



## Charleston County News Release

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## Charleston County Solicitor's Office Receives Grant to Hire Criminal Domestic Violence Prosecutor

The South Carolina Department of Public Safety has awarded the [9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Solicitor's Office](#) a \$67,467 grant to assist in hiring and employing a Criminal Domestic Violence (CDV) prosecutor.

In South Carolina, the Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) award is administered through the S.C. Department of Public Safety. The state award to various cities and counties is estimated to be \$1.8 million this year, including the \$67,467 given to the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Solicitor's Office. Last year, the award from the state was \$5.3 million.

The decline in the state awarded funding is due to the decline of funds available on the national level. Nationally, the JAG program has experienced a 66.7 percent decrease in funding since 2007.

"Given the greatly reduced odds of receiving funds this year, our office is proud to have secured the \$67,467 for the CDV program we designed and applied for as a grant-funded effort for the Charleston area," said Scarlett Wilson, 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Solicitor.

Beginning with the new grant funding, the objective of the Solicitor's Office is to form a highly-trained domestic violence team that will focus on the problem of domestic violence in the legal arena.

"This will complement the General Sessions prosecution efforts underway as well as our prosecuting in the Magistrate's Centralized CDV Court," Wilson said.

According to the Violence Policy Center, South Carolina ranks seventh in the nation for the number of females murdered by males in single victim/single offender homicides.

On the state level, South Carolina murder rates increased by 23.2 percent from 2004 to 2006 (14.9 percent from 2005 to 2006), and 28 percent of those murders were domestic violence related according to the S.C. Law Enforcement Division (SLED).

According to the S.C. Office of the Attorney General, Charleston County had the second highest number of CDV incidents in South Carolina in 2005, with a total of 2,669 incidents (Horry County had a slightly higher figure).

"In the case of most other violent crimes, the victim never again has personal contact with the defendant. But in domestic violence cases, the perpetrator usually continues to be a

part of the victim's personal life," Wilson said. "As a result, the victims are often unwilling to testify, making these cases particularly difficult to prosecute."

Given the circumstances and high number of CDV incidents occurring in Charleston County, the Solicitor's Office determined that a specialized, full-time prosecutor is needed for the successful trial of these unique cases.

"The more effectively and promptly we are able to investigate the crimes and prosecute the offenders, the more lives we will save, including the lives of children who are involved," Wilson said.

Studies show that children who have been exposed to domestic violence are at high risk for developing serious problems later in life and continuing the cycle of abuse.

"If we can prevent these children from having to live in violent home situations, we can contribute to breaking the cycle," Wilson said.

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