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Law Enforcement Agencies Issue Revised Protocol for Domestic Violence Investigations

PHOENIX – Police and prosecutors in Maricopa County will follow updated procedures for investigating incidents of domestic violence and holding offenders accountable. The process is detailed in the Maricopa County Domestic Violence Protocol Manual developed by local law enforcement agencies in collaboration with the County Attorney’s Office, community stakeholders and subject matter experts.

“The Domestic Violence Protocol is a work in progress that reflects the latest and best practices for breaking the cycle of abuse and ensuring successful prosecutions to protect domestic violence victims from harm,” said Maricopa County Attorney Bill Montgomery. “The goal is to achieve successful prosecutions of offenders, use resources more effectively, and help victims of domestic violence recover their lives,” he added.

The latest revision of the Protocol Manual incorporates a successful initiative undertaken by the County Attorney’s Office to address domestic violence cases involving an allegation of strangulation. These procedures direct responding officers to have victims undergo a forensic examination to document evidence of possible strangulation that can be used to support the filing of criminal charges. This approach has dramatically increased the prosecution rate of violence strangulation cases from roughly 10 percent of submissions before the strangulation protocol was implemented to nearly 70 percent today.

The revised Protocol Manual also reflects the most recent legislation addressing domestic violence and provides guidelines for a variety of other aspects related to domestic violence investigations, including 911 communication, patrol and medical response, stalking incidents, victim services and probation.

Since 2005, at least 1,146 Arizonans have been killed in domestic violence related incidents, the overwhelming majority of which occurred in Maricopa County. Ninety percent of domestic violence cases are misdemeanors. “This means that the majority of our cases have some kind of prior history with municipal law enforcement and municipal or lower jurisdiction courts, which underscores the absolute importance of cooperation and

information sharing horizontally and vertically among and between various criminal justice system partners,” Montgomery noted.

A copy of the 2015 Domestic Violence Protocol Manual is available at www.maricopacountyattorney.org in the Annual Reports & Protocols section.

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