

Grants to Support Families in the Justice System Program

VAWA 2013 authorized the Grants to Support Families in the Justice System Program (Justice for Families or JFF Program), which consolidated two pre-existing VAWA-funded programs: the Court Training and Improvements Program (Courts Program), and the Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange Program (Supervised Visitation Program), and added new purpose areas as well.

JUSTICE FOR FAMILIES GRANTEES SEEK TO IMPROVE THE RESPONSE of the civil and criminal justice system to families with a history of domestic/sexual violence or child sexual abuse. JFF grantees do this by promoting the development of supervised visitation and exchange centers, improving civil and criminal court responses to victims of domestic/sexual violence, and training court-based and court-related personnel on sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. The last grants made under the Courts and Supervised Visitation programs were awarded in FY 2013.¹

97 Grantees Reporting

Between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2019, 97 unique grantees reported activities funded by the JFF Program.

6,339 Victims Served

On average, grantees served 6,339 victims during each 6-month reporting period.

63,382 Supervised Visitations

Grantees provided a total of 63,382 supervised visitation and exchange services to an average of 1,496 families.

In specialized courts, trained advocates can provide support throughout the proceedings and share information with victims, and judges demonstrate knowledge of domestic/sexual violence and respectful treatment of victims. These practices can help victims as they navigate legal proceedings. These courts have also been shown to reduce 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 (Anderson, 2015; Bell et al., 2011; Cissner et al., 2015).



¹ Justice for Families was authorized by VAWA 2013 in March of 2013, and Congress appropriated funds for this new program. However, OWW had already accepted applications under the former Supervised Visitation and Courts programs for FY 2014 funding, so FY 2014 Justice for Families awards were made to applicants that had applied under the two programs' solicitations.



AZ • Grantee Perspective

OWV funds have allowed us to develop a coordinated community response that is unparalleled in the State of Arizona. We are able to provide two victim advocates on-site at the courthouse to be present at every hearing, and these advocates are able to connect victims to services far beyond the court assistance. The Court and Emerge! Center Against Domestic Abuse have forged a partnership with the Deaf community in Tucson and their service providers, and have improved their language access for Deaf and hard of hearing people, as well as refugee populations. We now have ASL interpreters trained in interpreting for victims of domestic violence and trauma. We have a probation review calendar attended by up to five probation officers, all of our approved treatment providers, and our advocates. The Court has been designated a Mentor Court by OWV and we are able to travel to various courts in Arizona and share our procedures and forms and our challenges and achievements.

TUCSON CITY COURT, ARIZONA



A supervised visitation and exchange program can protect children during visits with their abusing parents by first identifying abusive tactics and then intervening on behalf of the victim and children (Parker et al., 2008; Saini et al., 2012). These programs offer a safe place for the exchange of a child or a secure and nurturing environment for children to interact with non-custodial parents. Visitation centers employ multiple safety strategies, such as staggered drop-off/pickup times and separate entrances and exits. Staff at supervised visitation centers are trained to intervene during the parent/child visit so that any threats to safety are addressed and the abusive parent is redirected.

The scope of the Justice for Families Program is vast, as required to accomplish these goals. Purpose areas include:

- Provide supervised visitation and safe exchange of children and youth by and between parents in situations involving domestic or dating violence, child sexual abuse, sexual assault, or stalking;
- Educate and train court-based and related personnel on issues relating to victims' needs, perpetrator behavior, and offender accountability;
- Provide resources in juvenile court matters to ensure victims receive necessary services;
- Provide civil legal assistance to victims and non-offending parents (where the other parent is represented by counsel);
- Enable courts or court-based or related programs to develop new or enhanced:
 - Court infrastructure;
 - Community-based initiatives within the court system;
 - Offender management/monitoring/accountability programs;
 - Safe and confidential information storage and sharing databases;
 - Education and outreach to improve community access to the courts; and
 - Other projects to improve court responses to domestic/sexual violence.

VAWA 2013 clarified that victim services and legal assistance include services and assistance to **victims of domestic/sexual violence who are also victims of severe forms of trafficking in persons.**

General Grant Information

Information for this report was submitted by **97** individual grantees for the July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2019 progress reporting period.

- **11** (11%) grantees reported that their grants specifically addressed tribal populations.
- Grantees most frequently addressed the following purpose areas:
 - Provide supervised visitation and safe exchange of children and youth;
 - Educate court-based, court-related, and court-appointed personnel and child protective service workers; and
 - Provide civil legal assistance and advocacy services.

Staff

Grant-funded staff provide supervised visitation and safe exchange for children; develop community consulting committees; engage in issuing protection orders or helping victims obtain them; support victims in family matters and/or criminal cases; and establish statewide training and technical assistance projects to increase supervised visitation and safe exchange options. They provide training, supervised visitation, victim services, offender management, and support criminal and civil courts. **Being able to hire staff is critical to the overall function and success of programs.**

- **92** (95%) grantees used funds for staffing needs.
- Grantees funded an average of **156** full-time equivalent (FTE) staff during each 6-month period.
- Grantees most often used these staffing funds to support supervision staff and program coordinators.

PA • Grantee Perspective

The JFF Program has allowed us to add a non-attorney paralegal who provides holistic services to victims appearing in court for Protection From Abuse (PFA) cases and links these clients with Women Against Abuse, Inc. attorneys more seamlessly. The paralegal is stationed in the PFA courtrooms four days a week to provide petitioners who appear for their hearings with intake, information, safety planning, and referrals. We are able to get clients to attorneys more quickly since the paralegal can do on-site intakes. We are also able to provide more intensive brief services to clients who do not seek attorney representation.

WOMEN AGAINST ABUSE, INC., PENNSYLVANIA

Table 1 | Staff supported with JFF grant funds, July 2017–June 2019: **Selected groups**

Staff funded	6-month average	
Total FTE staff funded	156	
Supervision staff	46	29%
Program coordinators	29	19%
Attorneys	17	11%
Victim advocates	16	10%
Administrators	10	6%
Security staff (including Court security)	8	5%

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

In a recent evaluation of a widely used training program for judges on the dynamics of domestic violence, the majority of participants reported specific benefits and changes in behavior relating to access to justice, offender accountability, judicial leadership, and victim safety (Jaffe et al., 2018).



Training

Grantees train law enforcement, court personnel, legal personnel, prosecutors, probation officers, guardians ad litem, victim advocates, child welfare workers, and other social service agency staff to help improve the response to victims, children, and families with a history of domestic/sexual violence or child sexual abuse. **This training enables visitation staff to meet the safety needs of all family members and improves the professional response to victims while increasing offender accountability.**

- **64** (66%) grantees used funds for training.
- Grantees convened a total of **617** training events.



