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**NEW REPORT RANKS OKLAHOMA 13<sup>th</sup> IN INTIMATE PARTNER  
HOMICIDES: OCTOBER DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH**

A report recently released by the Violence Policy Center in Washington, D.C., ranks Oklahoma 13<sup>th</sup> in the nation in the ratio of females murdered by males in single victim/single offender homicides, with 31 women killed by their intimate partners in 2002 – a rate of 1.75 per 100,000 population.

The report, “When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2002 Homicide Data,” ranks Alaska first, with a rate of 4.84 per 100,000, and South Dakota last, with no deaths.

The report couldn’t come at a more appropriate time with October designated as “Domestic Violence Awareness Month,” said Julie Young, deputy commissioner of domestic violence/sexual assault services at the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

“Domestic violence is more prevalent in Oklahoma than people may realize,” she said. “An ODMHSAS study found that at least 136,000 Oklahoma women – 17.4 percent

of women over the age of 18 who are married or living in a similar situation – reported they have been emotionally and/or physically abused by a partner.”

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Physical abuse isn't the only type of abuse, Young said.

“Often in a physically abusive relationship there is emotional abuse as well, such as name-calling or verbal put-downs, restricting contact with family or friends, inducing fear through intimidation, or overly controlling behavior,” Young said. “Emotional abuse is just as damaging as physical abuse, because the scars of emotional abuse can last a lifetime. Many victims of domestic violence have low self-confidence and low self-esteem because they are continually being torn down by their partners. Emotional trauma, depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder all are problems that can result from physical and emotional abuse.

“Domestic violence is a crime in Oklahoma,” Young added. “It also impacts the health of families and communities. It is a crime that has negative consequences ranging from the need for mental health counseling to medical surgeries for broken jawbones or facial fractures. Plus, the impact on children is tremendous. Although the partner is the primary target, violence is often directed toward children, as well. Neurologically, a child's brain development can change as a result of witnessing violence or growing up in a violent environment. Domestic violence impacts their behavior and functioning, and perpetuates the cycle of abuse in future generations.”

Young provided this Domestic Violence Checklist to help people determine if they are being abused:

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### **Domestic Violence Checklist**

Look over the following questions. Think about how you are being treated and how you treat your partner. Remember, when one person scares, hurts or continually puts down the other person, it's abuse.

Does your partner...

- Embarrass you with bad names and put-downs?
- Look at you or act in ways that scare you?
- Control what you do, who you see or talk to, or where you go?
- Stop you from seeing or talking to friends or family?
- Take your money or Social Security, make you ask for money or refuse to give you money?
- Make all the decisions?
- Tell you you're a bad parent or threaten to take away or hurt your children?
- Act like the abuse is no big deal, it's your fault, or even deny doing it?
- Destroy your property or threaten to kill your pets?
- Intimidate you with guns, knives or other weapons?
- Shove you, slap you or hit you?
- Force you to drop charges?
- Threaten to commit suicide?

Threaten to kill you?

If you checked even one of these, you may be in an abusive relationship. If you need help, call the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services' "Safeline" at **1-800-522-7233**. This number also can provide referral information for domestic violence shelters, batterers' intervention programs and other types of services for victims of domestic violence or sexual assault.

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