



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

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Member Organizations

**The Umbrella Center for
Domestic Violence Services**
Ansonia, CT

The Center for Family Justice
Bridgeport, CT

Women's Center
Danbury, CT

**Domestic Violence Program
United Services**
Dayville, CT

The Network
Enfield, CT

**Domestic Abuse Services
Greenwich YWCA**
Greenwich, CT

Interval House
Hartford, CT

**Chrysalis Domestic Violence
Services**
Meriden, CT

New Horizons
Middletown, CT

Prudence Crandall Center
New Britain, CT

**The Umbrella Center for
Domestic Violence Services**
New Haven, CT

Safe Futures
New London, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Norwalk, CT

Women's Support Services
Sharon, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Stamford, CT

Susan B. Anthony Project
Torrington, CT

Safe Haven
Waterbury, CT

**Domestic Violence Program
United Services**
Willimantic, CT

**CCADV Calls on Legislature to Make Successful Online
Restraining Order Option Permanent Following Pandemic**

Hartford, CT – The Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) is today urging lawmakers to permanently open the door for online restraining order applications when they convene in special session later this fall. An Executive Order issued by Governor Ned Lamont in early April to allow for an online process – for the very first time - has validated the need and efficacy of this approach with nearly 700 applications filed with the assistance of a domestic violence advocate during this period. Yet, despite these unprecedented efforts to create an efficient online process, the total number of restraining order applications filed in the state fell over 50% during April and May, prior to courts beginning to re-open in June.

Today CCADV released its latest policy brief, [Online Restraining Orders: Ensuring Safe Access to Court-Ordered Protections During a Pandemic](#). The brief assesses the processes established during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure victim access to restraining orders amid court closures and limited hours of operation in Connecticut.

“The pandemic has created more opportunities for abusers to control their victims while simultaneously having a negative impact on the ability of victims to seek help,” said CCADV chief executive officer, Karen Jarmoc. “It is more critical now than ever to ensure access to court-ordered protections for victims of domestic violence and CCADV has worked closely with the Judicial Branch and policymakers to remove potential barriers caused by the pandemic.”

Over the past five months, CT Safe Connect – the state’s domestic violence resource hub - has assisted with filing 292 restraining order applications on behalf of victims, connected victims to local providers for help in over 170 cases where the victim filed an application without advocacy assistance, and followed up with an additional 500 inquiries relative to the restraining order application process. In addition, advocates within the state’s 18 domestic violence organizations provided assistance with 405 applications.

As stay-at-home orders went into place, it quickly became apparent that the safety measures taken by the Judicial Branch to limit public and staff exposure to COVID had the unintended consequence of limiting access to family violence restraining orders. Victims also expressed hesitation about going to the few remaining open courts for fear of COVID. The Judicial Branch, Connecticut Legal Services, Inc. and CCADV offered guidance around a solution. In response, Governor Lamont signed Executive Order No. 7T on April 2nd paving the way for the restraining order application process to be completed entirely online.

Said Jarmoc, “We found that the social distancing challenges ultimately led to a more efficient online process that enhances victim safety and streamlines the court’s work. While the Governor’s executive order remains in place through November 9, 2020, we are calling on the CT General Assembly to make the process permanent through statute when it next convenes.”

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The online option has allowed victims to file their application independently or seek assistance from either CT Safe Connect or one of CCADV's 18 member organizations. Advocates assist the victim with completing the application, the contents of which the victim must attest to under penalty of false statement; file the application on their behalf; and, coordinate service of the order with a state marshal.

By creating more opportunities for advocates to be involved in the application process, they are able to more fully assess the victim's needs and help them to think through other options related to matters such as divorce or child custody and make connections to additional resources. This approach has resulted in judicial economy, fewer individuals in the courthouse, and less physical contact with staff, etc., thus supporting safe distancing practices needed for the foreseeable future. Court personnel also noted efficiencies achieved by advocates accurately adhering to application instructions.

CCADV is calling on the General Assembly to update statutory language that will allow this online process to continue permanently. As is noted in Executive Order 7T, this entails replacing the requirement of a sworn affidavit with the requirement to complete the application under penalty of false statement. CCADV is also asking legislators to include language that ensures the electronic transfer of documents among all stakeholders, including advocates, court clerks, and state marshals.

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Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Inc. is the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence and those organizations that serve them. We are a membership organization of the state's 18 domestic violence organizations. Help is available to victims 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by visiting www.CTSafeConnect.org or by texting/calling (888) 774-2900. For more information about CCADV, please visit www.ctcadv.org.