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Shelter From a Storm

Montgomery County tries a one-stop approach to aiding victims of domestic violence.

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A YOUNG WOMAN in [Montgomery County](#) recently sought help because she was being abused by the father of her two children. Her quest started at 7:30 in the morning, and over the next 12 hours, she crisscrossed the county going to different offices for medical attention, police intervention, legal advice and counseling. Lacking a car, she took buses from one place to the next to the next. Because it should not be that hard to get help, Montgomery County is embarking on an innovative initiative to offer a one-stop center for victims of abusive relationships.

Money has been set aside and planning started for a center that will house a multi-

disciplinary team to provide coordinated services to victims of family violence. Instead of having to trek around the county, telling their story over and over, reliving the nightmare and fighting the bureaucracy, victims will be able to go to one place to get protective orders, find shelter, get financial assistance, make a police report and much more. More than 1,000 women in Montgomery sought help from abusers in the past six months, and, officials fear, many of them ended up back with their abusers after being worn down by a system that is hard to navigate.

The center, to be located at 600 E. Jefferson St. in Rockville, is fashioned after the Family Justice Centers that have opened to great acclaim across the country. The first, begun in San Diego in 2002, led to a reduction in homicides linked to domestic violence, more successful prosecutions of abuse cases and increased independence and empowerment of victims. County Council member [Duchy Trachtenberg](#) (D-At Large) has been the force behind the Montgomery center, but she properly notes that it can't come about without the willingness of law enforcement and social services officials to think outside the box and cooperate in new ways. Officials hope to open the center early next year, and that, as Ms. Trachtenberg says, is "not a moment too soon."

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