

# The Judicial Oversight Demonstration Initiative

## PARTNERS

Milwaukee Circuit Court/Office of  
the Chief Judge

Milwaukee County Office of the Dis-  
trict Attorney

State Public Defender of Wisconsin

State of Wisconsin Department of  
Corrections

Milwaukee Police Department

Milwaukee County Law Enforcement  
Executive Association (MCLEEA)

Milwaukee County Executive's Office

Milwaukee County Board of Supervi-  
sors

Milwaukee Commission on Domestic  
Violence & Sexual Assault

Asha Family Services

Milwaukee Women's Center

Sojourner Truth House

Task Force on Family Violence

## Background

During fiscal year 1999, Milwaukee County was one of three national demon-  
stration sites selected to participate in the five-year Judicial Oversight Demonstration  
Initiative (JODI). Funded and managed by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Jus-  
tice Programs' Violence Against Women Office and the National Institute of Justice,  
JODI tests the idea that a coordinated community response to domestic violence that  
ensures a focused judicial response and a systematic criminal justice response can  
improve victim safety and increase offender accountability.

## Project Goals

To ensure victim safety and offender accountability, Milwaukee County aims to:

- Enhance criminal justice practices that will lead to: faster disposition of cases, in-  
creased outcomes due to evidence based prosecution, assignment of dedicated  
felony district attorneys to domestic violence cases, increased participation of  
victims in the court system and reduced recidivism.
- Implement system changes including: expanded prosecution capacity, specialized  
domestic violence detectives and investigative equipment, implementation of  
pretrial supervision of defendants, initiation of post-conviction review hearings.
- Enhance the structure for community domestic violence coordination and  
planning.

## Community Collaboration

Milwaukee County has a long history of community collaboration around domestic vio-  
lence. The county's coordinated community response to domestic violence—the Com-  
mission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault—was formed in 1979 and a special-  
ized domestic violence court was established in 1994. With the introduction of JODI,  
Milwaukee has enhanced its community coordinated response and its specialized  
courts with a focus on improved community collaboration and increased victim safety  
and offender accountability.

The JODI advisory board was created during the demonstration's initial planning phase.  
Several subcommittees, which spun-off from the advisory board, meet regularly and  
continue to make decisions about creating, revising and implementing JODI policies  
and programs.

Each JODI partner agency participates in a national evaluation. Funded by the National  
Institute of Justice and implemented by the Urban Institute, data derived from the na-  
tional evaluation will be used to develop "best practices" or how best to eliminate do-  
mestic violence in the community, ensure victim safety and offender accountability.

*For more information, contact:*

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## Partners

### **Milwaukee Circuit Court/Office of the Chief Judge**

Under JODI, a fourth dedicated domestic violence court was added to the three that existed. A court commissioner presides and has authority to review and modify conditions of bail, take a plea, and schedule jury trials and sentencing dates. In addition, the commissioner oversees pre-trial activity with the assistance of a bail monitor. A JODI employee, the bail monitor regularly contacts felony offenders and misdemeanants charged with intimate partner violence between the time of intake and trial. The bail monitor also contacts victims to assess safety and address any concerns.

### **Office of the District Attorney**

JODI allowed for enhancements to the district attorney's specialized domestic violence unit. Four additional assistant district attorneys were added to increase capacity to prosecute both misdemeanor and felony cases. In addition, the unit has worked to increase the number of vertical prosecutions—when one assistant district attorney sees a case through from beginning to end. This and other enhancements will lead to higher charging and conviction rates and a higher quality of prosecution.

### **Defense Bar**

Members of the public and private defense bar have been involved in the JODI planning process and continue to work with partners on issues related to their work as defenders. JODI encourages increased communication between the defense bar, the court, the district attorney's office and the probation department. Numerous defense bar members have participated in trainings on domestic violence and batterer intervention sponsored by JODI.

### **State of Wisconsin Department of Corrections**

The Court and the Department of Corrections have developed post-conviction procedures to ensure victims safety and offenders' compliance with judicial mandates. After trial and sentencing, judges and probation officers work together to bring offenders before the court for post-conviction court reviews. The hearings take place 2 to 3 months after sentencing. In addition, probation officers at the Department of Corrections are committed to reaching out to victims and providing them with information related to the case. In an effort to do this in a safe and useful way, probation officers are in the process of developing a model victim contact protocol in conjunction with other JODI partners.

### **Law Enforcement**

Under JODI, the Milwaukee Police Department has trained and assigned officers to investigate domestic violence cases. The department continues to operate its liaison unit in the district attorney's office. Four domestic violence specialists review case files to ensure complete and accurate records and gather missing information. In addition, the Department instituted a Family Violence Unit that will be responsible for crisis response and follow-up to all cases related to domestic violence. JODI provides a specialist who accompanies police officers from the Family Violence Unit on cases involving intimate partner violence.

### **Victim Services**

Milwaukee County offers an array of services to victims—both community-based and within the court. Victim witness advocates that work in the court specialize in helping victims navigate the court system, file protection orders, and find appropriate services in the community. Through a multi-organization collaborative effort, a waiting room for victims of domestic violence and sensitive crimes was established. The waiting room includes a separate children's area with toys, games, and activities.

### **Batterer Intervention Services**

Since JODI began, collaboration between batterer intervention providers (BIPs) and other JODI partners has significantly increased. This, ultimately, results in improved oversight of defendants. Representatives from BIPs, the court and probation meet regularly at a special subcommittee to discuss issues and enhancements for monitoring offenders. Referrals to BIPs from the court have increased and BIPs have begun to notice higher completion rates. In addition, JODI has assisted the four major Milwaukee BIPs in establishing program standards for batterer intervention.