LA • Grantee Perspective

Funding through Justice for Families affords us the opportunity to participate in nationwide trainings in the field of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and stalking. This exposure and level of engagement has built upon the years of experience in our agency. All of our counselors, advocates, and visitation staff are working from a trauma-informed perspective and exposing our partners—which include local law enforcement, judges, the local bar, and child protection workers—to trauma-informed principles. These experiences challenge us and our partners to continue to expand and extend our efforts to effectively respond to and meet the needs of survivors in our community.

WELLSPRING ALLIANCE FOR FAMILIES, LOUISIANA



Extensive research has demonstrated that providing trauma-informed, survivor-focused services can improve victim outcomes, particularly safety-related empowerment (Goodman, Thomas, et al., 2016; Trabold et al., 2020).



VT • Grantee Perspective

The funding has allowed us to represent victims/survivors in relief from abuse cases and to start a legal clinic for survivors that provides counsel and advice on a wide range of civil legal issues. It has also allowed Vermont Legal Aid to provide legal training to Voices Against Violence staff. The Justice for Families Program enables Voices Against Violence to meet the needs of victims/survivors of domestic/sexual violence and/or child sexual abuse, along with their families. As a result of this funding, our program has been able to increase our capacity to meet the needs of a growing number of survivors reaching out to our program through hotline calls, court referrals, and community partner referrals by employing a part-time advocate. Our advocate provides daily direct service to a significant number of victims/survivors who are seeking information, legal support, and safety planning for themselves and their children. JFF funding has allowed us to expand our supervised visitation services in the community so that we can meet the growing needs of families. It has also enabled us to upgrade our security measures for families and staff.

CHAMPLAIN VALLEY OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY, VERMONT

In the two years covered by this report, Justice for Families Program grantees trained:

10,729

PROFESSIONALS

across **multiple systems:**



COURT
PERSONNEL



VICTIM
ADVOCATES



ATTORNEYS/LAW
STUDENTS

Victim Services

Grantees provide an array of services to victims navigating the court and legal system. These services may include legal advocacy to secure a protection order or custody, civil legal assistance, criminal justice advocacy, and victim advocacy, including safety planning. **These comprehensive support services address a wide variety of needs to help victims become and remain safe from violence.**

- **58** (60%) grantees used funds for victim services.
- Grantees provided services to an average of **6,339** victims during each 6-month period.
- **98%** of victims who sought services received them during each 6-month period.

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

Advocacy services:

- Civil legal advocacy to **3,057** victims;
- Victim advocacy to **2,853** victims;
- Criminal justice advocacy to **1,035** victims; and
- Pro se clinics/group services to **334** victims.

Other services:

- Victim-witness notification/victim outreach services were used a total of **8,450** times; and
- Grantees made a total of **8,785** referrals to governmental victim services and **10,148** to non-governmental victim services.

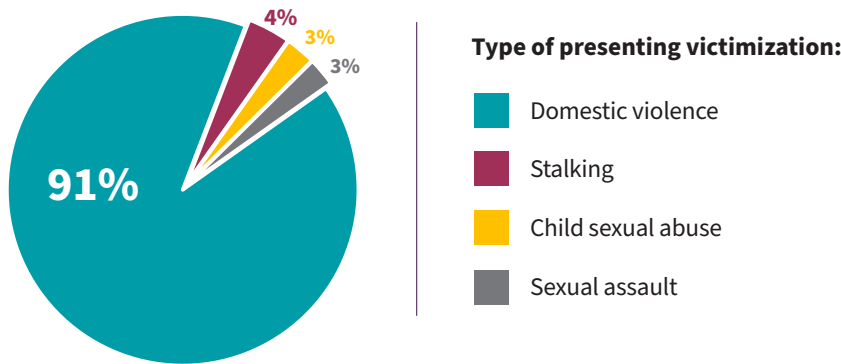
Victims Seeking Services

Grantees serve victims of domestic/sexual violence. Between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2019:

- The majority of victims served or partially served were victims of **domestic violence/dating violence** (91%).

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

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



Multiple studies have shown that services offered to domestic violence victims, such as shelter, advocacy, support groups, and counseling, have positively impacted their short- and long-term safety, mental health, and sense of self-efficacy (Sullivan, 2018). A recent study also found that receiving tangible aid from both formal community providers and informal supports was associated with an increased likelihood that victims would report sexual assault to the police (DePrince et al., 2020).

NY • Grantee Perspective



JFF Program funding has significantly impacted our ability to serve clients in a positive way. We have been able to hire an experienced family law attorney with strong supervisory skills and experience mentoring pro bono counsel. She has enabled us to improve and expand our intake process so that clients can receive on-site intake at the courthouse if the court or Department of Probation is their first point of contact with the system. She has trained the advocate to do legal screenings and to draft family offense and custody petitions, and has created a system for handling legal emergencies as they arise. She spends a good deal of time interacting with our hotline and domestic violence advocacy staff so that they understand when to refer clients for legal consultations. She is also educating staff from other programs regarding attorney/client privilege so that we can coordinate services in a way that is not at the expense of that privilege. As a result, 25% of all clients received a legal consultation during the reporting period, compared to 15% in the year 2017.

CENTER FOR SAFETY AND CHANGE, NEW YORK

Table 2 | Victims seeking services with JFF grant funds, July 2017–June 2019

Victims seeking services	6-month average	
Total victims seeking services	6,489	
Victims served	6,113	94%
Victims partially served	227	3%
Victims not served	149	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 JFF 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 JFF Program grant.

Victims' Relationships to Offenders

Grantees serve victims of domestic/sexual violence. Between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2019:

- The majority of victims served or partially served were victimized by a **spouse or intimate partner** (68%).
- The remaining victims were most often victimized in the context of a **dating relationship** (20%) or by a **family member** (9%).

WI • Grantee Perspective



The Justice for Families funding has allowed the Milwaukee Visitation Center to help Milwaukee families receive much needed assistance during volatile times. Parents and children have a place to go to spend quality time in a safe environment. Parents can access and receive resources and domestic violence education while at the center, while modeling healthy relationships and healthy responses to situations. Eighty-nine percent of victims of abuse report an increased perception of safety when utilizing the Center and its services.

