

Litigant Perspectives in an Integrated Domestic Violence Court

The Case of Yonkers, New York

Match 2007 - March 2008

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Each year, tens of thousands of families enter the court system. It is not uncommon for a single family to be involved in two or more concurrent cases, each of which is dealt with by separate judges in different courtrooms. Multiple cases are even more common amongst families in which domestic violence is an underlying issue, as domestic violence has both criminal and civil repercussions. Beginning in the 1990s, legal advocates for children and families began calling for the adoption of a “unified family court” designed to address fragmentation and improve the ability of courts to meet the needs of families with multiple cases. At the heart of unified family court model lies the concept of “one family-one judge”, which suggests a single judge should hear all of one family’s cases.

New York State’s Integrated Domestic Violence (IDV) courts combine the “one family-one judge” concept with an approach to domestic violence that is similar to that found in specialized domestic violence courts across the country. IDV courts preside over criminal domestic violence and related family cases, in particular custody and visitation cases and the issuance and modification of protective orders. IDV courts are designed to hold domestic violence defendants to a high level of accountability by concentrating defendant oversight in the hands of a single judge who can simultaneously monitor defendant compliance with criminal court mandates and litigant compliance with any related family court orders. The first IDV courts were opened in 2001 in six counties in the southern and central part of the state. Since then, New York has founded more than 40 new IDV courts which serve thousands of families annually. The Yonkers Integrated Domestic Violence Court was the second IDV court to be established in Westchester County, a primarily suburban area just north of Manhattan. Yonkers is the most populous municipality in Westchester with just under 200,000 residents. More than 80 families were able to consolidate criminal and family cases related to domestic violence during the period under study (2007-2008).

This study explored the perceptions of 46 litigants in the Yonkers IDV Court across a range of issues including procedural justice, criminal and family case outcomes, and interactions with the judge. Given the small number of litigants surveyed, the findings should be considered provisional.

Overall, litigants hold positive views of the IDV court, with victims¹ holding more positive views of the court than defendants. A substantial minority of both litigant groups held negative views of the court. In particular, those with negative experiences interacting with the IDV judge were less likely to think the court process was fair and/or were less satisfied with court outcomes. In summary, the study documented:

- *Goals of the IDV Court:* When asked about the goals of the IDV court, victims most often identified the welfare of the children in the case and victim safety as important. In

¹ The term victim is commonly accepted throughout the academic literature on domestic violence courts to refer to individuals with a criminal or family case involving an allegation of domestic violence. For the purposes of this study, it should be noted that some “victims” are strictly speaking “alleged victims” since at the time of the interview there had not yet been a disposition in their criminal case.

contrast, defendants tended to perceive the punishment of perpetrators to be a court priority; few defendants felt that victim safety was an important goal of the court.

- *The One Family-One Judge Model:* Most victims (70%) reported that having a single judge helped them get positive results compared with just under half (47%) of defendants. A large majority (84%) of respondents believed that the IDV court judge used what he learned in the family case to make decisions in the criminal case and vice-versa.
- *Court Efficiency:* The majority of both victims and defendants believed that having all of their cases in one court made getting to court easier and meant taking fewer days off from work to attend court.
- *Protective Orders:* Nearly all (85%) respondents had a protective order in place at the time they were surveyed. Most victims (60%) believed that the court was likely to discover a violation of their protective order and 72% believed that the judge would take such a violation seriously. All but one defendant reported intending to follow the protective order, although 11% reported not fully understanding its provisions.
- *Victim Safety:* Victims generally reported feeling safe while at the courthouse; the presence of court officers in particular increased victims' sense of safety.
- *Victim Services:* Just under half (47%) of all victims had contact with a victim advocate by the time they completed the survey. The longer a victim had been coming to the court, the more likely it was that she had been in contact with the victim advocate.
- *Prosecution:* Forty-two percent of the victims surveyed wanted to pursue prosecution. Ten percent said they wanted help for the defendant. The majority of victims discussed their wishes concerning prosecution with the district attorney, and felt the district attorney took their wishes seriously.
- *The Judge:* Victims were more likely than defendants to believe that the IDV judge took their opinion into account when making decisions and listened carefully to their side of the story.
- *Importance of Family Cases for Litigants:* Fifty-three percent of victims reported that the outcome of their family case was more important to them than their criminal case outcome. Forty-seven percent felt both cases were equally important. No victims and only 8% of defendants reported that the outcome of their criminal case was more important.
- *Criminal Case Outcomes:* Just under 60% of victims and 45% of defendants were satisfied with the outcome of their criminal case. Defendants whose disposition included a batterer program mandate were less likely to be satisfied with the outcome.

