

AT A GLANCE

Location of Court

Kansas City, Missouri

Type of Court

Criminal Domestic
Violence Court

Project Goals

- Enhance victim safety
- Ensure offender accountability
- Respond with a holistic approach to address offenders' needs

KANSAS CITY MUNICIPAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURT

Kansas City, Missouri Municipal Court, Division 203, has exclusive jurisdiction over all domestic violence ordinance violations that are filed within the Kansas City limits. These cases are criminal in nature and carry a range of punishment of up to six months in jail.



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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.

COURT STAFF

- **Domestic Violence Court judge**
- **Offender accountability coordinator:** supervises the high-risk domestic violence offenders while on probation and ensures that they are held accountable throughout their probation term; coordinator also reports to the judge on the offender's progress and assists with victim safety
- **Domestic Violence prosecutors:** two prosecutors designated to handle all domestic violence cases in all phases of prosecution, including trials, pleas, probation violations, and compliance docket review/staffing
- **Integrated domestic violence specialty court prosecutors**
- **Other project partners:** community agencies provide services for litigants in the Integrated Domestic Violence Court for both criminal and civil cases; Service providers include domestic violence advocates [domestic violence (offender) programs], legal services agencies, parenting skills programs, substance abuse programs, mental health programs, veteran's services, and supervised visitation programs

CASE MANAGEMENT

Types of cases and dockets: Domestic Violence Court, Division 203, handles all domestic violence-categorized criminal municipal ordinance violations, including intimate partner violence, child abuse, child endangerment, violations of protective orders, stalking, and violence between family members. The court supervises high risk offenders on a compliance docket. The court has a specialized domestic violence drug court for high risk domestic violence offenders that have co-occurring substance use disorders. There is a specialized docket for offenders ages eighteen to twenty-four that are charged with intimate partner violence. This docket is called the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention (RSVP) Docket. The RSVP docket is a supervised diversion program. To be eligible offenders must have no prior domestic violence convictions. The RSVP docket offers wrap-around services to the intimate partner of the offender. All first time domestic violence offenders that appear in Kansas City Domestic Violence Court are ordered to complete a three-hour domestic violence intervention course as a condition of their bond.

Case identification, screening, and transfer: All cases filed in the Municipal Court that fall under the types of cases mentioned above are either originally filed in Division 203 or are ultimately transferred to that division upon determination that they are eligible for the Domestic Violence Court.

Information sharing: The offender accountability coordinator receives regular compliance reports from mandated programs via verbal correspondence with providers. This information is shared with the judge and prosecutor during domestic violence specialty court staffing. The reports are also shared with defense counsel when they are appointed or retained (counsel is generally appointed if the city is seeking probation revocation). Furthermore, the victim advocate working with domestic violence specialty court victims can share information with the offender accountability coordinator as needed.

Schedule: Domestic violence cases are heard Monday through Friday at 9:00 am. The Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention (RSVP) docket meets Mondays at 2:30 p.m. The domestic violence drug court meets Tuesday at 2:00 p.m. The compliance docket meets Tuesdays at 2:30 pm. Staffing meetings for the domestic violence drug court and the compliance docket begin at 1:00 pm on Tuesdays. Probations violations for offenders that are not participating in a domestic violence specialty court are heard Thursdays at 1:30 pm.

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

Frequency of stakeholder meetings: Quarterly

List of stakeholders: Offenders on unsupervised probation receive batterer intervention services from Northland Dependency Services and Midwest ADP. All compliance docket and domestic violence drug court offenders receive batterer intervention services through Northland Dependency Services. RSVP docket offenders receive batterer intervention services from the Family Peace Initiative. The domestic violence intervention class for first time offenders is instructed by Midwest ADP. Mental health services are referred to the provider based on the defendant's residence and the catchment area, to include University Health and Swope Health services. All offenders may receive substance abuse treatment from Imani House, Benilde Hall, or Heartland Behavioral. Connections to Success provide employment services. The Missouri Family Support Division provides child support assistance to domestic violence specialty court offenders. Electronic monitoring is provided by Electronic Sentencing Alternative.

VICTIM SAFETY

The Municipal Court prosecutor's office employs two full-time victim advocates who work with victims prior to final adjudication of their cases. These victim advocates are present in the courtroom daily and use non-docket time to notify victims of upcoming court appearances and explain the legal process. Newhouse and Rose Brooks Inc. provide community-based victim services post-final adjudication. A representative from each organization is present in the courtroom daily and receives referrals from the prosecutor's office once a case is concluded. Rose Brooks provides victim advocacy services on the RSVP docket. Newhouse instructs the virtual Victim Empowerment course.

OFFENDER ACCOUNTABILITY

Compliance reviews: The domestic violence drug court and compliance docket staffing includes the judge, offender accountability coordinator, compliance docket prosecutor, and compliance docket batterer programs instructor. Staffing occurs immediately prior to the calling of these dockets and discusses each offender reporting on the docket. Staffing is an opportunity to review an offender's success or discuss sanctions where required. Domestic violence drug court and compliance docket probation violations are addressed with a uniform sanctioning grid. Defendants placed on the compliance docket have plead guilty on a regular domestic violence docket and are required to report on a compliance docket within two weeks of their plea. They also report to the offender accountability coordinator within one week of their plea. First appointments with the

offender accountability coordinator include administration of the domestic violence risk and needs assessment (DVRNA) tool, the administration of the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Questionnaire, completion of the probation acknowledgement form, completion of the victim contact form, review of the sanctioning grid, review of instructions for urinalysis testing, and the scheduling of a batterer intervention evaluation. The report back dates for the compliance docket and the report dates with the offender accountability coordinator are scheduled based on defendant's success on probation. The better an offender does on probation, the less frequently he must report. The longest an offender may go without some form of supervisory contact is 30 days.

Offender services: Defendants are ordered into services (detailed above) based on their needs as determined either by the risk assessment tools or through the collaborative efforts of the compliance docket team and community partners. Offenders may be placed on electronic monitoring where there is a high risk of victim contact, in particular for multiple allegations of protective order violations. An offender may be ordered to report to a probation officer prior to the final adjudication of their case to ensure that bond conditions are not violated.

LEGAL SERVICES

Domestic violence cases filed at the municipal level are punishable by up to six months in jail. If a defendant cannot afford legal counsel, they are represented by Legal Aid of Western Missouri. Legal Aid is also appointed as necessary on probation violations.

TRAINING

Court staff has provided training at the following conferences:

- *Court and Community Collaboration to Enhance Victim Safety and Offender Accountability*
- *The 20th Annual Domestic Violence and Children Interdisciplinary Conference*
- *The 21st Annual Governor and Attorney General's Victims' Rights Conference*
- *Best Practices in Enhancing Victim Safety and Offender Accountability: How Can the Criminal Justice System Respond Conference*

Court staff and community stakeholders have received training on:

- *Evidence-Based Best Practices in Offender Accountability and Victim Safety*
- *Recognizing and Responding to Risk in Domestic Violence Cases*

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