CITY OF MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN



While violence touches all communities, victims from historically underserved populations may face greater barriers to accessing help from service providers and the justice system. Access to resources, religious beliefs, cultural practices, race or ethnicity, gender identity or expression, sexuality, age, language, immigration status, geographic location, and economic opportunity are all factors that can affect how a victim perceives, manages, and resists violence (Bridges et al., 2018; Cheng & Lo, 2015; Cho, 2012; Cho et al., 2017; O'Neal & Beckman, 2016; Weng, 2016).



MN • Grantee Perspective

This program has allowed our site to enhance our child-related relief calendars and develop a court infrastructure to meet the needs of domestic violence victims, offenders and their children. As part of this program, we were able to hire a State/Tribal Court Liaison that serves as a liaison between the Native American community and Hennepin County District Court to build relationships, provide improved support, and enhance the courts infrastructure when it comes to resources, knowledge, and accessibility. Additionally, the State/Tribal Court Liaison helps identify barriers in Native survivors' usage of Family Court and helps implement changes to remove those barriers. As a result of this program, the Fourth Judicial District has been presented with the flags of seven of the 11 federally recognized tribal nations of Minnesota which are flying in our courthouse next to the US and Minnesota flags. This is significant given that we are the first court system in Minnesota to ever be gifted these flags. Also, as a result of this program, we were able to designate a space for smudging in all of our Fourth Judicial District courthouses. For thousands of years, Indigenous traditional medicines such as sage, sweetgrass, and cedar have been considered as sacred, cleansing, and protective plants. Sacred smoke created from burning medicinal plants is a practice common to Indigenous peoples. The Fourth Judicial District Court now honors the cultural traditions and ceremonies involving smudging. The Fourth Judicial District welcomes this time-honored practice in our courthouses. This would not have happened without the support of OVV and the JFF Program.

JUDICIARY COURTS OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

Figure 2 Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Domestic/dating violence** (6-month average)

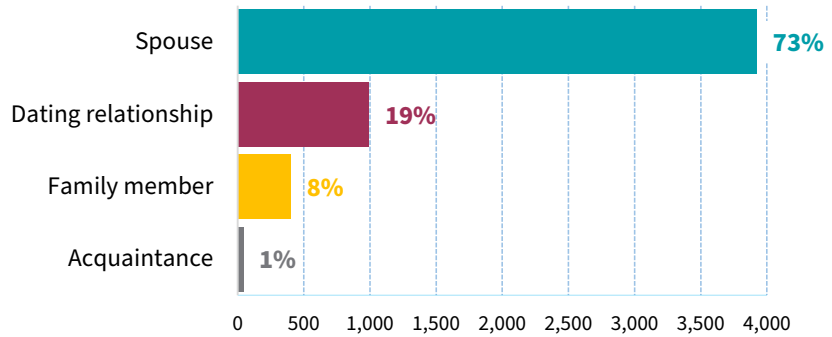


Figure 3 Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Stalking** (6-month average)

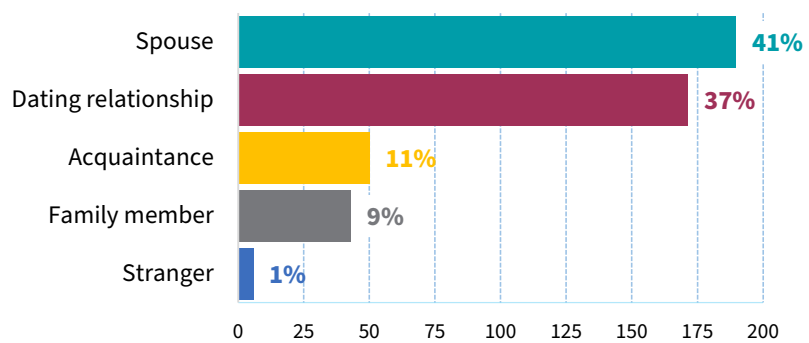


Figure 4 Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Sexual assault** (6-month average)

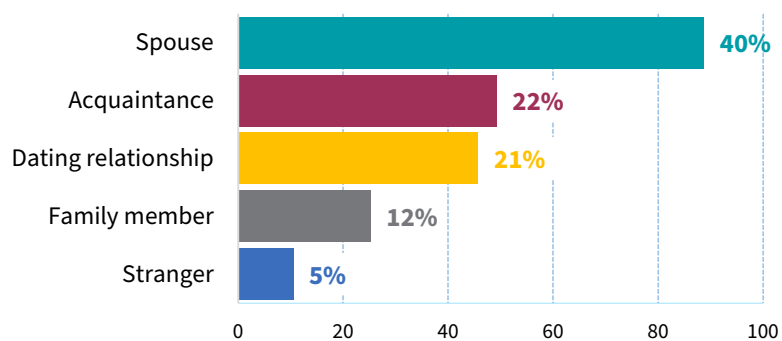
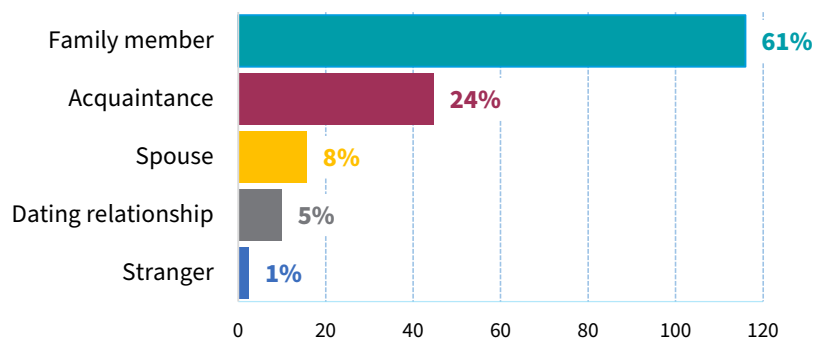


Figure 5 Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Child sexual abuse** (6-month average)



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;
- Conflict of interest;
- Need not documented;
- Victim did not meet statutory requirements; and
- Services not appropriate for victim.

Demographics of Victims Served and Partially Served

Grantees served or partially served an average of **6,339** victims during each 6-month period. The majority of those victims were **white** (53%), **female** (88%), and between the ages of **25 and 59** (80%).

