

Court Training and Improvements Program

The Court Training and Improvements Program (Courts Program) supported federal, state, tribal, territorial and local courts or court-based programs in improving their responses to domestic/sexual violence through specialized court processes, such as dedicated court dockets, specialized courts, and enhanced court procedures, and by providing judicial training.

THE 2013 REAUTHORIZATION OF VAWA REPLACED THE COURTS Program, along with the Supervised Visitation Program, with a new, comprehensive grant program: the Grants to Support Families in the Justice System Program (Justice for Families or JFF Program). The Justice for Families Program improves civil and criminal justice system response to families with histories of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and cases involving allegations of child sexual abuse. The last Courts Program grants were awarded in FY 2014.

33 Grantees Reporting

Between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2015, 33 unique grantees reported activities funded by the Courts Program.

1,372 Victims Served

On average, grantees served 1,372 victims during each 6-month reporting period.

7,601 Cases Disposed

Grantees disposed of a total of 7,601 cases; 69% of which resulted in convictions.

Grantees engaged in the following purpose areas:

- Improve internal civil and criminal court functions, responses, practices, and procedures;
- Educate court-based and court-related personnel on issues relating to victims' needs and best practices for holding perpetrators accountable;
- Collaborate and train with agencies and organizations to improve implementation and enforcement of relevant federal, state, tribal, territorial, and local law;
- Provide technical assistance to federal, state, tribal, territorial, or local courts wishing to improve their practices and procedures, or to develop new programs; and
- Enable courts or court-based programs to develop new or enhance current programming.

A New York statewide investigation of domestic violence courts found that these courts reduced rearrests for any criminal charges, inclusive of domestic violence charges, among convicted offenders who were subject to policies such as judicial supervision and sanctions for noncompliance.¹⁵⁸



FL • Grantee Perspective

Courts grant funding has enabled the County to devise and implement a comprehensive compliance monitoring program with legal ramifications for failure to comply with court-ordered conditions of the injunction orders. The Courts funding has also enabled DV stakeholders from the County to come together for a continuous discussion of how we can handle injunctions better so that safety is maximized. The improvements we've devised and implemented in the last three years have had lasting effect on the perception of how seriously DV injunctions are handled in Pinellas County.

COUNTY OF PINELLAS 6TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT,
FLORIDA



OH • Grantee Perspective

The impact of having two full-time Justice System Advocates (JSAs) cannot be overstated. It is the most essential portion of the grant funding because it puts the victim directly in the path of a knowledgeable and supportive professional whose sole purpose is to support that victim's interests. Although victim safety and security is paramount to the Court staff, they still have to be impartial. There are numerous supportive services that the JSAs are able to provide that would not be available without grant funding. These include, but are not limited to: support during the protection order process from someone looking out solely for the best interest of the victim; assistance with writing the statement to the Court used by the judicial officer in making the determination as to whether to grant or deny an ex parte order; assistance in making the decision on whether or not to file for a protection order and the safety concerns and potential consequences to filing; direct access to the shelter run by their agency; and direct referrals to individual counseling and support groups run through the Domestic Violence and Child Advocacy Center.

CUYAHOGA COUNTY DOMESTIC RELATIONS COURT,
OHIO

General Grant Information

Information for this report was submitted by **33** individual grantees for the July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2015 progress reporting period.

- **3** (9%) grantees reported that their grants specifically addressed tribal populations.
- Grantees most frequently addressed the following purpose areas:
 - Developed new or enhanced existing court infrastructure, including specialized courts, dockets, intake centers, and interpreter services;
 - Improved internal civil and criminal court functions, responses, practices, and procedures; and
 - Educated court-based and court-related personnel on issues relating to victims' needs.

Staff

Grant-funded staff engage in issuing protection orders or helping victims obtain them, family matters, criminal cases, and other specialized court activities relating to domestic/sexual violence. They also provide training, victim services, offender supervision, and batterer intervention and sex offender management programs to increase victim safety and offender accountability. **Being able to hire staff is critical to the overall function and success of programs.**

- **29** (88%) grantees used funds for staffing needs.
- Grantees funded an average of **28** full-time equivalent (FTE) staff during each 6-month period.
- Grantees most often used these staffing funds to support case/docket managers and victim advocates.

