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**EL PASO COUNTY ATTORNEY AND DISTRICT ATTORNEY
UNVEIL NEW INITIATIVE AGAINST DOMESTIC/DATING
VIOLENCE**

**Program includes videos, materials and presentations to be offered to local
high schools**

On Friday, February 11, 2011, El Paso County Attorney Jo Anne Bernal and District Attorney Jaime Esparza unveiled a bold new initiative to reduce domestic and dating violence in El Paso County.

This comprehensive initiative entitled “*No Te Dejes! Don’t Let Yourself,*” was made possible by an \$80,000 grant from the Criminal Justice Department of the Texas Governor’s Office.

The initiative includes the production of culturally sensitive videos targeted at local area high school students and their parents. The videos, created by local production company “MindWarp Entertainment,” will be used in conjunction with a comprehensive domestic/teen dating violence curriculum. Both offices will offer the video and training curriculum to students, school administrators, parents and community groups in El Paso County.

The first video is a 16-minute dramatization that explores issues related to abusive teen dating relationships, such as the use of intimidation, isolation and physical violence to exercise power and control over the victim.

The second video, created in English and Spanish, addresses issues of domestic violence in adult relationships, such as economic and sexual abuse, the use of children to manipulate and the immigration considerations of victims involved in abusive relationships.

The project is unique in that all aspects of the initiative were designed to reflect situations, cultures and issues specific to El Paso and other border communities along the U.S.-Mexico border. Culturally sensitive materials connect better with the audience and make the message more effective. So far students have responded well to previews of the teen dating violence video.

The initiative also includes the creation of an interactive webpage and the development of a comprehensive curriculum that covers the dynamics of domestic/teen dating violence, as well as prevention and intervention resources available within the El Paso community. Some of the topics include access to law enforcement, safety planning, the use of protective orders, availability of shelter and counseling services, and criminal prosecution of offenders.

Presentation of the teen dating violence video and corresponding curriculum will be offered to all interested school districts in the El Paso area to comply with state legislation which went into effect May of 2007. The legislation, found in Section 37.0831 of the Education Code, mandates the implementation of a dating violence policy to be included in each district's improvement plan.

Commenting on the importance of the project, District Attorney Jaime Esparza explained, "this important initiative will jumpstart the conversation across our community about the harm of violent relationships. We hope to help young people and adults alike, recognize the warning signs of abusive relationships and equip them with information on how they can get help if they become a victim of an abusive relationship or family violence," Esparza said.

El Paso County Attorney Jo Anne Bernal said "the groundbreaking initiative is the first time the two prosecutors' offices in El Paso County have collaborated to create a domestic violence program that aims to ensure justice by proactively educating, deterring and preventing the occurrence of family violence before the need for prosecutorial intervention."

The County and District Attorneys' Offices will start scheduling presentations with local school districts on March 1, 2011. The interactive webpage will go live on the same date.

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