



OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 1, 2009

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DOROTHY BROWN LAUNCHES ONLINE ORDERS OF PROTECTION PROGRAM AT START OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH
Convenient Internet Service on Clerk's Office Web Site Enables Users to Easily Complete Court Forms Needed to Obtain Orders of Protection

CHICAGO (October 1, 2009) –Today, the Honorable Dorothy Brown, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County, was joined by several domestic violence advocates to publicly announce that SmartForms, an online Orders of Protection program, is available on the Clerk's Office Web site (www.cookcountyclerkofcourt.org). SmartForms is a self-service program, accessed via the Internet, that facilitates the completion of civil domestic violence orders of protection court forms. The use of the SmartForms Online Orders of Protection service on the Clerk's Office's Web site is free of charge to the public.

The **SmartForms Orders of Protection** application allows individuals who are victims of domestic violence to quickly prepare the Court paperwork needed to request an Emergency Order of Protection and other Orders. Individuals can request protective orders for themselves, their children, and anyone else living in their home.

The application also allows individuals to request protective orders on behalf of a minor or on behalf of a high-risk adult who can't otherwise make the request themselves.

In addition, if there are minor children involved, remedies for custody, child support, visitation and other child-related matters can be requested.

Clerk Brown planned the SmartForms launch to coincide with the national observance of **Domestic Violence Awareness Month** in October. "The increased public interest in domestic violence during October is important to getting the message out that this new service is available for victims of domestic violence," said Clerk Brown. "We want victims to know that they have legal recourse, and law enforcement and the courts are acting in their best interest to protect them from future violence. Obtaining an order of protection is a vitally important procedure for victims seeking safety from their abusers."

Domestic violence is an issue that devastatingly affects our communities on a daily basis.

Domestic Violence affects women:

- Domestic violence is the single most common source of injury to women – it is more common than auto accidents, muggings, and rapes by a stranger *combined*.
- 97% of the women killed by another family member were killed by their husband.
- More than 4,000 women each year are killed by their partners.

- By age 20, 1 in 3 young women will experience dating violence.

Domestic Violence affects children:

- 63% of boys, ages 11 to 20, arrested for homicide, have killed their mother’s abuser.
- 70% of men in court ordered treatment for domestic violence witnessed it as a child.
- 80% of runaways come from homes where domestic violence occurs.

Domestic Violence affects men:

- 5-10% of domestic violence victims are men, although this is a highly underreported number due to society’s stigmas.

Domestic Violence affects society as a whole:

- Medical expenses from domestic violence are about \$3-5 billion annually and businesses forfeit at least another \$100 million in lost wages, sick leave, non-productivity and absenteeism.

“For victims of the crime of domestic violence, it is important to have a safety plan for themselves and any young children who are in harm’s way. One legal tool that might be an important part of a safety plan is a Protection Order,” said Clerk Brown.

A *Protection Order* is a civil order for victims of domestic violence who have been assaulted, threatened, or stalked and are afraid of being hurt again. The court tells the “family or household member” who threatened or assaulted not to harm the victim again. This order is requested by the victim at any local court. There is no cost for the Protection Order.

Clerk Brown added, “The Clerk’s Office understands that providing this online service is a great assistance to victims as well as to domestic violence advocates, as this is a way to speed the process of getting people the protection they need.”

SmartForms is available on the Clerk’s Office’s Web site via the *TurboCourt*TM service, a suite of Internet-based interactive forms for self-represented litigants. It allows people who plan to represent themselves in court to quickly and easily prepare their forms for filing and educates them along the way. *TurboCourt*TM can be accessed any time of day or night from the convenience of the home, court, library, office or any facility that has Internet access.

“The applications are designed to be very easy to use, so even someone with little or no computer experience or knowledge of legal matters can go through the program without difficulty” according to Steven Kimmelman, product manager for INTRESYS, makers of *TurboCourt*TM. “We make sure you don’t leave any important information blank, we validate many of your answers as you go through the virtual interview, and we’ll even do any calculations for you that are needed.”

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