

AT A GLANCE

Location of Court

Rockford, Illinois

Type of Court

Domestic Violence Coordinated Courts, Criminal and Civil

Project Goals

Increase victim-survivor safety, accountability for people who cause harm¹, and informed judicial decision making

Increase access to justice for victim-survivors through civil legal assistance, enhanced remote access and increased accessibility

Provide training for court-based and court-related personnel.

Provide and maintain a fair and impartial court that focuses on procedural fairness.

WINNEBAGO COUNTY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COORDINATED COURT

The Winnebago County Domestic Violence Coordinated Court consist of both full-time dedicated Domestic Violence Criminal Courts and Domestic Violence Civil Court.



COURT STAFF

- **Deputy Court Administrator:** serves as the main point-of-contact for matters related to domestic violence within the court system; provides oversight and management of federal and state grants that support the work of the Domestic Violence Coordinated Court; and provides direct supervision to the staff.

¹ The authors use people-first language. “Victim-survivor” refers to the person being harmed, and “people who cause harm” to the person causing harm through IPV/coercive control.

This fact sheet is part of a series describing Domestic Violence Mentor Courts. Selected by the Office on Violence Against Women, Mentor Courts share their expertise and assist other domestic violence courts in implementing promising practices and procedures, and building the capacity of state court systems to respond effectively to these difficult cases.

- **Case docket/resource coordinator:** Prepares annotated dockets for protective order court to enhance coordination and informed judicial decision-making; monitors civil compliance for those ordered to partner abuse intervention programs through a protective order; and serves as a liaison between providers and advocates to enhance resource coordination.
- **Domestic Violence Assistance Center Coordinator:** Provides oversight and management of the Domestic Violence Assistance Center (DVAC) located in the Winnebago County Courthouse to ensure the DVAC is a safe and welcoming space; and coordinates the DVAC Volunteer Greeter program.
- **Domestic Violence Mentor Court Coordinator:** Serves as the main point-of-contact for matters related to the Domestic Violence Mentor Court project including information sharing, resource development and the scheduling of observations and site visits.
- **Non-governmental Advocates:** Through a combination of federal and local funding, non-governmental legal advocates provide assistance with the filing of Orders of Protection and court accompaniment in accordance with Illinois law. These legal advocates are housed in the Domestic Violence Assistance Center.
- **Specialized Domestic Violence Probation Unit:** The Winnebago County Court Services Adult Probation Department has a specialized domestic violence unit that monitors people who cause harm placed on probation for offenses involving domestic violence, or those that may have a history of domestic violence. Cases are assigned to officers based on risk level and one officer carries a specialized caseload of women who use violence.
- **Dedicated team of domestic violence prosecutors and public defenders.**
- **Victim-survivor Service Providers:** Through the Winnebago County State's Attorney's Office serve as a liaison between prosecutors and victim-survivors of crime. Service Providers provide court accompaniment in accordance with Illinois law, assistance with filing Criminal Orders of Protection, and witness preparation.
- **Enhanced Criminal Response Liaison:** Monitors and reports on intimate partner cases where defendants are communicating with victim-survivors and witnesses from custody.

CASE MANAGEMENT

Types of cases: The Domestic Violence Criminal Court adjudicates all levels of criminal misdemeanor and felony offenses involving intimate or former intimate partners, as well as associated criminal orders of protection. The Domestic Violence Civil Court hears all intimate partner orders of protection and all domestic violence-related dissolution of marriage and parentage cases.

Case identification, screening, and transfer: In the Civil Court, the clerk's office screens cases to determine if they qualify for assignment to the Domestic Violence Coordinated Court. The Case Docket Coordinator conducts additional screening to determine if an Order of Protection should be transferred to the Domestic Violence Coordinated Criminal Court. In the Criminal Court, Law Enforcement and the State's Attorney's Office indicate if a case and/or charge involves parties in an intimate partner relationship which indicates to Trial Court Administration that the case should be assigned to the Domestic Violence Coordinated Criminal Court. Two criminal judges are assigned to this court, one hears all felony matters and the other all misdemeanor matters.

