



COMMON PLEAS COURT

GENERAL DIVISION

Richard E. Berens, Administrative Judge
David A. Trimmer, Judge

PRESS RELEASE 4/8/2019

On March 28, 2019, the General Division of the Fairfield County Court of Common Pleas was awarded a grant in the amount of \$12,353.00 by the Ohio Supreme Court's Civil Justice Program to provide legal assistance to indigent litigants involved in protection order cases.

The Common Pleas Court submitted a grant application to the Ohio Supreme Court for consideration in the fall of last year. The proposal requested funding for its CSPO Legal Assistance fund, a pilot project aimed at engaging local attorneys to provide legal services and representation to low-income individuals who are named as a party in Civil Stalking Protection Order or Civil Sexually Oriented Protection Order (CSPO/CSOOPO) cases.

“Providing low-income, self-represented litigants with legal representation in CSPO/CSOOPO cases ensures that all litigants receive personal, procedural, and substantive justice,” explained Magistrate Jillian Boone, who presides over a majority of the Court's CSPO/CSOOPO protection order cases. “When everyone is adequately informed of the process, the applicable standards, and all possible outcomes, it increases the likelihood of personal justice being accomplished in each case.”

The stakes in CSPO/CSOOPO cases are high for both parties: petitioners seek peace-of-mind, safety, and protection from unrelenting, and sometimes violent, individuals. Respondents face the potential of jail time and criminal prosecution upon violating terms of the imposed order. Despite this, CSPO and CSOOPO cases are civil in nature: therefore, litigants do not have the right to an attorney, even if they cannot afford one financially. Further, since 2015, the number of Petitions for CSPOs and CSOOPOs have increased exponentially. In 2015, a total of 31 petitions were filed. That number increased to 83 in 2018, resulting in a 168% increase in protection order cases over the past three years.

In alignment with the Civil Justice Program's mission, the CSPO Legal Assistance Fund will provide low-income individuals an opportunity to apply for an attorney to help them through the protection order process. This grant will ensure that the Court's CSPO Legal Assistance Fund will be funded through April 30, 2020.

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