



COURT WATCH REPORT

**22nd Circuit Court St. Louis City, Division 14
July 1st – December 31st, 2017**

This project was supported by Grant #2015-FJ-AX-0009 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and Recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence against Women.

INTRODUCTION

For over 20 years, the Court Watch Project has been sending trained volunteers into the St. Louis Circuit Courts to observe and collect data when there has been an identified need for change. Over the past decade, it has been an effective way to make small collaborative changes. Stakeholders within the court and community are continuing to sit at the table as they have for years and discuss ways to improve the Adult Abuse Court.

Court Watch uses a transparent process when monitoring the order of protection proceedings. The project shares all monitoring practices and areas of focus with judges and court administrators in advance. This provides all stakeholders with a clear understanding of the monitoring process. The forms were revised in December of 2017 to include more key elements of procedural justice: voice, respect, neutrality, understanding and helpfulness.

St. Louis City Circuit Court, Division 14 went through a change in presiding judges during this 6-month observation period. Judge Thomas Clark, III was appointed to full Circuit Court. Judge Clark was the presiding judge for almost two years and was receptive to the Court Watch Project and its mission. During his tenure there were noticeable improvements to his explanation of the hearing process to litigants and the Bailiffs' focus on staggered exit times for Respondents and Petitioners.

In July, Judge Scott Millikan was appointed Associate Circuit Judge by Governor Greitens. While monitors did continue to observe during the transition of judges over the summer, this report only reflects the observations during the time Judge Millikan presided beginning August through December of 2017. The Honorable Lynne Perkins was appointed Associated Circuit Judge and assigned to Division 14 beginning January 1st, 2018. A challenge with rotating judges can be a lack of consistency or long-term change. The Court Watch Project will continue to work closely with the Court as an ally and resource and look forward to maintaining the forward momentum.

The Leadership team is comprised of advocates from the domestic violence community: Christina Holmes, ACCESS of MERS Goodwill, Susan Kidder, Safe Connections, Michelle Schiller-Baker, St. Martha's Hall, Jessica Woolbright, St. Martha's Hall, and Carla Maley, Court Watch Project Coordinator.

COURT WATCH PROJECT

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Court Watch Project is to make the justice system more effective and responsive in handling cases of domestic violence perpetrated against women and children and to create a more informed and involved public.

The Court Watch Project is a volunteer staffed project under the auspices of the St. Louis Ending Violence Against Women Network (SLEVAWN), in which court proceedings in the St. Louis Circuit Courts are monitored. That information is made available to the court, the Bar and the public to ensure transparency and to give victims a greater voice in how the court processes domestic violence cases. Volunteers attend court on specific days to observe Civil Protection Order cases and record case outcomes on a form.

HISTORY OF THE COURT WATCH PROJECT

In January of 1997, concerns were raised at a Missouri Coalition Against Domestic Violence, now known as Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (MCADSV), St. Louis Metropolitan Region meeting about whether victims of domestic violence were getting the Orders of Protection that they needed and whether these victims were being treated fairly by the Judges and court personnel. A suggestion was made to start a court watch program to address these concerns. A committee was formed to develop a court watch project.

In April of 1997, with a limited number of volunteers, the St. Louis Metropolitan Region of MCADSV began monitoring three (3) of the nine (9) courtrooms which hear Order of Protection cases in the Circuit Court of the State Missouri, Twenty-First Judicial Circuit in St. Louis County. An increase in volunteers allowed the program to expand to all nine (9) courtrooms in March of 1998. Plans began to be made to expand the Court Watch program to the Twenty-Second Judicial Circuit Court of the State of Missouri in St. Louis City in both the civil divisions which hear Order of Protections cases, as well as the two criminal divisions, which hear misdemeanor and felony domestic violence cases.

