



STATE OF NEW YORK | EXECUTIVE CHAMBER

ANDREW M. CUOMO | GOVERNOR

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GOVERNOR CUOMO PROCLAIMS OCTOBER AS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo has proclaimed October 2013 as Domestic Violence Awareness Month in New York State, and he encourages all New Yorkers to participate in the State's annual Shine the Light on Domestic Violence campaign by wearing purple on Wednesday, October 16.

"New York State is committed to providing the victims of domestic violence the protections and justice they need, and ensuring that offenders are appropriately penalized for their atrocious actions," Governor Cuomo said. "The designation of October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month and our Shine the Light campaign seeks to raise awareness of what New Yorkers can do to help combat domestic violence and sends a message in our communities that it will not be tolerated in this state."

Coordinated by the state Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (OPDV), the Shine the Light campaign promotes the use of the color purple – long associated with domestic violence awareness – in creative ways throughout October to raise awareness of the issue and efforts to combat it.

For example, landmarks and buildings across the state, including Niagara Falls, Syracuse University's Hall of Languages, Schenectady City Hall, the State University of New York's Administration Building, the Mid-Hudson Bridge, and Times Square, have been bathed in or featured purple lights as part of the campaign.

OPDV Executive Director Gwen Wright said, "Governor Cuomo stands with us in affirming the seriousness of domestic violence by proclaiming October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month in New York State. Our annual Shine the Light campaign further supports individuals and communities across the state by providing them with a low- or no-cost way to participate in the effort to spread awareness of the issue, since awareness is a critical component in the prevention of domestic violence."

More than 500 entities across the state, including municipal governments, the courts, private businesses, colleges, non-profit organizations, law enforcement agencies and crime victims' assistance programs, have participated in the campaign since it began in 2008.

In addition to using purple lights to illuminate buildings and other structures, groups have used purple in a variety of ways, including creating a "living" purple ribbon, composed of individuals wearing purple and photographed in the iconic shape; hosting a purple scavenger hunt; and hanging banners and distributing wrist bands and other materials with awareness messages and information about where to get help.

Entities and individuals who participate in the State's Shine the Light campaign by turning purple or wearing the color on October 16 or any other day in the month are encouraged to submit their photos to opdvpurple@opdv.ny.gov so that OPDV may share them via Facebook (www.facebook.com/nysdomesticviolence) and Twitter (@NYSOPDV). Join the conversation on Twitter:

#shinethelight.

New York is the only state in the nation to have an executive-level agency that has the sole mission of fighting and preventing domestic violence. Since taking office, Governor Cuomo has made strengthening the state and local response to domestic violence, a crime which disproportionately affects women and children, a priority.

Under the Governor's leadership, the state has enacted a variety of legislation designed to strengthen the criminal justice system's response to domestic violence while at the same time providing survivors with enhanced protections so they can more safely sever ties with their abusers. For example, New York created the new felony crime of aggravated family offense, which enables law enforcement to target the recidivist nature of domestic violence.

Defendants who commit certain misdemeanor-level offenses and have a previous conviction for a specified misdemeanor or felony against a family or household member within the past five years can now face a felony charge. Judges are now required to consider the history and use of possession of firearms, and violations of orders of protection, when determining bail or release of defendants charged with domestic violence offenses.

The State also has taken steps to address non-criminal needs of domestic violence victims, such requiring insurance companies, when notified of the domestic violence, to not jeopardize a victim's safety by disclosing confidential information to the abuser; and preventing abusers who were subject to an order of protection or charged with someone's death from making funeral or burial arrangement decisions.

Victims of domestic violence and sexual assault can seek help 24 hours a day by calling New York State's toll-free hotline: 1-800-942-6906 or 1-800-942-6908 (Spanish language).

There are also programs statewide that provide direct services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, including counseling and emergency shelter for victims and their children. Information about those programs is available via New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence website: www.nyscadv.org, and the New York State Office of Victim Services (www.ovs.ny.gov) also funds 186 programs that assist crime victims across the state.

The Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (www.opdv.ny.gov) is charged with improving the response of state and local communities to domestic violence. OPDV provides guidance to Executive staff on policy and legislation; conducts statewide community outreach and public education programs; and trains professionals on addressing domestic violence in a wide array of disciplines, including child welfare, law enforcement and health care.

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