



ALASKA JUSTICE FORUM

A PUBLICATION OF THE JUSTICE CENTER

Fall 2005

UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

Vol. 22, No. 3

Court Innovations in Domestic Violence Cases

A Judicial Council evaluation of two new Alaska Court System programs focused on the domestic violence protective order process shows that the programs have had some modest success, but not all of the hoped-for results. The programs, which were funded by a U.S. Department of Justice grant, provided for two new types of positions within the court process: an advocate and a facilitator. The advocate position was attached to the AWAIC women's shelter and the facilitator position was placed within the court system's Family Law Self-Help Center. The results shown by the evaluation are mixed and can be interpreted in different ways.

Using measures of success defined by the

court system, the Judicial Council conducted an evaluation based on data from the first fifteen months of the programs—2003 and early 2004—and from 2002 for comparison purposes. Dr. Darryl Wood of the Justice Center at the University of Alaska Anchorage performed the statistical analysis for the study. The main findings of the evaluation are presented here.

At a minimum, according to the quantitative analysis, incidents of criminal and civil domestic violence declined for petitioners during the period evaluated. On the other hand, the chance that an initial *ex parte* petition would eventually lead to a long-term protective order—one of the defined mea-

asures of success—did not increase during the period covered by the evaluation. Several factors, some unexpected, were associated with the granting of long-term orders, including the identity of the judicial officer who handled the case in the 2002 cases, the presence of an attorney for the respondent, and the gender of the petitioner.

Interviews with individuals involved with the programs showed a positive reception for both of the new types of positions. Interview comments also suggested that some of the unexpected findings from the quantitative analysis did, in fact, have a positive cast.

Please see *Court innovations*, page 3

Interviewees Make Suggestions

As discussed in the accompanying article, the Judicial Council evaluation of the court system's domestic violence projects included interviews with a number of people actively involved with the projects. The interviewees included judicial officers, court administrators, court staff in the DV unit, Family Law Self-Help Center staff, and AWAIC staff. In addition to discussing the functioning of the programs, interviewees also were given an opportunity to respond to the question *Do you see problems in the domestic violence protective order process that need to be addressed by other means?*

The following is the list of their suggestions, quoted from the Judicial Council report:

- have more education on the process for petitioners and respondents about how to prepare for hearings;
- the DV waiting area is too confined for disputing parties;
- we need child care for hearings;
- rethink how the hearings are scheduled. It is extremely difficult on litigants to wait all together in the same courtroom to deal with violence. It's an unnerving and hostile atmosphere waiting for the cases to be called. Security is not always there even though it is supposed to be;
- the process needs regularity. A lot of cases that are filed aren't DV. *Ex partes* are granted that should not have been and then petitioners are confused about why the long term is denied. Everyone should be on the same page;
- there is a lot of inconsistency in how the law is applied. It is confusing to parties when not all judges would rule the same way in a case; it used to be that people were reluctant to get a DV order, now they are rushing down here. We call it divorce/dissolution by DV;
- there will be some strategic maneuvering by some attorneys due to House Bill 385, which creates a presumption against custody for a perpetrator of domestic violence. This will get worse if it hasn't already;
- we need more interpreters. Have petition forms in other languages;
- we were stunned to know how many people are involved in the DV process who are also involved with the Office of Children's Services. We need more data on related CINA cases. More coordination with CINA cases;
- batterers intervention and anger management is not being ordered. The masters perceive that they don't have a mechanism for enforcement;
- more time needs to be allocated for hearings. Fifteen to twenty minutes is not good.
- better security is needed;
- better, more instructive forms are needed;
- it is extremely difficult to get enforcement of elements in the protective order such as drug/alcohol treatment, no guns, Batterers Intervention Program, alimony, child support, and restitution;
- we need a more professional intake function in the DV unit to make sure that petitioners understand what a protective order is and what the consequences are. Improved intake would help weed out some people that don't belong.

Court innovations

(continued from page 1)

Domestic Violence Process in the Anchorage Court

In Anchorage, petitioners can go to the Boney Court Building at any time to file a petition for a protective order, typically for an *ex parte* order valid for twenty days. (Within this article the term *ex parte* will be used in reference to the protective order granted at the initial hearing. *Long-term* will be used for the later hearing, for an order for a lengthier period of protection. Figure 1 shows the events in the civil domestic violence process.

