

Regional Law
Safety & Justice
Committee



REGIONAL LAW SAFETY AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE
Thursday, May 25, 2017

Domestic Violence Prosecution and the Firearms Surrender Program

- Chris Anderson, Seattle City Attorney's head of Domestic Violence
- David Martin, King County Prosecutor's head of Domestic Violence
- John Howell, Coordinator of the Regional Protection Order and Order to Surrender Firearms (PO & OTSF) Service Work Group
- Sandra Shanahan, King County Prosecutor's Office – Protection Order Advocacy Program Supervisor

The panel provided an overview of the history of domestic violence and the policy changes that have led to a substantial reduction in domestic violence. The panel described the research regarding the dangers of firearms and the resulting legislative response: HB 1840 and Extreme Risk Protection Orders. Retired Judge Anne Levison led a review to provide recommendations for King County jurisdictions. The review included several workgroups and identified system reforms. The presentation included an explanation of the different types of protection orders, King County resources for victims, the challenges of enforcement, and described the Model Policy that provides guidance on implementation. The attached PowerPoint includes detail on these topics.

At the conclusion of the presentation, RLSJC members had several questions and comments. The group discussed a need for legislative mandates, as county resources are limited and enforcement may not be possible without legislation. While the panel supports legislative efforts, they acknowledged it took 12 years to pass 1840 and waiting for a legislative solution is not an option. Members emphasized the need for a communication plan to let people know there will be consequences for violations. The panel was asked about officer safety. The Model Plan provides guidance on this, as currently there is a wide range of policies for LEAs.

Members were interested in how the Model Policy is being distributed. The workgroup will present to the King County Police Chiefs group in June. They are also working on ways to share the policy with courts and communities. California created a useful website that will be integrated into the local website. RLSJC members can contact John Howell for a draft copy of the Model Policy.

The group discussed the need for further support for petitioners without representation and for greater cooperation between jurisdictions. A member also asked why prosecution was not more common, as it is the only tool for enforcement. The panel explained that the calendar review has held individuals accountable, but that the intersection between civil and criminal law presents challenges and there is a need for better communication.