



Prosecutor/District Attorney's Role in the DVHRT

Prosecutors (primarily District Attorneys and County Attorneys in Texas) may prosecute a criminal case, which includes making recommendations based on decisions regarding charges and bail for an offender to judges and magistrates. It may also involve representing a survivor in a protective order case, which includes discussing which provisions are most important in protecting the specific survivor. Prosecutors should prepare the survivor for court and use existing risk assessments to identify patterns of violent behavior or escalation of family violence.

Prosecutors on DVHRTs should also be prepared to interact directly with victims by adhering to survivor-centered prosecution. This means placing the needs and priorities of a survivor of violence at the forefront of any response. To support these goals, prosecutors should be trained in survivor-centered prosecution and trauma-informed interviewing techniques. These may include:

- » Preparing a victim to testify if they choose to do so,
- » Incorporating the survivor's requests and input at charging and sentencing, and
- » Being ready to present cases where the victim is unavailable to testify or feels doing so will compromise their safety.

The risk of violence in domestic violence cases sharply rises between the offender's arrest and the pre-trial proceedings. Bail decisions, conditions of bond/ release, and even pre-trial decisions are difficult for victims to navigate, as the defendant's rights must be balanced against the severe level of danger to the victim. Prosecutors must maintain regular communication with survivors and advocates to stay focused on safety while collaborating with other team partners to move these high-risk cases forward quickly.

The role of the Prosecutor and District Attorney's Office on a DVHRT is to:

- » Participate or have a representative attend all scheduled DVHRT meetings.
- » Understanding and respecting that survivors are the experts on their own safety and that prosecutors should listen to the survivor's perspective in each case.
- » Analyze case data and outcomes and issue periodic reports on outcomes.
- » Collaborate on solutions to any identified gaps in system response.
- » Provide the DVHRT with timely information on any current criminal cases, including court dates, bond hearings, conditions of release, and other relevant matters as allowed by law and agency policy.
- » Use available risk assessment information to inform prosecutorial decisions.
- » Offer direct access or referrals to safety planning, civil legal assistance, and crime victims' rights and compensation services, discussing survivor input on bond conditions, and orders of protection.
- » Connect survivors with victims' assistance programs to address safety planning during courtroom procedures.
- » Maintain regular communication with the survivor, either independently or through the DVHRT, to keep them apprised of case progress.
- » Assist in the filling out and preparation of protective orders for high-risk victims.
- » Notify Probation and/or Parole offices when a case gets accepted into the DVHRT.