



**CIRCUIT COURT OF CLAY COUNTY,
MISSOURI**

SEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
11 SOUTH WATER STREET
LIBERTY, MISSOURI 64068

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PRESS RELEASE

The Seventh Judicial Circuit Court of Clay County forms court to address domestic violence

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To enhance the Court's response to the continuing problem of domestic violence throughout the community, the Clay County Domestic Violence Court was established in October of 2023. The mission of the Domestic Violence Court is to increase safety for victims of domestic violence and their children while also requiring accountability for offenders. The Honorable Alisha O'Hara is designated as the Circuit Judge presiding over the Domestic Violence Court.

Judge O'Hara developed this court after receiving a fellowship with the Judicial Engagement Network's "JEN" program. The JEN fellowship is made possible through grant funding under the United States Department of Justice. Under this program, Judge O'Hara worked with mentor judges throughout the United States who have developed and preside over Domestic Violence Courts.

The Domestic Violence Court provides regular post-judgment oversight and is designed to increase the accountability for offenders and establish a coordinated community response for victims. Victims of domestic violence related crimes and also those whose protection orders are under the supervision of the Clay County Domestic Violence Court, will be eligible, along with their children, for survivor's counseling. They will also receive assistance from a victim advocate to connect survivors with housing, transportation, clothing and food. In addition, Clay County's victim advocate holds a Juris Doctorate and can assist with pro bono legal services for the victims. The Court will insure due process and legal representation is afforded to the offenders by providing access to pro bono counsel. Each offender in Clay County's Domestic Violence Court will be required to complete Synergy Service's Batterer's Intervention Program which runs between 28-52 weeks.

The Domestic Violence Court implementation team consists of individuals from the following departments: Clay County Family Court, the Office of Dispute Resolution, the Clay County Sheriff's Office, and the Clay County Prosecutor's Office. Clay County's Domestic Violence Court will utilize a compliance coordinator, victim advocate, court attorneys and court coordinator. Each one of these positions is grant funded. Dr. Teri Hargrave, Director of Clay County Office of Dispute Resolution, applied for and secured all grant funding for this project so it can be provided at no cost to the citizens of Clay County, Missouri.

Judge O'Hara is currently a co-chair of the Supreme Court's Combatting Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence Committee. She also sits on the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare committee as well as the Access to Family Courts committee. Judge O'Hara was first appointed as an Associate Circuit Judge in 2019 and later to Circuit Judge in 2022.

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For Questions: Contact Denise Banning, Presiding Judge's Secretary at (816) 407-3988