

# CONFERENCE OF STATE COURT ADMINISTRATORS

## Resolution 26

### **Safety and Accountability: State Courts and Domestic Violence**

WHEREAS, the Conference of State Court Administrators recognizes that domestic violence endangers human lives and require an extraordinary response by the courts; and

WHEREAS, a White Paper, *Safety and Accountability: State Courts and Domestic Violence* examined the unique and complex challenges that domestic violence matters present to judges, attorneys, court administrators, and front-line justice professionals; and

WHEREAS, the White Paper also identified underlying common principles of new approaches to domestic violence cases-

- Families in crises can easily access courts and are provided with services that can assist litigants in understanding the court process and in filing necessary petitions,
- Judges need comprehensive, real time information on any existing court orders and the history of violence in the family,
- Victims have unique needs for immediate safety, housing, financial support, and services for their children,
- Domestic violence is met with a meaningful judicial response and the respondents/defendants are held directly accountable to the judge, and
- Judges are catalysts to enhance the interagency collaboration; and

WHEREAS, the White Paper further examined current issues facing the courts and provided examples from across the country that indicate that court systems and partner agencies can improve both victim safety and offender accountability; and

WHEREAS, the White Paper concluded with seven recommendations to the Conference membership –

- Analyze the current response to domestic violence cases,
- Designate a domestic violence single point of contact for the state court system,
- Adopt and promote essential elements or standards for domestic violence courts that may lead to a model domestic violence court,
- Plan for an integrated, multi-jurisdictional response to domestic violence,
- Dedicate sufficient resources to handling domestic violence cases,
- Ensure that both judicial and non-judicial personnel are trained on domestic violence, cultural competency issues, and the impact of violence on children, and

- Provide judges with the support that they need to participate in -and lead- multi-agency partnerships to combat domestic violence.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Conference of State Court Administrators adopts the White Paper, as revised, requests the President of the Conference to assign the White Paper to the appropriate committees to foster the implementation of the recommendations, and commits to take necessary steps to implement the recommendations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Conference of State Court Administrators hereby agrees to establish the following national action plan,

- Forge a closer partnership with the Office on Violence Against Women of the U. S. Department of Justice,
- Seek federal funding to conduct a nationwide survey of current responses by courts to domestic violence cases and to establish a single point of contact within each state's court system,
- Seek funding for a national conference to identify the essential elements or standards for an effective response to domestic violence based on the results of nationwide survey,
- Develop and promote judicial leadership at the state level for improvement in the response by state courts to cases involving domestic violence,
- Conduct annual follow-up to monitor and evaluate reform efforts by the courts, and
- Direct a national research agenda to evaluate and identify effective court interventions to protect the safety of victims and hold offenders accountable.

Renewed at the COSCA 2008 Annual Meeting on July 30, 2008.

*Recommended by the COSCA Policy Liaison Committee  
COSCA Adoption Date: July 29, 2004  
COSCA Expiration Date: July 29, 2007*