



## **Montgomery County Domestic Relations Court Special Projects' Review: One-Year Anniversary for KIOSKS, Pro se Workshops, & Domestic Violence Wallet Cards**

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Dayton, Ohio – 2014 was a dynamic year for The Montgomery County Domestic Relations Court. Collaboration with the legal community and law enforcement led to innovative ways to better serve the public. Throughout this past year the Court has continued to revisit these ideas and adjust processes for more effective results.

KIOSK check-in was introduced in June of last year. This simple process where attorneys and private citizens check themselves in for a hearing continues to provide efficiency to all involved. It provides parties the ability to check their demographic information and provide the Court with updated information so that they are fully notified of future Court events. The KIOSK also frees staff time to address other parties with new filings including requests for Civil Protection Orders (CPO) stemming from Domestic Violence.

In light of the growing numbers of CPO requests and pro se litigants coming to the Court, October, 2014 brought two more opportunities to better meet community needs. Domestic Relations Attorneys and the Greater Dayton Volunteer Lawyers Project joined the Court to offer free "Pro Se Workshops." Individuals who have filed pro se paperwork with the Court, are not represented by an attorney, and meet income eligibility requirements can consult with a volunteer attorney at no cost. Participant numbers have steadily increased as word about this offering spread.

Finally, last fall the Court began providing Domestic Violence Wallet Cards. While persons protected by a Civil Protection Order are instructed to carry the order with them at all times, a packet of paper can become worn after a few months, yet alone years. Upon collaborating with local law enforcement, the Domestic Relations Court developed a wallet card that supplements the full order, containing pertinent information for any officer responding to a call. It is the size of any standard credit card or ID and is laminated. These cards are offered to anyone who is granted a full protection order. After having only a handful of persons take advantage of this resource, Administrative Judge Denise Cross recognized that a potential barrier for those protected was to return to the Court and pick up the card. In response, the Domestic Violence Wallet Cards are now mailed with the protected party's full protection order.

The Court continues to look at new technology options to better reach the parties and attorneys and is currently developing its e-filing system which will join the civil and criminal divisions of the Common Pleas. Judge Cross has been sharing the court's progressive ideas with other counties and was recently notified by Hamilton County (Cincinnati) that the DV Wallet Cards, Kiosks and Pro se clinics are all projects being considered or underway for their community.

Any party who did not receive a wallet card, or needs a replacement, is welcome to come to the Domestic Relations Court, located at 301 W. Third Street, Second Floor and pick one up in person. The Greater Dayton Volunteer Lawyers Project (GDVLP) is responsible for scheduling participants for the “Pro Se Workshops”. To determine eligibility for participation in a workshop, call Legal Aid of Western Ohio at 1-888-534-1432, Monday through Thursday from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. And as always, the Domestic Relations Court thanks all of the continued collaboration from the County Commissioners, law enforcement and attorneys assisting in offering better service for all of the community.

*Submitted by: Jennifer A. Petrella-Ahrens, Esq., C.C.M., Domestic Relations Court Administrator, November 5, 2015*