Table 1 | Staff supported with Courts grant funds, July 2013–June 2015: **Selected groups**

Staff funded	6-month average	
Total FTE staff funded	28	
Case/docket managers	8	30%
Victim advocates	5	20%
Program coordinators	5	18%
Compliance monitors	4	13%
Probation officers	1	5%

NOTE: Data presented for the most frequently reported categories only (≥5%).

Training

Grantees train court-based and court-related personnel on issues relating to victims' needs, including safety, security, privacy, confidentiality, and economic independence, as well as information about perpetrator behavior and best practices for holding perpetrators accountable. **This training improves the professional responses to victims and increases offender accountability.**

- **21** (64%) grantees used funds for training.
- Grantees convened a total of **101** training events.
- Grantees trained a total of **2,166** people.
- Most often these trainings reached court personnel (**30%**), victim advocates (**19%**), and attorneys/law students (**12%**).

Victim Services

Grantees provide an array of services to victims navigating the court and legal system. Victims may request legal advocacy to secure a protection order or custody of their children; translation services; victim advocacy, such as planning or accompaniment to court; or access to supervised visitation and exchange services. **These comprehensive support services address a wide variety of needs to help victims become and remain safe from violence.**

- **12** (36%) grantees used funds for victim services.
- Grantees provided services to an average of **1,372** victims during each 6-month period.
- **98%** of victims who sought services received them during each 6-month period.

During each 6-month period, on average, grantees provided:

- Civil legal advocacy to **844** victims;
- Victim advocacy to **633** victims; and
- Criminal justice advocacy to **447** victims.

Other services:

- Victim-witness notification/victim outreach services were used a total of **4,096** times; and
- Grantees made a total of **1,301** referrals to governmental victim services and **3,019** to non-governmental victim services.



AZ • Grantee Perspective

The funding has also allowed us to provide training in the area of domestic violence and the Deaf community by using DeafHope as a great resource. The empowerment director of DeafHope, Amber Hodson, is on call for both Emerge! and the Community Outreach Program for the Deaf (COPD) to reach out to, and the training she provided to both agencies was invaluable. We have also been able to use the funding to pay for ASL interpreters for Deaf victims who access Emerge! Services. We are also able to pay for the COPD counselors and Emerge! to put on education programs for Deaf teens. We spent a lot of money on sending attorneys from DV Court to training and it has been very well spent, especially where defense attorneys were concerned. The Public Defenders assigned to DV court, who treat victims with the utmost respect, seem to have an increased understanding of the dynamics involved in these cases, are very careful about victim safety, and are cautious about making requests that might compromise victim safety. Sending the attorneys to training together has fostered a great working relationship in the courtroom, which has resulted in a better delivery of justice for everyone.

TUCSON CITY COURT, ARIZONA



OH • Grantee Perspective

The significance of these funds on Ohio's Domestic Relations Summit cannot be understated. As a result of this funding, the Summit featured a powerful domestic violence track (including four funded sessions) and a plenary session led by Dr. Peter Jaffe on domestic violence risk assessment, lethality, and homicide. Because domestic violence themes had such a prevalent position during the Summit, many of the court (county) teams infused their discussions with appropriate responses to domestic violence. The success of the Summit was evidenced by the energy it generated. The Supreme Court is committed to improving the judicial response in cases involving domestic violence and it continues to leverage general revenue funds to maximize federal funds.

SUPREME COURT OF OHIO



VT • Grantee Perspective

The biggest change is providing broad access, information, and support to all victims of domestic violence appearing on the consolidated calendars in all departments. Having bilingual, bicultural support can make a huge difference. Victims are more likely to feel understood, supported, and safe when working directly with someone who is bilingual and bicultural, versus talking to an Advocate/Specialist through an interpreter. It enhances their ability to follow court directions when accompanied by a bilingual support person (for example, going to the Self Help Center to meet with an attorney about their family law case, or to Family Court Services to schedule an appointment for an emergency screen or mediation). It also enhances their willingness and comfort in accessing community resources, such as shelter-based agencies, social services agencies for food or medical assistance, and for some individuals, referrals for immigration-related services.

HAVE JUSTICE WILL TRAVEL, VERMONT

Victims Seeking Services

Grantees serve victims of domestic/sexual violence. Between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2015:

- The majority of victims served or partially served were victims of **domestic violence** (92%).

