

# Civil Protective Orders: Improved Safety for Victims & Cost Effective for State Governments

## New Research Findings on Effectiveness

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# Findings on civil protective order effectiveness

- Protective orders ***do work*** for many victims:
  - Half (50%) of victims experienced ***no violations*** of the DVO during the 6 month follow-up period.
  - For those victims who did experience violations, every single type of violence and abuse was ***significantly reduced*** during the 6 month follow up period compared to the 6 months before the protective order was issued.
- Many victims appreciated the orders and the help they received from the justice system:
  - Victims' fear of future harm was significantly reduced during the 6 months after the order was issued.
  - The vast majority of victims thought the protective order was fairly or extremely effective (77%-95%) 6 months after the order was issued.
  - Only 4% of victims requested to drop the protective order during the 6 months after the protective order was issued.
- Protective orders were less effective for stalking victims:
  - Being stalked by the violent partner in the 6 months before the protective order was ***strongly predictive of protective order violations*** after the order was issued.
  - Women who were stalked after the protective order was issued were more afraid of future harm, experienced more distress related to the abuse, endured more property damage and other kinds of violence, and were less confident in the order than were women who were not stalked.
  - ***Stalking after the protective order was associated with almost every other kind of violence*** and abuse suggesting those who stalk are more violent and more resistant to court intervention.



- **Enforcement of the protective order played a critical role in public safety**
  - The majority of respondents (those with protective orders against them) had prior charges (78% with an average of 9 charges) and convictions (63% with an average of 7 convictions) suggesting that partner violence is a part of a larger pattern of criminal conduct. For example, 57% had prior substance-related charges and 53% had substance-related convictions.
  - The majority of victims who did not experience violations believed the effectiveness was because the respondent was afraid of going to jail.
  - Enforcement is clearly an important component of protective orders for those who experience violations - ***but there is a need for more assertive court action*** - especially for stalking cases.

## What about the cost and cost-benefit of protective orders?

- Overall, ***protective orders saved one state at least \$85 million*** each year in costs that would have been incurred if the protective order had not stopped or reduced the violence and abuse.
- Protective orders cost very little in comparison to the suffering and costs of victims.
- ***Stalking is predictive of ongoing violence, victim distress, and much higher costs to the state.***

## What are the areas for improvement?

- Develop more effective interventions to address partner stalking.
- Strengthening enforcement when violations occur.
- Create systems of feedback and accountability for every step of the protective order process.

For example-by jurisdiction:

- Develop a tracking system for all civil protective order petitions denied and the reason they were denied.
- Track the number of protective orders granted and for how long.
- Track protective order violation charges and dispositions.