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

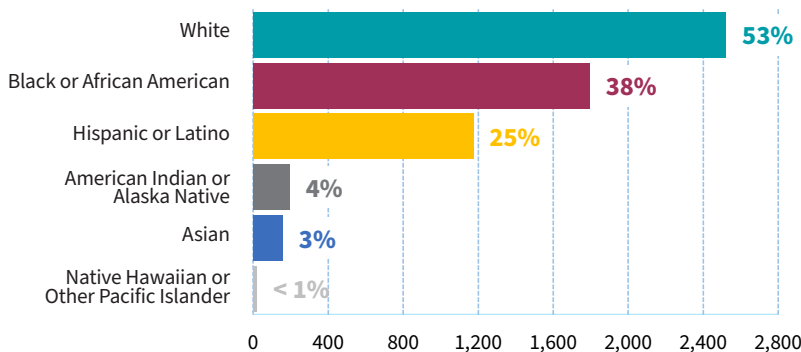
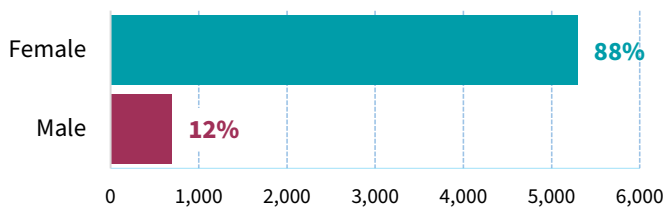


Figure 7 Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Gender** (6-month average)



OR • Grantee Perspective



Justice for Families (JFF) Program funding has allowed us to provide vital advocacy services for limited English proficient Spanish-speaking and other survivors at the entry point of the Deschutes County Courthouse. In addition to the services provided by the client assistant program (courthouse) advocate, funding has provided the opportunity to thoughtfully investigate barriers for Spanish-speakers seeking to access these services at the courthouse with the goal of improving access. Funding also supported ten hours per week of on-site, trauma-informed advocacy to survivors involved in supervised visitation/safe exchange by the Mary's Place Advocate. Without JFF funding, the time she has available to serve Mary's Place-involved survivors would be significantly less.

DESCHUTES COUNTY COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, OREGON

OH • Grantee Perspective



Funding has provided advocates who assist survivors in the criminal courts in Trumbull County. Connecting survivors to advocates provides a lifeline to anyone experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Advocates provide confidential services and assist survivors in navigating the criminal justice system. They assist survivors with safety plans, connect them with community resources, and assist the survivor with other issues they may be going through such as housing, visitation/custody, and financial matters.

COMMUNITY LEGAL AID SERVICES, INC., OHIO

NC • Grantee Perspective



The JFF funding has been instrumental in providing additional legal services for victims/survivors and has allowed us to coordinate services with County DV advocates and qualified private attorneys. While domestic violence victims can obtain free legal assistance and representation from Legal Aid for protective orders, the JFF funding provides legal representation at no cost for victims seeking custody, divorce, and equitable distribution assistance.

COUNTY OF CHATHAM, NORTH CAROLINA



CA • Grantee Perspective

Without the funding provided by the JFF grant, the Court would be unable to extend the free legal services that the staff attorney position currently provides to low-income victims of domestic violence. These services have proven crucial in assisting protected parties with family issues such as civil restraining orders and residence exclusions, custody and visitation disputes, divorce, legal separation, and support and parentage cases. There are a limited number of agencies in the County that offer free attorney-provided legal assistance to low-income individuals. There are even fewer that focus on assisting victims of domestic violence who need affordable legal services that are accessible, relevant, and provided by those with expertise in DV. With this grant funding, OWW Staff Attorneys are able to meet with litigants on the day of court, before their court hearing, to explain court process, ensure compliance with court procedures, address pending matters such as custody and visitation, and connect victims with on-site domestic violence advocates from community-based organizations.

CALIFORNIA SUPERIOR COURT, COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA



Since civil and criminal justice processes can often be confusing and intimidating, attorneys and advocates can enhance victims' experience in the legal system and improve outcomes by supporting them through attorney access, support with self-representation, and language and disability assistance (National Center for Access to Justice, 2018).



MT • Grantee Perspective

The program funding has allowed many survivors of domestic violence to have access to holistic civil legal services, which they would not have had prior to funding. Prior to funding, survivors with limited financial resources had to rely on the generosity of the local bar to provide civil legal services. Such legal services, when available, often lacked competent, client-centered representation in cases of domestic and sexual violence. By having access to attorneys who are educated and experienced in the dynamics of domestic and sexual violence, the program has provided education to the judiciary and court personnel that would not be available without grant funding.

SANDERS COUNTY COALITION FOR FAMILIES, MONTANA

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

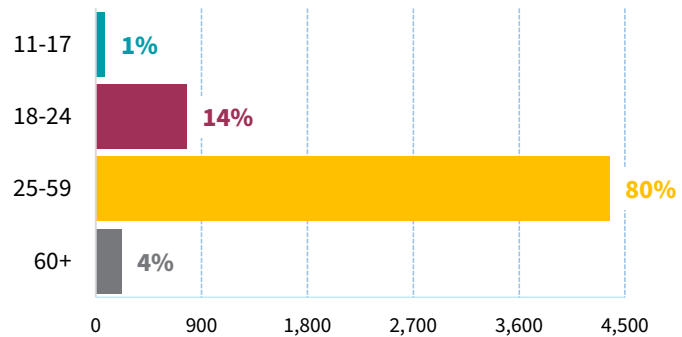
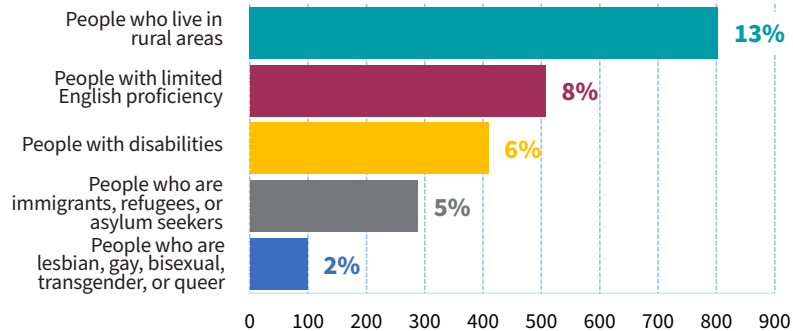


Figure 9 | Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Other** (6-month average)