Figure 1 | Provision of victim services by Courts Program grantees, by type of presenting victimization

Victims served by type of victimization (6-month average)

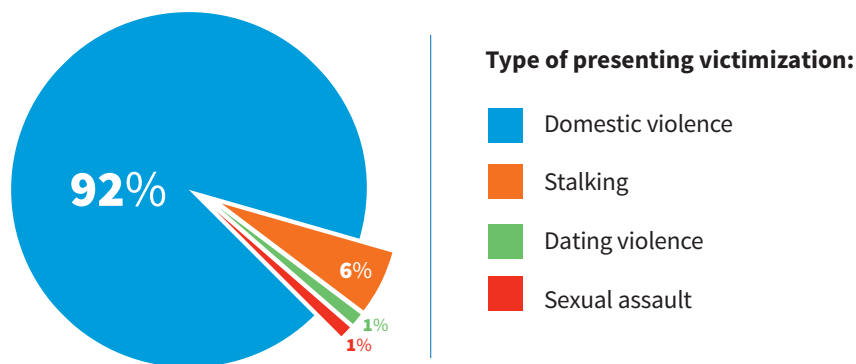


Table 2 | Victims seeking services with Courts grant funds, July 2013–June 2015

Victims seeking services	6-month average	
Total victims seeking services	1,397	
Victims served	1,326	95%
Victims partially served	46	3%
Victims not served	25	2%

NOTE: "Partially served" represents victims who received some but not all of the service(s) they requested, provided those services were funded under the Courts Program grant. "Not served" represents victims who sought services and did not receive the service(s) they were seeking, provided those services were funded under the Courts Program grant.

Victims' Relationship to Offender

Grantees serve victims of domestic/sexual violence. Between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2015:

- The majority of victims served or partially served were victimized by a **spouse or intimate partner** (86%).
- The remaining victims were most often victimized by another **family or household member** (11%) or in the context of a **dating relationship** (2%).

Figure 2 | Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Domestic violence**

