



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

With Domestic Violence Rates Increasing, Senator Tim Kennedy and Family Justice Center Executive Director Mary Murphy Announce \$100,000 in State Funding for Continued Crisis Support in WNY

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY October 6, 2021

| ISSUE: **CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC; COVID-19; DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, FORENSIC SCIENCE**



BUFFALO, N.Y. – Family Justice Center Executive Director Mary Murphy joined Senator Tim Kennedy (D-Buffalo) Wednesday to announce \$100,000 in state funding coming to support the Western New York crisis agency’s Forensic Medical Unit. The Senator secured the funding in this year’s state budget, and comes at a critical time. During 2020, as COVID-19

raged through Erie County and victims of domestic violence were forced to quarantine at home with their abusers, the FJC experienced a 74 percent spike in hotline calls - an increase that continues to this day. Since the onset of the pandemic, the FJC has been operating remotely, with staff assisting victims by phone, virtually, and through limited in-person intervention.

“When the pandemic hit, the COVID-19 virus wasn’t the only public health crisis that we witnessed; demand for crisis services across our region and nation skyrocketed due to the mandated quarantine that so many of us faced in order to stay safe. The staff at the Family Justice Center continue to save lives and provide safety and comfort to individuals in their darkest hour,” said Senator Tim Kennedy. “As we emerge from this crossroads and attempt to Build Back Better, we have a responsibility to ensure that our frontline crisis workers are equipped with the resources they need to effectively respond to this increased volume in calls they’re receiving. I’m proud to have helped deliver that state support, and will continue to advocate for this incredible agency that advocates for all of us.”

“Our Forensic Medical Unit is busier than ever, and the reports from clients including serious injuries are like nothing we have experienced before,” said Mary Travers Murphy, FJC Chief Executive Officer. “As we mark Domestic Violence Awareness Month, this funding secured by Senator Kennedy underscores the need for these services. I’m incredibly proud of the work done by our FMU, and this funding will ensure that we can keep pace with the needs of the community.”

The state funding will go towards staffing the Forensic Medical Unit, as well as purchasing high tech cameras, lighting equipment, ongoing training and supplies needed to effectively run the unit. The Forensic Medical Unit serves several important roles, including detailing client injuries on an electronic map of the body, taking high tech color pictures of injuries, assisting the Erie County District Attorney’s Office in prosecuting perpetrators, and helping

clients understand and address the severity, and devastating lifelong health repercussions, caused by their injuries. In 2020, the majority of calls into the FJC's hotline have been of a high lethality risk nature, which the Forensic Medical Unit is specifically designed to address.

In 2020, the Family Justice Center's Forensic Medical Unit nurse worked with:

- 215 domestic violence victims
- 102 cases of strangulations
- 61 cases of head injuries/Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

On May 2, 2006, the Family Justice Center of Erie County celebrated its grand opening. Since that time, the FJC has helped thousands of clients deal with issues of domestic and family violence. The FJC continues to bring unity to a once fragmented system; holding abusers accountable for their actions; and providing a safe place for victims and their children to find hope and healing.

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