



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Local partnership implements new program to reduce firearm violence in domestic violence cases**

On Friday, June 1<sup>st</sup>, a new program was started in Thurston County to prevent firearm violence in domestic violence situations. The Firearm Surrender Program is cooperative effort of the Superior, District, and Municipal courts in partnership with local Law Enforcement and the Prosecuting Attorneys Office. This program is modeled after successful programs of its type in California and King County, Washington.

Basically, in both civil and criminal domestic violence cases in Thurston County Superior and District Courts where the presiding judge finds that a threat of violence exists to the victim/petitioner in a case and that firearms may be in the control of the defendant/respondent, the Judge may order those firearms surrendered by the defendant/respondent. These new orders will include federal firearm law warnings. If a defendant/respondent violates such an order they could be prosecuted in Federal District Court. A Thurston County Deputy Prosecutor will be seeking a special commission as an Assistant U.S. Attorney to handle any of these prosecutions.

In addition, defendants/respondents served with these new orders will not be able to purchase any firearms legally as federal law prohibits them from doing so when served with one of these new orders containing the federal law warning.

The defendants in misdemeanor criminal D.V. cases in District Court and some felony criminal D.V. cases in Thurston County Superior Court will be ordered to surrender their firearms within 48 hours of the court hearing or their release from custody. They must sell, transfer to a third party or surrender any firearms under their control or possession. If they choose to surrender to the appropriate Law Enforcement agency, a set of clear instructions on how to comply with the court order will be given to them.

The Deputy Prosecuting Attorney or the City Attorney handling the case will be monitoring compliance in most cases. At the Sheriff's Office when a defendant surrenders firearms to that agency an inventory form will be sent to the Prosecuting Attorney's Office to inform them of the surrender.

In civil cases where orders are issued through Family and Juvenile Court, most firearms will be seized when the original No Contact Order/Order to Surrender Firearms is served on the respondent by the local Law Enforcement agency in most jurisdictions.

While the first few months of this program will be monitored by a joint committee of the programs participants to identify problems or issues that may crop up, the potential to prevent firearm related assaults and homicides is great. In King county where they have had a program for 3 years, the domestic violence homicide rate has been down nearly 50% the last two years.

This cooperative partnership between the Courts, Law Enforcement, and Prosecutors to try and be proactive in dealing with domestic violence is an example of the positive efforts that can be found when we work together to try and prevent our citizens from being victimized.

If you would like comments on the above program, please contact:

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