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## Civil Service Unveils Domestic Violence Policy for Public Employers

**Trenton-** The New Jersey Civil Service Commission (CSC) Chair and CEO Deirdré Webster Cobb, Esq., today announced the release of the Statewide Domestic Violence Policy (DVP) for Public Employers. This policy is designed to encourage employees who are victims of domestic violence as well as those impacted by domestic violence to seek assistance from Human Resources Officers (HRO) within both state and local government. HROs are equipped to assist employees who are impacted by domestic violence. Under the statute, N.J.S.A.11A-2.6, the policy applies to all public employers, not just those that are part of the Civil Service System.

Each year, thousands of domestic violence cases go unreported due to fear, embarrassment or shame. The State of New Jersey recognizes that domestic violence presents many challenges for victims, perpetrators and families. In response to these challenges, New Jersey is leading efforts to confront this growing problem.

“As part of a Legislative mandate, the Civil Service Commission formed a task force consisting of government representatives, advocacy groups, and community leaders to formulate the policy that is being introduced today,” **said Webster Cobb**. “These new guidelines seek to create an easy, welcoming, and confidential system for all public employees to report domestic violence incidents. Furthermore, the policy will provide protections for domestic violence victims from retaliation by current and future employers for their history with domestic violence. On average, nearly 24 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States. Throughout one year, this equates to more than 12 million women and men.”

The DVP addresses critical areas such as domestic violence reporting procedures, responsibility of state HROs, domestic violence action plans, applicable federal and state laws and confidentiality provisions. This policy serves as a tool to protect vulnerable men and women against the harsh realities of domestic violence. The Civil Service Commission is charged with overseeing the implementation of this policy and working with state, county and local authorities.

Under the DVP:

- All public employers shall designate an HRO to assist employees who are victims of domestic violence.
- HROs must receive training on responding to and assisting employees who are domestic violence victims in accordance with this policy.
- Employees who are victims of domestic violence are encouraged to seek immediate assistance from their HRO.
- All public employers shall develop an action plan to identify, respond to, and correct employee performance issues that are caused by domestic violence, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 11A:2-6a.

In addition, each designated HRO shall:

- Immediately respond to an employee upon request and provide a safe and confidential location to allow the employee to discuss the circumstances surrounding the domestic violence incident and the request for assistance.
- Determine whether there is an imminent and emergent need to contact 911 and/or local law enforcement.
- Provide the employee with resource information and a confidential telephone line to make necessary calls for services for emergent intervention and supportive services, when appropriate. The HRO or the employee can contact the appropriate Employee Assistance Program to assist with securing resources and confidential services.
- Refer the employee to the provisions and protections of The New Jersey Security and Financial Empowerment Act, N.J.S.A. 34:11C-1 et seq. (NJ SAFE Act), referenced under Section VIII of this policy.
- In cases where domestic violence involved a sexual touching or sexual assault between state employees, the HRO is also required to report the incident to his or her agency's EEO Officer or Title IX Officer, as appropriate.
- Maintain the confidentiality of the employee and all parties involved, to the extent practical and appropriate under the circumstances, pursuant to this policy. (See Section VI).

The DVP includes an appendix with a list of resources and programs to assist victims of domestic violence. The links to the policy and appendix can be found by visiting: [https://www.state.nj.us/csc/authorities/domestic\\_violence.html](https://www.state.nj.us/csc/authorities/domestic_violence.html)

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