Information sharing: Cases between the same parties, such as orders of protection, divorce, family and criminal cases, are coordinated between judges to ensure requests for protection orders and issues related to parental allocation are timely addressed. The protective order court is also assigned a case docket/resource coordinator to assist with case docketing, information gathering, and compliance monitoring. The Case Docket Coordinator, Partner Abuse Intervention Providers and probation officers have access to a shared case management system to view PAIP referrals and attendance reports.

Schedule: The Domestic Violence Coordinated Court operates full-time Monday through Friday. The Civil Protective Order Court hears all intimate partner and non-intimate partner order of protection and civil no contact order filings. The Protective Order Court has set aside time for return dockets, hearings, and a twice monthly compliance docket. Judges assigned to the Family Division receive domestic violence involved cases per a specialized assignment structure and cases are scheduled according to case and hearing type. The Domestic Violence Coordinated Criminal Courts, both felony and misdemeanor, have two jury weeks per month, three compliance dockets on non-jury weeks and one criminal order of protection docket each week.

Caseload: On average, the Domestic Violence Coordinated Criminal Court is assigned 1,400 criminal cases annually. Winnebago County averages 3,200 protective order filings a year.

Approximately 400 domestic violence dissolution cases are assigned to the Domestic Violence Coordinated Civil Court, and approximately 1/3 of the average 900 family cases assigned have a history of domestic violence.

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

Description of stakeholder meetings: The stakeholder meetings serve several purposes. The Pulaski Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court Judge leads the meetings and sets the agenda based on the needs of the courts and the needs of stakeholder agencies. Specific cases are never discussed. One purpose is to examine and develop best policies, practices, and procedures of the dockets to make the court experience more responsive, efficient, impartial, and consistent. Another purpose is to identify local trends, challenges, and concerns related to domestic violence dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking in the community and address solutions to problems that arise. Finally, the stakeholder meetings serve to create networking opportunities that facilitate communication and relationships among those serving the community by promoting accountability and ensuring victim-survivor safety.

Description of stakeholder meetings: The Domestic Violence Coordinated Court Core Team is comprised of stakeholders and project partners. This Core Team review all activities of the Domestic Violence Coordinated Court and addresses system gaps and solutions. Several subcommittees and task forces exist under the work of the Core Team, either as standing subcommittees or those developed on an ad-hoc basis to address immediate needs.

Frequency of stakeholder meetings: The Core Team meets bi-monthly and holds a retreat once a year. Subcommittee meetings vary from monthly to quarterly.

List of stakeholders: Stakeholders in the Domestic Violence Coordinated Courts are the 17th Judicial Circuit Court, Winnebago County, the Winnebago County Circuit Clerk's Office, Winnebago County's Public Defender's Office, Winnebago County State's Attorney's Office, Remedies Renewing Lives, City of Rockford Family Peace Center, the Rockford City Police Department, the Winnebago County Sheriff's Department, the 17th Judicial Circuit Family Violence Coordinating Council, Rockford Sexual Assault Counseling, Inc., Northern Illinois University College of Law, Winnebago County Court Services Adult Probation Department, Children's Safe Harbor Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange Program, Prairie State Legal Services The Domestic Violence Coordinated Court also partners with agencies that are focused on serving underserved populations such as; The Liam Foundation, The Arc, RAMP Center for Independent Living, and the YWCA of Northwestern Illinois.

VICTIM-SURVIVOR SAFETY

Court security: The following policies, procedures, and resources are in place in an effort to address safety in domestic violence cases:

- A secure public entrance with metal detectors and x-ray screening
- Video surveillance
- Deputized security personnel throughout the courthouse (also available for escort)
- Trained and experienced bailiffs assigned to the domestic violence courtrooms
- Duress buttons in the Domestic Violence Assistance Center
- A dedicated securities director
- Courtroom practices designed to separate petitioners and respondents during the order of protection calls, to provide safety and comfort.
- Hybrid court proceedings that allow parties to attend court virtually or in-person

Victim-survivor services: The Domestic Violence Assistance Center is located inside the Winnebago County Courthouse and assists victim-survivors with drafting orders of protection, safety planning, resources/referrals, and court advocacy and accompaniment. In addition to advocate assistance, victim-survivors and others seeking assistance with a protective order can use lobby kiosks to complete and file paperwork. The Center also offers a children's waiting area. Additional victim-survivor resources include Remedies Renewing Lives' 24-hour hotline, shelter, and counseling services and additional services available through the City of Rockford Family Peace Center.

