

**A Multi-Faceted Approach to Seeking  
Protection and Justice  
For Victims of Domestic Violence in Maryland**

*2009 Governor's Summer Internship Program  
The 22nd Class*

"The prevention of domestic violence and the support for the victims of these heinous crimes, improving protection, prevention, enforcement and services are among our Administration's most urgent and pressing priorities. We must do all that we can to help Maryland's most vulnerable citizens."

-Governor Martin O'Malley<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Office of the Governor, "Governor O'Malley, Lt. Governor Brown Announce Domestic Violence Grants," The Press Office, October 23, 2008.

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## **Introduction**

Domestic violence permeates many cultures and has a significant presence in the state of Maryland. It is extremely difficult to prevent and prosecute for a myriad of reasons. The proposals described here seek to alleviate some of this difficulty and bring protection and justice to more victims of domestic violence in Maryland through approaching the problem from two angles. First, a policy is proposed which seeks to increase reporting of domestic violence incidents among victims who are also undocumented immigrants. Second, another policy is proposed to improve Maryland's court system so that legal resources may be utilized more efficiently, and quickly offer more high quality legal assistance to domestic violence victims.

Due to fear of deportation, it is estimated that thousands of undocumented immigrants in Maryland who are victims of domestic violence (some of whom are also victims of human trafficking), are unable or unwilling to report incidents of domestic violence against them to the police, which allows abuse to continue.

The distinctive nature of domestic violence cases require a unique set of resources for victims. The modification of the court system to include a Unit dedicated towards domestic violence would condense resources into a single agency, thus simplifying the legal process for victims. Maryland possesses the resources to bolster such a necessary change and such a Unit would assist in utilizing such resources.

## **Proposals to Provide Sanctuary to Immigrants**

Our proposal is twofold. First, we propose that a so-called "sanctuary policy" be enacted throughout the state. This sanctuary policy shall make it the policy of all law enforcement agencies and officers not to inquire about immigration status of a victim or witness of any violent crime when their assistance is sought. This policy will suppress some of the fear that undocumented immigrants have about contacting law enforcement for assistance due to fear of deportation and of being reported to the federal Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Second, we propose that information about the aforementioned sanctuary policy and the federal T and U visa program be made available to potential victims of domestic violence in pamphlets in hospitals, by EMT's, and by police officers who are called to the scene of domestic violence incidents. This information should also be made available on all websites of organizations that provide services to victims of domestic violence in Maryland. This information should include the T and U visa program's purpose, who it provides aid to, who is eligible to apply and a step-by-step outline of the application process. It is also important that this information be available in different languages to help ensure that the victim will be able to use it. Based on the numbers of immigrants who became legal Maryland citizens in Fiscal Year 2006, the languages best suited to cater to the state's undocumented domestic violence victim population are: Spanish, French, Hindi, Mandarin and Korean. Furthermore, we propose that all organizations that provide services to victims of domestic violence in Maryland to, at least, be able to refer non-English speakers to translators or other services which offer help in their language.

## **Domestic Violence in Maryland**

An average of 20,864 arrests per year was made stemming from domestic

violence-related incidents in Maryland between 2003 and 2007.<sup>2</sup> In one year, from July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008, 75 people in Maryland were killed as a result of domestic violence.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, domestic violence incidents are notoriously under-reported. According to the Department of Justice, approximately 60% of domestic violence incidents were reported to police between 1998 and 2002, and about 49% of domestic violence incidents reported to police resulted in an arrest.<sup>4</sup>

An article in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health calls domestic violence an “iceberg” issue, meaning “most of the cases are submerged, allegedly invisible to society.” It explains that prevalent data is only one side to the domestic violence issue, the other half being the fact that most cases go unreported. It is also this side of the issue that receives less attention. The article estimates that 25% of the population is affected by domestic violence, but only between 2.5% and 15% report it. This resistance to reporting domestic violence is caused by personal (embarrassment, fear of retaliation by abuser, economic dependency) and societal (imbalanced power between the genders, familial privacy) reasons.<sup>5</sup>

