



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2023-2024 COURT WATCH REPORT

***DAIS Mission** - Empower those affected by intimate partner violence and advocate for social change through support, education, and outreach.*

OVERVIEW

The Domestic Abuse Intervention Services (DAIS) Court Watch Program observes Dane County injunction hearings to establish a data-driven analysis of the Circuit Court system's advancement of victim safety and perpetrator accountability in intimate partner violence cases.

The Court Watch Program aims to 1) improve the experience of survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV) who seek restraining orders, 2) provide information to legal stakeholders regarding trends in the court system's handling of Domestic Abuse and Harassment injunction cases, 3) identify recommendations for improved trauma-informed and victim-centric responses to Domestic Abuse and Harassment injunction cases and 4) further inform legal stakeholders about the role of service representatives in the court process.

Please contact Kianna Hanson, DAIS Community Advocacy Manager, at kiannah@abuseintervention.org for the full report.

OBJECTIVE FINDINGS

- **814** total cases observed
- **60%** of cases involved **intimate partner violence**
- Average of **37 hearings per judge** per Court Watch cycle (R= 3-44)
- **15-ten year injunctions granted** (25% of the 69 requested)
- **Lack of representation:** 87% of petitioners appeared *pro se*
- 15% of petitioners were accompanied by a **service representative**
- **Gender disparities:** 74% of petitioners were female, 67% of respondents were male
- **Petitioners with a service representative were 114% more likely to have their injunction granted.**

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DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION SERVICES

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STATISTICS

1 in 3 cis-gendered women will experience IPV in their lifetime *

Abusers with access to firearms are five times more likely to kill their victims **

Firearms were used in sixty-seven percent of domestic violence homicides in 2021 ***

LETHALITY RISK FACTORS **

- Stalking
- Contact with law enforcement
- Threats to take their own life
- Threats to kill victim
- Access to a firearm
- Strangulation

WISCONSIN STATUTE §895.45

Allows an adult who alleges they have been the victim of a crime to select a service representative from an organization or victim assistance program to attend hearings, depositions and court proceedings (both civil and criminal) with them.

BEST PRACTICES

- Compassion and validation from court officials
- Understanding dynamics of DV
- Clear and consistent expectations and explanations of court processes and procedures
- Discussing service by publication and firearm surrender

OBSERVER CONCERNS

- Perpetuation of myths about domestic violence
- Lack of understanding of lethality risk factors when ruling on ten-year injunctions
- Handling of cases when there are children in common
- Lack of consistency with court procedures, particularly for *pro se* litigants

*According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022 ** Campbell JC, Webster D, Koziol-McLain J. et al ***Taken from the 2021 Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Ongoing IPV training for all judges and court personnel
- 2) Follow consistent procedures for injunction hearings
- 3) Utilizing bench cards for injunction hearings, including a lethality risk assessment
- 4) Improved firearm surrender practices

DAIS

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