



Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia

News

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Project to Promote Access, Safety in Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Cases Expands to Wood County

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PARKERSBURG, W.Va. – Domestic violence and sexual assault victims in Wood County will soon have a way to file petitions and attend follow-up hearings without having to be in the same building with the people they are seeking protection from.

The media and the public are invited to attend a final test of the Wood County Remote Victim Outreach Project at 2:30 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 28, in the courtroom of Third Family Court Circuit (Pleasants and Wood Counties) Judge C. Darren Tallman in the Donald F. Black Courthouse Annex, 315 Market St., Parkersburg.

Previously, victims of domestic violence and sexual assault had to go in person to magistrate court to seek domestic violence protective orders or personal safety orders, and they had to attend follow-up hearings in magistrate court and family court in person. Now in Wood County, victims have the option of filing a petition and participating in the court hearings remotely from the Wood County Family Crisis Intervention Center.

Employees of the center will appear remotely at the Sept. 28 test to demonstrate how the process will work. The center can be contacted at 304-428-2333 or through a 24-hour hotline at 1-800-794-2335.

The addition of Wood County brings the total number of counties participating in the Remote Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Outreach Project to eight. The other active counties are Cabell, Jefferson, Kanawha, Lincoln, Mason, Ohio, and Wayne.

An anonymous user of the program in another county shared their thoughts on what it meant to have this remote option: “When I found out about the option provided at the Sexual Assault Help Center where I could participate virtually, my anxiety was significantly reduced, and I finally felt like I can do this, and things will get better. I'm very appreciative that this virtual option is available for individuals facing the unthinkable.”

“This important project will continue to expand in West Virginia,” said Chief Justice Beth Walker. “It is designed to improve safety for petitioners while also protecting the

due process rights of respondents. This is an example of how the state court system works for everyone.”

Petitions also can still be filed during weekdays, after hours, and on weekends through each county’s magistrate court by calling 911. Magistrates are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week in every West Virginia county.

The Remote Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Outreach Project is made possible by funding through West Virginia’s Division of Justice and Community Services, the state administering agency for the STOP Violence Against Women Grant Program.

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