



Stop Abusive and Violent Environments

The Cost of Mandatory Arrest: 600 Lives a Year

PRESS RELEASE

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WASHINGTON / November 8, 2010 – Domestic violence victims who live in a state that mandates arrest for domestic violence face an unintended, yet deadly side effect of such policies. Each year, over 600 persons die as a result of mandatory arrest laws, according to a report released today:

<http://www.saveservices.org/downloads/Justice-Denied-DV-Arrest-Policies>

The report, “Arrest Policies for Domestic Violence,” summarizes the research on the impact of mandatory arrest laws, and concludes such policies have had the opposite of the desired effect. The report is issued by Stop Abusive and Violent Environments (SAVE), a non-profit organization that advocates evidence-based solutions to domestic violence.

The estimated 600 lives lost each year is based on a national study by Harvard University that found mandatory arrest policies increase subsequent homicide rates by 57%. The Harvard study was highlighted in a *New York Times* op-ed column (“The Protection Battered Spouses Don’t Need” 8/7/2007).

“For years, persons have known get-tough mandatory arrest policies weren’t working,” explains SAVE director Claudia Cornell, PhD. “Now, victims of domestic violence need to send a powerful message to lawmakers: ‘Remove mandatory arrest policies.’”

According to Harvard researcher Radha Iyengar, mandatory arrest has back-fired because such policies discourage victims from calling for help. “Victims want protection, but they do not always want to see their partners behind bars,” she notes in her *NYT* column.

The 2005 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act shifted from a mandatory to a “pro-arrest” stance. But five years later, not a single mandatory arrest state has removed such policies.

Another harmful effect of mandatory arrest is that persons are often arrested based on scant evidence of abuse, giving rise to allegations of false arrest. Only 30% of persons arrested for domestic violence are convicted of any crime.

A listing of the states with mandatory arrest policies can be seen here: <http://www.saveservices.org/protect-victims-stop-mandatory-arrest/>

Stop Abusive and Violent Environments is a victim-advocacy organization dedicated to stopping partner abuse: www.saveservices.org