## **Immigration in Maryland**

### **According to a report by the Department of Legislative Services:**

- Immigration has grown significantly within Maryland. Between 2000 and 2006, approximately 130,000 immigrants moved to Maryland, the 15th highest gain of all 50 states.
- Maryland's foreign-born population is above 680,000, which is over 12.2% of the state's

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<sup>2</sup> Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence. “The 2007 Uniform Crime Report.” <http://www.mnadv.org/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20UCR2007.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> “2008 Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence Statistics.” Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence. [http://www.mnadv.org/DV\\_Stats/dv\\_stats.html](http://www.mnadv.org/DV_Stats/dv_stats.html)

<sup>4</sup> “Family Violence Statistics.” Bureau of Justice Statistics. June 2005. <<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/fvs02.pdf>>.

<sup>5</sup> Enrique Gracia, “Unreported cases of domestic violence against women: towards an epidemiology of social silence, tolerance, and inhibition,” *The Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 58 (2004): 536-537.

entire population

- Fewer than half, at 44.7%, of Maryland's foreign-born population are naturalized American citizens
- In 2006, Maryland's foreign-born population was at the 15th highest percentage in the country
- The Pew Research Center estimates that between 11.5 and 12 million undocumented immigrants are living in the United States, about half of whom initially entered the country legally.<sup>6</sup>

### **Domestic Violence in the Immigrant Community in Maryland**

Domestic violence spans across cultures, and immigrant communities are no more immune to domestic violence than any other. In a 2007 study, researchers took a sample of 10 women from each of the following immigrant populations in Baltimore: Russian-speaking, Spanish-speaking, Chinese-speaking, Korean-speaking and Francophone African women. The sample totaled 50 women who ranged in from 19 to 78 years of age, with a median age of 32. Two-thirds of the subjects were married. The survey indicated that 64% of the respondents personally knew someone who had been abused by his or her spouse, and 82% of respondents believed domestic violence was a problem in their communities, with 47.7% saying that domestic violence was a serious problem.<sup>7</sup>

This study also unearthed some of the specific reasons why domestic violence is underreported in immigrant communities, including, but not limited to, "language barriers, needing and wanting to remain with their husbands/partners, needing/wanting to remain in their immigrant communities, fear of deportation (of self or husband/partner), inability to work or get an education appropriate to the new society's demands complex family dynamics, childcare

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<sup>6</sup> The Department of Legislative Services, "International Immigration: The Impact on Maryland Communities," Office of Policy Analysis, 2008, <http://hispanic.maryland.gov/documents/hispanic/2008ImmigrationImpactonMaryland.pdf>.

needs, [and] not understanding the laws".<sup>8</sup>.

The Baltimore Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice (MOCJ) reports that domestic violence in immigrant communities is a problem: "immigrants have additional barriers to overcome when combating domestic violence".<sup>9</sup> MOCJ reports that these additional barriers include fear of deportation and of retaliation from the abuser, language barriers, immigration status, fear of deportation, losing custody of children, especially if the child was born in the United States and the victim is not a U.S. citizen, being ostracized by their friends, family and community, financial insecurity, religious faith, denial, self-blame, isolation, and a seemingly inaccessible system.<sup>10</sup>

### **Sanctuary Policies around the United States and as They Currently Exist in Maryland**

Sanctuary policies for undocumented immigrants "generally prohibit city employees and police officers from asking individuals about their citizenship or immigration status".<sup>11</sup>

According to the Congressional Research Service, two states (Alaska and Oregon) and several cities (Albuquerque, Austin, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York, San Diego, San Francisco, and Seattle) have adopted sanctuary policies. In Maryland, Baltimore City and Takoma Park have adopted sanctuary policies.<sup>12</sup>

A good example of a sanctuary policy is Executive Order No. 41 passed by Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York City in September, 2003. The order included provisions such

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<sup>7</sup> The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. "National Conference on Domestic Violence and 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration."

<sup>8</sup> Natalie Sokoloff and, Susan Pearce. "Domestic Violence through an Immigrant Lens in Baltimore, MD: Some Formal and Informal Help-Seeking Approaches," [http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p239244\\_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p239244_index.html).