After an *ex parte* hearing before a judicial officer, the petitioner can return to court within twenty days for a long-term order. Between the *ex parte* hearing and the long-term hearing, the petitioner can ask to have the *ex parte* order dissolved, in effect canceling the long-term hearing. Alternatively, the petitioner's *ex parte* order can become part of an ongoing or newly-filed superior court case (typically, child custody, divorce or dissolution). The court, seeing such more permanent resolutions as desirable in the domestic violence cases, asked the Council to focus on these outcomes as one measure of the success of the projects.

At the long-term hearing, the judge can grant a long-term order or deny it, or the petitioner can ask to have the case dismissed. In general, the long-term orders granted during the period evaluated lasted for six months. A 2004 legislative change extended this period to a year. Petitioners often miss the long-term hearing without notifying the court.

After a long-term order is granted, the petitioner can ask to have it modified or dismissed. Petitioners or respondents often want to change visitation schedules or child support. They can also ask to have the terms of the protective order changed in other ways, and they can ask to have the entire order dissolved. Typically, a protective order severely restricts contact between the parties. Violation of a protective order is a misdemeanor offense, and the party violating the order—petitioner or respondent—can be charged with the crime. If the petitioner wishes to return to greater contact with the respondent, the court must dissolve or modify the protective order to reflect new conditions. For the cases in this

evaluation, the order automatically expired at the end of six months, but the petitioner could return to court at that time and ask for a new order.

While clerks at the Anchorage courthouse can help petitioners complete the forms petitioning for an *ex parte* order, they cannot aid them in other ways. The advocate and facilitator programs were designed to assist petitioners with some of their unmet needs. Better-prepared petitioners, in theory, would have better outcomes in their cases. In addition, the program staff could provide better information to the judicial officers hearing domestic violence civil cases.

As noted above, the Department of Justice grant provided for two new types of positions within the protective order process—an advocate and a facilitator. The project designers foresaw that the advocate position, which was placed with Abused Women's Aid in Crisis (AWAIC), would:

- be focused only on civil domestic violence petitions;
- assist victims at several stages of the process, but particularly between the *ex parte* and long-term hearings;
- lead to an increase in the number of long-term orders;
- help petitioners prepare better-focused petitions, leading to a decrease in the number of modifications of orders;
- lead to an increase in the number of cases in which victims sought a more permanent solution in superior court;
- lead to a reduction in the number of re-

peat filings, civil or criminal, by the same couples;

- function in coordination with the facilitator position.

The facilitator position, which was placed within the court system's Family Law Self-Help Center, had different responsibilities. The facilitator was expected to:

- work only with petitioners and respondents in cases that involved children;
- contact petitioners and respondents between the *ex parte* hearing and the long-term hearing—or if necessary, at the long-term hearing;
- work with parents to develop parenting plans, child custody orders, child support orders, referrals to superior court, and referrals to other, related resources.

Relationships Between the *Ex Parte* Process and Long-term Orders

Table 1 shows information about approximately 4,600 petitions for *ex parte* orders filed during the periods studied (2002 cases were comparison cases; 2003-2004 cases were drawn from the period during which the projects were in place), and the relationships between *ex parte* petitions and long-term orders. These data provide context for the sample of cases used in the actual evaluation.

Petitioners usually came to the *ex parte*

Please see *Court innovations*, page 4

Table 1. Distribution of Screened Cases, 2002-2004

Column percentages

	2002		2003-2004		Total	
	N	% of all cases	N	% of all cases	N	% of all cases
<i>Ex parte</i> proceedings only						
No-show petitioner at scheduled long-term hearing	633	29.5 %	704	28.2 %	1,337	28.8 %
<i>Ex parte</i> order only ^a	221	10.3	257	10.3	478	10.3
<i>Ex parte</i> petition denied at <i>ex parte</i> hearing	402	18.7	479	19.2	881	19.0
<i>Ex parte</i> petition filed only, no-show petitioner	137	6.4	149	6.0	286	6.2
Total <i>ex parte</i> only	1,393	64.9 %	1,589	63.7 %	2,982	64.2 %
Long-term hearing held						
Long-term order granted	553	25.7 %	652	26.1 %	1,205	26.0 %
Long-term order denied	100	4.7	114	4.6	214	4.6
Long-term hearing, petitioner requested dismissal	102	4.7	139	5.6	241	5.2
Total long-term hearings	755^b	35.1 %	905^b	36.3 %	1,660^b	35.8 %
Total domestic violence cases reviewed	2,148		2,494		4,642^c	

^a A long-term hearing was typically scheduled for these cases, but in 478 cases, the petitioner asked to have the *ex parte* order dissolved (and therefore the long-term hearing was cancelled), or the case was reassigned to a superior court judge, or the petitioner did not request a long-term hearing.

