



In February 2021, the Rapid Response Team of the Conference of Chief Justices and Conference of State Court Administrators (CCJ/COSCA) selected and notified “Implementation Labs” to bring together courts working to implement pandemic-related innovations in various areas.

The Implementation Lab on Domestic Violence is a peer-led learning community that shares resources, experiences, and challenges to respond to domestic violence under pandemic conditions and beyond. Lessons learned were synthesized to provide recommendations for the broader court community. Jurisdictions represented include Arizona; the District of Columbia; Illinois; Kansas; Massachusetts; North Carolina; Tulalip Tribes of Washington; the United States Virgin Islands; and Utah. The Alliance of Tribal Coalitions to End Violence joined as of June 2021.

The Lab prioritized three study areas: **1) an inter-jurisdictional communications guide; 2) a study of portals; and 3) how virtual proceedings could contribute to protection of parties.** Reports on each of the three areas are provided below.

Cross-jurisdictional Communications

The Lab considered mechanisms and model agreements between jurisdictions to ease the sharing of information. The group identified a need for improved communication across jurisdictional lines, with the goal of improving the enforcement of orders. This survey will inform a centralized resource for use by liaisons and points of contact within each jurisdiction to enhance communication and better understand the issues affecting protection order enforcement.

Kat Genthon, with NCSC’s Research Division, developed an interjurisdictional communications survey

(https://ncsc2.iad1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3F4nCpeXeuRwucC). The purpose of the document is to create a resource documenting state-specific differences in protection order processes that may affect communication across jurisdictions.

E-filing and Portals

A consistent topic of interest during the Lab was the use of DV Portals or e-filing to increase access to survivors in virtual proceedings. Based on preliminary data:

- Use of these portals increased exponentially during the pandemic
- Parties reported that portals were easy to use.

- Data trends indicate a reduction in the time to process these cases and fewer continuances.
- There may be a reduction in involuntary dismissals (e.g., if the plaintiff/petitioner does not appear) but this needs to be further studied.

To respond to interests and needs, the DV Lab contributed to the creation of a session at NCSC's Court Technology Conference on DV Portals.

- Michele Gillich (AZ) covered technical aspects of portals
- Melissa Arvin (IN) talked about the why and how this process started in her state; next steps re: language access and guided processes; why additional safety and technical accommodations are needed for DV cases.
- Stephanie Bunten, Chief Financial Officer of Kansas addressed funding questions and opportunities.

Materials are available here:

- [Protection Order Repositories, Web Portals, and Beyond: Technology Solutions to Increase Access and Enforcement](#) (pdf)
- [PowerPoint](#)

The group expressed those future conversations on e-filing need to address access to safety planning, access to advocates and language access.

Improving access to safety planning, particularly for those who use e-filing or choose not to involve the legal system at all

- Rural areas often have little to no local victim service providers.
- CPOs can only do so much. It is helpful to have other resources and planning available.
- Options may include simple information for the public on the limitations of protection orders.
- An online guided interview (like CPO e-file petitions) to help the person gather and identify information to inform a safety plan.

Improving access to advocates via e-filing portals

- Some portals only include contact information for the local victim service provider.
- Might be nice to have more interactive elements as part of these portals to help connect folks to providers for safety planning, etc.

Improving language access in DV e-filing portals

There are a variety of language access options for people who are involved in the court system once a case is filed, but there are very few options available at the front end (e.g., information on e-filing portals may only be available in English). A subsequent Lab may include Kentucky, Indiana and Kansas to advance a national conversation regarding language access.

Guidance for Virtual Hearings

The group expressed the need for guidance to address common challenges and concerns related to virtual hearings:

- Access to justice considerations
- Guidelines for effective participation in virtual hearings
- Decorum
- Safety: enhancements, precautions
- Advocate access
- Training: Recognitions of safety concerns; how to maximize use of technology
- Confidentiality
- Internet connectivity/Level of technology
- Judge reluctance to use (Cultural differences)
- Visibility: Witness confrontation anonymity and ability to perceive witness expressions phone vs. video
- Document sharing/preparation

A New NCJFCJ toolkit on virtual hearings and pandemic-related matters

NCJFCJ released a [toolkit](#) for Judges in October 2021. Content is organized and developed to provide the same information in multiple formats (e.g., videos, infographics, interactive tools, etc.). Material will be updated quarterly.

The toolkit was developed using 10 Guiding Principles. Each page serves as a one-stop shop with links to various resources.

The toolkit includes links to other resources as well as a 'Coming Soon' section.

1	Promote Judicial Leadership
2	Equity & Access to Justice
3	Focus on Individualized Context
4	Empower Voice & Choice
5	Conduct Systemic Assessment
6	Create Effective Responses
7	Promote Safety
8	Ensure Meaningful Accountability
9	Work in Collaboration
10	Promote Wellness & Healing

Lab members discussed other issues to be addressed:

- Managing backlog
- Lessons learned from the other Rapid Response Labs (like Remote Hearings)
- Re-envisioning court processes and workplace policies for remote work
- E-filing guidance for jurisdictions who had to innovate processes during the pandemic
- Open Court Requirements: how to comply while ensuring victim safety and confidentiality
- Improving communication and collaboration between intra-court silos: Operational, Administrative, Executive
- Improving language access to support the intake process

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