

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURTS: IMPROVING THE CIVIL AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM'S RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



Report to  
Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter  
and the 2nd Regular Session of  
the 61st Idaho Legislature

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Idaho's Integrated Domestic Violence Courts are "one family/one judge" problem-solving courts that respond to the unique nature of domestic violence. One judge handles all criminal domestic violence cases and related family issues, such as divorce, custody, visitation, civil protection orders and child protection cases. Integrating criminal and civil response systems is the critical next step in improving victim and child safety and holding offenders accountable by ensuring compliance with court orders and treatment.

*I think it was helpful, after all the violations and then the felony charge, my divorce and all the cases were given to one judge who is trained in domestic violence.*  
*I think the importance of domestic violence training is critical.*

-- Domestic Violence Victim

### Idaho's first domestic violence court conference held

In October 2010, grant funding from the Office on Violence Against Woman allowed the Judiciary to hold the first Idaho Domestic Violence Court Conference. Over 80 Domestic Violence Court team members from around the state of Idaho were in attendance, including judges, court clerks, prosecutors, victim witness coordinators, public defenders, probation officers, family court services coordinators and domestic violence court coordinators. The conference began with a panel of domestic violence survivors and was followed by Robyn Mazur, Center for Court Innovation; Honorable Michael Denton, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, James E. Henderson Jr., Battered Woman's Justice Project and other technical assistance consultants from around the country who assisted participants with understanding effective court strategies in responding to domestic violence, strategies for offender supervision and holding offenders accountable, and best practices and key elements of Domestic Violence Courts. The conference evaluations gleaned high marks for the conference overall and the participant comments were extremely supportive and positive.

*I am finally living a life that is better than anything I could have imagined ... [Domestic Violence Court] has given me an opportunity to look within and in doing so, make some real and lasting positive changes. I will be forever indebted to this Court for granting unto me the opportunity to become the being I always wished I could be.*

-- Domestic Violence  
Court Offender

*My husband has had problems for many years and has been involved in a lot of treatment programs. [Domestic Violence Court] is the first to offer help for me and my children and it is really helping us hold together as a family regardless of the outcome for him.*

-- Domestic Violence Victim

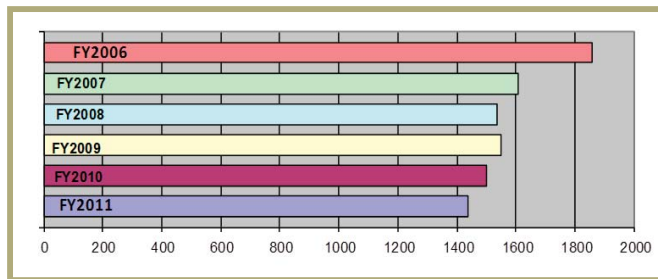
### Bannock County awarded grant to enhance domestic violence and sexual assault services

Bannock County, in partnership with community agencies, was awarded an Office on Violence Against Woman grant to enhance services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and increase offender accountability. The grant provides funding for direct services to victims, as well as training and education for judges, court personnel, law enforcement, attorneys, and probation. Grant funding also provides for the establishment of a bilingual victim advocate and a dedicated probation officer for criminal domestic violence related cases.

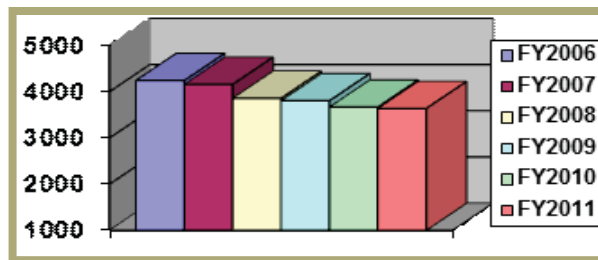
## Statewide decrease in criminal domestic violence charges

Since the inception of Idaho's Domestic Violence Courts in 2006, Idaho has seen a 23% decrease in violations of criminal no-contact orders and civil protection order charges and a 14% decrease in criminal misdemeanor and felony domestic assault and battery charges filed with the court. The courts have also seen a 9% decrease in civil protection order filings since 2006.

Criminal No-Contact Order and Civil Protection Order Violations



Idaho's Criminal Domestic Violence Charges

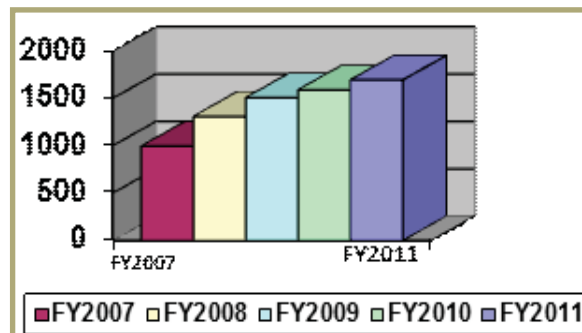


## Domestic violence courts operational in five judicial districts

Domestic Violence Courts monitored over 1,575 offenders in FY2011, a 73% increase over the last two years. Domestic Violence Court judges held over 3,875 judicial review hearings in FY2011.

Domestic Violence Court Coordinators assisted 1,695 victims, which represents a 7% increase from last year and a 70% increase from the first year of Idaho's Domestic Violence Courts.

Number of Victims Served by Domestic Violence Court Coordinators



*The Domestic Violence Court was very helpful in referring me to appropriate places for counseling, advocacy programs and the Crisis Center. The programs and meetings from these were helpful in giving me the tools to learn what and how to deal with the situation I was in and how to ward off future attempts of abusive situations.*  
 -- Domestic Violence Victim

## How do domestic violence courts work?

Domestic Violence Courts are designed to improve victim and child safety and hold offenders to a higher level of accountability by concentrating responsibility for offender oversight in the hands of a single judge who can monitor compliance with court orders, which is consistent with legislative policy (Idaho Code 32-1408).

Integrated Domestic Violence Courts improve the handling of domestic violence cases through the following key elements:

**One Family/One Judge:** A single presiding judge is cross-trained to handle all matters relating to a family. Judicial decisions are more informed, coordination and resources increase, and the potential for conflicting judicial orders is reduced.

**Offender Monitoring:** On-going judicial review hearings ensure immediate consequences for non-compliance, increase offender accountability, and provide quick recognition of offender progress and compliance to encourage other positive steps. Supervised probation is an essential component to monitoring offenders.

**Problem-Solving Model:** Domestic Violence Courts work with a wide spectrum of stakeholders. This collaborative team approach is critical to ensure the successful and effective operation of Domestic Violence Courts.

**Greater Efficiency:** Idaho's Domestic Violence Courts accelerate the disposition of criminal domestic violence cases resulting in offenders entering treatment earlier in the process, linking victims to services earlier, and providing safety for victims.

**Earlier Services for Victims:** Domestic Violence Courts give victims greater opportunity to be heard so that the criminal justice system is better able to address critical family issues. Additionally, services to victims are coordinated and referrals and resources for the entire family are offered to victims immediately when they enter the court system.