

# Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center High Risk Team Recognized at the White House

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President Obama and Vice President Biden spoke about the unprecedented efforts across the Federal Government to protect victims of domestic and sexual violence in an event marking **Domestic Violence Awareness Month** that was held at the White House on October 27, 2010.

Suzanne C. Dubus, Chief Executive Officer of the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center, was invited to the event and honored to hear the Vice President's comments recognizing the success of the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center's work to reduce domestic violence homicides through its high risk team model:

"The most dramatic murders occur shortly after the victim tries to leave. That's the most dangerous moment...we need to pick up on the warning signs much better than we have thus far. There have been moments when the system could have worked better—when lives could have been saved. We know this because of what happened to a woman like Dorothy Cotter, who was 35 years old; a compassionate, beautiful woman and mother of two young daughters. She had suffered years of severe abuse at her husband's hands. Years. Dorothy's case had all the warning signs of homicide. The Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center of Newburyport, Massachusetts, where Dorothy sought help, wrote a note in her file, and that said "Very Lethal Case," but they didn't have the tools to coordinate with the police and the courts. After Dorothy's husband shot her, the Crisis Center made a commitment not only to screen every single woman for the warning signs, but also to bring everyone together to interrupt that cycle of escalating violence. And that's how it goes...it escalates...it never stays the same.

***There have been no domestic violence homicides in that community since the project began. We need to replace what we have been doing and replicate this kind of success."***

—Vice President Joseph Biden



## **What is the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center's High Risk Response Team Model?**

The High Risk Team is a multidisciplinary group of professionals that identify and address the most dangerous cases of reported domestic violence in the greater Newburyport community. The Team partners include the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center; Newburyport Probation; Amesbury, Salisbury Newburyport and Newbury Police Departments; the Essex District Attorney's Office; the certified batterers' intervention program at Caritas Holy Family Hospital; the Essex Sheriff's Department and Anna Jaques Hospital.

The Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center developed the model following a domestic-violence-related homicide.

The Team focuses equally on victim safety and services and offender accountability by using a three-pronged approach:

- Early identification of high risk offenders through risk assessment.
- Case-specific, multidisciplinary response to high risk cases.
- Coordinated and ongoing monitoring and containment of offenders along with accessible and high quality victim services.

Rather than expecting that victims most at risk of violence will escape to shelter—effectively forcing them to leave behind their homes, families, friends and communities—the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center has created a better-coordinated model that is able to address their needs and provide new options for victims who are in high danger.

The High Risk Team is in the sixth year of operation and has transformed the way the community responds to victims in high danger. The model has been replicated in 14 other communities in the Commonwealth, and, to date, the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center staff have trained over 3,000 criminal justice professionals and advocates in the model.

View the White House event and hear the full speeches by Vice President Biden and President Obama at:  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2010/10/27/domestic-violence-awareness-month>