



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

**Testimony Regarding**

**HB 5030, AAC Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for FY15  
Judicial Branch Budget**

**Member Organizations**

- The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services  
Ansonia, CT
- The Center for Family Justice  
Bridgeport, CT
- Women's Center  
Danbury, CT
- Domestic Violence Program  
United Services  
Dayville, CT
- Network Against Domestic Abuse  
Enfield, CT
- Domestic Abuse Services  
Greenwich YWCA  
Greenwich, CT
- Interval House  
Hartford, CT
- Meriden-Wallingford Chrysalis  
Meriden, CT
- New Horizons  
Middletown, CT
- Prudence Crandall Center  
New Britain, CT
- The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services  
New Haven, CT
- Safe Futures  
New London, CT
- Domestic Violence Crisis Center  
Norwalk, CT
- Women's Support Services  
Sharon, CT
- Domestic Violence Crisis Center  
Stamford, CT
- Susan B. Anthony Project  
Torrington, CT
- Safe Haven  
Waterbury, CT
- Domestic Violence Program  
United Services  
Willimantic, CT

**Appropriations Committee  
February 19, 2014**

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Representative McCrory and members of the committee. CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) is the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence and our 18 member organizations that serve them.

We thank Governor Malloy for maintaining funding for several domestic violence services funded through the Judicial Branch Office of Victim Services. We urge you to support those funding levels, as well as respectfully request that you consider providing additional funding for Family Violence Victims Advocates (FVVs) dedicated solely to civil matters.

Currently, there are 43 FVVs who work in Connecticut's criminal courts to assist victims of domestic violence who are involved as victims in criminal proceedings. These positions are funded through a combination of a Victims Assistance Grant under the federal Victims of Crime Act, state match dollars for that federal funding, and state dollars through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund. The FVVs are stationed in the state's criminal courts and are available to assist victims with safety planning, understanding the court process and connecting them to other services.

Unfortunately, these FVVs are unable to provide services to victims in civil court who are seeking restraining orders. While CCADV's 18 domestic violence organizations do have adult advocates on staff who can assist victims with understanding the civil court process, these services are only available if the victim actually calls the statewide hotline or comes to the agency. Many domestic violence victims appear in civil court and pursue restraining orders without ever speaking with a certified domestic violence counselor or, in many cases, even being made aware that our services exist.

**CT Restraining Order Numbers**

	<b>Applications</b>	<b>Ex Parte</b>	<b>RO</b>
<b>2012</b>	8,937	5,328	3,234
		59% of applications	60% of ex parte
			36% of applications
<b>2011</b>	8,862	4,975	3,024
		56% of applications	60% of ex parte
			34% of applications
<b>2010</b>	9,112	5,094	2,809
		55% of applicants	55% of ex parte
			30% of applications

If FVVs were made available in civil courts similar to the manner that they are made

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available in criminal courts, we are confident that almost all domestic victims who seek restraining orders would be able to be notified of our services. FVVAs would be able to assist victims with understanding the restraining order process and help them effectively tell their story to the judge. As you can see from the Judicial Branch data on restraining orders, between 2010 and 2012, the state averaged 33% of all restraining order applications resulting in an actual year-long restraining order. While there are a variety of reasons why an application would not ultimately result in the granting of an order, one of those reasons is that the victim simply did not understand the system or how to properly present their situation to the judge.

Additionally, victims who pursue restraining orders without the assistance of a domestic violence advocate are missing the most important piece of addressing the abuse they are experiencing – safety planning. FVVAs stationed at civil courts would be able to assist victims with the development of a safety plan to ensure that, even when they have a restraining order, they are still taking the necessary steps in their everyday lives to protect themselves.

Family Violence Victim Advocates in civil court would also be able to assist victims with providing details to State Marshals who are tasked with making service of the restraining order on the respondent. Anecdotally, we have heard from several Marshals who often find it difficult to track down the respondent because they are not given enough detail by victims. The availability of FVVAs to assist in this process would likely result in a higher rate of successful in-hand service by Marshals.

Finally, FVVAs in civil court would also be able to assist victims with understanding the civil processes of divorce and child custody, as the abuse they have experienced needs to be considered when judgments are made in those areas.

Two of CCADV's 18 member organizations currently have funding for FVVAs dedicated to civil matters (Bridgeport and Hartford). We respectfully request funding to provide 1 fulltime FVVA dedicated solely to civil matters at each of the 16 other domestic violence organizations. The cost to do so would be \$775,280. We would also be happy to discuss potential pilot sites with the greatest need of a civil FVVA.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

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