There was then a change in staff at the lead agency for the Court Watch Project (St. Martha's Hall), and it slowly decreased in participation, and then ceased operations. In 2006 the Court Watch Project became a permanent program under MCADSV St. Louis Metropolitan Region and the Family Violence Council of St. Louis City as the two organizations joined efforts to expand this project. The Program remained active until 2008. Recognizing again that victims of domestic violence were still experiencing problems in the courtroom in 2013, SLEVAWN reignited the Project. In 2014 The Advocacy and Action Committee of SLEVAWN

sought and received funding for the Court Watch Project from SLEVAWN to buy supplies.

In September 2015 St. Martha's Hall, acting on behalf of the Court Watch Project received a three-year grant, *Justice for Families Grant*, from the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women. The Project now has a paid coordinator, an independent contractor.

NECESSITY OF A COURT WATCH PROJECT

Victims of domestic violence enter courtrooms in St. Louis County and City everyday seeking help to escape the violence in their lives. Many victims experience frustrations with the process, which leads to a lack of trust in the judicial system when seeking Orders of Protection and/or testifying against their abusers in criminal domestic violence cases. Unlike someone being prosecuted for a crime, victims of domestic violence have very few rights.

To help support victims on a systemic level, volunteers are needed to monitor the courtrooms that hear the Adult Abuse Order of Protection Dockets, to work toward improved outcomes for victims. The feedback received through a court watch project can be used to change the policy and procedure in several ways. The results can be shared with the Presiding Judge with a request for changes. The results can be published to encourage change.

“Ensuring Justice for Victims of Domestic Violence”

AUGUST 1ST – DECEMBER 31ST, 2017

22nd Circuit Court City of St. Louis, Division 14
The Honorable Scott Millikan, presiding

OBJECTIVES AND PROGRESS OF COURT WATCH PROJECT

- Send trained volunteers into the courtroom to evaluate whether victims of domestic violence are being treated fairly by the judicial system.

During this five-month period, 16 dockets were observed by 14 individual monitors. With five exceptions, each docket had two monitors collecting and reporting observations. The Court Watch Project Coordinator was present for assistance only and did not collect data. Several monitors attended on multiple dates providing a combination of experienced monitors as well as new monitors with new perspectives of their observations. Volunteers attend court dockets on specific days to observe Civil Protection Order cases and record case outcomes and evaluations on a standardized form. That information is made available to the court, the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, the Missouri Bar Association and the public to ensure transparency and to give victims a greater voice in the court process.

- Observe full hearing dockets to identify the problem patterns and issues within the court system.

During the five-month observation period from August to December, 14 monitors observed 16 dockets including 25 default hearings and 31 full hearings. Narrative comments along with the quantitative information collected on the Court Watch Project forms were compiled by the Court Watch Project Coordinator. This report is the outcome mixed methods compilation of those observations.

- Promote victim safety and offender accountability.

The previous report included a recommendation to increase focus on the separation of parties as they enter the courtroom. During this reporting period, the courtroom was locked until approximately 10 minutes before court began and an announcement was made as parties entered indicating what side of the courtroom they should be seated. Late comers were also more consistently instructed to see the bailiff as they entered. This was an observed improvement from past practices.

- Improve the administration of justice.

The Spring 2017 report was presented to the previous presiding judge, Hon. Thomas Clark, III with a request to discuss the recommendations and observations. Past reports encouraged changes around transparency of the court process, judicial demeanor and increased focus on security for victims. Judge Millikan's approach did bring notable changes including the increase in detail regarding the process provided to the litigants prior to the hearing, an increase in observed perception of judicial fairness and respect, and a change in security practices.

- Increase public awareness and public trust in the justice system.

An additional four volunteer courtroom monitors were trained in August 2017 for Court Watch Project. As our current monitors, these individuals are prospective jurors and voters in our community who now possess an increased awareness and understanding of the justice system and domestic violence. These volunteers influence judicial retention and the community's response to domestic violence. Past reports are available to the public online via the SLEVAWN website, <https://slevawn.org> to educate other citizens and further informed civil engagement in the St. Louis community.