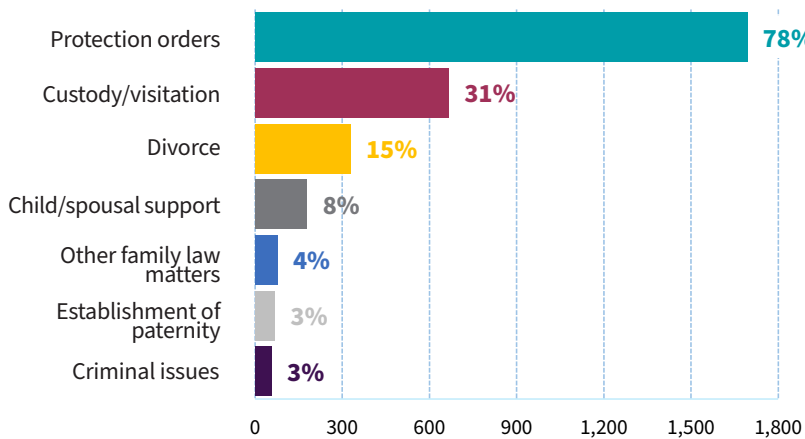
Legal Services

Grantees began providing legal services to victims and non-offending parents on July 1, 2014. These services, which were provided by grant-funded attorneys or paralegals, can include representing non-offending parents in matters of child sexual abuse, providing assistance to victims in divorce and custody cases, and helping victims obtain protection orders against their abusers. Between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2019:

- **33** (34%) grantees used grant funds for legal services.
- Grantees addressed an average of **3,185** legal issues during each 6-month reporting period.
- Grantees provided multiple instances of legal services to an average of **874** victims (40% of those receiving services).
- Grantees most frequently provided legal assistance with protection orders and custody/visitation.

Figure 10

Victims who received assistance with legal issues addressed by JFF Program grantees, July 2017–June 2019 (6-month average)



Services for Families

Grantees provide one-to-one supervised visits, group supervised visits, and supervised exchanges. Before providing services, grantees conceptualize and develop supervised visitation and exchange services through community-based consulting committees. **This comprehensive, collaborative planning process ensures the safety of adult victims of domestic/sexual violence and their children during visitation or exchange.**

- **52** (54%) grantees used funds to provide supervised visitation and safe exchange services to families.
- Grantees provided services to an average of **1,496** families during each 6-month period.
- **87%** of families who requested services received them during each 6-month reporting period.

Across the 2-year period, grantees provided the following services:

- A total of **37,471** one-to-one supervised visits to an average of **1,117** families;
- A total of **22,419** supervised exchanges to an average of **347** families; and
- A total of **3,492** group supervised visits with an average of **90** families.

IA • Grantee Perspective



Support from OVW allowed Iowa Legal Aid to provide legal services to vulnerable clients who may not have been able to access those services before. Domestic violence contributes to poverty in many ways, and legal services are one of the most effective means of addressing both. Victims need to achieve permanent freedom and safety from their abusers and to secure custody of their children before they can achieve the emotional stability and independence they need to work. The legal aid attorney successfully achieved outcomes for clients by providing sufficient legal advice and full representation on many cases in court, by negotiating settlements, and helping clients prepare for the future through safety planning. Funding has allowed Iowa Legal Aid to successfully obtain nine restraining orders. Three of the nine cases awarded custody or denied visitation, one case awarded custody with the possession of the home, and one case awarded the possession of the family home. Furthermore, the attorney provided tailored legal advice on the remaining 23 cases. Having a more constant advocacy presence in the courthouse has also allowed us to meet with survivors that may never have known about advocacy services, and we believe that Council on Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence presence makes the courthouse a more comfortable space for those needing services. The funded advocate has been able to prevent families from becoming homeless by advocating for employment and financial assistance, and in the juvenile court system.

**SIOUXLAND HUMAN INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP,
IOWA**

A recent longitudinal study of urban and rural survivors of intimate partner violence who received civil legal services found that this kind of assistance was positively associated with victims' psychological wellbeing, economic self-sufficiency, and safety over time (Copps Hartley & Renner, 2016).





KY • Grantee Perspective

The Justice for Families Program funding has allowed us to offer a much needed service to survivors of domestic violence in this small rural area. Before this funding, there was not a secure place for supervised visitation and exchanges to take place. They often happened in parking lots or at family members' homes. With this funding, we have been able to make this process much more secure for all parties involved. Victims of domestic violence can feel confident using our facility knowing their children are safe and secure.

JOHNSON COUNTY FISCAL COURT, KENTUCKY

During the 2-year reporting period, grantees reported that the following safety and security problems occurred during supervised visitation and/or safe exchanges:

- **163** attempts to contact other party;
- **41** threats made;
- **32** violations of protection orders; and
- **16** times security staff were unavailable.

During each 6-month reporting period, nearly **one-third** (31%) of families receiving services completed services or services were terminated.

- **58%** of the families discontinued involvement because threats ceased, there was a change in the court order, mutual agreement, or treatment was completed; and
- **26%** were terminated because they habitually did not keep appointments, were incarcerated, did not comply with program rules, or were terminated due to supervisor's discretion.

Families Seeking Services

Grantees serve victims of domestic/sexual violence and their children. Between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2019:

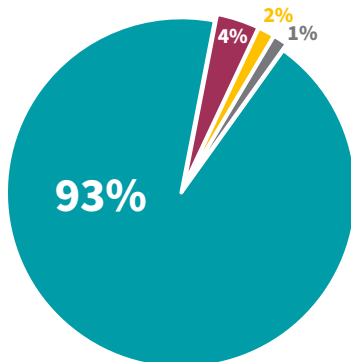
- The majority of families served or partially served were victims of **domestic/dating violence** (93%).



For many victims of domestic violence, leaving the relationship does not end the abuse perpetrated by their partners. The risk of abuse to the non-abusing parent and children during separation and after divorce often continues or increases; in some cases, abusers may kill their partners and children during this escalating period of violence. After separation, children are often exposed, directly or indirectly, to violence, threats, intimidation, manipulation, and coercive controls, which can profoundly compromise their emotional stability and psychological wellbeing (Crossman et al., 2016; Ellis, 2017; Jaffe et al., 2017; Rezey, 2020).

Figure 11 | Provision of family services by JFF Program grantees, by type of presenting victimization

Families served and partially served by type of victimization (6-month average)



Type of presenting victimization:

- Domestic/dating violence
- Child sexual abuse
- Sexual assault
- Stalking



Despite the noted harmful effects of post-separation violence and abuse on victims and children, custody evaluators regularly fail to recommend visitation arrangements that best serve the well-being of children and prevent direct contact between the abused and abusive parents (Davis et al., 2011; Khaw et al., 2018; Saunders et al., 2016; Saunders & Oglesby, 2016; Staroneck & Ake, 2018).

Table 3 Families seeking services with JFF grant funds, July 2017–June 2019		
Families seeking services	6-month average	
Total families seeking services	1,718	
Families served	1,419	83%
Families partially served	78	5%
Families not served	221	13%

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

Families Referred to Supervised Visitation or Safe Exchange Programs

Grantees report on referral source and primary victimization for all families they serve or partially serve.