<sup>9</sup> The Baltimore Office of the Mayor, "Domestic Violence in Specific Communities," <http://www.baltimorecity.gov/government/mocj/communities.php>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> The Department of Legislative Services, "International Immigration: The Impact on Maryland Communities," Office of Policy Analysis.

as stating that no city official or employee may inquire about a person's immigration status, stating that no city official or employee shall disclose confidential information (including immigration status), defining "illegal activity" as more than mere status as an undocumented alien, and stating that it shall be the policy of the police department not to inquire about immigration status of crime victims, witnesses, or others seeking assistance.<sup>13</sup>

By implementing a policy similar to this, Maryland can:

- a) reduce fear in undocumented immigrants who need the assistance of law enforcement but are too scared to contact them
- b) allow all people living in Maryland to benefit from its public services, including public education and health services, and
- c) Stay within the federal parameters that deal with protecting the identities of undocumented immigrants in regards to communication with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (designated in §642 of the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996).

A statewide sanctuary policy must be implemented. Currently, local law enforcement agencies in Maryland handle undocumented immigrants in different ways. For example, Baltimore City and Takoma Park, Maryland both have sanctuary policies that only apply within their jurisdictions.<sup>14</sup>

Takoma Park enacted a sanctuary law in 1985 to protect numerous refugees from warring El Salvador and Guatemala from being deported. According to city official, the Takoma Park Police Department neither inquires into nor records information about an individual's immigration status. However, police officers are not restricted from arresting someone who is suspected of criminal activity or who is subject to an outstanding warrant unrelated to

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Office of the Mayor, New York, N.Y. 10007. Executive Order No. 41, September 17, 2003.

<sup>14</sup> The Department of Legislative Services, "International Immigration: The Impact on Maryland Communities," Office of Policy Analysis.

immigration status. The city's sanctuary law, however, is not binding on the Maryland State Police or on the Montgomery County Police Department. The county police department advises that it closely coordinates investigations with the city police department and provides assistance when requested. If a county level investigation requires county police officers to enter Takoma Park, the county department has the authority to do so and to conduct the investigation in a way that is consistent with county policy, as well as state and Federal law.

### **Unaware of Options**

Studies have shown that many undocumented immigrants who are victims of domestic violence do not report their abuse for fear of deportation.<sup>15</sup> However, undocumented immigrants need not necessarily fear deportation due to the creation of two special classifications of visas, the T and U visas, which were created by the 2000 Victims of Trafficking and Violence Act.<sup>16</sup> The T visa applies undocumented immigrants who are victims of human trafficking, and the U visa applies to undocumented immigrants who are victims of violent or heinous crimes, including but not limited to: domestic violence, rape, torture, incest, kidnapping, prostitution and sexual assault.<sup>17</sup> After applying and upon being granted one of these visas, the immigrant is designated as having "lawful temporary resident status" and also is provided with employment authorization or a temporary work "permit".<sup>18</sup>

An inventory of the websites of the 26 organizations and agencies which provide services specifically for victims of domestic violence in the state of Maryland turned up only one mention of the T and U visas. While these visas are extremely promising to undocumented victims of

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<sup>15</sup> Natalie Sokoloff and Pearce, Susan. "Domestic Violence through an Immigrant Lens in Baltimore, MD: Some Formal and Informal Help-Seeking Approaches."

<sup>16</sup> H.R. 3244, "Victims of Trafficking and Violence Act," 106<sup>th</sup> Congress. (2000).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

domestic violence, they do no good if they are not aware of the program.

The issue of the lack of advertising of domestic violence help outlets is addressed on a local level in the 2005 Calvert County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team Annual Report. One of their findings on why domestic violence is so prevalent stated that “none of the victims sought services prior to the event even though there was a history of domestic violence in the relationship.”<sup>19</sup> To remedy this issue, the team suggested that “all police agencies and first responders distribute packets with information about victim domestic violence services when dispatched on a domestic violence call.” This type of solution is one that is suggested to remedy the lack of awareness about the T and U visa programs and other programs that aide undocumented immigrants who are victims of domestic violence.

