



CUYAHOGA COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
DIVISION OF DOMESTIC RELATIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 10, 2017

***Justice Department Selects Cuyahoga County Domestic Relations Court as
Domestic Violence Mentor Court***

CLEVELAND – The Cuyahoga County Domestic Relations Court is pleased to announce it has been selected by the United States Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) as a Domestic Violence Mentor Court. It joins ten other mentor courts nationally which serve as a model to assist other civil and criminal courts to respond effectively to domestic violence. This is the first Mentor grant awarded to a Domestic Relations Court in the United States and the first Mentor Court in Ohio.

Domestic violence cases continue to increase nationally and in Cuyahoga County. Families dealing with abuse present comprehensive and complicated issues. The Mentor Court grant is the third Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) grant received by the Domestic Relations Court. With the aid of the VAWA grants, the Court, a high volume urban court that hears civil domestic violence cases involving family, parents, or household members, expanded to include a dedicated Domestic Violence Department in 2012 to develop strategies and best practices to address these difficult cases.

Prior to the original grant, one magistrate and one administrative assistant managed all domestic violence cases. The Domestic Violence Department has grown to a specialized full-time staff of two magistrates, a Director, a Coordinator, two schedulers, and two staff assistants, who work collaboratively with the Court's grant project partners, the Domestic Violence & Child Advocacy Center, the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, and the Rape Crisis Center, and community partners, the Clerk of Courts, the Cuyahoga County Sheriff and the Cuyahoga Support Enforcement Agency.

In 2016, the Court heard 764 emergency requests for orders of protection and is on a pace to hear more this year. Together with reactivated cases, the Court adjudicates between 1000 and 1100 cases annually. "A dedicated Civil Protection Order docket

model, which includes policies and procedures to protect safety, confidentiality, and to ensure efficiency in the filing process, coupled with on-site victim advocacy, and collaboration with other county agencies, social service organizations and law enforcement, have been key to the success of the Department,” said Judge Diane M. Palos who spearheads the project. “The Domestic Relations Court has worked toward establishing best practices in its policies which include cooperation with Juvenile and Common Pleas Courts, separation of parties, and enhanced safety procedures.”

As a recognized well-established specialized Mentor Court, the Domestic Relations Court will receive \$41,000 in OVW Technical Assistance Initiative funding to enable it to guide other courts and court-based programs that seek to significantly improve their court responses to domestic violence cases and ensure victim safety and offender accountability. The Court will host site visits from other jurisdictions planning to establish domestic violence courts; share forms, procedures and protocols; provide technical assistance, judicial education and training; and link courts facing similar challenges with peers. By sharing its experience and expertise and spreading best practices, the Court will support the Justice Department’s overall goal of building the capacity of state court systems to respond effectively to these difficult cases.

The Court joins an exclusive group of leading Mentor Courts in New York, Idaho, Texas, Missouri, Minnesota, and Illinois.