^b From the 1,660 long-term cases, 1,072 cases were selected for the evaluation sample.

^c 67 cases were excluded from the table because they were emergency or medical orders and would not typically have led to a long-term hearing.

Court innovations (continued from page 3)

hearing. Judges granted the order for 81 percent of the 4,642 *ex parte* petitions. With this project, the court wanted to encourage petitioners to pursue long-term orders, or to have their cases handled in a more permanent forum, usually by having the superior court make decisions in divorce, dissolution or child custody cases. However, slightly over half (52%) of the petitioners who received *ex parte* orders did not pursue long-term orders, including 478 cases in which the petitioners resolved the case in some other way (see notes on Table 1) and 1,337 cases in which the petitioners never returned to court for the long-term hearing.

These data show that the court processes for most cases stayed about the same between 2002 (before the new projects were put in place) and 2003-2004 (the years in which the projects started operation). In each period, about 6 percent of those who filed *ex parte* petitions did not attend the *ex parte* hearing and judicial officers denied 19 percent of the *ex parte* petitions in each year. After the projects started, a slightly higher percentage of those with a scheduled long-term hearing actually went to the hearing (35% in 2002 and 36% in 2003-04). At the hearing, however, little changed. Over both periods the petitioner asked for dismissal at 5 percent of the hearings, and the judge granted the long-term order for 26 percent of the cases for all who filed an *ex parte* petition. (If different denominators are used, such as the number of people who had long-term hearings scheduled, the percentage of petitioners with long-term orders granted increased slightly, from 40 percent to 41 percent. Using only the 1,072 cases selected for the evaluation sample, there was no change—73 percent of cases in each year—in the percentage of long-term orders granted. All three analyses lead to the conclusion that no significant increase in the percentage of long-term orders granted occurred between 2002 and 2003-04.)

Evaluating the Long-term Hearings and Orders

After looking in detail at the *ex parte* process and outcomes, the evaluators focused on the long-term process and outcomes. Petitioners in the 1,072 cases sampled showed the following characteristics:

- about 82 percent were female;
- the average age was 34;
- a majority weren't married, although the percentage of married petitioners in-

Table 2. Comparisons between Grant Objectives and Data Report

N = 4,642

	Grant goals/ expectations	Bivariate or frequencies	
Change in attendance at <i>ex parte</i> hearings	Not part of grant	No change	(94% to 94%)
Change in likelihood of <i>ex parte</i> order	Not part of grant	No change	(75% to 75%)
Change in likelihood that long-term order was not pursued by petitioner*	Not part of grant	No change	(10% to 10%)
Change in attendance at scheduled long-term hearings	Increase	Increase	(54% to 56%)

* No long-term hearing was scheduled for 221 cases in 2002 and 257 cases in 2003-2004. For these cases, the petitioner asked to have the *ex parte* order dissolved and the long-term hearing cancelled; or the case was reassigned to a superior court; or the petitioner did not ask for a long-term hearing. These data were not evaluated for statistical significance.

Table 3. Changes in Measures at or within Six Months of Long-term Hearing: Comparisons between Grant Objectives and Data Report

N = 1,072

	Grant goals/ expectations	Bivariate or frequencies		Expected/not expected
		Statistically significant changes are indicated by boldface.		
At long-term hearing				
Change in likelihood that long-term order was granted	Increase	No change	(73% to 73%)	Not expected
Change in child custody awards at long-term hearing or within six months	Increase	Increased	(44% to 54%)*	Expected
Change in child support awards at long-term hearing or within six months	Increase	Increased	(8% to 11%)	Expected
This case, before or after long-term hear				
Change in hearings per case	Decrease	Increased slightly or no change		Not expected
Change in motions to modify	Decrease	Increased	(40% to 47%)*	Not expected
Long-term order dissolved at petitioner's request after long-term hearing	Decrease	Increased	(11% to 17%)*	Not expected

* Statistically significant. A measure of statistical significance is used to determine how likely it is that a distribution of data is due to chance. The standard for statistical significance is whether there is less than one chance in 20, or less than a 5 percent chance that an event occurred because of chance. A test used to determine this is called "chi square." Chi square results are usually expressed as $p < .05$ (or as a smaller percentage, down to $< .001$). See the full report, *Court Innovations in Domestic Violence Cases*, for significance test results for the data

creased from 36 percent in 2002 to 41 percent in 2003-04;

- about 71 percent had children in the household; and
- about 40 percent had experienced prior domestic violence with the respondent.

