



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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Kanawha County courts launch domestic violence pilot program

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CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Supreme Court Justice Robin Jean Davis will attend a ceremony at 9 a.m. on Friday, August 31, announcing the creation of a domestic violence pilot program in Kanawha County.

“The murder-suicide last week in Putnam County reminded everyone in the Kanawha Valley about the horrific nature of domestic violence and its serious consequences,” said Justice Davis. “Domestic violence is always a tragedy.

“The Supreme Court chose Kanawha County for this pilot project because of the volume of cases there and the quality and experience of the judicial officers who handle them. We have confidence that this will be a good place to try this innovative way of handling a challenging caseload,” Justice Davis said.

The pilot program was called for by the Legislature earlier this year in a law which allowed the Supreme Court to establish one pilot program in any jurisdiction it chose. The Supreme Court chose Kanawha County and Family Court Judge Mike Kelly, who will work with Magistrate Julie Yeager.

Currently, domestic violence cases are handled by ten magistrates and five family court judges; family court judges handle the civil part of the cases while magistrates handle criminal charges.

“It’s very confusing for the respondents and petitioners,” Judge Kelly said. “Clearly, we have to do something different.

“This program consolidates these to see if we can address these issues more effectively,” Judge Kelly said. “We are going to focus on becoming a court of early intervention. We want to intervene with quality programming and provide services quickly.”

The pilot project will last four years, at the end of which a report will be given to the Speaker of the House and the Senate President.

“It’s a wonderful cooperative effort to address this important issue that comes before the circuit courts, family courts, and magistrates courts in Kanawha County,” said Chief Circuit Judge Duke Bloom.

The text of Enrolled House Bill 4648 can be found on the Legislature’s website at http://www.legis.state.wv.us/Bill_Text_HTML/2012_SESSIONS/RS/pdf_bills/HB4648%20ENR%20PRINTED.pdf.