- The majority of families served or partially served were referred by a **family court order** (62%).
- The remaining families were most commonly referred by a **protection order** (14%) or a **domestic violence court order** (12%).

Table 4 Average number of families using supervised visitation or safe exchange by primary victimization and referral source, July 2017–June 2019		
Referral source	Number of families	
Family court order	925	62%
Protection order	205	14%
DV court order	173	12%
Child welfare agency	50	3%

NOTE: Data presented for the most frequently reported categories only (≥50 families).

Reasons Families Were Not Served or Were Partially Served

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

- Hours of operation;
- Program reached capacity; or
- Family was not accepted into program.ⁱⁱ

For those families who were not accepted into the program, grantees reported the following reasons:

- Client unwilling to agree with program rules;
- Situation was deemed too dangerous; or
- Conflict of interest.

ⁱⁱ These are families who requested grant-funded services and were willing and able to partake in those services, but who were not accepted into the program.

NC • Grantee Perspective



Since acquiring the OWW Justice for Families grant funding, the Mecklenburg County Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange (SVSE) has hired and trained our full-time Court Liaison. We recognized that there was a significant lapse in time between services being ordered by the courts and services being received. The court liaison’s function is to meet with families directly following their court hearing. As we continue to use this position, it will enable the program to decrease the service delivery time down to days, as opposed to weeks when the program initially began several years ago. This funding has also made available to us a direct referral source for legal assistance provided for our victim parents. They can receive services ranging from a consultation up to full legal representation in civil proceedings. Both these positions have increased safety and made service provision easier for parents through the SVSE center.

MECKLENBURG COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA



MD • Grantee Perspective

Without the Visitation Center and legal representation through House of Ruth Maryland (HRM), victims would be particularly vulnerable during their family law cases. Judges will not automatically refer cases to the Visitation Center. It is an important duty of the Justice for Families-funded attorney to argue and advocate that their client be given access to the Visitation Center. Victims whose abusers are court-ordered to have only supervised visitation with their children also often have highly-contested custody cases that involve complicated factual issues. Access to the JFF-funded attorney in these cases can significantly increase a victim's safety and his or her chances of a positive result from the court. JFF Program funding has allowed HRM to provide legal services to 49 victims of domestic violence in family law cases that HRM would not have been able to serve without this grant.

CITY OF BALTIMORE, MARYLAND



GA • Grantee Perspective

The Justice for Families Grant has allowed DeKalb County Magistrate Court to continue to employ a Domestic Violence Case Coordinator. It is her responsibility to ensure that judges are provided with all available and pertinent information before they conduct a hearing; that scheduling conflicts are resolved in the most economical manner; that incarcerated parties are present for hearings; and to perform any other duties to ensure that the court can continue to increase victim safety while holding respondents accountable.

DEKALB COUNTY MAGISTRATE COURT, GEORGIA

Demographics of Families Served and Partially Served

Grantees served or partially served an average of **1,496** families during each 6-month reporting period. The majority of custodial parents were **white** (78%), **female** (74%), between the ages of **25 and 59** (88%), with children between the ages of **0 and 6** (50%). Noncustodial parents were most likely to be **white** (74%), **male** (72%), and between the ages of **25 and 59** (89%).

Table 5 Demographic characteristics of parents and children served with JFF grant funds, July 2017–June 2019 (6-month average)

Characteristic	Custodial parent		Non-custodial parent		Children	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Race						
American Indian or Alaska Native	18	1%	17	1%	22	1%
Asian	39	3%	37	3%	72	4%
Black or African American	228	17%	275	21%	411	21%
Hispanic or Latino	256	19%	280	21%	472	24%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	13	1%	13	1%	19	1%
White	1,027	78%	970	74%	1,484	76%
Unknown (missing)	174		189		300	
Gender						
Female	1,102	74%	411	28%	1,109	51%
Male	378	26%	1,083	72%	1,084	49%
Total	1,496		1,496		2,241	
Unknown (missing)	16		3		49	
Age						
0–6	-	-	-	-	1,118	50%
7–17	-	-	-	-	1,095	49%
11–17	2	< 1%	1	< 1%	-	-
18–24	159	11%	145	10%	6	< 1%
25–59	1,277	88%	1,300	89%	0	0%
60+	19	1%	15	1%	-	-
Total	1,496		1,496		2,241	
Unknown (missing)	41		36		22	
Other						
People who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ)	8	1%	7	< 1%	1	< 1%
People with disabilities	41	3%	62	4%	82	4%
People with limited English proficiency	73	5%	78	5%	36	2%
People who are immigrants, refugees, or asylum seekers	43	3%	39	3%	13	1%
People who live in rural areas	217	14%	215	14%	341	15%

Criminal Justice

The Justice for Families Program promotes a coordinated community response that includes representatives from victim service agencies, child welfare agencies, law enforcement, prosecution, courts, probation, healthcare providers, and public and private community resources. 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.

Criminal Cases

JFF-funded courts use funds for dedicated dockets, specialized courts, and other practices to enhance case flow; information sharing; and successful prosecution of domestic/sexual violence and child sexual abuse.

- **11** (11%) grantees used funds for criminal case activities.

Case Dispositions

Table 6 | Dispositions of cases by JFF Program-funded courts, July 2017–June 2019

Type of case	Cases disposed of	Dispositions resulting in conviction	
		Number	Percent
All cases	8,038	4,592	57%
Misdemeanor domestic/dating violence	4,712	2,548	54%
Felony domestic/dating violence	1,741	893	51%
Violation of protection orders	820	504	61%
Violation of probation or parole	534	475	89%
Violation of other court order	119	109	92%

NOTE: Convictions include deferred adjudications.



Research shows that when victims receive services from civil attorneys and community-based advocates, they experience strengthened protection from revictimization and improved self-efficacy in and out of the courtroom (Cattaneo et al., 2009; Copps Hartley & Renner, 2016). Additionally, victims who had empowering experiences in criminal court reported greater financial stability, mental health, and self-advocacy six months later. They were also more likely to report intending to use the legal system if violence recurred (Cattaneo & Goodman, 2010; Goodman et al., 2016).

AL • Grantee Perspective



The Justice for Families Program funding has allowed our County to restructure its judicial response to how it handles domestic violence cases. This funding has enabled us to create a designated court for domestic violence cases and quickly bond defendants to this docket, decreasing the time it takes for a case to be resolved. This decrease in time has increased victims' safety, has allowed the victim to play an active role in the process of holding defendants accountable, and has given us the opportunity to implement new protocols for how we provide services to victims. The Victims Advocate now has the ability to make contact with victims within 72 hours of an offenders arrest and provide immediate resources. Through the Justice for Families Program funding, we have had the ability to hire a full-time Case Manager. This position enables the courts to better provide for victims' safety, research defendants before they ever appear on a docket, coordinate the sharing of information, and ensure that defendants are complying with court orders. The Justice for Families grant funds have also allowed us to expand our Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange Program, making room for more referrals.

