyzed domestic incident calls to the 911 emergency call center from Jan. 1, 2020 to March 10, 2020 and compared the numbers to those same domestic calls from March 11, 2020 (when the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a worldwide health pandemic) to April 12, 2020. Also analyzed was data for those same dates from police reports filed (by 34 of 50 police departments in Montgomery County) after they responded on scene to the incident. The two sets of data revealed an increase in domestic incidents of 16-17%. However, a check on the same data sets from 2019 showed that as spring arrives, domestic violence calls and incidents typically rise. When adjusted for that typical spring increase, the analysis of the data found that domestic violence incidents due to the COVID-19 pandemic increased by 8-9%.

“Living in this unprecedented pandemic is a stressful time, with adults and children staying at home together, confined to close quarters while at the same time being upended from routines, friends, jobs and other constants of their lives. Add to that fears of getting coronavirus, job losses/layoffs and stress and you have a situation that can lead to tensions in even the best of relationships but especially where there is a family member who acts out physically and emotionally,” said Steele. “The fact that 911 calls and police incident reports related to domestic violence are up is important

to note because it means victims need help—and that some people are calling when they are able. And even more important is the fact that help is still available.

“Police in Montgomery County are still answering calls for assistance with domestic violence incidents and other crimes. Other agencies such as Laurel House and the Women’s Center of Montgomery County are still helping victims with housing, advice through hotlines and the like. And the Courts are still handling PFA orders through the Emergency Court, having issued more than 50 since this crisis began. If you are a victim who needs help, please reach out.”

Laurel House’s 24/7 domestic violence hotline is 800-642-3150. The Women’s Center of Montgomery County’s hotline is 800-773-2424. Both of these help lines are answered by trained volunteers who can listen, offer advice on services available, provide safety planning, and get immediate safe shelter for victims and children. Both agencies provides legal aid to help with writing and obtaining a PFA through the Courts; safety advice for victims, and assistance in obtaining safe housing. More information can be found at [laurel-house.org](http://laurel-house.org) and [wcmontco.org](http://wcmontco.org), both of which have an escape button on the site should someone be surprised by their abuser while looking at the site’s services.

Details of the analysis are: the Detective Bureau gathered the raw numbers for each of the time periods for each year. The 2019 data was used as the control, or standard, for the number of 911 calls and police reported incidents. The data was then adjusted for the differential in days in the two times periods of each year to obtain a median number of calls and incidents per day. The analysis found that in 2020, domestic calls, as classified by 911 operators, numbered about 31 incidents and police reports showed 34 incidents per day from the beginning of January through March 10. Then once the COVID-19 crisis intensified on March 11, 2020 and continuing through the analysis period of April 12, 2020, domestic incident calls were about 36 per day and police reports showed 40 per day. The raw numbers used in the analysis are as follows:

**2020**

Date	911	Median/Day	PD Reports	Median/Day
1/1-3/10	2,344	31	2,421	34
3/11-4/12	1,214	36	1,322	40

**2019**

Date	911	Median/Day	PD Reports	Median/Day
1/1-3/10	2,310	33	2,427	34
3/11-4/12	1,156	33	1,243	37

“As disturbing as these numbers are, it’s likely that there are more disturbances and violence happening in homes that go unreported to police,” said Steele. “I cannot stress enough that law enforcement and our partner agencies are here for victims of domestic violence. We are still making arrests and prosecuting these cases during this

crisis. Our law enforcement community is here to help and so are some very caring people at Laurel House and the Women's Center. No one has to endure the pain and suffering of domestic violence."

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele