

The Ready Resource

*Providing Up-To-Date Trainings and Resources for
Judicial Officers*

Welcome to the third issue of The Ready Resource, designed to provide up-to-date information focused on trends and practices as courts work to improve responses to intimate partner violence cases.

Courts and Communities

Courts are a vital part of the community and can benefit from community-based feedback and partnerships to improve systemic responses and increase access to services. This edition of the Ready Resource focuses on strategies for building court-connections to those working inside and outside of the system to enhance safety and accountability measures in domestic violence cases.

Coordinated Community Response (CCR)

A CCR is an example of a collaborative approach to improving systems. A CCR is a multi-system approach to engage key individuals and agencies to promote positive system change.

Possible Benefits of CCRs:

- Enhanced collaboration among stakeholders
- Improved system-wide practices
- Increased understanding of roles and ethical and legal boundaries and obligations of various stakeholders
- Expanded knowledge-base of domestic violence for system stakeholders

Blog from the Bench

Hon. Wendy Million: Tucson, AZ City Magistrate: Domestic Violence Court

At the beginning of the COVID crisis, as the courts shut down, and victim services agencies had to retreat from direct contact, I felt fear and concern for the families and survivors who appear in my courtroom. Worse yet, I felt helpless - an unusual feeling for a bossy judge who presides over a criminal domestic violence court and who is used to solving problems and getting things done.

With over 2,000 pending and probation cases to be handled, not only did we face enormous challenges in just resetting cases, but in making sure we didn't lose contact with the victims and the offenders; the longer we went without hearing the cases, the louder the message: the system can't help you or won't hold you accountable. Additionally, domestic violence arrests were way up, and we had multiple people in custody, facing risks of contracting COVID while in jail.

However, as I met with other judges in the Judicial Engagement Network, and talked to our teams at NCJFCJ and CCI, I realized there were still things I could do as a judge to hold offenders accountable and keep survivors safe. Having these discussions and resources gave me lots of ideas, but innovative strategies could only be adapted to our community's situation with the participation of our whole Domestic Violence Court team. This collaboration has always been necessary to accomplish all the things that made Tucson City Court a Domestic Violence Mentor Court, but it became particularly important during these troubled times.

Emerge Center Against Abuse (Emerge), our victim services agency, was not providing any direct services at the courthouse, so we had to work with the advocates to make sure we had ways for the victims in our cases to contact the advocates. The courthouse has closed to the public twice, so it became important to develop procedures to allow victims to be heard in our remote video hearings. Additionally, we had to make sure that our Protective Order office was able to process remote and phone requests for orders, and still refer petitioners to Emerge.

Our treatment providers stepped up to develop remote classroom models, and at the court's suggestion, a couple of them set up socially distanced computers at their locations to allow offenders without access to technology to participate. This option provided a "no excuses" way for any offender to keep complying with their domestic violence classes. I met with my probation team, and we worked on a remote review hearing system, where the treatment providers and defense attorneys would also be able to be present.

Our Zoom meetings focused on business, but we were also able to address some of our stress and anxiety as a team. We met each other's pets, we toured a baby nursery for a pregnant prosecutor, and we bonded a little more like humans.

Emerge was part of all these discussions, as were the nine defense attorneys and three prosecutors assigned to my courtroom. Their contributions, as well as the participation of the probation officers, the treatment providers, the court staff, and the police department, allowed me to focus on the big picture - the ultimate goals of a domestic violence court. Many of the strategies we have adopted may very well follow us into a post-lockdown world, and some we will gladly abandon as soon as we can. But our teamwork and collaboration were crucial in developing a meaningful court response to domestic violence during this crisis, and it makes me very grateful to be part of such a dedicated, caring group of people.

Related Resources

[NCJFCJ: Can I or Can't I? Extra-judicial Activity and Judicial Leadership](#)

This article, written by Judge Karen Aileen Howze, discusses how being a judge doesn't end when the docket does. Experienced judges understand their duties include much more than overseeing a courtroom. A significant part of a judicial officer's duties also includes leadership in the community, committee participation, meetings with stakeholders, and ensuring access to justice.

Resources to assist in these efforts can be found on the Judicial Engagement Network (JEN) website found [here](#).

[Webinar: NCJFCJ: Domestic Violence and Court Community Engagement: Serving Community Needs Through A Coordinated Response](#)

This webinar addresses the specifics of Coordinated Community Response (CCR) programs, which support the premise that coordination and integration of the justice system, human services, and advocacy responses to domestic violence should reduce its occurrence. It describes the court's role in community engagement, explores the principles and techniques used by other jurisdictions that helped to improve and strengthen their community's response, and discusses the role of the judge in providing leadership in a CCR.

[Battered Women's Justice Project: Coordination Models](#)

This link explores using a coordinated community response model in the criminal justice system to encourage practitioners to identify and utilize effective means to work within and across agencies to protect victims of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and stalking and to help offenders change their behaviors. When efforts are coordinated across agencies and practitioners, the system's overall ability to achieve these two goals is enhanced.

[Center for Court Innovation: Key Principles of Domestic Violence Court: Coordinated Community Response](#)

The Center for Court Innovation published this weblink, which discusses how all segments of a community have to work together to combat domestic violence by sending a consistent message that violence is not acceptable. Domestic violence courts can play a critical role in raising public consciousness and convening disparate partners to improve interagency communication.

[End Domestic Abuse: Coordinated Community Response](#)

End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin's core philosophy of a CCR to domestic violence is that domestic violence is a community issue that requires engagement from the entire community. End Domestic Abuse provides CCR support and technical assistance, a CCR toolkit on building, supporting and sustaining your CCR team, a monthly CCR Training and Resource Bulletin, and a CCR listserv.

NCJFCJ's COVID-19 Resources and Updates

The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) continues to update resources related to COVID-19 and posts updated information as it is made available. Please find the NCJFCJ's COVID-19 Resources and Updates webpage [here](#).

The NCJFCJ has released a statement regarding [Safe Courts and Access to Justice During COVID-19](#).

[TA2TA Webpage of Resources and Information on COVID-19 Responses](#)

This webpage, developed by NCJFCJ's TA2TA: The TA Provider Resource Center, contains and consolidates the COVID-19 specific resources, events, and webpages developed by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women's (OVW) Training and Technical Assistance Initiative. Resources and information are categorized by profession, which includes a category-specific to judges, and by topic.

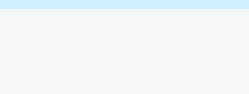
Technical Assistance to Judicial Officers and Courts

The NCJFCJ staff are available to assist with customizing training curricula, providing information and resources on specific topics, and offering connections among courts and judicial officers working to improve responses to intimate partner violence. Please contact Jennifer Arsenian for information at jarsenian@ncjfcj.org or visit the NCJFCJ website at <https://www.ncjfcj.org/family-violence-and-domestic-relations/>.

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For more information or to request technical assistance please contact us at info@njdv.org

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