- *Family Case Outcomes:* Just over half of victims (57%) and a large majority of defendants (76%) reported that they got “very little or none” of what they wanted in the outcome of their family case. Overall, litigants who were dissatisfied with the outcome of their criminal case were also dissatisfied with the outcome in their most recent family case.
- *Procedural Fairness:* Half (50%) of the survey sample agreed that their case had been handled fairly in the IDV Court. Victims were moderately more likely than defendants to view both the Yonkers IDV Court and the court system in general as fair.

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the last 30 years, there has been a shift in the public perception of domestic violence—from a “private sphere” issue to a public health and social policy problem. Despite reforms in social service and criminal justice system responses to domestic violence, violence between intimates remains a sizeable problem, with an estimated 2.5 million incidents of physical assault annually (Field and Caetano 2005).

Domestic violence is often a complex problem to address, in part because affected families frequently require diverse services that traditionally work independently of one another (health care, housing, child welfare and criminal justice, to name a few). Within the justice system alone, families often become entangled in multiple courts as they attempt to resolve criminal cases as well as civil matters such as divorce, child custody or visitation, and child support.

The formation of specialized criminal domestic violence courts beginning in the 1990s constituted one attempt by the justice system to improve the response to domestic violence. These are generally staffed by specially trained judges and court staff dedicated to hearing only domestic violence cases. They also generally have court-based victim advocates and maintain collaborations with a variety of local social service agencies—from battered women’s shelters to drug treatment programs. Currently, there are more than 200 criminal domestic violence courts in over 35 states across the country (Labriola et al. 2010).

Concurrent with the spread of criminal domestic violence courts, a movement began throughout the legal community calling for an end to the fragmentation of the country’s courts dealing with legal issues surrounding families and children. Unified family courts (UFCs), in which a single judge hears all of a family’s cases, have been proposed as a means to improve outcomes for families. While not the primary purpose of most unified family courts, the “one family-one judge” model has been hypothesized to increase the likelihood that the court will detect underlying domestic violence issues in otherwise common domestic relations cases (e.g., custody, visitation, child support).

New York State adopted a more explicit approach to addressing domestic violence in the family court system through the establishment of integrated domestic violence (IDV) courts. IDV courts criminal, civil and matrimonial cases involving the same parties in front of a single judge. The IDV court model takes a holistic approach toward families whose court involvement stems from underlying domestic violence. The primary objectives include the promotion of informed judicial decision-making; consistent handling of cases; efficient use of court resources; victim safety through the coordination of victims’ services by a court-based victim advocate (CCI 2000).

In the case of both criminal domestic violence courts and unified family courts, most of the existing research measures the impact of such courts on defendant compliance and recidivism using quasi-experimental research designs. While several studies on litigant perspectives have been conducted in criminal domestic violence courts (Erez and Belknap 1998; Gover 2007; Guznik 2008) only one has focused specifically on an IDV court (Levy, Ross, and Guthrie 2008) and that study examined only the victim experience through qualitative interviews..