An examination of the details of the hearings held in these cases showed:

- the petitioner was at the hearing 98 percent of the time, and the respondent was at the hearing about 60 percent of the time;
- neither the petitioner nor the respondent had an attorney most of the time;
- the judges who heard domestic violence

long-term hearings changed significantly after the programs started, with the two specialized domestic violence masters handling about 46 percent of the 2002 cases, but 61 percent of the 2003-04 cases;

- about 60 percent of the cases in each year had two or more hearings;
- case files in 2003-04 had many more orders related to child custody, visitation and support than cases in 2002, indicating that the court had achieved one of its goals in instituting the projects; and
- parties asked for more modifications of the long-term orders in 2003-04 than they did in 2002—an unexpected outcome (the court had expected fewer modifications).

The court hoped for several changes in the court process as a result of these programs. Tables 2 and 3 present the project expectations and the actual results. The project designers had hoped that having the advocate and facilitator helping petitioners between the *ex parte* filing and the long-term hearing would result in better-prepared petitioners who were more willing and able to use the court process. The court believed that several indicators could be used to measure whether the projects achieved the goals set. It was expected that:

- A higher percentage of petitioners would go to the long-term hearings, and in fact, a slightly higher percentage of petitioners did go to the hearings.
- Judges would grant more long-term orders. Judges, however, granted about the same percentage of long-term orders in

each period.

- Judge would grant more child custody awards at the long-term hearing or within the six months following. The percentage of cases with child custody awards granted did increase significantly during the test years.
- Judges would grant more child support awards at the long-term hearing or within the following six months. The percentage of child support awards did increase during the test years.
- The court would hold fewer hearings in each case. The number of hearings in each case, however, stayed about the same.
- Parties would file fewer motions to modify the long-term order. The motions to modify the order, however, increased significantly during the test years. Staff and observers interviewed for the evaluation believed that the presence of the advocate

and facilitator may have encouraged people to use the court process appropriately, rather than violating the terms of the orders—i.e., not returning to court when they wished to change the terms of the relationship. Thus, although this was unexpected, the court believed that it represented a positive result from the projects.

- Petitioners would ask for fewer long-term orders to be dissolved after they were granted. The number of orders dissolved actually increased significantly during the test years. Again, the court and other observers believed that this represented the petitioners' willingness to use the court process as it was intended to be used, rather than deciding to ignore the order without returning to court.

Please see *Court innovations*, page 6

Statistical Techniques Employed for Evaluation

The new court programs discussed in the accompanying article, "Court Innovations in Domestic Violence Cases," presented a set of points for evaluation that required a complex statistical approach. To examine the difference between the cases in 2002 (the comparison group) and those in 2003-2004 (the test group), cross-tabulations, means comparisons, crude rate comparisons and survival analyses were conducted. The strategy used was determined by the type of case outcome examined and the types of data available for analysis.

Cross-tabulations (with *chi-square* tests for statistical significance) and means comparisons (with *t*-tests for statistical significance) were used to examine case outcomes decided during *ex parte* or long-term protective order hearings.

For case outcomes that happened in the time periods after hearings – such as requests to modify orders, divorce and dissolution filings, or re-victimization—both crude rate comparisons and survival analyses were conducted to determine what effect, if any, the new court programs had.

Given that there was a much greater amount of time "at risk" for the cases in the 2002 comparison group than with the 2003-2004 test group, a cross-tabular analysis might be expected to reveal a greater incidence of outcomes such as divorce or re-victimization simply because there was more time for those outcomes to occur. As a result, the effects of the court programs would seem greater than what would occur if equal times "at risk" for the two groups were considered. The crude rate comparisons and survival analysis techniques counteract this problem of non-equivalent time periods—in different ways.

