

**ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY News Release**  
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**New Report on Domestic Violence Sounds "System Alert" in Arizona**

Domestic violence (DV) ranks among the most common 911 calls to police statewide. And a new report reveals that the victims making the calls – and the professionals working in Arizona's criminal-justice system – say the state's response is at risk of failing.

***System Alert: Arizona's Criminal Justice Response to Domestic Violence***, published by Morrison Institute for Public Policy at Arizona State University, finds that, despite important strides made over the past three decades, the state's criminal justice system is too often falling short of its goals of achieving victim safety and offender accountability. The report was commissioned by the Governor's Commission to Prevent Violence Against Women.

According to report author Richard Toon, "We called the study *System Alert* for a reason – while most of our respondents support Arizona's current approach to DV, they warned that we must improve the state's response. Many of them compared DV in magnitude and seriousness to substance abuse or DUI."

*System Alert* examines the impact of this destructive force through the views and opinions of front-line practitioners in Arizona's criminal-justice system and the victims who have sought its aid. Researchers conducted more than 800 confidential surveys and 71 in-depth interviews of prosecutors, judges, probation officers, victim advocates, and victims throughout Arizona.

In addition to quantitative data, the report includes candid, first-person assessments by victims and front-line professionals. As one city prosecutor commented: "I don't think any one part of the system – police, prosecution, courts – is set up effectively to handle DV."

Among other things, the report concludes:

- Most criminal-justice professionals described a system so swamped with cases that they often wonder at the quality of justice they are able to dispense
- Victims and victim advocates consistently expressed disappointment with how well the system responds to victims' needs
- All groups praised the efforts of victim advocates
- Judges were criticized by many others for sentencing DV offenders too lightly
- Prosecutors and others said victims' lack of involvement in prosecution remains the major stumbling block to effective action

*System Alert* also presents recommendations for improving the system's response.

*System Alert* builds upon Morrison Institute's 2005 report *Layers of Meaning: Domestic Violence and Law Enforcement Attitudes in Arizona*, which described the widespread frustration on the part of Arizona law enforcement officers with domestic violence cases. *System Alert* tells the rest of the story in an effort to further assist Arizona policymakers and others in their efforts to reduce and prevent domestic violence.

To download a copy of *System Alert*, visit [www.morrisoninstitute.org](http://www.morrisoninstitute.org). Also online, read new commentaries by members of the project's advisory panel as they discuss issues facing criminal justice professionals.

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