### **The Opponents’ Potential Argument and in Turn, a Counter-Argument**

It is anticipated that the most common objection one can expect to hear to these proposals is that illegal immigrants seeking a visa to remain legally in the United States will falsify domestic violence in order to secure a visa. However, the truth would almost certainly be revealed throughout the criminal and visa application processes. Applying for either the T or U visa exposes one as an illegal immigrant and places one at risk of deportation if one’s visa is denied. If one is found to be falsifying domestic violence, that person would likely be deported.

If one were successful in securing the visa, a family member could go to prison, and could that family member eventually be deported upon release. These risks are high enough that it can be reasonably expected that if illegal immigrants are well aware of how the visa application and court proceedings operate, they will be substantially less likely to take such a risk.

## Aligning these Policy Proposals with Governor O'Malley's Goals

These policy proposals are consistent with Governor O'Malley's and his administration's mission. Public safety and expanding opportunity, including opportunity to immigrants, are among Governor O'Malley's priorities, as is frequently demonstrated through his website, his speeches, and most importantly, his administration's actions.

Governor O'Malley considers public safety to be a "core priority (Governor Martin O'Malley)," as expressed in his State of the State speech on January 29, 2009, and the website of the Office of the Governor articulates that Maryland's priorities include, "to improve public safety...in every part of our state...and, to expand opportunity - the opportunity to learn and to earn..."<sup>20</sup> Reducing domestic violence is a fundamental component of public safety, as expressed by Governor O'Malley and other members of his administration on numerous occasions.

- Said Governor O'Malley on October 23, 2008:

*"Last year alone, 52 women, men, and children lost their lives in our State because of domestic violence, and there were nearly 20,000 cases reported to police and 41,000 protective and peace orders filed in District Court. The prevention of domestic violence and the support for the victims of these heinous crimes, improving protection, prevention, enforcement and services are among our Administration's most urgent and pressing priorities. We must do all that we can to help Maryland's most vulnerable citizens."*<sup>21</sup>

- Said Lt. Governor Brown on October 23, 2008:

*"Domestic violence has touched too many Maryland families. I applaud Governor O'Malley's work that has strengthened existing partnerships and forged new ones to help*

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<sup>19</sup> Calvert County, MD, "Annual Report," The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, [www.mnadv.org/pdfs/calvert\\_annual\\_report.pdf](http://www.mnadv.org/pdfs/calvert_annual_report.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> The Office of the Governor, "The State of the State Forward Again, Protecting our Families; A Better Future for Our Children." January, 2009. [http://www.governor.maryland.gov/documents/2009StateOfState\\_asPrepared.pdf](http://www.governor.maryland.gov/documents/2009StateOfState_asPrepared.pdf); The Office of the Governor, "Maryland's Priorities," <<http://www.governor.maryland.gov/index.asp>>.

<sup>21</sup> The Office of the Governor, "Governor O'Malley, Lt. Governor Brown Announce Domestic Violence Grants," The Press Office, October 23, 2008.

*Maryland fight back against domestic violence. By working together, we can reduce the number of innocent Marylanders who have tragically become statistics.”<sup>22</sup>*

- Said Attorney General Gansler on October 23, 2008, "Prevention of domestic violence and the promotion of healthy relationships are critical to creating and sustaining a safe and just society, and I am committed to do my part to achieve these goals.”<sup>23</sup>
- On February 4, 2008, Governor O'Malley said, "The most fundamental responsibility that any Government has to its people is to safeguard the lives of our citizens and to ensure the safety of our neighborhoods and our communities – and that starts in the home.”<sup>24</sup>

Governor O'Malley and his administration have also expressed appreciation for the value of the immigrant community in Maryland, saying on January 13, 2009, "...immigrants living and working in Maryland are a vital component of Maryland's economic engine, Maryland's tax base, and Maryland's social and cultural fabric.”<sup>25</sup>

Also on January 13, 2009, Secretary Perez of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation stated, "Maryland's immigrant community has a wealth of knowledge and experience that can help our state grow and prosper. It is our duty to ensure New Americans living in our State are given the opportunities to use that knowledge to realize their highest potential, and to participate fully in our workforce, our economy and our communities.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> The Office of the Governor, "Governor O'Malley Addresses the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence 20th Annual Memorial Service," Press Office, February 2008, <<http://www.governor.maryland.gov/pressreleases/080204b.html>>.

