



Stearns County Domestic Violence Court for Repeat Felony Offenders

**Increasing Victim Safety and Batterer Accountability
Through an Intentional, Targeted Response**

Presented by: Janelle Kendall, Stearns County Attorney
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LEGAL AID LAWYER IS KEY TO VICTIM SUCCESS

Strengths

- **Holistic** representation on wide range of civil legal issues-family, housing, health; gives victims options.
- **Coordination** between Legal Aid and prosecution helps victims testify and report violations.
- **Coordination** between Legal Aid and public defender helps maintain no contact status.
- **Immediate and extended services for victims** – when victim is ready to act, service is there.
- **Confidential legal representation for victims** – helps victim make safe choices.
- **Victims leave abusers:** 14 months after entry into program, 58% of victims are separated from the abuser.
- **Concentrated and coordinated** victim services **enhance victim & child safety.**

Challenges

- Uncertain grant funding for Legal Aid Lawyer.
- Need for Legal Aid Lawyer extends beyond offender completion of Court; demand for Legal Aid resources and services for victims expands as more abusers move through Domestic Violence Court.
- Victim need for professional social work assistance in coordinating social service, mental health, and other needs of victim and her children.

Needs

1.25 FTE Legal Aid Staff Lawyer positions for 2 years

Salary/benefits x 2 years x 1.25 FTE: \$170,772 + equipment/supplies \$20,000: \$190,772

Annual Budget: Salary (\$47,519 + Benefits \$20,790) x 1.25 = \$85,386

Equipment/supplies/travel/training/library \$20,000

1 FTE Legal Aid support staff (paralegal/secretary) salary and benefits for 2 years \$108,668

Annual Budget: Salary \$40,255 + Benefits \$14,079 = \$54,334

1 FTE Legal Aid Social Worker

Salary/benefits x 2 years: \$108,000 + equipment/supplies \$10,000: \$118,000

Annual Budget: Salary \$40,000 + Benefits \$14,000 = \$54,000

Equipment/supplies/travel/training: \$10,000

Federal Funding from Legal Assistance to Victims VAWA grant secured

Award number 2011-WL-AX-0012 - \$36,000

TOTAL: \$381,440

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CRIME REDUCTION

through

INTENSIVE VICTIM SERVICES WORKS...

ONLY IF the victim KNOWS...

1. *She has choices*
2. *She has experts on her side*
3. *Abuser will be held accountable*
4. *Simple cause and effect!*

REQUIRES:

TEAMWORK

EXPERTISE

RESOURCES

LEGAL AID SERVICES ARE CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

- **More than 125 victims and their children have been helped by Legal Aid**
- **Holistic representation makes a difference**
 - In **one** case:
 - Order for Protection enhances safety.
 - Child Support Order stabilizes income.
 - Order for Protection against **separate** abuser reinforces safety decisions.
 - SSI representation for disabled child increases services and income.
 - Coordination of information with County Attorney keeps victim informed of abuser's whereabouts to enhance safety and security.
- **Services for victims, protection of children, improvements in outcomes for children**
 - **Before DVC Legal Aid involvement:** School records showed that during one school year, when phone visitation was allowed, the child had missed school over 40 times due to severe stomachaches and headaches.
 - **After DVC Legal Aid involvement:** Lawyer successfully obtained order cutting off visitation, child missed school only three times. The child's grades improved by at least one full letter grade.
- **Confidentiality matters**
 - Victim calls Legal Aid Lawyer and reveals that abuser is violating No Contact Order. She can't report because he will hurt her for reporting. Lawyer and victim are able to plan safe coordination with surveillance officer and law enforcement. Plan is executed. Abuser is arrested.
- **Time matters**
 - Of 79 victims who received at least 14 months of access to legal services, 58% reported separation from their abusers:
 - 28 OFP representation/advice
 - 3 Divorce representation/advice
 - 2 HRO against abuser
 - 4 Custody case against abuser
 - 1 Report violations by abuser
 - 8 Client report (other dispute with abuser/other case/new partner)
 - Case Example:
 - April 2011 Abuser enrolled in DV Court, victim wants no contact order dropped. "I'm sorry I ever called the police."
 - July 2011 No Contact Order issued over victim's objections.
 - September 2011 Abuser charged with violation of order/jailed.
 - March 2012 Victim calls about steps needed to protect children when abuser is released.