The use of crude rates assumes that the likelihood of outcomes is constant over time. However, the occurrence of most of the time dependent outcomes considered for this evaluation was not constant over time. These outcomes were more likely than not to happen in the time immediately following an intervention point. Research on domestic violence seems to show, for example, that re-victimization is most likely to occur within a few weeks following police intervention. Since the cases in the 2002 group had a *greater* length of time when it was *much less* likely that re-

assaults or restraining order violations or divorces would occur, it is possible that the crude rates for the 2003-2004 group would seem much higher only because they were based to a greater extent upon time periods when these time-dependent outcomes were the most likely to happen. In other words, it is possible that the use of crude rates may distort the effects of the court programs because the time-dependent outcomes for the cases in the 2003-2004 group were considered only during the time periods when those outcomes were most likely to occur.

The techniques known as survival analysis allow for the quantification of survivorship to examine time until the occurrence of some event or outcome. In the analyses conducted for the accompanying article, survival analysis made it possible to compare the survival functions—the cumulative survival for each group as a function of time—of the test and comparison groups to determine if there were differences in the likelihood of a given outcome over time. For example, survival analysis allowed for a comparison of the between-group likelihoods of surviving victimization (i.e., the chances of not being re-victimized) following the granting of long-term protective orders at monthly, quarterly, and annual time intervals.

When multiple techniques were employed, the choice of results presented in the summary tables with the accompanying article depended on the most appropriate statistical technique. The results of cross-tabulations and means comparisons are presented when outcomes occurred at the time of the *ex parte* or long-term hearings. If the likelihood of an outcome that occurred after the hearings concluded was constant over time, the results of the crude-rate analyses are presented. The results of the survival analyses are presented in the summary tables for those time-dependent outcomes that were more likely to occur in the days following court intervention than at a later point in time.

The complete results for each of the analyses conducted are presented in the Judicial Council report *Court Innovations in Domestic Violence Cases: Evaluation Report—August 2005*. The most important summary results appear in the tables with the accompanying article.

Court innovations (continued from page 5)

Interviews

To discern whether the projects were carried out as planned, Judicial Council staff interviewed about twenty people who were actively involved in the programs. Interview questions also probed for results of the projects that the data analysis would not have captured. In some ways, the interviews supported a more positive view of the projects than did the data, with most interviewees believing that the projects had benefitted both the court and the petitioners, along with children, the community, and possibly respondents.

Interviewees reported that the advocate helped petitioners by giving them a better understanding of the process, assistance in stating their needs more clearly, and emotional support. In the past, according to one staff person, "Petitioners usually [gave] too much information in the petition and during the hearing and the judicial officer [had] to sift it out." According to interviewees, the advocate's ability to calm petitioners and give a sense of security also reduced confusion and distractions during the hearings.

Table 4. Longer-range Outcomes: Comparisons between Grant Objectives and

N = 1,072

	Grant goals/ expectations	Bivariate or frequencies Statistically significant changes in some groups are indicated by boldface.
Change in divorces or dissolutions filed for all married couples after <i>ex parte</i> petition filed	Increase	Decreased
Change in divorces or dissolutions filed for couple with children after <i>ex parte</i> petition filed	Increase	Decreased
Change in child custody cases filed after <i>ex parte</i> petition filed, when judge granted long-term order	Increase	Decreased
Change in civil domestic violence cases after <i>ex parte</i> petition filed	Decrease	Decreased
Change in criminal domestic violence cases after <i>ex parte</i> petition filed	Decrease	Decreased
Change in civil and criminal domestic violence cases, combined, after <i>ex parte</i> petition filed	Decrease	Decreased*

* Some groups statistically significant. A measure of statistical significance is used to determine how likely it is that a distribution of data is due to chance. The standard for statistical significance is whether there is less than one chance in 20, or less than a 5 percent chance that an event occurred because of chance. A test used to determine this is called "chi square." Chi square results are usually expressed as $p < .05$ (or as a smaller percentage, down to $< .001$). See the full report, *Court Innovations in Domestic Violence Cases*, for significance test results for the data described in this report.

Besides improving the court process, most people interviewed thought that the advocate helped petitioners find needed services in the community and helped petitioners feel more safe about coming to the courthouse.

The facilitator's role differed from the advocate's. The facilitator contacted only petitioners and respondents with children, either before or at the long-term hearing, to work out mutually agreeable parenting plans. The plans covered child custody, support, and visitation. One interviewee remarked that the facilitator made it possible for respondents and petitioners to address parenting issues during the period when the protective order was in effect, when otherwise contact was prohibited. Some interviewees, however, were concerned that the facilitator's contacts did not have sufficient due process protections, especially for the respondent. They were reluctant to use the information that the facilitator developed. Most, however, believed that the facilitator's work benefitted petitioners, respondents, the children, and the court process. An interviewee said, ". . . [P]eople feel more empowered with the facilitator. They are given confidence in their ability to access the court."