SHELBY COUNTY, ALABAMA



Law enforcement recovery of firearms from domestic/sexual violence perpetrators who are prohibited from possessing firearms and ammunition by state and federal laws remains infrequent in many jurisdictions (Lynch et al., 2018; Lynch & Logan, 2017; Seave, 2006; Wintemute et al., 2015; Zeoli et al., 2017). This failure can have deadly consequences. A recent study found that women in states with higher rates of gun ownership are at a higher risk of being killed by someone they know. The researchers found that gun ownership rates alone explain 40% of the variation in women's homicide victimization rates, compared to only 1.5% of the variation in men's victimization rates (Siegel & Rothman, 2016).



Judicial monitoring may facilitate offender adherence to court orders and sentencing provisions. Judicial monitoring sessions are opportunities to reiterate and clarify information about requirements, restrictions, and consequences for violations. Offenders assigned to judicial monitoring may be more likely to understand their obligations and to recognize that noncompliance will result in serious consequences (Labriola et al., 2012).

Criminal Protection Orders

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

Table 7

Criminal protection orders issued by JFF Program-funded courts by type of victimization, July 2017–June 2019

Type of case	Granted as a condition of:	
	Bail	Deferred disposition/probation
All cases	1,758	950
Domestic/dating violence	1,516	746
Sexual assault	241	159
Stalking	1	45

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 **887** offenders were monitored in each 6-month reporting period.
 - The overwhelming majority of offenders reviewed were domestic violence offenders (**98%**).
- A total of **10,383** 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 in Table 9 reflects the consequences imposed for violations of court orders. With each type of violation, the courts took no action in only **17%** of the cases and issued fines in **less than 1%** of the cases. A significant number of cases resulted in the courts adding conditions (**12%**), or partially or fully revoking probation (**49%**). The courts issued a verbal or written warning in **22%** of the cases.

Table 8

Dispositions of violations of probation and other court orders by JFF Program-funded courts, July 2017–June 2019

Violation	No action taken		Verbal/written warning		Fine		Conditions added		Partial or full revocation of probation	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Protection order (N = 269)	55	20%	10	4%	1	0%	20	7%	183	68%
New criminal behavior (N = 185)	18	10%	22	12%	0	0%	16	9%	129	70%
Failure to attend mandated batterer intervention program (N = 599)	149	25%	211	35%	1	0%	80	13%	158	26%
Failure to attend mandated offender treatment (N = 100)	15	15%	61	61%	0	0%	2	2%	22	22%
Other condition of probation or parole (N = 478)	37	8%	59	12%	2	0%	75	16%	305	64%

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

WA • Grantee Perspective

Justice for Families has provided us the opportunity to recruit, train, and support a broad bandwidth of community volunteers to observe criminal prosecution of sexual assault cases and provide feedback to the courts. This has not only been well accepted by the courts, but the program also regularly hears from volunteers that it has changed their lives as well, making them aware of how courts operate, deepening their insight into sexual assault, and giving them a sense of pride that they are able to directly contribute to improving court and legal responses to sexual assault. The program also routinely hears from the judiciary that they greatly appreciate the volunteer feedback. The impact on volunteer court monitors expands exponentially. Volunteers are the top recruiters of new volunteers, and often share accounts of how they share with their community about the richness of their CourtWatch experience. This program has also provided our program with the support to obtain and analyze data with great depth. This has led to crucial conversations with the court, prosecution, and legislators and has enabled staffing, system, and policy changes which have led to improved time to disposition in the prosecution of sexual assault cases.

KING COUNTY SEXUAL ASSAULT RESOURCE CENTER, WASHINGTON

VAWA defines protection orders broadly, and its full faith and credit provision requires that all valid protection orders be enforced in all jurisdictions within the United States, including tribal lands and territories (Battered Women's Justice Project, 2016; Richards et al., 2018). However, a limitation to the effectiveness of this provision exists in the fact that not every state allows victims of sexual assault and stalking to petition for and receive protection orders unless they have been the spouse or intimate partner of, or in a family or household relationship with, their abuser (Fields, 2017; National Network to End Domestic Violence, 2018). In addition, some states and counties do not enforce protection orders issued by tribal courts due to lack of understanding about jurisdiction or lack of compatibility in tracking systems (Walter & Freedman, 2019).



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 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.

- **11** (11%) grantees used funds for civil protection order cases.

Table 9

Civil protection orders issued by JFF Program-funded courts by type of victimization, July 2017–June 2019

Type of case	Temporary orders	Final orders
All cases	12,385	4,976
Domestic/dating violence	3,585	1,204
Stalking	689	287
Sexual assault	0	6
Type of victimization unknown	8,111	3,479



OR • Grantee Perspective

The creation of the navigator position has allowed the court to provide services to litigants dealing with domestic violence and family law matters. In the past, we have provided family law “forms” facilitators who were focused on providing assistance with our very complex forms, and guiding all litigants through the family law court. The navigator position has allowed more one-on-one contacts to assist survivors through the system. Over the course of the grant and the changing role of the navigator position, the court has realized that we need to conduct more outreach to community partners and the Department of Human Services/Child Protective Services. The court is planning on having locally-funded facilitators begin to provide services and workshops in the community. Additionally, over the course of the grant, we have been able to provide significant training to lawyers, custody evaluators, advocates, judges, and court staff. Due to the training provided for family law judges and staff through the grant, the court has now created a training committee and held semi-annual trainings on different topics for all judges and court staff.

OREGON OFFICE OF THE STATE COURT
ADMINISTRATOR, OREGON



Representation in family law matters is especially crucial for victims of domestic violence because offenders may continue to exert control over victims by using the legal system to force contact, restrict victims’ access to protection, make implicit threats, and create ongoing challenges through litigation. These forms of “paper abuse” are particularly harmful for victims with children because offenders routinely use the courts to challenge custody, child support, and visitation arrangements (Campbell, 2017; Douglas, 2017; Miller & Smolter, 2011; Watson & Ancis, 2013). In addition, further research is needed to understand the dynamics of economic and/or financial abuse as a form of intimate partner violence that occurs on its own, or in the context of physical or sexual violence. This may take the form of bank account control or surveillance, employment sabotage, or theft of money or property, for example (Postmus et al., 2020).

