

Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

Letter to Law Enforcement Agencies

April 10, 2020

Domestic Violence, Law Enforcement, and COVID-19

This is a challenging moment for New York State. Our world looks different than it did before the COVID public health emergency; however, domestic violence victims still need protection and safety, and police departments and sheriffs' offices remain the places they turn to for help most often.

There may be some differences in how you deal with domestic incident calls, such as how to assist a family that is in mandatory quarantine. It is important that police officers and sheriffs' deputies protect themselves.

I encourage you to review the New York State Department of Health's (DOH) "[Interim Guidance for Law Enforcement Agencies to Limit Potential Exposure to COVID-19](#)", distributed on March 28, 2020 by the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). You may also review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [guidelines](#) for additional information. These measures will allow you to respond in the safest manner possible, while assisting domestic violence victims.

Mandatory arrest laws remain in effect and must be followed, where applicable, even though arraignments may be handled differently in the local courts. Criminal contempt charges should be brought when deemed appropriate. Please note that on March 19, 2020, the State's Chief Administrative Judge issued an [Administrative Order](#) extending the expiration date of all existing Temporary Orders of Protection. I encourage you to confer with your local District or County Attorney on these matters, as appropriate.

Regardless of whether an arrest is made, please be sure to make appropriate referrals to local domestic violence programs and/or the New York State Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline, as these programs provide critical support and expertise to victims of domestic violence and their families. These resources are available at:

- The New York State Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline is available 24/7 at 800-942-6906.
- [Click this link](#) or visit ovs.ny.gov for information about local programs that assist domestic violence victims.

Thank you for your time and attention, and for the work your agencies and officers are doing during these unprecedented times, to help ensure the safety of all New Yorkers.