



A Kentucky Community Races to Provide Safety

Battered Women's Justice Project
January 2018

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This project was supported by Grant No. 2016-TA-AX-K047 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

Lexington, Kentucky is a community that understands that time is often critical in keeping domestic violence victims safe. Two initiatives launched by the Fayette County Sheriff and Fayette County Circuit Court, electronic Emergency Protective Orders (e-EPO) and domestic violence order hope cards, aim to save lives when minutes matter.

Accelerating the protective order process electronically.

The first initiative, electronic Emergency Protective Orders (e-EPO), significantly reduces the time to create, review, authorize and enter protective orders into the system, according to Fayette County Sheriff, Kathy Witt. The signing judge is alerted to the EPO request via text and email. Connecting partner agencies electronically allows for temporary emergency protective orders to be granted within minutes rather than hours and respondents to be served more expeditiously.

Hope Cards condense and simplify protection orders for police.

The second initiative involves the Fayette County Sheriff's office issuing Domestic Violence Order Hope Cards to victims of domestic violence in Lexington who are granted domestic violence orders (DVO). Hope Cards are laminated, wallet-sized cards that can easily be carried by the victim and provides law enforcement with critical information regarding a valid domestic violence order. One side of the card contains the case number, expiration date of the DVO, the name of the petitioner/victim, the name, date of birth, physical description and photo of the respondent. The other side of the card contains the conditions of the DVO. The hope card takes a multi-page order and reduces it down to the size of a credit card. When police respond, they have the information necessary to make an expedient arrest.

Victim advocates essential to Lexington's firearm removal and victim safety.

County Sheriff advocates and deputies are always in domestic violence hearings to assist petitioners throughout the entire process. Sheriff's office staff members work with the petitioner to learn if there are firearms owned by the respondent. Petitioners meet with the team member to go over what types of firearms there are within the respondents' possession. Additionally, throughout the term of a DVO, the Sheriff's office stays in touch with the petitioners. Petitioners are called by advocates every three to six months. Advocates inquire if the petitioner is feeling safe in her current situation and if there have been any violations of the order that have not been reported law enforcement. A DVO may remain effective for up to three years. Prior to the expiration of the order, the petitioner will receive a letter advising them that the order is about to expire and informing the petitioner that if they want an extension of the order they will need to petition the court. The on-going contact between victims and the Sheriff's office creates confidence in the system and enhances victim safety.