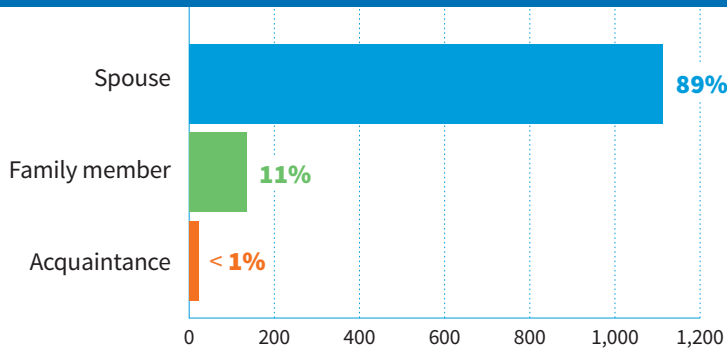


Figure 3 | Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Stalking**

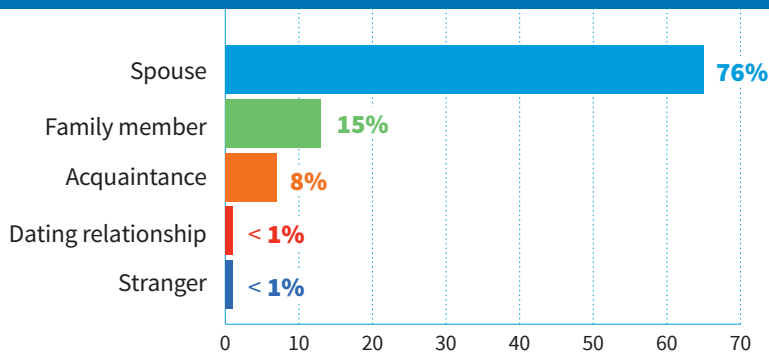


Figure 4 | Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Dating violence**

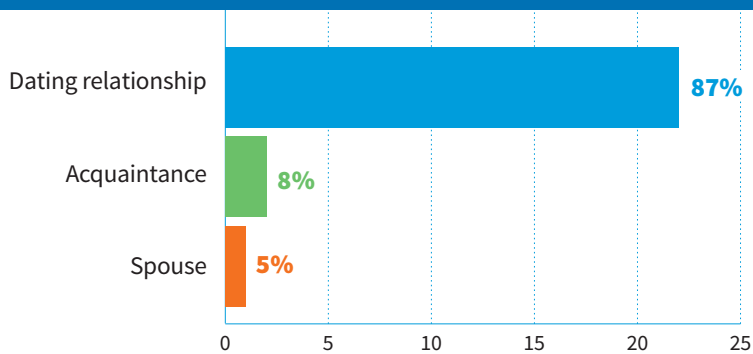
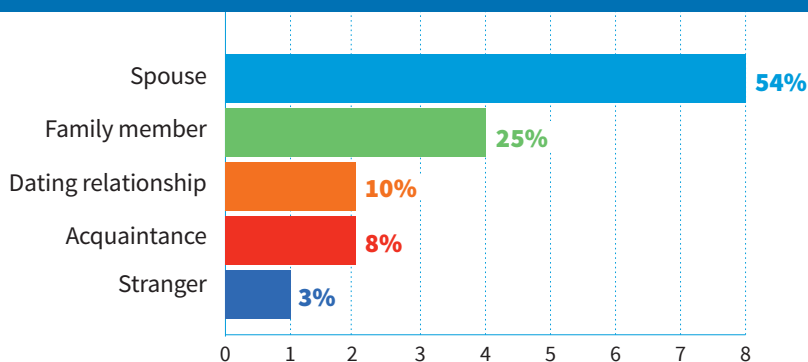


Figure 5 | Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Sexual assault**



Reasons Victims Were Not Served or Were Partially Served

During each reporting period, grantees most frequently noted the following barriers as reasons why victims were not served or were only partially served:

- Program unable to provide service due to limited resources;
- Hours of operation; or
- Insufficient/lack of language capacity.

Demographics of Victims Served and Partially Served

Grantees served or partially served an average of **1,372** victims during each 6-month period. The majority of those victims were **Black or African American** (43%), **female** (88%), and between the ages of **25 and 59** (76%).

Figure 6 Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Race/ethnicity** (6-month average)

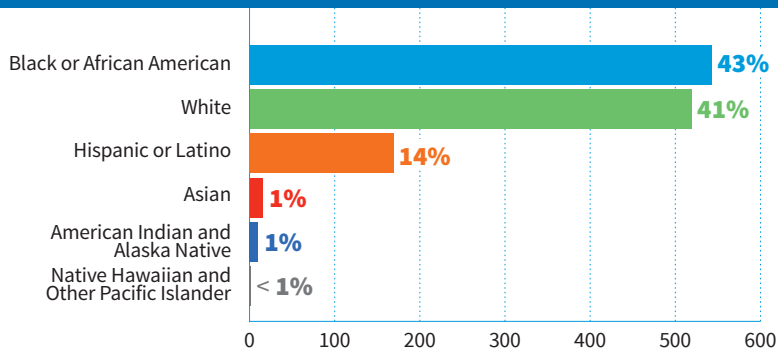


Figure 7 Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Gender** (6-month average)

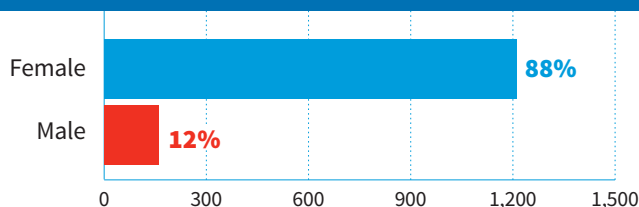


Figure 8 Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Age** (6-month average)