<sup>25</sup> The Office of the Governor, "Governor O'Malley Swears In, Announces Members of the Maryland Council for New Americans." January 2009, <<http://www.governor.maryland.gov/pressreleases/090113b.asp>>.

<sup>26</sup> The Office of the Governor, "Governor O'Malley Swears In, Announces Members of the Maryland Council for New Americans.”

## **Governor O'Malley Has Taken Action to Reduce Domestic Violence and Integrate Immigrants into Maryland's Economy and Culture**

Governor O'Malley has taken significant action during his term to reduce domestic violence and to demonstrate his commitment to integrating immigrants as valuable, productive members of society into Maryland's economy and culture. This year, Governor O'Malley "successfully fought for two tough new domestic violence laws that take firearms out of the hands of domestic abusers."<sup>27</sup> In October 2008, "in recognition of Domestic Violence Month, Governor Martin O'Malley and Lt. Governor Anthony Brown, joined by state, civic and law enforcement leaders, announced that the State of Maryland will award \$1.8 million in STOP – Violence Against Women (VAWA) Federal funding grants to help victims of domestic violence."<sup>28</sup> In December 2008, Governor O'Malley signed an Executive Order establishing the Council for New Americans "to assist the Governor and State agencies in maximizing immigrant integration into Maryland."<sup>29</sup>

## **Protecting Maryland's Most Vulnerable Residents at a Very Low Cost in a Time of Economic Recession**

Should Governor O'Malley choose to run, he will be up for re-election in November 2010, and one year from now, he and his administration and staff will be in full campaign mode. Governor O'Malley must take reelection concerns into consideration when deciding which legislation to champion and which not to promote. However, as Governor, it is his obligation to ensure that he represents the will of the people who elected him. If Governor O'Malley were to champion these proposed policies, the majority of Maryland residents and

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<sup>27</sup> The Office of the Governor, "Improving Public Safety," <http://www.governor.maryland.gov/safety.asp>.

<sup>28</sup> The Office of the Governor, "Governor O'Malley, Lt. Governor Brown Announce Domestic Violence Grants," October 2008, <<http://www.governor.maryland.gov/pressreleases/081023.asp>>.

<sup>29</sup> The Office of the Governor "Governor O'Malley Swears In, Announces Members of the Maryland Council for New Americans," January 2009.

voters would likely align themselves with his position, ensuring that he would be representing and carrying out the will of the majority.

Governor O'Malley does not need to be concerned about his opponents' arguments against these policies during the coming election year. If passed into law, these policies would in no way encourage illegal immigration nor would they invite more immigrants into the state, legal or otherwise. Most Maryland voters who would be opposed to these policies likely did not vote for Governor O'Malley in 2006, and will not vote for him in 2010 regardless of what transpires between now and the election. Furthermore, illegal immigration is not a "hot button" issue in Maryland. The top priority for most Maryland voters, and for the state government, is the current economic recession. The criticism that Governor O'Malley has endured during his term has mostly involved budgetary matters, and any candidate who may attempt to challenge Governor O'Malley in the primary election will likely build his or her case on economic issues. The cost of implementing this law would be very little, yet these policies would have the potential to make a significant impact if implemented. If passed into law, these policies would also enable many human trafficking victims to come forward and be freed from their circumstances. Advocating for these policy proposals would demonstrate the O'Malley administration's commitment to protecting Maryland's most vulnerable residents at a low cost in a time of economic recession.

## Adjusting the Court System for Victims' Needs

*"Victims of domestic abuse are among our most vulnerable citizens, and they often have no place to turn but the court system."*<sup>30</sup>

-Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr.

## Counties' Varied Approaches

Although domestic violence (DV) requires resources from several state agencies, the court system is the primary means through which victims are able to obtain the most effective assistance. The concentration of DV cases is varied throughout the state and each county has created separate and distinct programs to serve their constituents; there is no uniform protocol.