The current study examines the perceptions of litigants (both defendants and victims) in the Yonkers, New York Integrated Domestic Violence Court. The purpose of the research is two-fold: (1) to document litigants' experience in the Yonkers IDV Court over a one-year study period, and (2) to add to a growing body of research on the experiences of litigants in specialized domestic violence courts across several domains of interest, including procedural fairness, family and criminal case outcomes, and court efficiency.

Why Study Litigant Perspectives in Domestic Violence Courts?

To date, the evaluation literature on domestic violence courts has measured success across a range of overlapping goals, including increasing court efficiency, increasing defendant accountability, enhancing victims' services and reducing recidivism. In general, studies have found the courts to be relatively successful in enhancing access to victims' services (Harrell et al. 2007; Henning and Klesges 1999; Newmark et al. 2001), and moderately successful at increasing efficiency and defendant accountability. Results of traditional recidivism analyses, however, have been equivocal. Out of ten identified quasi-experimental studies to date, three studies documented significant reductions in reoffending among domestic violence court defendants (Angene 2000; Gover et al. 2003; Harrell et al. 2007), another five documented null or negative results (Harrell et al. 2007; Henning and Kesges 1999; Newmark et al. 2001; Peterson 2004; Quann 2007), and one found mixed results (Davis et al., 2001). Several rigorously designed evaluations have found little or no impact of the batterer programs used by many domestic violence courts (Davis et al. 2000; Feder 2005; Labriola et al. 2008) and research on the impact of judicial monitoring as a deterrent to future violence is still nascent (Rempel et al. 2008).

Another set of studies examined the potential benefits of judicial system reform designed to improve litigant experiences in domestic violence cases. While research in this area is relatively sparse, that which does exist has provided some important preliminary insights into litigant perceptions. In 1999, the Urban Institute initiated the Judicial Oversight Demonstration project (JOD), the largest study of specialized judicial initiatives for criminal domestic violence cases to date (Harrell et al. 2007). While the more than 1,000 structured interviews with domestic violence victims and defendants conducted by the JOD study did not cover litigant perceptions of the specialized justice system process, supplemental focus groups did address these issues. Results showed that both defendants and victims generally had a positive response to the court initiatives. However, discussion of specific components (e.g., probation, prosecution, victim services) elicited more complex reactions from the focus groups. For instance, defendants generally responded negatively to batterer intervention programs but had positive experiences with probation supervision. Victims reported positive interactions with court staff—particularly judges and victim advocates—but they generally felt overwhelmed by the bureaucracy of the justice system (Harrell et al. 2007).

A 2008 study conducted in Lexington County, South Carolina (Gover 2007) similarly found that both defendants and victims held positive overall views of the domestic violence court. The study further found these positive views to be associated with compliance with court mandates and reduced recidivism among defendants—that is, defendants with a more positive view of the court were more compliant and less likely to reoffend. A second study isolating the perceptions of domestic violence perpetrators found that defendants reporting that they were treated fairly by police during a domestic violence arrest had lower re-arrest rates (Guznik 2008).

Since victims' court experiences are widely believed to affect the likelihood that they will report future violence, understanding victim interaction with domestic violence courts is likely to prove critical to the future development of initiatives to respond to domestic violence. Although existing studies have found that victims have a fairly positive overall response to the domestic violence court model (Gover 2008; Harrell et al. 2007), closer examination reveals more subtle and potentially useful findings. For example, victims' interactions with prosecutors often have a strong impact on their experience and overall satisfaction with the court process (Davis et al. 2008; Erez and Belknap 1998; Levy et al. 2008; Harrell et al. 2007). Specifically, the majority of victims interviewed across several studies expressed the desire to retain control over the decision to press charges (Davis et al. 2008; Erez and Belknap 1998), a finding that could have serious implications for evidence-based prosecution. Additionally, victims typically report positive experiences with court-based victim advocates and victim services agencies associated with the court (Erez and Belknap 1998; Harrell et al. 2007), a finding that would support the development of collaborative court models.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This research was designed at a single New York State IDV court during the 12-month period from March 2007 through March 2008. With the exception of the procedural fairness survey conducted in Lexington County, South Carolina (Gover 2007), this research is the only known study to measure the experiences and perceptions of both victims and defendants in a specialized domestic violence court. The survey allows for comparison of victim and defendant perceptions in the same court with respect to a complex set of interrelated issues, including perceptions of criminal and family case processing and outcomes; litigant interactions with the judge, attorneys, and law guardians; perceptions of court efficiency and procedural justice; and opinions of the overall court model. Although the sample size is small, the findings presented below suggest some productive directions for future research.

