



Idaho Domestic Violence Courts

Improving the Civil and Criminal Justice Systems Response to Domestic Violence

Specialized courts or court processes for domestic violence cases increase the judiciary's ability to handle these cases effectively. Levels of specialization vary widely in those counties that have adopted this approach. Some counties have created courts that handle only criminal domestic violence cases; others have altered court processes to ensure more effective processing of civil domestic violence matters; still others have specialized staff who provide support to victims. Through this focus on domestic violence issues, the Idaho Courts send a message to the community that violence will not be tolerated.

Domestic violence courts utilize a case processing model with expedited hearings focusing on improving offender accountability and enhancing victim safety. Domestic violence courts hold offenders to a higher level of accountability through judicial oversight. Judicial review hearings are based on comprehensive reports provided by probation officers, treatment providers, and victim input (if appropriate and possible) to monitor compliance with court orders.

The team approach to helping victims of domestic violence seems to be very effective and it's because of the collaborative efforts that I am able to reach out and access victims in criminal court as effectively as I am.

Quote from victim advocate

Additionally, domestic violence courts may include a "one judge, one family" model where the presiding domestic violence court judge is re-assigned any civil protection order, domestic relations, and/or child protection cases for the same parties and is aware of all pending cases and existing orders to avoid duplication or conflicting orders. This specialized court ensures that offenders are carefully monitored, victims have access to comprehensive services, and judges have the information they need to make prompt and effective decisions.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURTS OPERATIONAL IN SIX JUDICIAL DISTRICTS

Currently, Idaho has nine active domestic violence courts. Idaho's domestic violence courts monitored over 1,900 offenders in FY2015. Domestic violence court coordinators assisted approximately 1,500 victims in navigating the court system in both criminal and civil cases. Domestic violence court best practices are expanding throughout Idaho to promote the effective handling of these difficult civil and criminal domestic violence cases.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT FUNDS FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURT OFFENDERS

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare allocated \$429,000 in FY2015 for substance use disorder treatment for individuals in domestic violence courts. In FY2015, these funds reached over 125 domestic violence offenders. The funds are to provide substance abuse treatment for moderate to high-risk domestic violence offenders. These are individuals who are unlikely to successfully complete probation or other court requirements without such treatment and continued court involvement.

Report to the Governor
C.L. "Butch" Otter
and the
2nd Regular Session of the
63rd Idaho Legislature



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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURT SUBCOMMITTEE PROVIDES LEADERSHIP

The Domestic Violence Court Subcommittee of the Children and Families Courts Committee, chaired by the Honorable Jerold Lee, provides leadership, mentorship, and guidance to maximize the effectiveness of domestic violence courts. This Subcommittee is comprised of domestic violence court judges, a prosecutor, public defender, court coordinator, domestic violence evaluator, as well as representatives from the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence and the Idaho Council on Domestic Violence. In 2010, the Subcommittee developed the Idaho Domestic Violence Court Policies and Guidelines. These policies and guidelines provide each district with flexibility to implement a domestic violence court, operating under evidence-based practices, that best responds to local needs and resources.

The Subcommittee's future plans include providing mentorship to Idaho's domestic violence courts, expanding best practices throughout Idaho, and addressing training needs related to domestic violence. The leadership and subject matter expertise of the Subcommittee's membership is recognized statewide and nationally.

We communicate in a completely non-violent manner, very mature and controlled conversations where we can honestly discuss our relationship openly without fear of anger or violence.

Quote from DV Court Offender

IDAHO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURTS PLANS TO UNDERGO STATEWIDE EVALUATION

Evaluation and assessment of domestic violence courts is critical for effective operation and realization of program goals. Evaluation and monitoring of domestic violence courts is one of the essential elements identified in the Idaho Domestic Violence Court Policies and Guidelines. The Domestic Violence Court Subcommittee has coordinated with the Idaho Supreme Court Planning and Research Department to develop an annual statewide evaluation plan for Idaho domestic violence courts. The plan establishes a system of ongoing feedback about domestic violence court processes and activities to identify gaps in services, potential training needs, and successes and barriers.

INNOVATIVE PRACTICES: COLLABORATION BETWEEN IDAHO DRUG COURTS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURTS

Early this year, the Drug Court Mental Health Court Coordinating Committee approved the designation of the first domestic violence drug court. One core element of this problem-solving court is to provide a unified approach for the treatment of high-risk domestic violence offenders with substance abuse issues. The 7th Judicial District Domestic Violence Drug Court follows the problem solving court model, which includes weekly court reviews and staffing with the court team as well as treatment providers (domestic violence, substance abuse, mental health, family specialist) and the victim advocate agency. The collaboration between drug courts and domestic violence courts has provided the court the ability to address complex issues of domestic violence and substance abuse to reduce recidivism and to end the cycle of abuse.

I am glad that [DV Court Offender] is in this program [DV Court]. This is the first time in our marriage that I have felt that I and the girls are a real priority to him.

Quote from DV Court Victim

Domestic violence remains a significant and challenging problem, affecting the stability and safety of Idaho's families. Each component of Idaho's domestic violence courts is designed to promote victim safety and hold offenders accountable. Domestic violence courts continue to lead the way in how Idaho handles these complex cases and addresses the root causes of domestic violence.

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