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April 21, 2014

SPOTLIGHT: ORANGE COUNTY

LEGAL SERVICES OF THE HUDSON VALLEY PROVIDES ON-SITE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES

As part of Orange County's funding for non-residential Domestic Violence services, Legal Services of the Hudson Valley will receive renewed funding of \$140,000 as a subcontracted agency to Safe Homes of Orange County, to provide civil legal services to survivors of violence and their children within the Orange County Family Justice Center. Legal Services of the Hudson Valley began working with Safe Homes as a subcontracted provider in June 2013, with our full-time staff attorney and full-time bi-lingual paralegal collocated onsite in the Orange County Family Justice Center – a model collaboration between the County of Orange, its Department of Social Services and Safe Homes.

The Family Justice Center concept was designed to create co-located services for of domestic violence victims and their children. Co-locating services eases barriers faced by survivors and allows easier access to much-needed services. Additionally, the Family Justice Center is intended to create a warm, safe, nurturing environment in which to seek help.

Legal Services of the Hudson Valley has 46 years of experience working with Domestic Violence survivors. Domestic Violence accounts for 14% of our total caseload and we serve more than 1,200 Domestic Violence clients annually.

In acknowledging the funding that has made this innovative collaborative program possible, Legal Services of the Hudson Valley CEO Barbara Finkelstein said "The first 10 months of our on-site collaboration with Safe Homes of Orange County has been a tremendous success. We were able to dramatically increase the number of women and their children who received legal protection from domestic violence. This year, we want to ensure that even more families who need our help receive it. We thank the Orange County officials and Orange County Department of Social Services for making this vital work possible and we look forward to continuing our affiliation with Safe Homes, which has benefitted both of our organizations and our community."

Legal Services of the Hudson Valley has partnered with Safe Homes since 2004. We have worked together formally and informally on cases, coalitions and committees including the Orange County Coalition to Prevent Violence Against Women. Our collaborations have included cross-referrals, outreach, cross-training, resource development and community education.

Through this agreement, Staff Attorney Katherine McGerald and Paralegal Jessica DiSilvestro will be supervised by Legal Services of the Hudson Valley's Attorney Manager for Domestic Violence Services Joanne Sirotkin, who brings expertise as an experienced attorney and specialist in the dynamics of domestic violence. The Legal Services of the Hudson Valley team will represent domestic violence victims with legal proceedings including orders of protection (family offense matters), custody, visitation, child and spousal support and divorce.

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