



## New Volunteer Opportunity Helps Domestic Violence Survivors

Rebecca A. Kulaga

In 2017, the Ada County Domestic Violence Court, the Idaho Volunteer Lawyer's Program (IVLP), and the Women's and Children's Alliance launched the Domestic Violence Protection Order Volunteer Program. The project idea originated from Judge Carolyn Minder and the Fourth Judicial District Pro Bono Committee.

In 2015, the Ada County Domestic Violence Court expanded to absorb the permanent protection order docket. To kick off the new volunteer program this spring, Judge Andrew Ellis and the Women's and Children's Alliance Court Advocate, Manager Maureen Wishkoski, presented a pro bono training at Concordia University School of Law. The CLE covered domestic violence protection orders, civil protective orders, and domestic violence principles.

At the CLE, several attorneys volunteered to represent domestic violence survivors at protection order hearings. Currently, the roster has grown to 18 volunteer attorneys who have undertaken 39 hearings since April. In less than six months, volunteers gave more than 235 hours of pro bono assistance to domestic violence survivors.

The coordinated community response between the Ada County Domestic Violence Court, IVLP, and the Women's and Children's Alliance, and volunteer attorneys has been very successful. The collaborative program is structured between the three organizations and pro bono attorneys. It works like this: survivors apply and are screened for

the Domestic Violence Protection Order Volunteer Program through the Women's and Children's Alliance. The Ada County Domestic Violence Court contacts the volunteer attorneys for availability and transfers necessary paperwork. IVLP ensures all volunteer attorneys receive credit for pro bono hours worked and have access to malpractice insurance coverage.

These agencies look forward to expanding this new volunteer program. This past summer, Idaho Legal Aid Services joined the effort by offering to provide additional civil legal resources to domestic violence survivors after their hearing's completion.

An upcoming October 26th CLE is being planned to encourage more attorneys and limited-licensed law students to join the volunteer roster. Attorneys can elect to take volunteer cases at any time. This volunteer opportunity typically requires approximately seven hours over one month.

Limited-licensed law students now have a fresh opportunity to practice their skills, including client

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interviews, hearing preparation, trial skills, and negotiation. All the while, domestic violence survivors receive the phenomenal legal benefits a volunteer attorney provides.

If you have any questions about the Domestic Violence Program Order Volunteer Program, please contact Rebecca Kulaga, Domestic Violence Court Program Administrator, at [rkulaga@adaweb.net](mailto:rkulaga@adaweb.net). Also, please visit the DVC's website for more information - [https://fourthjudicialcourt.idaho.gov/ada/domestic\\_violence-criminal.html](https://fourthjudicialcourt.idaho.gov/ada/domestic_violence-criminal.html)

**Rebecca A. Kulaga** moved to Boise, in May 2011, after completing her studies at Creighton University School of Law. She entered practice and worked predominantly with domestic violence survivors. She began working for the Ada County Domestic Violence Court in January 2014. In December 2015, she became the Domestic Violence Court Program Administrator.

