



Court Watch Volunteer

Position Description

TIME COMMITMENT:

Court Watch Program Volunteers must be able to commit to a minimum of one shift per week for a minimum of six months. Shifts are up to 4 hours in length and are available on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings. A 26-hour New Advocate Training is required prior to starting this position, followed by an additional 3-hour training and observation shift(s), on the civil justice system, restraining order relevant statutes, and injunction hearings observations.

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES: The Court Watch Program Volunteer is responsible for attending restraining orders injunctions at the Dane County Courthouse and collecting data based on observations. Court Watch Program Volunteers are trained in the dynamics of domestic violence, relevant statutes, what to monitor, and how to respectfully observe proceedings while making notes on the data collection tool created for court monitoring.

SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Attend and observe injunctions hearings on a weekly basis
- Record accurate observations with legible handwriting and a high degree of accuracy
- Perform data entry work using a personal computer
- Communicate effectively with the DAIS Legal Advocacy Program Manager about what you observed, both through monitoring questionnaires and debriefings
- Follow court rules and etiquette
- Track and report volunteer hours to the Legal Advocacy Program Manager

DAIS' RESPONSIBILITIES TO COURT WATCH VOLUNTEERS:

- Train Court Watch Volunteers in the skills necessary to effectively perform responsibilities
- Provide ongoing training and information.
- Be available for consultation and support.
- Provide reference letters and/or documentation of volunteer hours for employment and education purposes. Letters will be written based on the Legal Advocacy Program Manager knowledge of the volunteer's service with DAIS and any documentation that may be on file.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Must be at least 18 years of age
- Keen awareness or curiosity about domestic violence and related legal issues
- Ability to maintain confidentiality
- Must be able to commit to a minimum of one shift per week (up to 4-hours for observations)

- Must be able to sit in a courtroom and focus for extended periods of time (up to four hours at a time)
- Must provide their own transportation to and from the Dane County Courthouse

TRAINING:

- 26-hour New Advocate Training (NAT) is required
- Additional Court Watch program training is required
- Court Watch Observations will be coordinated with Legal Advocacy Program Manager following Court Watch program training

Additional Information

Goals:

The DAIS Court Watch program observes Dane County restraining order hearings to establish a data-driven analysis of the court system's advancement of victim safety and perpetrator accountability in intimate partner domestic violence cases. The program goals include:

- Improve the experience of victims of intimate partner violence seeking a restraining order.
- Provide information to stakeholders in the community, including the judges, on trends related to the court systems handling of domestic violence and harassment injunction cases.
- Identify recommendations for improved trauma-informed and victim centric responses to domestic violence and harassment cases.
- Further inform legal system stakeholders about the role of service representatives in the court process

History:

Court Watch programs exist throughout the country; some programs operate from within victim service agencies and others are entirely separate non-profit organizations. DAIS has operated a Court Watch program on an intermittent basis since at least 2003. The program has primarily been staffed by DAIS Court Watch Volunteers and DAIS Legal Advocacy Program Staff.

Program Scope:

The DAIS Court Watch program is specifically focused on Domestic Abuse and Harassment injunctions because the responsiveness of the court system in these hearings is so closely tied to victim safety. Because DAIS doesn't have specific funding for this program, the program does not have the capacity to observe hearings in other legal forums such as criminal, family, and small claims court.

Methods:

DAIS staff and volunteers attend restraining order hearings with the goal of observing proceedings 2-3 times per week. Observers will attend a minimum of three cycles of the judge rotation so each judge will be observed for three weeks before data is summarized. The data is gathered through a tracking form and is then entered into an online form for analysis. Data gathered includes both objective data and subjective data on the court proceedings. Due to limited capacity, a review of the petition won't occur with each case, though in certain cases this practice will be included to provide the observer with greater clarity on the circumstances of proceeding.