Rockford Sexual Assault Counseling provides legal advocacy and court accompaniment for victim-survivors of sexual assault and sexual abuse, in addition to therapy services, medical advocacy and a 24-hour hotline.

Supervised visitation and safe exchange: Children's Safe Harbor is a safe visitation exchange and supervised visitation facility that offers free services by court order or self/agency referral for families experiencing domestic violence.

ENGAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PEOPLE WHO CAUSE HARM

Compliance reviews: The Domestic Violence Coordinated Criminal Court holds a misdemeanor compliance docket once every other week and a felony compliance docket once every other week. Compliance in the Criminal Court is monitored by the Winnebago County Court Services Adult Probation Department. At each compliance docket, the judge monitors each defendant for compliance with orders to partner abuse intervention programming, no

contact conditions and any other orders to comply with court supervision, conditional discharge, or probation.

The Domestic Violence Coordinated Civil Court holds a compliance docket twice per month to monitor respondents for compliance with orders to attend partner abuse intervention programming and other orders within the order of protection.

Sanctions for non-compliance may include additional court dates, court admonishment, additional conditions of supervision or incarceration. Incentives for compliance may include reduced court appearances, praise, and adjustments to conditions of supervision.

Services for people who cause harm: Winnebago County has five private providers of partner abuse intervention programs, two with Spanish language capabilities, and one county-funded program for indigent people who cause harm placed on probation. All providers must be approved by the State of Illinois Department of Human Services. People who cause harm are ordered to complete partner abuse intervention programs either through criminal court orders, civil court orders, as a condition of pretrial release, or possibly through juvenile court orders. Programming for people who cause harm: The following agencies provide Partner Abuse Intervention Programming in Winnebago County as noted below. All agencies require participants complete a minimum of 26 weeks of programming.

Remedies Renewing Lives

- In-Person sessions
- Classes offered in English only
- Classes offered for no-charge to participants on reporting probation through funding from Winnebago County; option to complete community service for reduced fees
- Use of ODARA risk assessment
- Programming for males; use of Change Curriculum

- Use of CECEVIM assessment and curriculum from Centro para Erradicar Violencia
- No fee for participants who are unhoused
- Programming for males and females

Brightpoint

- Remote/virtual sessions
- Classes offered in English only
- Offer a need-based fee waiver program and option to complete community service in lieu of class fees
- Use of ODARA risk assessment

The Recourse Project

- In-Person sessions
- Classes offered in Spanish only

- Programing for males and females; use of the Duluth Model Curriculum with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy; use of Turning Points curriculum and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for females

Foundations Center

- In-person sessions
- Classes offered in English only
- Classes offered at half-price for participants on a fixed income; class fees waived for qualifying participants

- Male and female programming; groups tailored to clients from underserved populations

YWCA Northwestern Illinois

- In-person sessions
- Classes offered in English and Spanish
- Option to complete community service for reduced fees
- ACES assessment completed
- Programming for males; use of Duluth Model Curriculum

LEGAL SERVICES

Prairie State Legal Services offers *pro bono* legal services to qualifying individuals in many cases, including orders of protection, divorce, and family cases. The Domestic Violence Coordinated Court established a *Pro Bono* Attorney Project to provide legal representation for victim-survivors in order of protection cases. The program is staffed by local attorneys who have agreed to take cases related to this project *pro bono*. The Domestic Violence Coordinated Court provides training for volunteer attorneys and Prairie State Legal Services provides administrative support to the program. The NIU College of Law Zeke Giorgi Legal Clinic provides representation for qualifying individuals in order of protection cases.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TRAINING

The Domestic Violence Coordinated Court staff has participated in training and provided training for attorneys, advocates, social service agencies and community members on topics such as strangulation, stalking, human trafficking, the intersection of juvenile abuse and domestic violence, the SAFer Model, civil and criminal protective orders, enhancing the court process for domestic violence litigants, and judicial responses to domestic violence.

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