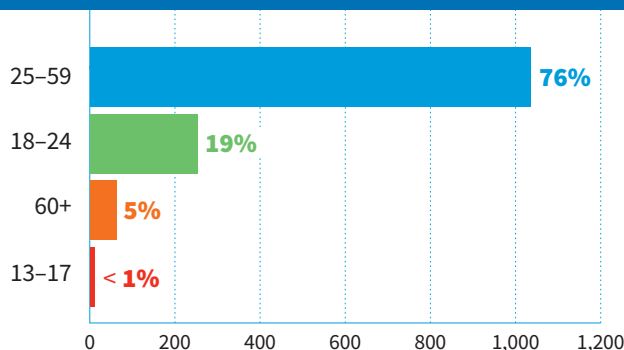
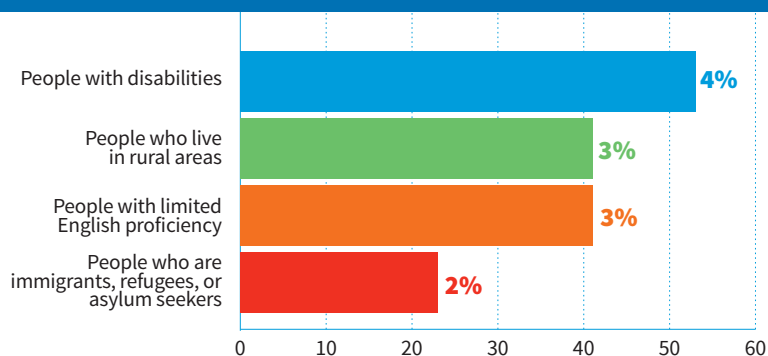


Figure 9 | Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Other** (6-month average)

Criminal Justice

To enhance protection for and services to victims within the court system, grantees work with criminal justice and social service agencies to address service gaps, provide training, ensure consistency in case handling, enhance case information flow among partner agencies to improve judicial decision-making and partner agency operations, and emphasize defendant monitoring and accountability.

- **17** (52%) grantees used funds for criminal case activities.

When victims receive services from civil attorneys and community-based advocates, they report being better equipped to express their opinions and have those opinions validated.²⁰⁵

Case Dispositions

Table 3 | Dispositions of cases by Courts Program-funded courts, July 2013–June 2015

Type of case	Cases disposed of	Dispositions resulting in convictions	
		Number	Percent
All cases	7,601	5,271	69%
Misdemeanor domestic/dating violence	4,291	2,721	63%
Violation of probation or parole	1,178	1,082	92%
Domestic violence ordinance	655	452	69%
Felony domestic/dating violence	643	452	70%
Violation of protection order	592	420	71%

NOTE: Convictions include deferred adjudications.

Criminal Protection Orders

Criminal protection orders are issued as bail conditions or as conditions of release to protect victims during the pendency of the criminal case or following the conviction, or deferred adjudication, of offenders.

Type of case	Granted as condition of:	
	Bail	Deferred disposition/ probation
All cases	3,913	1,610
Domestic violence	3,460	1,529
Dating violence	443	80
Sexual assault	8	0
Stalking	2	1

Judicial Monitoring

Judicial monitoring occurs when the court schedules regular probation or court reviews to determine whether convicted offenders are complying with the terms of their sentences. Probation officers may meet with offenders in person, by telephone, or via unscheduled surveillance.

- An average of **1,603** offenders were monitored in each 6-month reporting period.
 - The overwhelming majority of offenders reviewed were domestic violence offenders (**97%**).
- A total of **13,528** judicial reviews of individual offenders were conducted across the 2-year period.

Judges monitor offenders to review progress and compliance with court orders. The data reported below (Table 5) reflect the consequences imposed for violations of court orders. With each type of violation, the courts took no action in only **11%** of the cases and issued fines in **<1%** of the cases. A significant number of cases resulted in the courts adding conditions (**12%**), or partially (**11%**) or fully (**26%**) revoking probation. The courts issued a verbal or written warning in **39%** of the cases.

Table 5 Disposition of violations of probation and other court orders by Courts Program-funded courts, July 2013–June 2015

Violation	No action taken		Verbal/written warning		Fine		Conditions added		Partial revocation of probation		Probation revoked/incarcerated	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Protection order (N = 381)	41	11%	78	20%	0	0%	49	13%	26	7%	187	49%
New criminal behavior (N = 342)	116	34%	87	25%	5	1%	60	18%	17	5%	57	17%
Failure to attend mandated batterer intervention program (N = 892)	75	8%	557	62%	1	<1%	74	8%	75	8%	110	12%
Failure to attend mandated offender treatment (N = 203)	25	12%	81	40%	1	<1%	29	14%	25	12%	42	21%
Other condition of probation or parole (N = 735)	23	3%	195	27%	3	<1%	102	14%	133	18%	279	38%

NOTE: Other conditions include requirements such as substance abuse and alcohol treatment, parenting classes, and mandatory check-ins.

