



17th Judicial Circuit Court Family Violence Coordinating Council 2013 Fact Sheet

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the Family Violence Coordinating Councils, at both the state and local judicial circuit level, is to establish a forum to improve the institutional, professional and community response to family violence including child abuse, teen dating violence, domestic abuse, and elder abuse; to engage in education, prevention, and coordination of intervention and services for victims and perpetrators, and to contribute to the improvement of the legal system and the administration of justice.

Council Chair

The Honorable Rosemary Collins, Circuit Judge, 17th Judicial Circuit
(1994 – Present)

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Description of Committee Structure & Membership of the Council

The Child and Youth Safety, Court Procedure, and Elder Abuse Committees meet monthly. The Domestic Violence Awareness Month Planning Committee meets from June to October as needed. Occasionally special short-term work groups are convened to address a particular task. Each committee has a chair-person who oversees the meetings and the work of the Committee. The Membership is drawn from various local groups representing law enforcement, criminal justice system, schools, health care professionals, faith community, social service, community members and local and state government. Anyone interested in participating on a committee is welcome.

The Council continues its work locally on the Arrest Grant that was awarded to the Illinois Family Violence Coordinating Council in 2012. Two multidisciplinary training teams are currently working to develop training based on the Illinois state model protocols for domestic violence, victims of elder abuse and domestic violence victims with disabilities. These local training teams anticipate offering two repeat all-day training sessions in March 2014. These sessions will be offered to all law enforcement agencies within the 17th Circuit.

Accomplishments of the Council

Court Procedure Committee:

Honorable Rosemary Collins, Chair

The Court Procedure committee is most successful in bringing a large group of stakeholders together to bridge communication and solidify working relationships. Members feel comfortable in bringing concerns, solutions and suggestions for change. This forum provides a great opportunity for committee members to address immediate issues. Another important function of this committee is to increase each committee member's knowledge of family violence issues and the services that are available in our community.

On July 26, 2013 the Court Procedure Committee hosted National Presenter Gael Strack, a specialized expert in the identification, investigation, and documentation of strangulation in intimate partner violence cases. Gale works for the Family Justice Center Alliance's strangulation Training Institute. Forty-four (44) professionals from various disciplines attended this free, half-day training.

On September 26th and 27th the Council and the Domestic Violence Coordinated Court (DVCC) Project co-hosted a duplicated one-day training lead by a group of multidisciplinary national trainers from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. One hundred and eighteen (118) participants attended this day-long training that was titled *Enhancing a Coordinated Response to Domestic Violence in a Court Setting*.

Child and Youth Safety Committee:

Heather Beaufls and Becky Winstead, Co-Chairs

During the month of February, the Child and Youth Safety Committee provided information to community members and schools in recognition of Teen Dating Violence (TDV) and Awareness Month. The committee provided information about resources as well as suggestions on how schools can address this critical issue with youth. Also in February, the Child and Youth Safety Committee hosted an interactive exercise titled In Their Shoes to raise awareness about the issue of teen dating violence. This exercise was offered once to all committee members in the form of a lunch and learn session and again to Court Procedure Committee Members. A total of 47 people attended these two sessions combined

In April, the Child and Youth Safety Committee organized and hosted the 12th Annual Hands Around the Courthouse Event. Over 100 members of the community were present at this youth lead event to show their dedication to preventing child abuse and neglect in our community. Judge Rosemary Collins presented information to raise awareness about the issue of Child Abuse and Neglect and Winnebago County Chairman Scott Christiansen Proclaimed the Month Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Month in Winnebago County. Youth from the Violence Enders group aided community members in constructing pinwheels which were planted outside of the Criminal Justice Center for the Month. Pinwheels gardens are another symbol of support of child abuse prevention.

The Child and Youth Safety Committee have also collaborated with the State's Attorney Joseph Bruscato and Rockford Public School District 205 to coordinate McGruff Crime Dog presentations regarding the issue of Bullying. It is a goal of the committee to help coordinate at least one presentation at a local elementary school each month of the school year.

Elder Abuse Committee:

Yvonne Anderson, Chair

The Elder Abuse Committee hosted the Role of the GAL in Adult Guardianship Cases, on May 17, 2013 at the Boone County Keen Age Center. Close to forty 40 participants attended this offering, thirty 30 were current or prospective GAL's. This half-day training covered the following topics: Adult Guardianship Proceedings in a Nutshell; Interviewing Techniques; The Role of Guardian ad Litem vs. Advocate Counsel in the Court Process; Related Issues: Powers of Attorney and Representative Payee; Abuse/Neglect and Placement Issues: Senior Protective Services and the Ombudsman Program; Temporary Guardianship and Orders of Protection.

The committee also provided information about the issue of elder abuse, the role of a GAL and local elder abuse intervention resources to the entire staff of the Winnebago County State's Attorney's Office in July, as a way to raise awareness and highlight National Elder Abuse Awareness Month.

Domestic Violence Awareness Month Committee:

The Domestic Violence Awareness Month Committee meets from June – October each year. This committee's task is to plan events and activities that help raise awareness about family violence during the nationally proclaimed month of October. This year, each municipality in the Circuit was contacted and encouraged to conduct a proclamation in honor of National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Committee members attended many of the proclamations and provided information about family violence and the council to those in attendance.

This year Council members staffed a domestic violence awareness month booth and distributed a domestic violence informational flyer to those entering the Rockford City Market. Council members had the opportunity to reach approximately 500 community members during this event.

The Committee encouraged community members and groups to "Shine a Light on Domestic Violence" by lighting up their home or place of work purple for the month of October. For the second year in a row both the City of Rockford's City Hall and the Winnebago County Sheriff's Department's Criminal Justice Center were illuminated purple for the entire month of October. This year the Village of Roscoe joined in by lighting the City Hall and Public Safety Building purple for the month. The committee hopes to see additional entities join in each year.

The Council hosted the 12th Annual Shining the Light on Domestic Violence Ceremony. Close to 70 people attended this brief ceremony which is designed to remember, honor and celebrate victims and survivors of domestic violence, as well as recognize and honor the work that had been done to improve safety for victims of domestic violence during the past year. Sheriff Meyers was the recipient of the 2nd Annual Shining the Light on Domestic Violence Recognition Award. The Rockford Sexual Assault and Counseling Clothesline project and the Council's silhouette project were also on display at this event.

Future Direction

The Council continues to identify and address current trends and needs within the 17th Circuit. We will continue to provide education, information and support to the various systems which intersect those who are affected by the devastating issues of family violence.