



Warren C. Evans
Sheriff

News Release

Sheriff Contact: John Roach: 313-224-0615

Release Date: Tuesday, May 29, 2007

Sheriff expands jail based domestic violence program

- **First time offenders now required to complete extensive counseling**
- **Move is expected to help halt escalating behavior that often ends tragically**

Wayne County Sheriff Warren C. Evans announced today the major expansion of a successful jail and community based program he says should help reverse the recent trend of increasingly violent domestic abuse that has resulted in a 74% spike in domestic homicides in Michigan.

For the first time, Evans says, all domestic abuse offenders coming into the Wayne County Jail – including first time misdemeanants – will be required to complete an intensive counseling program that can last up to six months after the completion of his or her jail sentence. Evans said he believes that a key cause of the recent rise in violence is the lack of substantive intervention among less-serious first time offenders, who, he says, often progress to more violent attacks.

“Physical and emotional abuse, like many behavioral problems, is more effectively treated if you address it earlier and in a substantive way,” Evans said. “Expanding our support services to those who are just beginning to demonstrate abusive behavior is our best chance at preventing a future tragedy.”

Evans says a similar jail based counseling program has worked for years among more serious offenders. Since 2000, the Sheriff’s Office, Community Corrections Advisory Board and the Wayne County Executive’s Department of Children and Family Services have been offering **Transitions**, an intensive award winning domestic violence program for felony offenders that has demonstrated remarkable success.

Of the 565 offenders who have entered the program, fewer than 5 percent have re-offended. More impressive, Evans says, is that of the more than 490 who have successfully completed all requirements of the program, only 2 percent have had a violent re-offense.

The felony version of the program has been funded for the past three years with the help of the County Executive’s Office. “Understanding the tremendous impact that domestic violence has on the stability of families and the lives of our children, the Department of Children and Family Services has committed resources to this initiative since 2003,” said Executive Robert Ficano.

#more#

Expanding the program to low-level misdemeanants – who are considered easier to rehabilitate and whose offenses sometimes have not reached the level of a physical assault – is expected to reach an additional 150 offenders each year. Evans said that such early and intensive intervention stands a far better chance at making a lasting impact.

“Domestic violence usually escalates from incident to incident. That’s part of how the offender tries to maintain control,” Evans said. “By stepping in after the first known offense and establishing some control of our own, we are more likely to change the offender’s thought process and help them resolve their emotions without resorting to violence.”

How the program works

The jail portion of the program is 15 classroom days in length (20 day period of incarceration), with offenders attending group sessions from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm daily and completing journaling and homework assignments every evening. Upon release from the program and from jail, offenders are required to attend a community-based domestic violence follow-up program, either 12 or 26 weeks in length, based upon their original length of sentence, participation in the program, and case information.

Evans said that participants in the program have an incentive to stick with it. If the offender violates the terms of the program by failing to attend the community-based treatment, a bench warrant will be issued for their arrest and they will be required to complete the rest of their time at the jail.

Funding for the expansion of the program was recently approved by the Wayne County Commissary Board, which oversees an account is funded through proceeds from jail inmate purchases, such as socks and underwear, toiletries and other basic items. Any “profit” from the sales is deposited into the Commissary Fund and earmarked specifically for programs designed to benefit the inmates.

"It is a triumph for a program like this to materialize. I have long been an advocate of prevention over punishment, and I believe that early intervention can prevent future violence from occurring," said Wayne County Commissioner Bernard Parker, who also serves on the Commissary Board.

About ETRS

The Commissary Board, including the Sheriff’s Office, has contracted with ETRS, the provider of the Transitions Program, to deliver this program to include sentenced misdemeanants. ETRS is the largest provider in the State of Michigan for court-ordered clients to participate in habilitative services and have three offices in Wayne County, in Taylor, Livonia, and Detroit.