Table 10

Types of relief issued in final protection orders by JFF Program-funded courts, July 2017–June 2019

Types of relief	Number of protection orders/cases
Stay away/no contact	3,106
Firearms restrictions	1,475
Batterer intervention program (BIP)	373
Supervised visitation/exchange	316
Custody	280
Sole parental rights to petitioner	513
Sole parental rights to respondent	4
Shared parental rights	11
Allocated parental rights	11
Other offender treatment (e.g. substance abuse or other counseling, does not include BIP)	155
Child support	145
Economic relief (e.g. spousal support, debt assignment, payment of obligations and/or losses)	103

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

Table 11

Post-judgment/post-adjudication judicial reviews of civil protection order conditions, July 2017–June 2019

Type of case	Number of cases (6-month average)	Number of hearings (2-year total)
Civil protection order case reviews	198	4,048

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.

- **7** (7%) grantees used funds for family cases.

Table 12 | Number of new and pending family cases addressed by the JFF Program, July 2017–June 2019

Type of case	Number of cases (6-month average)	Number of hearings (2-year total)
Divorce (children in common)	100	1,509
Divorce (no children in common)	49	829
Parental rights/responsibilities	36	256

Table 13 | Post-judgment/post-adjudication judicial reviews of family cases, July 2017–June 2019

Type of case	Number of cases (6-month average)	Number of hearings (2-year total)
Family case reviews	206	1,567

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.

- 8 (8%) grantees used funds for probation or monitoring activities.
- An average of **275** offenders were monitored during each 6-month reporting period.
- On average, grantees reviewed BIP information or contacted BIP staff for **343** offenders/respondents, and had meetings or contact with **217** offenders/respondents.
- As a strategy to increase victim safety, probation staff contacted an average of **28** victims in each 6-month reporting period.
- All (100%) offenders/respondents monitored were for domestic/dating violence offenses.

Remaining Areas of Need

Grantees most frequently reported that **judges, court personnel, victim service providers, prosecutors, and law enforcement agencies need better training in order to enhance services to victims**, especially around issues of:

- Trauma-informed practice;
- Dynamics of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking;
- Proper investigation and identification of primary aggressors;
- Supervised visitation; and
- Enforcement of protection orders.

IL • Grantee Perspective



Participating in the Domestic Violence Mentor Court Initiative [a special initiative funded by JFF] has allowed the Winnebago County Domestic Violence Coordinated Courts (DVCC) to exchange best practice information with other national DV courts and gain insight into other innovations that help us continue to evolve as a Mentor Court. We have utilized our technical assistance providers to help facilitate discussions with other jurisdictions who are looking to implement a specialized or coordinated court on a large scale. The funding has allowed us to employ a part-time Case Docket/Resource Coordinator for our DV Criminal Court, who is a key part of the DVCC and would not otherwise be included in the court's budget. We have also utilized opportunities to present on Center for Court Innovation webinars and participate in conversations through the DV Court Forum as a way to continue to evaluate our work and identify areas of remaining need and improvement/updates. Additionally, we were able to hold conference calls with several other jurisdictions to field questions regarding DV specialized court structure, compliance monitoring, and support personnel such as case docket/resource coordinators. Finally, the funding awarded by the Mentor Court Initiative has allowed us to continue to demonstrate the effort and progress made by the DVCC to our project partners and stakeholders and engender their continued support.

WINNEBAGO COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT, ILLINOIS

Research has shown that data-driven risk assessment tools can aid judges in effective decision-making in cases of violent crime; however jurisdictions may grapple with how to implement these tools, and concerns have been raised about potential racial and ethnic bias in their outcomes. Nonetheless, more education and evaluations of these approaches are needed since they may improve the use of community-based sanctions that ultimately build public safety and accountability (Crank et al., 2019).





MD • Grantee Perspective

There remains a large unmet need for civil legal representation for victims of domestic violence in family law cases. The Justice for Families-funded attorney was able to serve only about one-third of the total number of victims who sought services during the reporting period. Even after the attorney completes her training and has a full caseload, the need for services is so high that there will always be a large number of victims who she is unable to represent. Most of the victims seeking services were of limited income, making it difficult if not impossible for them to pay for a private attorney.

MAYOR'S OFFICE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE - VISITATION AND EXCHANGE CENTER, MARYLAND



ND • Grantee Perspective

The most significant area of remaining need with regard to increasing offender accountability is a lack of effective supervised probation for domestic violence offenders. Domestic Violence Court will provide a layer of judicial monitoring; however, it cannot replace the benefits of supervised probation in regards to both offender accountability and rehabilitation. First of all, the use of unsupervised probation for a large number of domestic violence offenders is a notable concern. In the current system, the majority of misdemeanor cases are placed on unsupervised probation. Unsupervised probation not only lacks direct monitoring in the community, but it also makes any violation of conditions of probation virtually impossible for law enforcement to enforce. Without the oversight and guidance of a probation officer, offenders tend to be less compliant with finishing their sentencing conditions before their probation expires, especially when their probation term is only one year.

COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION CENTER, NORTH DAKOTA



MI • Grantee Perspective

In order for services to victims and survivors to improve, survivors need to feel supported by the family court and criminal court systems. Judges would benefit greatly from having a deeper understanding of the dynamics of sexual and domestic violence. It is also crucial that judges/referees have a clear understanding on the impact of trauma and be trained on how to arrive at rulings in a trauma-informed way. Mandatory trainings should be made available to judges, referees, and their clerks regarding domestic and sexual violence and the effects that these issues have on children.

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Providers of **supervised visitation and exchange** underscored the need to improve access to services by:

- Opening satellite facilities;
- Expanding hours of service; and
- Increasing awareness of their services within their communities.

Grantees also emphasized the need for access to **low cost civil legal services** for victims and for **improved legal resources for pro se litigants**.

A number of grantees pointed to the need to **enhance offender accountability** through:

- Improved access to batterer intervention programs;
- Stricter enforcement of protective orders; and
- Enhanced pre-trial supervision.

Grantees reported numerous **difficulties meeting the needs of victims with limited English proficiency**. These needs included:

- A need for more qualified interpreters;
- A shortage of bilingual advocates and court personnel; and
- A lack of cultural competency among providers.

Grantees cited the need to reach out to and **provide services to chronically underserved and marginalized populations** in order to improve their experiences within the criminal justice system.

Finally, grantees highlighted the need to **improve coordination between courts and service providers and between jurisdictions** in order to improve outcomes for victims.