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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **City of Biddeford, Maine and Sexual Abuse Response Services of Southern Maine Open Biddeford Support Center**

Ribbon Cutting on Thursday, November 19, 2015 at 1:00 PM

The City of Biddeford, Maine has teamed up with the Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine (SARSSM) to open a dedicated space for victims of sexual abuse to receive services locally. The new space will open officially on this Friday, November 20.

“The unfortunate truth is that there are victims of sexual abuse in every community and that includes our community,” stated Mayor Alan Casavant. “Having a local office where our citizens can seek assistance is going to make recovery easier. Hopefully, it might encourage new victims the strength to seek the first step in their individual recovery,” the Mayor added.

“Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine is pleased to partner with the City of Biddeford to open a space where those affected by sexual violence can find advocacy, support and resources. The agency has been providing services in Cumberland and York counties for 42 years and this new opportunity to help the Biddeford community will provide accessible advocacy to those who need it,” stated Amy Stanley, SARSSM Executive Director.

The community has experienced much over the last six months with the very public and at times, painful process, of the sex abuse allegations against two former police officers employed by the City decades ago. “In addition to the direct benefits that the victims will receive as a result of this joint endeavor, the City Council has supported this project as a very important step in the healing process for the entire community,” Mayor Casavant continued.

The new dedicated office space is at the City’s J. Richard Martin Community Center, located at 189 Alfred Street. The office hours will be on Tuesdays from noon to 4:00 PM and on Fridays from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM. The new center is comprised of a very comfortable space and atmosphere and includes a room just for group sessions. For more information or to make an appointment please call SARSSM at (207) 828-1035, ext. 100 or the Crisis & Support Line at 1-800-313-9900.

The facility was made possible through the collaborative work of the City and SARSSM. The space was renovated by the City using unrestricted federal funds given to the City by HUD-Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG). The space is being offered by the City at no cost. The programming is being handled by SARSSM.

The formal ribbon cutting will occur on Thursday, November 19 at 1:00 PM. Representatives will be on hand from both organizations to share more details about the programming and the future.