Some interviewees also mentioned that the court made substantial changes to the overall domestic violence process at the same time these particular projects began. Supervision in the DV court changed. The court hired new staff for the department, revised forms and began to meet regularly with

stakeholders and community groups. One interviewee spoke at some length about these changes, which may have affected court processes as much as the presence of the facilitator and advocate:

Just the existence of this grant has made everyone focus in on DV... The clerk's office has changed a lot of systems. The DV office is completely changed. There used to be a lot of burned-out people there. Now they are managing DV more at the front end. We also have meetings monthly with all the people involved, including clerks. These are all 'invisible' things ...like happier clerks giving better customer service.

Longer Range Effects Associated with the Projects and Other Data

Because in addition to improving the process for handling civil domestic violence cases, the court also hoped to have a longer-range effect on domestic violence in Anchorage, the Judicial Council also looked at possible long-term changes in the incidence of domestic violence. The analyses used are described in detail in the Council's full report. The sidebar accompanying this article, "Statistical Techniques Employed for Evaluation," describes the statistical approach. The project designers believed that two types of measures (Table 4) would indicate broader improvements. These included an increase in the likelihood that couples would seek a



Alaska Justice Forum

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Published quarterly by the

Justice Center
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3211 Providence Drive
Anchorage, AK 99508
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University of Alaska Anchorage
ISSN 0893-8903

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divorce, dissolution or permanent child custody order in superior court (measured by filings in superior court), and a decrease in the likelihood of further civil or criminal domestic violence cases involving the couples in the evaluated cases (measured by a review of the court's computerized case tracking system and a review of paper files).

On the first set of measures, Council evaluators found that although the court expected more divorces, dissolutions and child custody decisions, 2003-2004 couples had fewer filings for each. The decreases were not statistically significant. One hypothesis advanced for this finding was that parties perceived that they were better served through the domestic violence process with the advocate and facilitator and did not feel the need for longer-term solutions.

On the second set of measures, the Council found that the projected decreases in civil and criminal domestic violence cases between the two parties in the evaluated cases actually occurred. Civil domestic violence petitions and criminal charges for domestic violence involving the parties in the evaluated cases decreased more in the months following the long-term hearings for the 2003-04 group than they did for the 2002 group. For criminal and civil domestic violence cases combined, the finding was statistically significant. Although the data could not say whether the presence of the advocate and facilitator actually caused the decreases, they were strongly associated statistically with the decreases.

The Council also attempted to discover factors associated with the granting of long-term orders (Table 5). When all of the cases from both periods were reviewed, the analysis showed that three factors were closely associated with the granting of a long-term order:

- If the petitioner was female, the court was more likely to grant the order. Conversely, the court was less likely to grant orders for male petitioners. This factor lost its significance when the data were analyzed by the individual years.
- If the respondent did not have an attorney, the court was more likely to grant the order. Conversely, if the respondent did have an attorney, the court was less likely to grant the order.
- If the petitioner, at the long-term hearing, did not ask to have the *ex parte* order dismissed (or the long-term order denied), the court was more likely to grant the long-term order. Conversely, if the petitioner asked the judge to dismiss the *ex parte* order or to deny the long-term order, the court was very unlikely to impose the long-term order.

Table 5. Results of Multivariate Analyses

Statistically significant variables are indicated by boldface.

Variables tested	Variables important, bivariate	Variables important, both comparison and test years	Important changes between comparison and test years
Respondent had attorney	If respondent had attorney, fewer long-term orders	If respondent had attorney, fewer long-term orders	
Respondent used weapon	(not statistically significant)		
Children in case; petitioner had or asked for children	If children involved, fewer long-term orders		
Petitioner and respondent were ex-spouses	(not statistically significant)		
Petitioner was female	If petitioner was female, more long-term orders	If petitioner was female, more long-term orders	
Earlier domestic violence, case file	If earlier domestic violence in case file, more long-term orders		
Judge was domestic violence specialist	If judge was domestic violence specialist, more long-term orders		Domestic violence judge in 2002 more long-term orders (significant); not statistically significant in 2003-2004
Petitioner asked judge to deny long-term order	If petitioner asked judge to deny order, fewer long-term orders	If petitioner asked judge to deny order, fewer long-term orders	
Case was in 2002 (vs. 2003-2004)	(not statistically significant)		

The evaluators also found that in 2002 the long-term petitions heard by the specialist domestic violence masters were more likely to be granted. In 2003-04, the presence of the specialist masters in the case was no longer associated with a greater likelihood of a long-term order being granted. One reason for the change may have been that because the specialist judges in 2003-2004 heard a significantly larger percentage of the cases, their standards for granting long-term orders would have affected more cases. This hypothesis was consistent with interviewee comments that the specialist judges seemed to have different criteria than other judges for granting long-term orders.

