

PRESS STATEMENT

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Deadly holiday weekend in Kansas: *Statewide organization responds to recent domestic violence murders in Kansas*

Statement from Sandy Barnett, executive director, Kansas Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence

Topeka, Kan. — We extend our sympathies to the families and friends of Karen, Emily and Lauren Kahler who were murdered Thanksgiving weekend in Burlingame. We are horrified, and yet these deaths serve as a stark reminder that Kansas has a long way to go to achieve communities free from domestic violence.

After reviewing online court records, it was clear that Karen Kahler was attempting to free herself from this relationship. She filed for divorce and temporary custody of the children in January. She filed for a protection order in March, and it appears that James Kraig assaulted her on the day he was served with the protection order. A neighbor has said that during the summer months he continued to harass and intimidate Karen in a variety of ways, including slashing her tires and ripping out her utility cables. Unfortunately, delays requested by the defense in the pending criminal case and extended litigation by the respondent in the civil case allowed him to continue abusing her.

When battered women attempt to leave their husbands or boyfriends, they face increased risks for violence, including lethal violence. While KCSDV has no information about what happened in Karen's marriage before she was murdered by her husband, we do know that all the information that we could find pointed toward her reaching out to others for help. She reached out for help in her divorce, and the system failed her by sending her to mediation and parenting classes. She sought help in the criminal case, and the system failed her by allowing the case to be continued at least four times with no apparent sanctions for his violation of the no contact order.

In the aftermath, the media is reporting that the Kahler's were "sparring over the children," experiencing a "year-long slide" in their marriage, and that the murder was a result of a "domestic dispute" that "boiled to the surface." These characterizations are incorrect, and they trivialize the true violence, fear and trauma experienced by all victims of domestic violence, especially those separating from their abusers.

In 2008, 19 adults and 14 children were murdered as a result of domestic violence in Kansas. With Topeka and Kansas City, Kansas reports yet to be filed, at least 18 adults and eight children have been murdered so far in 2009, including:

- Rosa M. Gomez who was murdered by her ex-husband at her workplace in Salina. She had divorced him three years ago and currently had a protection order against him, which he violated three times prior to killing her. Charles R. Losey, a co-worker trying to protect her, was also murdered.

- Jeannie Jacobsen, a mother of three, was recently murdered by her boyfriend, Armando Mosqueda, in Lyons. Jeannie filed for a protection order one week prior to her murder because he had threatened, bruised and strangled her. Armando was currently on probation for aggravated battery of an ex-girlfriend who had sought protection from him twice. He previously served three years in prison for aggravated battery of a man.

KCSDV urges all communities to look inward and assess what they can do to create safer and more immediate responses for battered women and their children. As individuals, there's something that everyone can do to make a difference for victims — simply knowing the Kansas Crisis Hotline number, 888-END-ABUSE, and the *HelpChangeKansas.com* website ensures that everyone will be ready to assist when someone they know needs their help. In addition, please call your legislators and ask them to maintain funding for life saving services for victims of domestic violence and their children across the state.

KCSDV's 30 statewide sexual and domestic violence advocacy programs provided 62,900 shelter nights, answered 45,000 crisis calls, and provided 44,000 supportive counseling hours in 2008. Currently, one in 10 adult women in Kansas report domestic violence victimization, which can include isolation, emotional, verbal, sexual and physical abuse, as well as financial abuse and control. For every victim that receives services, there are countless others — three out of five victims in Kansas — that do not know where to go to receive services and support.

The Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence is a private, non-profit organization whose mission is to prevent and eliminate sexual and domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. KCSDV is a network of 30 community-based, sexual and domestic violence advocacy programs providing direct services to victims in all 105 counties in Kansas. Visit KCSDV online at HelpChangeKansas.com and kcsdv.org.

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