METHODOLOGY OF THE COURT WATCH PROJECT REPORT

There are two Court Watch monitor forms: 1. Courtroom Protocol and 2. Case Observations. Each monitor completes one Courtroom Protocol form for the entire docket. The Case Observation form is used for individual “default” or “full hearing” case only. Information regarding “consents”, “continuances” and “child orders” are not collected. However, all Courtroom Protocol narrative observations are collected for the entirety of the docket even incidents occurring during one of the types of hearings not formally being collected in a Case Observation form. The purpose of the narrative observations is to provide a more comprehensive perspective of the courtroom, the staff and the proceedings that perhaps the standardized questions cannot capture.

The data are broken out into “default” cases and “full hearing” cases, notated as such within the report and are separated out because some questions are only applicable to full hearings. Continuances and dismissals are not recorded. Narrative comments from monitors are noted in italic purple below. The Project Coordinator did review each form as it was turned in to ensure consistency between the monitors. The complete list of data outcomes is posted on the

SLEVAWN.org website along with these completed reports. The questions below are the direct questions completed on the forms. Some questions are not used for external reporting at this time but are collected for internal record keeping.

The Leadership Team of the Court Watch Project meets annually to review forms and questions to ensure relevance and validity of the data collected and to identify ways to improve the instruments for the next cycle. There have been some questions identified in this five-month cycle that were revised to ensure the information collected is more objective and will decrease inconsistent or inaccurate results. Forms were revised in December of 2017 to reflect those changes. The following are the elements of Courtroom Protocol and Case Observations we aimed to measure, the questions we used to measure those elements, and the findings of those questions.

COURTROOM PROTOCOL –

SAMPLE SIZE –26 FORMS COLLECTED (ONE PER DOCKET WAS REQUESTED FROM EACH MONITOR OBSERVING; 14 MONITORS ATTENDED 16 SEPARATE DOCKETS)

**denotes monitors' comments*

TIMELINESS OF THE DOCKET

Question 1-2: What time was the docket scheduled to begin? What time was the docket called?

Finding: The Judge consistently called the docket within an average of 10 minutes of the scheduled docket time of 9:00am.

EFFICIENCY OF THE DOCKET

Question 3: Was the whole docket called to see who was present?

Finding: In 100% of the dockets observed, the whole docket was called before proceeding to hear individual cases.

Question 5: Did it appear that cases with one party were called up to the bench before cases with two parties?

Finding: In 77% of the dockets, default cases (meaning the Respondent was not present) were handled first. To be respectful to the time and cost of paid attorneys, the Judge did address cases where attorneys were involved if they were ready to proceed. The Judge also would hear cases where an interpreter was needed first due to the costs of an interpreter on the court. The overall observations were that court personnel and the docket did run efficiently.

Court was very efficient with no service paperwork. Cleared room out quickly and quietly.

Advocate was helping clerk with paperwork for dismissals.

Because of the occasional downtime to allow paperwork to be completed and the Judge's discussions with attorneys, monitors did note on a few occasions that there seemed to be a delay before cases were heard.

Lots of down time between time docket was called and start of proceedings. Not sure what was being done.

TRANSPARENCY OF THE PROCESS

Question 4: Did the Judge explain the court process?

Finding: In 100% of the dockets observed it was noted that the Judge explained the process prior to the start of hearings. Judge Millikan took time with each party as they approached the bench to discuss what to expect during the hearing and what he expected of them. This was a change since the last report and was a practice that seemed welcomed by the parties and often moved the proceedings along.

Explained process individually to each party after they came to bench.

Judge explained the hearing process and order they would be called, and what default meant very thoroughly.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Question 7: Was there a Bailiff in the courtroom at all times?

Finding: In 85% of the dockets monitored, the response was yes.

Bailiff allowed a lot of side talking during hearing. Remained seated at desk with each other.

Question 8: Was the Bailiff watching the court proceedings or monitoring the courtroom?

