



**SYSTEM ALERT:
ARIZONA'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Probation Officer's View

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Probation officers (POs) in Arizona have the difficult job of moving probationers toward rehabilitation. Simultaneously they make sure offenders comply with court orders, assess their potential risk to the community, and bring them before the court for serious probation violations. In DV cases, POs have an even tougher job. They are challenged to motivate change in probationers whose abusive behaviors may be ingrained from childhood experiences of violence, and who may have used violence in numerous relationships. At the same time, they must consider the safety of victims who, for a variety of reasons, often remain with their abusers and may not report new incidents of abuse.

"Best practices" suggest we need specialized DV caseloads supervised by well-trained probation teams (consisting of a PO and a surveillance officer) that are skilled in addressing both offender "manipulations" and victim safety concerns. Unfortunately, such teams are not well funded throughout the state, and DV caseloads are often too large for officers to closely supervise.

Domestic violence offenders tend to re-offend and violate the conditions of their probation more than other offenders, yet incarceration is not necessarily what victims want, nor is it always in the best interest of the community. The result is that POs are often frustrated by a lack of the resources needed for effective offender treatment that includes therapists giving *immediate* feedback about progress, victim advocacy services including courtroom advocacy and direct assistance to victims of probationers, temporary residences for probationers' "time outs" other than jail, and viable and affordable GPS electronic monitoring of offenders. There also needs to be an acknowledgement by *all* players in the criminal justice system – and by community leaders – that domestic violence is an epidemic affecting the whole of society and that we must provide the appropriate resources to help perpetrators, victims, and their families.