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Survivors of Dating Abuse Now Eligible for Protective Orders in Virginia *Help Available for Those Experiencing Dating Abuse*

Arlington, VA— Women ages 16 to 24 are at the greatest risk of experiencing an abusive relationship. Yet for the vast major of those women – specifically those in dating relationships - the legal system offered little defense. That is because protective orders, a civil order issued by a judge to protect one person from another’s threatening behavior, were previously only available to those in a “domestic” situation – married, living together or having a child together.

July 1st marks a historic day for the protection of those previously unprotected as a bill passed in the Virginia legislature goes into effect, allowing survivors of dating abuse to be eligible for protective orders against their abusers. Until the beginning of this month, Virginia was one of only six states that did not afford this legal protection to dating partners. [Doorways for Women and Families](#), one of Arlington’s leading providers of services to women and families experiencing homelessness and abuse, encourages all in our community to spread the word that help is now available to survivors of dating abuse.

“This is a huge step forward in protecting our community from intimate partner violence” explained Caroline Jones, Executive Director of Doorways. “ Given the incidence of violence in younger relationships, Doorways has been actively partnering with schools, universities and community partners to bring greater education and prevention strategies to our youth. The toll of violence in relationships is far too great to become complacent in our efforts.”

Doorways created its Court Advocacy Program to assist those in need of legal protection by providing education and companionship through the petition and court hearing process. Operating out of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations In-take Office of the Arlington Court House, the Court Advocacy program assisted 724 adults and children last year in gaining protection from abusive partners.. With the implementation of the new protective order law, a whole new segment of the population should know that there is help available.. One in five teens in a serious relationship has experienced physical abuse with an estimated 33% of high school students having been a survivor of dating abuse.

Doorways encourages any survivor of dating abuse to call their 24-Domestic Violence Hotline at 703-237-0881 to find the help they need to be safe. Any survivor seeking a protective order can speak with Doorways’ Court Advocate by calling 703-244-5165 and be guided through the legal process.



“We want everyone to know that they are not alone in the pathway to safety,” Jones concluded.

For more information about domestic and intimate partner abuse and homelessness in the local community, visit www.DoorwaysVA.org.

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Doorways for Women and Families, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, strives to end homelessness and family and intimate partner violence by offering safe shelter and housing, life changing support services and community advocacy. Recognized as a well-managed leader and innovator, Doorways has received numerous accolades, including the Washington Post's Excellence in Nonprofit Management, Charity Navigator's Four Stars for financial responsibility and Washingtonian Magazine's Great Charities list. www.doorwaysva.org