Finding: In 92% of the dockets monitored, the response was yes. It should be noted that there were different Bailiffs who were present from week to week. This question has since been revised and will no longer be a "yes/no" response but a Likert scale.

Bailiff approached late arrival and told him to sit on Respondent side.

Not typical Bailiff this week. Very alert and responsive.

Older bailiff stayed fully engaged; younger bailiff was talking to advocates and court personnel occasionally during default hearings.

While this percentage was high, there were several comments from the monitors that described a different scenario; when the Bailiffs did not seem attentive, often on phones or having side conversations.

3 bailiffs were present and 2 were on their phones not paying attention to the courtroom. Cellphones went off numerous times.

Respondent came to court and sat behind Petitioner and tapped on her shoulder. He then left the courtroom. Petitioner looked very distraught and kept looking at deputy to do something. Deputy was on his phone.

Bailiff was looking down quite a bit on his phone. Second Bailiff came in and out of room. When they moved cases to commissioners the parties were not escorted.

CASE OBSERVATION –

SAMPLE SIZE – 25 DEFAULT OBSERVATIONS AND 31 FULL HEARING OBSERVATIONS (INDIVIDUAL CASES) COLLECTED FROM 14 MONITORS ATTENDING 16 SEPARATE DOCKETS

LITIGANT SUPPORT

Question 1-2: Was the Petitioner represented by an attorney? Was the Respondent represented by an attorney?

Finding: 94% of observed default cases, Petitioner was not represented by an attorney. Out of the 31 full hearings, only four Petitioners had legal representation. Of those four cases, two Respondents were also represented. There were five full hearings where the Respondent was represented but the Petitioner was not. Neither party was represented in 71% of full hearings.

Question 3: Did an Advocate approach the Petitioner or did you see an Advocate with the Petitioner?

Finding: In 43% of the default cases Petitioners were observed meeting with Advocates. For full hearing cases, it appeared that 71% of the Petitioners met with an Advocate. However, the Advocate often met with Petitioners after the hearings or in the hallway before the proceedings. According to the Court Watch Project Coordinator's ongoing conversations with the Advocate, many of the Petitioners were contacted prior to the hearings and provided information and resources. As stated in the previous report, observations and conflicting data indicate that monitors may not be capturing this data accurately. This question has been revised on the 2018 Courtroom Protocol Form to address this concern.

Currently, there is one full-time Advocate available during full hearings and filings.

Advocate was very active.

Petitioner met with advocate at request of Judge before Judge would entertain dismissal.

JUDICIAL MANNER

Question 6-7: Did the Judge treat the Petitioner with respect? Did the Judge treat the Respondent with respect?

Finding: In 100% of default cases the Judge did treat the Petitioner with respect. In 98% of the observed full hearing cases that the Judge did treat both the Petitioner and the Respondent with respect.

Explained process and expectations of both parties in kind, calm and respectful way.

He used very simple language, spoke slowly, repeated what she said back to her. Told her he knew it was a very serious situation.

Kind tone, maintained eye contact, explained the process exceptionally well. "do you fear for your safety"?

Judge made accommodations for her disability.

Judge seemed very sincere. Voiced concerns about Petitioner's daughter and need to set up custody agreement to protect Petitioner and her child.

Judge said "it takes courage to be here. Seemed sincere and kind to her. She cried, and he was patient and warm and told her to take her time. "I know it's difficult, it's not your fault".

Judge was incredibly sensitive to the use of preferred pronouns by the Respondent.

Question 9: Was a full order of protection granted?

