Women Who Are Deaf Face Special Challenges When Domestic Violence Strikes; New Video Helps Ensure These Individuals Will be Protected and Receive Essential Services

One in four individuals will experience domestic violence during her lifetime, according to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Women who are deaf or hard of hearing are up against an even tougher challenge than hearing women when they try to escape their batterers, secure the services they need to survive – such as counseling and domestic violence shelters – and make sure their legal rights are protected. October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The Chicago Hearing Society (www.chicagohearingsoociety.org) a division of Chicago’s Anixter Center, has produced a new video called “Deafening Silence” to help ensure that organizations that provide services to women who are deaf and hard of hearing are aware of this group’s special needs.

CHICAGO, IL (PRWEB) October 4, 2006 -- One in four individuals will experience domestic violence during her lifetime, according to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Women who are deaf or hard of hearing are up against an even tougher challenge than hearing women when they try to escape their batterers, secure the services they need to survive – such as counseling and domestic violence shelters – and make sure their legal rights are protected. October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

The Chicago Hearing Society (www.chicagohearingsoociety.org), a division of Chicago’s Anixter Center, has produced a new video called “Deafening Silence” to help ensure that organizations that provide services to women who are deaf and hard of hearing are aware of this group’s special needs. (According to the American Speech and Hearing Association, 42 million Americans experience some kind of speech, voice, language or hearing impairment.)

The half-hour video, produced with funds from the United States Department of Justice, uses a realistic dramatic portrayal to depict what often happens when women who are deaf suffer domestic violence. It’s well documented that battering - or domestic violence – represents a power struggle, usually men’s intent to control women.

“Most abusers try to isolate their victims from the rest of the community," says Jill Sahakian, director of Chicago Hearing Society. “Because of the special communication needs of deaf people, such isolation may be even more profound than for a hearing victim.” When a deaf women who uses sign language as a primary means of communication is being battered by a hearing man, her communication options are more limited. When she attempts to report the abuse, her abuser is often able to communicate quickly, verbally and directly with law enforcement or others who the woman tries to contact for help.

“The Americans with Disabilities Act, passed in 1990, made several important provisions to protect the rights of people who are deaf, and many of these come into play when domestic violence occurs,” says Sahakian. For example, under the ADA, an abused person is entitled to an effective, objective, impartial communication, often provided by a sign language interpreter. Accused abusers obviously don’t meet this criteria, yet they often are requested to interpret. Children should never be asked to interpret either, yet often are urged to do so. “Service providers – such as domestic violence agencies – need to know about the services they’re obligated to provide,”
says Sahakian.

The video was produced with a grant provided by the Office on Violence Against Women, United States Justice Department. Grant funding allowed the Chicago Hearing Society, which regularly counsels victims of domestic violence who are deaf and hard of hearing, to hire two staff members to create “Deafening Silence.” They developed a training curriculum, received feedback from those who would eventually use the video, wrote the script, auditioned actors, and shot and edited the video. In producing “Deafening Silence,” Chicago Hearing Society partnered with Mt. Sinai Hospital and Rainbow House (a domestic violence agency that is no longer in operation).

The video, along with an accompanying guide that includes topics such as “Myths Surrounding Domestic Violence” and “Myths and Facts about Deafness” will be distributed free of charge to nearly 2,500 domestic violence agencies nationwide. If you would like a copy of the video, send an e-mail.

###
Contact Information
Betsy Storm
ANIXTER CENTER
http://www.chicagohearingsociety.org
773-973-7900

Online Web 2.0 Version
You can read the online version of this press release here.