



Protecting Women, Children thru Emergency 9-1-1



Perpetrators of violence against women and children (VAWC) and gender-based violence (GBV) have gained another adversary as the DILG, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and the Department of Justice (DOJ) recently signed the Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) on the inclusion of GBV Emergency and Distress Calls in the Emergency 911 National Hotline.

Through the said JMC, women and children in distress who are victims of violence are connected, in a single 911 call, to instrumentalities of law enforcement and government agencies that can protect and assist them in their urgent life-threatening concerns.

Now the question is, since its signing in December 2021, where has this JMC led the country's fight against VAWC and GBV? What progress has been made in its goal to partake in liberating victims of violence one call at a time?

CALLS THAT SAVE LIVES

In a nutshell, the JMC brands itself as a 'one phone call away' tool to ending VAWC and GBV. Actually, 911, even before the launching of the JMC, was already taking VAWC-related calls.



"Emergency Call 911 has been catering to VAWC calls prior to the signing of the JMC among DILG, DSWD, and DOJ. Such calls were tagged not as VAWC calls but were rather categorized as domestic trouble; harassment; wife battery; physical injury; child abuse; rape; and, acts of lasciviousness, among others," E911 Executive Director Diosdado T. Valeroso said.

In 2020, 911 had 1,283 VAWC-related calls -- 834 calls of which or 65 percent were categorized under domestic trouble while 158 were calls on harassment while 80 calls were for physical injury; 57 for child abuse; and, 40 for rape. Other calls constitute complaints about indecent shows; abduction; prostitution; and abandoned children.

Data in 2021 were not much different with domestic trouble topping the list of complaints being raised by the callers comprising 802 calls or 59 percent of the total 1,357 calls received last year.

Meanwhile, following the signing of the JMC among DILG, DSWD, and DOJ, during the two-month period from December 7, 2021 to February 7, 2022, E911 received and responded to 287 VAWC-related calls nationwide.

According to Valeroso, 60 percent or 190 of these calls were forwarded to the Philippine National Police (PNP) for immediate response while 40 cases were directed to the barangay authorities; 32 to the Tactical Operations Center; 12 to the Command Center; seven to the Local Call Center; and six were advised to report to the nearest VAWC desk.

The E911 National Office said that the National Capital Region (NCR) had the most VAWC calls during the said period with 124 calls, the majority of which were complaints regarding domestic violence.

Following NCR with the most VAWC-related calls on 911 were CALABARZON with 52 calls; Central Luzon with 23; and Central Visayas with 18.

One of the most recent cases, based on the report of the E911 National Office, was a call made on January 25, 2022 around 3:15 AM concerning a woman calling for assistance following a case of physical abuse of the father on their children. This case, according to E911 was classified as domestic trouble which was a closed case with both parties turned over to the VAWC desk.

HOW RESPONSE IS DONE

During the launch of the JMC, DILG Secretary Eduardo M. Año said that E911 responding to VAWC and GBV calls is a great progress towards protecting women and children against violence.

"We want to let the victims of VAWC feel that the government cares and is ready to help them in their time of need. All they need to do is dial 911 and they will be assisted promptly," Año said.

Through the JMC, VAWC calls are given their own lane of concern. All agencies comprising the Emergency 911 Response System, member agencies of the Inter-Agency Council on Violence Against Women and Children (IACVAWC), and local governments units utilize and enhance already existing referral and response pathways.

"This is crucial in addressing the challenge in connecting the VAW victim to proper response and referral pathways so that they can be supported by appropriate government agencies as soon as possible given the nature of their situation and environment," DILG Undersecretary Marjorie N. Jalosjos said during the launch.

Once a VAWC call is transmitted and received by 911, the Emergency Telecommunicator (ETC) provides first aid, probes on the concern of the caller then refers it to an appropriate government agency.



ETC then fills out an intake form for case management and referral. Cases then are tagged and sent to a concerned agency for action which will then call back the client to provide assistance once it is done reviewing the case. ETC then continuously updates the intake form and refers the caller to other agencies until the case is resolved.

For emergencies needing immediate response, 911 forwards the call to the nearest police station. ■ **Xeph Garcia**

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We commit to continually improve the effectiveness of our Quality Management System compliant with applicable statutory and regulatory requirements and international standards gearing towards organizational efficiency in pursuing our mandate and achieving our client's satisfaction.

We commit to consistently demonstrate a "Matino, Mahusay at Maasahang Kagawaran Para sa Mapagkalinga at Maunlad na Pamahalaang Lokal".