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CODA discloses shelter location

Policy change reflects national trend

TERRE HAUTE (Oct. 1, 2017) — The Council on Domestic Abuse (CODA) is ending its policy of keeping secret the location of its emergency shelter. The policy change, recommended by the Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence, is in line with more than half of the state’s domestic violence shelters that also make their locations known to the public.

The location of CODA’s shelter is 26 South 17th Street in Terre Haute. Primarily serving residents of Vigo, Clay, Park, Sullivan and Vermillion counties, the shelter housed 118 adults and 72 children in 2016. After expanding from 24 beds to 45 beds late last year, the shelter has already housed 132 adults and 90 children in 2017.

The new policy will be made official with a ribbon cutting hosted by the Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce and Mayor Duke Bennett on October 3. The ceremony is one of several CODA events in observance of Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

In recent years, many shelters around the country have made the switch to a public location. This shift in thinking reflects a variety of factors:

- Keeping a shelter location confidential is difficult in a time of rampant data sharing when abusers can easily install tracking apps on victims’ phones.
- Having a public shelter location removes the stigma that victims have done something wrong and must “hide out.”
- Shelter residents will now be able to arrange for transportation to pick them up and drop them off at the front door of the shelter, instead of having to walk several blocks to avoid revealing the shelter’s location.
- Having a public location increases the likelihood that victims will be aware of the shelter’s location and will walk right up to its front door when they need help.
- Support group meetings can now welcome all domestic violence victims in the area, instead of just the shelter’s residents.
- Fully disclosed shelters have seen no increase in abusers coming to the shelter.

CODA’s vote to disclose the location was made after careful consideration of those factors, evaluation of reports from other public shelters, discussions with CODA staff and residents, and thorough evaluation of safety and security protocols.

“Our goal is to prevent violence in the Wabash Valley, while providing the best services possible for survivors,” said CODA Executive Director Sarah Campbell. “We strongly feel that our current residents will be more empowered, and we will all benefit from the increased awareness of our presence in the community.”

- more -

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Page 2

Oct. 1, 2017

A key element of this policy change is that, while the shelter location is no longer confidential, the Council on Domestic Abuse's services still are. CODA never will reveal the identity of any client who stays at the shelter or who receives any of its services, from calling the crisis line at 800-566-CODA to seeking advice on securing a protective order.

For more information on CODA's services, visit codaterrehaute.org.

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