Finding: In 88% of the observed default cases, the full order was granted. When there was a full hearing, 51% of the requested orders were granted. At the time of application, the judge reviewing the application would either grant an emergency order based on the allegations, deny the order or give a notice of hearing to allow the Petitioner and Respondent a chance to speak in front of the Judge. There was an increase of notice of hearings at the time of application as opposed to denying the ex-parte completely. Because of this, there would understandably be an increase in denials at the time of the hearing. Denials may

be based on factors outside of the control of the judge, including not meeting the requirements of the statute as defined by the Missouri Adult Abuse Act in Chapter RSMo 455 or the Petitioner not meeting the burden of proof.¹ The monitors reported insufficient evidence to meet the statute as the reason for most of the denials. An additional question was added to the forms in 2018 to collect and better understand the patterns of denial. When the Judge did grant the order, it was common to also grant an automatic renewal however these percentages are not collected as they may not always be made on the record for monitors to accurately collect. He often asked the Petitioner if they would like the Order to be renewed.

Doesn't meet the statute. Bad breakup, but no fear, violence, etc.

Stated there was not enough evidence to issue OP.

Judge indicated he felt the Respondent was controlling and unhealthy but nothing legally describing dangerous behavior. Requested multiple times for physical evidence or threats of abuse. At the end she stated there was physical abuse. Judge granted 1 year.

Granted automatic renewal.

Question 10: Did the Judge explain the ruling in plain language?

Finding: In 100% of default cases, the Judge explained the order to the Petitioner. In 96% of full hearings, it was noted that the Judge explained the ruling in a language that seemed clear and in recognizable legal terms.

Judge took time to explain his decision and thoughts on the case to the parties. Directed his comments mostly to the Respondent.

Judge indicated they should take the case to custody court. He was encouraging and told them they were further along than others in their relationship as parents.

Strongly suggested to Respondent to leave Petitioner alone.

Judge remarked "wait. I want to explain it to the Petitioner in the way she will understand".

Asked Petitioner "do you understand what that means?" to verify her understanding.

¹ Chapter RSMo 455 Pursuant to the Missouri Domestic Violence Act, a person may seek an order of protection from acts, attempts or threats to him or her from a family or household member or intimate partner; or from acts of stalking or sexual assault. "Stalking" is when any person purposely engages in an unwanted course of conduct that causes alarm to another person, or a person who resides together in the same household with the person seeking the order of protection when it is reasonable in that person's situation to have been alarmed by the conduct.

Told her Respondent to stay 500 feet away.

Didn't give details just that it's good for 1 year.

COURTROOM SAFETY

(The following questions are specific only to full-hearing cases observed)

Question 12: Did the Bailiff stand between the parties while they were giving testimony?

Finding: In 86% of the cases observed, the Bailiff was observed standing between the parties. It is regular practice for the Bailiff in this court to stand close to the parties during testimony. Because of the inconsistencies with responses and narratives from monitors, this question has been revised on the forms in 2018 to better reflect the practice of the Bailiff being close to the parties when testifying.

Bailiff stepped in to warn Petitioner about speaking one at a time.

He stood back and leaned against the railing. He also left the room during testimony.

Question 13: Was the Respondent held in the courtroom to allow the Petitioner time to safely leave the courtroom and courthouse?

Finding: In 63% of the observed cases the Petitioner was given time to leave the courtroom. It should be noted that monitors could not determine if this occurred in close to 14% of the cases, or if enough time was sufficiently given to allow the Petitioner to safely leave. This question was revised on the new 2018 Court Watch Project monitor forms.

Respondent abruptly left the courtroom upon hearing judge's decision.

Respondents were allowed to leave on two occasions at the same time as Petitioner.

Respondent was agitated, and Bailiff didn't seem to notice. Exited at same time as Petitioner.

Question 14: Was precaution taken to ensure the separation of Petitioner and Respondent *before* the proceedings?

Finding: In 93% of the cases observed, precaution was taken to ensure separation. This was a change from the Spring 2017 report when there was a limited or inconsistent separation at the time the parties entered the courtroom.

Based on the narrative observations written by monitors, there is still a need to improve this process.

Bailiffs remained seated and did not reiterate need for separation.

Bailiff did not instruct people where to go as they arrived. At 9:04 am he stood up and explained who needed to sit where. People had to get up and move sides.