Baltimore City, Baltimore county, and Prince George's county have consistently had the greatest number of DV cases in the past five years and developed different programs to respond to DV.<sup>31</sup> Baltimore City created the "The Mayor's Domestic Violence Coordinating Committee" which "helps identify and implement improvements in system response to domestic violence and sexual assault through legislation, education, and policy development."<sup>32</sup>; their police department has a "Family Crimes Unit". The "Domestic Violence Crisis Center of Prince George's county" provides a haven and related legal assistance through the Department of Human Resources.<sup>33</sup> The way in which the court systems address DV cases varies, just as the resources available through each county varies.

The District Court in Baltimore City addresses DV cases five days per week. The Prince George's county designates two days per week for DV while Howard county allocates one day

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<sup>30</sup> The Office of Governor Martin O'Malley, "Governor O'Malley Signs Legislation to Keep Maryland Families and Neighborhoods Safe," Press Office <http://www.governor.maryland.gov/pressreleases/090519.asp>.

<sup>31</sup> <sup>31</sup> Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence. "Domestic Violence," from "The 2007 Uniform Crime Report," Maryland State Police, 60 <http://www.mnadv.org/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20UCR2007.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> The City of Baltimore. "Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice (MOCJ)—The Mayor's Domestic Violence Coordinating Committee," <http://www.baltimorecity.gov/government/mocj/dvcc.php>.

<sup>33</sup> Prince George's County, Maryland, "Who Should I Call?" <http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/Government/AgencyIndex/Domestic/call.asp>

per week. In addition, victims may have two separate court cases simultaneously: one in the civil system to obtain a protective order and one case in the criminal system in order to press charges against the offender. Changes to the court systems would provide victims with more effective tools.

### **The “Domestic Violence Unit” of Washington, DC**

Starting in the mid-1990s, the District of Columbia created the “Domestic Violence Unit” which determines “all proceedings regarding intrafamily offenses...criminal, domestic relations and paternity and support proceedings assigned to the Domestic Violence Unit...”<sup>34</sup>

The specialization of work by the DV Unit in Washington, DC unified all of the DV-related legal services into one court agency. The Unit is a “one-stop-shop” of DV legal services as victims are able to process their initial intake and maintain their case in one agency for its entirety.

This Unit is able to focus specifically on DV due to the city’s concentrated efforts towards DV. Funding, in large part, is through grants made available by the United States’ Department of Justice’s “The STOP (Services, Training, Officers, Prosecutors) Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program (STOP Program).”<sup>35</sup> Judges who serve in the Unit rotate in one year terms and are also permitted to request specific placements.

### **Recommendations**

- Advise Baltimore County and Baltimore City to apply for STOP grants for FY2011 in order to obtain funding for a specialized Domestic Violence Unit.
- To phase the “Protective Order Advocacy and Representation Project” (POARP) in Baltimore County, into the Domestic Violence Unit.
- Identify judges and prosecutors who are interested in assignments to the Unit.

### **Benefits of a new Domestic Violence Unit**

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<sup>34</sup> The Superior Court of the District of Columbia, “Domestic Violence Unit Rules,” <http://www.dccourts.gov/dccourts/docs/Rules-DV.pdf>.

<sup>35</sup> Attorney Janese Bechtol, Telephone Interview, August 6, 2009.

The creation of domestic violence specific court systems in both Baltimore City and Baltimore County would best serve the victims. Both the civil and criminal docket cases would be handled by one court and place all the legal resources in one organization. Moreover, in 2006, Baltimore City “initiated a new integrated domestic violence court.”<sup>36</sup> The addition of an intake service would further streamline the resources for victims.

The costs of such a change could also be assisted through the STOP Grants. POARP was created with 2001 STOP funding. The “House of Ruth” and the “Women’s Law Center”, both non-profit organizations, provide many legal services. Phasing their services into a concentrated unit would strengthen their services and assist the victims. STOP grants “prioritize” projects that “Enhance or strengthen Statewide collaboration efforts among law enforcement, prosecution, nonprofit, nongovernmental victim advocacy and service providers, and the courts in addressing violence against women.”<sup>37</sup> The creation of the new “Domestic Violence Units” is aligned with the Program’s goals and further the second goal to “Reduce Violent Crimes Against Women & Children by 25% by 2012.”

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