Civil Justice

Civil Protection Orders

Civil orders of protection, also known as restraining orders, are court-issued injunctions that prohibit or limit an offender's contact with the victim and prohibit further abusive behavior. These orders may also include custody and visitation directives, economic relief, and temporary restrictions on possession of firearms. Orders of protection are enforceable throughout the country, not solely in the issuing jurisdiction.

- **12** (36%) grantees used funds for civil protection order cases.

Table 6 Civil protection orders issued by Courts Program-funded courts by type of victimization, July 2013–June 2015

Type of case	Temporary orders	Final orders
All cases	5,464	4,455
Domestic violence	3,109	2,940
Dating violence	294	226
Sexual assault	103	154
Stalking	1	0
Type of victimization unknown	1,957	1,135

Table 7

Types of relief issued in final protection orders by Courts Program-funded courts, July 2013–June 2015

Types of relief	Number of protection orders/cases
Firearms restrictions	3,747
Stay away/no contact	3,650
Custody	851
Sole parental rights to petitioner	693
Sole parental rights to respondent	18
Shared parental rights	48
Allocated parental rights	200
Batterer intervention program (BIP)	288
Other offender treatment (e.g. substance abuse or other counseling, does not include BIP)	268
Supervised visitation/exchange	184
Child support	64
Economic relief (e.g. spousal support, debt assignment, payment of obligations and/or losses)	48

NOTE: Custody represents the number of protection orders in which custody was addressed but the specific outcome was not known.

Table 8

Post-judgment/post-adjudication judicial reviews of civil protection order conditions, July 2013–June 2015

Type of case	Number of cases (6-month average)	Number of hearings (2-year total)
Civil protection order case reviews	544	2,541

Family Cases

The issues facing victims in family law matters — divorce, custody, child or spousal support, or parental rights and responsibilities — are complex. When criminal and/or protection order cases are also pending, the situation can be overwhelming and burdensome for victims, and competing or conflicting orders may place them at greater risk. Grantees may structure their dedicated docket or specialized court to include family matters where families are experiencing domestic violence. This could be a “one judge, one family” system in which one judge hears all matters relating to that family. Specially trained court staff who are aware of the dynamics of domestic violence will understand that some offenders use the court system to exert control over victims and force ongoing contact.

- 4 (12%) grantees used funds for family cases.

Table 9 | Number of new and pending family cases addressed by the Courts Program, July 2013–June 2015

Type of case	Number of cases (6-month average)	Number of hearings (2-year total)
Divorce (children in common)	58	658
Divorce (no children in common)	22	171
Parental rights/responsibilities	15	20

Table 10 | Post-judgment/post-adjudication judicial reviews of family cases, July 2013–June 2015

Type of case	Number of cases (6-month average)	Number of hearings (2-year total)
Family case reviews	4	43

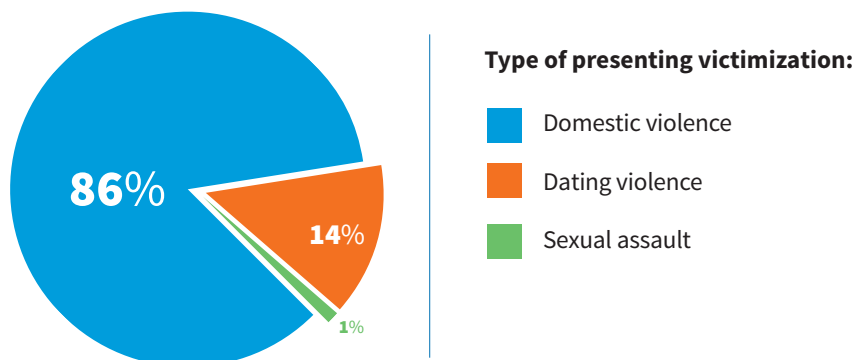
Court-Based Probation or Other Offender/Respondent Compliance Monitoring

Probation officers or other court-based compliance monitors conduct offender monitoring to determine whether offenders/respondents are complying with the terms of their court orders. Those orders could be pre-trial, bail, protection orders, probation, or other conditions of release.