Petitioner and Respondent came in and sat together.

One noticeable change with the new presiding judge, was the transfer of cases to Division 14A when the docket was full. The majority of the cases that were transferred were often defaults. However, on a few occasions when both parties were present monitors noted that parties were leaving at the same time, allowing for possible altercations to occur in the hallway. This practice did change with the change in bailiffs in 2018.

Some cases were told they would be heard down the hall and all were excused at the same time with no escort or hallway bailiff. Parties encountered each other at the door.

Question 15: Was precaution taken to ensure the separation of the Petitioner and Respondent *during* the proceedings?

Finding: In 91% of the cases, some degree of precaution was taken to ensure separation during the proceedings. The Bailiffs were consistently standing near the parties during testimony, but reportedly at varying degrees of attentiveness.

Question 16: Was precaution taken to ensure the separation of Petitioner and Respondent *after* the proceedings?

Finding: In 77% of the cases, some degree of precaution was taken to ensure separation after the proceedings. The Bailiffs often directed the parties to sit opposite in the front rows to wait for their paperwork.

Bailiff didn't appear to be monitoring the Respondent's behavior toward Petitioner. Judge had to tell Petitioner to come up and sit in front until Respondent was no longer in courtroom.

COMMENDATIONS

Overall, the dockets were efficient, and the specialized role of the Judge's clerk contributed to a well-organized court.

As noted in previous reports during Judge Clark's tenure, the Thursday Adult Abuse docket in Division 14 was noted as being incredibly efficient and timely. The court personnel, GALs, mediators, and advocates seemed to work in a very

collaborative way most of the time. During busy dockets, the Judge would transfer default or no custody hearings to Division 14A so that parties are not waiting all morning for their cases to be heard. The handling of all no service cases by the court clerks allowed time for the Judge to focus on hearings and attorney matters. There was also a reduction of overall no service cases over the past year. In ongoing conversations with the advocate and Judge's clerk, this was a result of working closely with the Sheriff's office and researching cases prior to the hearings. The Judge's clerk also played a pivotal role as the organizer of the dockets events, providing information and updates to the Judge as cases were presented to him. This increased role is like that of a Domestic Violence Coordinator often seen in specialized domestic violence courts. While this is not the specific role this clerk was assigned, her efforts and understanding of these sensitive cases certainly added to the efficiency of the docket overall.

The Judge exhibited and applied his knowledge of the dynamics of domestic violence as well as the core principles of procedural justice.

The court process can be re-traumatizing for victims, especially if there had been past negative experiences with the court or law enforcement. Factors that may bring additional stress or be re-traumatizing to victims and add to a negative experience include: procedural delays, complex court proceedings, discourteous court employees, vague court orders, and court orders that require the victim to cooperate with the abuser or to have regular personal contact with the abuser.² As stated previously, 71% of litigants were self-represented. Much of what occurs in the courtroom may seem confusing and intimidating to someone not familiar with its process. Ensuring understanding is a key component of integrating procedural justice into domestic violence courts. In all the observed hearings, monitors observed the Judge taking time to explain the process individually to the parties at the bench and what the expectations were. He would then refer to those expectations if the parties were not abiding by the guidelines. He explained his decisions, what Respondents can and cannot do if the order was granted, and other outlets of relief parties can access within the court. The Judge's respectful and empathetic nature to both the Petitioners and Respondents was noted by most monitors throughout the five-month period. It was noted in 100% of the observed hearings that he demonstrated respect to the individual parties and neutrality in his careful decisions. He often remarked about the brevity of his decisions in the individual hearings, validating victims' experiences and the complicated process of accessing the court system. His questions during hearings was that of active listening and collecting information, with no documented victim-blaming undertones.

² Domestic Violence Bench Book: A guide to Court Intervention (2015). Ling, E. and Crank, K. Center for Court Innovation.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COURT WATCH PROJECT

Recommendation 1: Conduct a Needs Assessment to determine the strengths and weakness of the current Adult Abuse dockets and the Division’s readiness to include a contempt or compliance docket.

