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Clackamas County
www.clackamas.us



CLACKAMAS COUNTY SHERIFF

Sheriff James Rhodes

Jesse Ashby, Undersheriff

Lee Eby, Undersheriff

Brad O'Neil, Undersheriff

October 13, 2026

BCC Agenda Item: 11/5/26

Board of County Commissioners
Clackamas County

Approval of a Proclamation of November 2026 as Strangulation Awareness Month in Clackamas County.
No County General Funds are involved.

Previous Board Action/Review: None.

Performance Clackamas: Building trust through good government; and ensuring safe, healthy and secure communities.

Counsel Review: No

Procurement Review: No

Contact Person: Sarah Van Dyke

Contact Phone: 503-804-0341

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Strangulation is one of the most lethal forms of domestic violence. Unconsciousness can occur within seconds and death within minutes. While non-fatal strangulation is more common it carries with it serious long-term physical, neurologic, and emotional consequences for the survivor. During November's **Strangulation Awareness Month**, A Safe Place Family Justice Center (ASP-FJC) is joining the effort to elevate awareness of the dangers of this prevalent type of domestic violence.

Domestic violence remains a public health emergency, with one in four women experiencing intimate partner violence in their lifetime. Research shows that up to 50% of domestic violence victims have also experienced strangulation, with 70% of women in domestic violence shelters reporting being strangled. One study found that 43% of victims of domestic violence homicide had been strangled in the

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year prior to the murder. Survivors often describe the experience as similar to drowning or water-boarding – an act widely recognized as torture. The compression of vulnerable arteries and veins in the neck causes immediate impacts on the brain, even when external injuries or bruises are not visible.

A Safe Place has had a strong partnership with Clackamas County's Children, Family and Community Connections through the Domestic Violence Systems Coordinator (DVSC), Sarah Van Dyke, who is stationed onsite. This co-location strengthens coordination, expands development opportunities, supports funding efforts, and enhances consultation across disciplines.

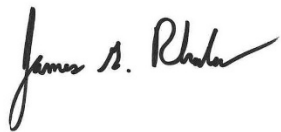
Clackamas County continues to provide statewide leadership in efforts to improve the response to strangulation. The Clackamas County **Strangulation Response Initiative** (SRI) has developed standardized tools, countywide protocols, and multidisciplinary training to ensure that responders provide consistent, trauma-informed care. The SRI also developed the **Strangulation Forensic Evidence Kit** (SKIT) program, now implemented in 14 counties, providing consistent medical intervention for survivors while improving the quality of evidence available to law enforcement and prosecution. Clackamas County's work is increasingly recognized as a model for coordinated response across Oregon.

In October, the SRI hosted a five-day, multidisciplinary webinar series focused on improving the response to strangulation statewide. The training brought together law enforcement, prosecution, advocacy, medical professionals, and other discipline experts to provide comprehensive, in-depth information on identification, investigation, and response. The series was recorded to expand access to this important training.

As we move towards an improved coordinated response to strangulation in the state, Clackamas County will continue to be a voice for survivors and for continuing to support best practices. The impacts of strangulation go far beyond the immediate fear and pain – survivors face lasting emotional, cognitive and physical consequences. Empowering law enforcement, advocates, the justice system, medical responders, and others to understand strangulation is essential to survivor safety and long-term healing. Recognizing November as **Strangulation Awareness Month** supports countywide priorities of safety, trust, and coordinated response, and solidifies Clackamas County as a statewide leader in domestic violence intervention.

RECOMMENDATION: The Sheriff's Office respectfully requests the Board of County Commissioners proclaim November 2026 as Strangulation Awareness Month.

Respectfully submitted,



James Rhodes
Sheriff



Erin Henkelman
Director, A Safe Place Family Justice Center

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

OF CLACKAMAS COUNTY, STATE OF OREGON

In the Matter of Proclaiming November 2026
as Strangulation Awareness Month in
Clackamas County



Board Order No.

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Whereas, November is recognized as Strangulation Awareness Month, providing an opportunity to increase public awareness of strangulation as a dangerous and potentially lethal form of domestic violence and to educate the community about its risks, warning signs, and the importance of early intervention; and

Whereas, strangulation is a felony in Oregon and is defined as “interfering with normal breathing and/or blood flow with external force being applied on the neck, blocking the nose or mouth, or applying pressure to the chest of another person”; and

Whereas strangulation is a crime where the difference between life and death can be mere seconds and only 50% of strangulation survivors show any marks or indications of the assault which has led to a systemic minimization of this crime; and

Whereas, victims of strangulation may die without visible external signs of injury; and strangulation is a significant predictor of future lethality, with victims experiencing a 750% increased risk of being killed by their abuser; and

Whereas, the Clackamas County Strangulation Response Initiative, in collaboration with local and state partners, implemented the Strangulation Forensic Evidence Kit – or SKIT – program that has provided 1500 medical exams in 14 counties since 2021 to assess the survivor for possible injuries and connect them with advocacy and services; and

Whereas, Clackamas County hosted a free 5-day webinar on strangulation in October that provided in-depth training for law enforcement, prosecutors, advocates, medical personnel, and other disciplines; and

Whereas, research indicates that perpetrators who strangle their intimate partners may pose a heightened risk of future violence, including homicide and violence against law enforcement; therefore, identifying perpetrators of strangulation and holding them accountable is critical to preventing future violence and protecting victims, law enforcement, and the community; and

Whereas, Clackamas County stands with strangulation survivors and recognizes their strength and resilience, and A Safe Place Family Justice Center provides advocacy, safety planning, and resources to support survivors on their path to safety and healing; and

Whereas, Strangulation Awareness Month provides an excellent opportunity for people to learn more about this dangerous crime and to show support for the numerous organizations and individuals who provide critical advocacy, services, and assistance to victims.

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

OF CLACKAMAS COUNTY, STATE OF OREGON

In the Matter of Proclaiming November 2026
as Strangulation Awareness Month in
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NOW THEREFORE, the Clackamas County Board of Commissioners do hereby order to
proclaim November 2026 to be Strangulation Awareness Month in Clackamas County.

DATED this 1 day of November 2026

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Chair

Recording Secretary