- **10** (30%) grantees used funds for probation or monitoring activities.
- An average of **1,356** offenders were monitored during each 6-month reporting period.
- On average, grantees reviewed BIP information or contacted BIP staff for **611** offenders/respondents, and had meetings or contact with **382** offenders/respondents.
- As a strategy to increase victim safety, probation staff made an average of **223** victim contacts during each 6-month reporting period.

Figure 10 | Offenders/respondents monitored by the Courts Program, by type of offense

Offenders monitored by type of offense (6-month average)



ID • Grantee Perspective

The Courts grant funding provides the level of treatment to address the highest risk offenders with co-occurring disorders. This intensive monitoring and treatment would not be possible without this funding. The grant provides resources that are not funded by probation for felony and misdemeanor offenders. The DV Court funding provides resources for offenders that in many cases would be incarcerated. The court provides support to victims and the community by assisting offenders to understand the consequences of their continued criminal behavior and by providing appropriate monitoring and treatment to aid them in future success. The grant funding eases the financial burden on the probationers that are not living with their families and are trying to support two households. This allows them to stay focused on their treatment and recovery by not having to pay the full amount of treatment costs. Case management provided by The Mental Wellness Center is being utilized as a result of the grant funding.

IDAHO DISTRICT 7 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURT



OH • Grantee Perspective

Over the last 20+ years, the quality of education on domestic violence for the judiciary has improved tremendously and transformed court practices and procedures to better respond to victims and abusers. However, the impact of domestic violence on the allocation of parental rights and responsibilities remains a challenge for courts, particularly where domestic violence (or sexual assault) is not substantiated, evidence is not introduced, or the evidence is inartfully articulated for the court. Courts seek to issue fair orders that promote healthy relationships between parents and their children, yet the correlation of past violence on a future parent-child relationship is often difficult to gauge. Efforts to develop and disseminate research-based tools that are meaningful to the judiciary must persevere.

SUPREME COURT OF OHIO



TN • Grantee Perspective

In regard to offender accountability, this is being addressed by way of new legislation but courts and communities need assistance in tracking offenders more thoroughly. Mandated programs and agencies could be utilized in the courts, additionally where more monitoring is required. In addition, a compliance review board could be a major factor in keeping track of offenders.

COUNTY OF HAMILTON, TENNESSEE



OH • Grantee Perspective

An area of remaining need is to improve the system of communication with Courts in the County who handle cases that have the same victims and/or perpetrators (i.e. Juvenile Court; Common Pleas Municipal Court; Common Pleas Felony Division; and Civil Stalking Protection Orders). This process has begun with the substantial talks between Juvenile Court and DR Court but the overall inter-communication between the courts needs to be streamlined and looked at as mandatory. Victims regularly voice frustrations about how different courts give them different information or even issue competing orders.

CUYAHOGA COUNTY DOMESTIC RELATIONS COURT, OHIO

Remaining Areas of Need

Grantees most frequently cited **additional training for judges, court personnel, and law enforcement on the dynamics of domestic violence** as their biggest need.

For **offenders**, grantees also reported a need for:

- Financial assistance to complete batterer intervention programs (BIP);
- BIP offered in multiple languages;
- Age-appropriate programming for young/teen offenders; and
- **More consistent monitoring.**

Grantees identified a number of **unmet needs for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking**, including:

- Affordable permanent housing;
- Supervised visitation;
- More victim services in rural areas; and, most notably,
- **Quality pro-bono and low cost legal representation.**

Finally, many grantees cited a need for **better communication between court systems on overlapping cases.**



IL • Grantee Perspective

Legal aid for victims of domestic violence is a growing need in our jurisdiction. We have two agencies in Winnebago County that provide pro bono services to domestic violence victims. While these agencies provide outstanding support, they are only able to serve as many victims as funding and staff allow, and the need is greater than that. Frequently, victims represent themselves pro se in DV-related divorce, parentage, and orders of protection cases in the DV and Family courts, while the batterer is represented by an attorney. The economic disparity facing victims of DV, particularly victims facing a batterer who has utilized family resources to hire an attorney, is daunting. Because DV-related cases are inappropriate for mediation, such cases that involve matters of custody and visitation, necessarily require the appointment of a guardian ad litem (GAL), and thus the need for legal representation for victims is exacerbated by the need for pro bono and reduced fee legal representation for children in DV-related cases by GALs.

17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT- WINNEBAGO COUNTY, ILLINOIS