A specialized Domestic Violence Court can enhance a court’s handling of domestic violence cases and improve outcomes for victims, their children and the greater community by providing greater offender accountability and accessible services to victims. St. Louis City Circuit Court Division 14 already has several key aspects in place providing litigant support, such as partnerships with a victim advocacy program, Guardian Ad Litem, and mediators through Family Court. There are Domestic Violence Courts currently established across the country and technical assistance available to provide resources for communities wanting to develop a specialized court. The principles of a Civil Domestic Violence Court are to:

- Enhance judicial decision-making by increasing the information available to judges.
- Ensure a consistent response to domestic violence by assigning a single presiding judge.
- Improve victim safety by frontloading services and increasing communication with other courts, including criminal courts.
- Increase offender accountability by ensuring ongoing monitoring of the respondent’s compliance without increasing the burden upon the petitioner.³

A needs assessment provides stakeholders in the court and community an evaluation of current strengths, weaknesses and opportunities as part of a strategic plan to begin working on a specialized court. At present, judges in St. Louis City Circuit Court rotate yearly through divisions. Because of the longevity of such a project, it is recommended that a key individual be identified and commit to a longer term within Division 14 to ensure recommendations from the needs assessment are reviewed and implemented.

Recommendation 2: Provide ongoing specialized training to judges, bailiffs and personnel that work in Division 14 around the dynamics of domestic violence and best practices around safety and security.

Minimizing contact with a victim’s attacker or abuser is critical. Half of domestic violence victims show one or more symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

³ Creating a Domestic Violence Court: Adapting the Model to Your Community. Center for Court Innovation. Domestic Violence Toolkit.

(PTSD).⁴ This magnifies the fear and trauma a victim experiences when there is contact. Victims cannot be expected to come to court if they are not protected from their abusers. A Bailiff's presence makes court a safer and more inviting place, assuring victims they will be protected from unwanted contact with their abuser or his family and friends. As noted in the findings, in only 77% of the cases, precaution was taken to ensure separation immediately after the proceedings. As in past reports, it is recommended that judges, security staff and court personnel working specialized dockets addressing intimate partner violence receive training, ensuring all staff assigned to the dedicated dockets are sensitive to the unique needs and dynamics surrounding domestic violence.

Recommendation 3: Establish a firearm retrieval procedure and collaborate with law enforcement and other stakeholders to implement protocols.

An abuser's access to firearms is the single greatest risk factor for intimate partner violence⁵ and Missouri ranks 8th in the nation for domestic homicides with a firearm. There are many challenges for firearm retrieval with the existing state laws, yet communities across the country and jurisdictions within Missouri are working to procedures for firearm retrieval from domestic violence offenders. While this is a lengthy process that requires collaboration and commitment from law enforcement, courts and community stakeholders it is an imperative step to help ensure the safety of victims and their children.

RESOURCES

1. CREATING A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURT: ADAPTING THE MODEL TO YOUR COMMUNITY. <https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/JCS/domesticViolence/topics/DVCourts/DVCToolkit.pdf>
2. ADAPTING DETERRENCE STRATEGIES FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OFFENDERS. RESOURCE AVAILABLE AT http://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/documents/FactSheet_December2016_Deterrence_DV.pdf.
3. CIVIL PROTECTION ORDERS: A GUIDE FOR IMPROVING PRACTICE IS AVAILABLE ON-LINE AT: HTTP://WWW.NCJFCJ.ORG/IMAGES/STORIES/DEPT/FVD/PDF/CPO_GUIDE.PDF

The complete data report can be found at <https://slevawn.org/>.

February 2018

⁴ Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report: Violence Against Women: Estimates from the redesigned survey (NCJ-154348), August 1995, p. 4.

⁵ Campbell *et al.*, American Journal of Public Health, 2003