

Tech empowers victims' access to hotline

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Thanks to a new technology system, more domestic-violence victims around the country will have better access to life-saving services through the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

Sen. Joseph Biden, D-Del., and the Texas-based National Domestic Violence Hotline revealed the new technology system Thursday.

The system includes mapping software, networked computers, flat-screen monitors and telephone air time to maximize call volume as well as collect and reports national domestic violence patterns.

"Across the country, millions of women take the first step to escape family violence by calling the National Domestic Violence Hotline," Biden said in a statement. "The new technology made possible by the Connections Campaign will ensure that no battered woman, man or child gets a busy signal and no victim's life is ever put on hold."

The Hotline was created by Biden's Violence Against Women Act in 1996 and since then, has answered 1.5 million phone calls with as many as 600 a day and about 16,500 a month from victims around the nation.

And with so many calls and outdated equipment, it found that its callers were holding longer times or experienced busy signals, so the new for new technology was great.

"Looking back over a decade of providing empowerment-based crisis intervention services, the Hotline has become a victim of its own

success," also stated Sheryl Cates, NDVH executive director. "As public awareness grows about domestic violence, the number of calls to the Hotline has increased by an average of 200 percent. Thanks to Senator Biden and our corporate partners from the Connections Campaign, we now have the technology and training to answer more calls and save more lives."

The Connections Campaign is a public and private effort between the government and companies like AOL, Microsoft, Dell and IBM, which have all made contributions to the Hotline by means of time, donations and technology.

And so far, Biden has collected over \$2 million in corporate donations as well as securing an additional \$840,000 in federal funding when he introduced the campaign as legislation.

Between 2 million and 4 million women in the United States are battered each year and more than half of victims live in a household with children under age 12.

Moreover, one-third of women in emergency rooms are victims of domestic violence according to The Journal of American Medical Associations.

And according to government studies, on average more than three women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends every day.

"These statistics are shocking, almost unbelievable," added Biden. "But the people who call the Hotline are not statistics. They are real individuals with real lives. They are women we see every day at work, at the grocery store, in the school parking lot. In many cases, they are people whose lives have been changed, in part, by calling the Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE."

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