



## **CHATHAM COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT**

295 Police Memorial Drive, Savannah, GA , 31405

(912) 652-6920 FAX: (912)650-6130

Chief Jeffrey M. Hadley

Assistant Chief Terry Shoop

Assistant Chief Julie Tolbert

### ***MEDIA ADVISORY***

**For Immediate Release**

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#### **Area Police Agencies See Increase in Domestic Cases During Shelter-In-Place Order**

**Chatham County, GA (April 21, 2020)** – The Chatham County Police Department and Savannah Police Department are seeing an increase in domestic disturbance and domestic violence cases as schools are closed and citizens shelter in place to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. With Governor Brian Kemp’s shelter in place order in effect until April 30, law enforcement and community organizations are banding together to address this problem and educate the community about helpful resources.

Between April 5, 2020 and April 16, 2020, Chatham County Police Department officers responded to an average of 4.2 domestic disturbance calls a day. This is up from the daily average of 3.6 for the same time period in 2019. Approximately 70% of those incidents were first-time domestic disturbance calls to those residences. During the same time period, Savannah Police Department officers responded to an average of 12 domestic violence-related calls a day, which is up from the daily average of nine calls for the same time frame in 2019.

“Sheltering in place is one of our most crucial weapons against spreading the deadly COVID-19 virus,” said Chatham County Police Chief Jeff Hadley. “But, it is incredibly stressful for many families who are now dealing with a disrupted daily routine, job loss, economic uncertainty and the anxiety brought on by this global pandemic. Sadly, in some households, the tensions are escalating to the point where the police must become involved for everyone’s safety.”

“Calls for domestic violence are on the incline nationwide and in our community, and we knew it was time to shed some light on this unfortunate circumstance,” said Savannah Police Chief Roy Minter. “We want to encourage those in our community to please call police if they are in an unhealthy or abusive situation. We are here to help. From our patrol officers to our Family Violence Unit detectives, you will receive a thorough investigation and get the assistance you need.”

Both Chief Hadley and Chief Minter say if a situation turns threatening or violent, call 9-1-1 right away. Those who are not in immediate danger, but want help leaving an abusive spouse or partner, can call Safe Shelter's 24-hour Crisis Line at 912-629-8888.

For those who are not in an abusive situation, but are concerned about the extra stress in their household and the potential for escalating tensions, there are resources available where you can receive assistance. You can call the Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Disaster Distress Hotline at 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs at 66746. You can reach the Georgia Crisis line at 1-800-715-4225.

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Media Contacts:

Betsy Nolen  
Public Information Officer  
Chatham County Police Department  
Cell: (912) 675-2949

Keturah Greene  
Public Information Coordinator  
Savannah Police Department  
Office: (912) 525-3271  
Cell: (912) 659-1837