Conclusions and Suggestions

The Council concluded that, on the whole, the projects had some modestly positive results and suggested that the court system might want to look at some aspects of the domestic violence process in greater detail.

- Because most people who filed an *ex parte* petition never went to a long-term hearing, the court system might want to see how better to serve the needs of people at the beginning of the process, or even before the beginning of the process through

educational and prevention programs for the general public.

- Because more people were filing petitions for *ex parte* orders either not involving the types of intimate relationships that were the focus of these projects or involving stalking, the court system might want to assess the needs of these groups of parties.
- Because many parties did not ask for child support, the court system might ask how this need was met.
- Because improved long-term processes may reduce the need for what are considered more permanent solutions in superior court, the court might ask whether increasing recourse to superior court should continue to be viewed as a goal for these projects.
- Because interviewees saw close associations between child-in-need-of-aid cases and domestic violence cases, the court might consider whether changes are needed for policies in these cases.

*This article is based on the Judicial Council report **Court Innovations in Domestic Violence Cases: Evaluation Report—August 2005**, which is available at the Alaska Judicial Council website at <http://www.ajc.state.ak.us/>.*

Anchorage Attitudes Toward Justice System

The following figures are derived from data from the Anchorage Community Survey, which was conducted by the Justice Center in late 2004 and early 2005. They present percentages for the respondents who answered pertinent questions. A total of 2,485 Anchorage residents participated in the survey. Response rates varied for each survey item, with an average of more than 80 percent of survey participants answering the questions represented by these

figures. The percentages are based only on the total number of respondents providing substantive answers to the given questions. Those who could not answer or refused to provide a response were not included in calculating percentages.

The complete results from the survey can be found at <http://justice.uaa.alaska.edu/research/2000/0508anchsurvey/0508sourcebook.html>.

Figure 1. Perceived Fairness: Courtroom Workgroup, by Respondent Race

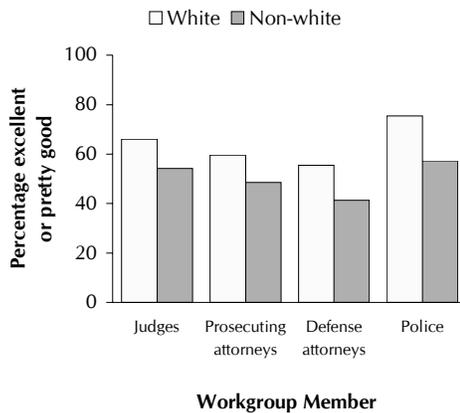


Figure 2. Perceived Punitiveness of the Criminal Justice System

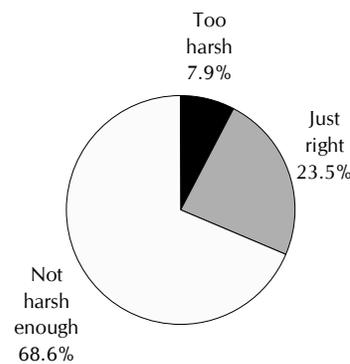
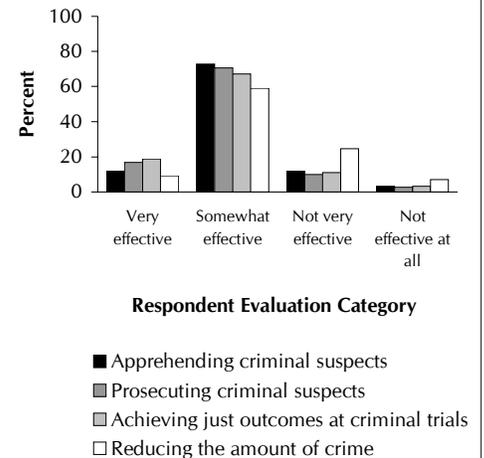


Figure 3. Evaluation of Criminal Justice System Effectiveness



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