

# What is a Domestic Violence Court?

At its most basic level, a domestic violence court is a dedicated docket that schedules all domestic-violence-related cases involving intimate partners on the same day/s and time/s. In doing so, courts recognize that domestic violence cases involving intimate partners are high-risk and present unique safety concerns. Hearing these cases at the same time allows courts to efficiently dedicate staff and resources to ensure better and safer outcomes.

**There is no one single model of a domestic violence court.** They have been implemented and used in different jurisdictions nationally and internationally and in a variety of contexts, including criminal, civil and family law, and order of protection cases. Domestic violence courts share key features and principles, including:

- Courtroom security protocols
- Presence of victim-advocates
- Court compliance reviews for cases
- System-wide coordination and information sharing
- Specialized training and dedicated staff

## **What are Domestic Violence *Mentor Courts*?**

The Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women regularly selects specialized courts that it views to be national models and designates them as mentor courts. Mentor courts provide support to communities interested in implementing or enhancing a specialized court response to domestic violence cases.

In addition to sharing sample forms and materials and lessons learned from their own community, mentor courts host and conduct in-person and virtual site visits for visiting teams of judges, court personnel, and other legal system and domestic violence stakeholders. On a typical site visit, visitors will observe the court in action and meet the judge; confer with project staff and participate in peer-to-peer discussion;

obtain sample documents; and generate ideas for enhancing approaches back home.

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

To learn more about active and emeritus domestic violence mentor court models, visit:

[innovatingjustice.org/mentor-courts](http://innovatingjustice.org/mentor-courts)

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