Setting: The Yonkers City Integrated Domestic Violence Court

The Yonkers Integrated Domestic Violence Court, the second IDV court to be established in Westchester County, and the 35th in New York State,² opened in December 2004. The city of Yonkers is located just two miles north of Manhattan and is the most populous municipality in largely suburban Westchester County, with just under 200,000 residents according to 2000 census data. Approximately one-quarter of Yonkers residents are of Hispanic or Latino origin; sixty percent are white, seventeen percent are black and five percent report being two or more races. Fifteen percent of residents are living below the federal poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau 2000).

The IDV court is situated on the third floor of the city criminal court in central Yonkers, within blocks of public transportation and the local branch of My Sister's Place, a large provider of domestic violence victim services. The court's jurisdiction includes defendants residing within the municipality of Yonkers who have two or more overlapping criminal misdemeanor and family court cases. Prior to the founding of the Yonkers IDV Court, the city criminal court had few resources to offer domestic violence victims, despite a clear need for such services.

Planning for the Yonkers IDV Court began in early 2004 and involved the collaboration of the New York State Unified Court System Office of Court Administration, the Center for Court Innovation (CCI), the Yonkers City Court, the Westchester County District Attorney's Office, the Westchester County Department of Probation, and My Sisters' Place. The Honorable Judy Harris Kluger, then Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Court Operations and Planning (now Chief of Policy and Planning) and the Honorable Francis A. Nicolai, administrative judge of the 9th judicial district, provided oversight. The planning process followed the model developed by Judge Kluger's office. This entailed outreach to local stakeholders, such as victim advocates, batterer programs and police, and a focus on: screening and case identification; procedures for calendaring and processing transferred cases; security and safety protocols; community resources; case integrity; use of the statewide IDV court database; specialized training for the judge and court staff; and evaluation.

² The first IDV court in Westchester County is located in White Plains, the county seat. The White Plains IDV Court hears felony level criminal cases and misdemeanors from White Plains and surrounding jurisdictions. Misdemeanor cases originating in Yonkers are not eligible for transfer to this court.

Survey Design and Implementation

This study utilized litigant surveys and stakeholder interviews to explore court processing in the Yonkers IDV Court. Surveys were conducted with a convenience sample of litigants and interviews were conducted with the dedicated probation officer and the victim advocate, both of whom provided direct services to litigants during the data collection period. Interviews focused on the providers' perceptions of litigant experiences in the court.

Surveys were designed to examine perceptions of both complaining witnesses/victims and criminal defendants across four domains: procedural fairness, interactions with the judge and attorneys, case processing, and case outcomes. Additional questions specific to each litigant group were also (e.g., victim services and advocacy among victims; program mandates among defendants).

At the time of design, no published template existed for survey construction targeted at litigants in specialized domestic violence courts or unified family courts. Thus, background research for survey development included examination of previous litigant surveys from other specialized courts (i.e., drug courts and community courts); consultation with IDV court staff and experts in the field of court responses to domestic violence; and analysis of previous studies of IDV courts utilizing other methodologies. The survey went through multiple iterations based on meetings between the principal researcher and the domestic violence technical assistance team at the Center for Court Innovation, as well as the court staff at the Yonkers IDV Court. Versions of the surveys were piloted with the domestic violence program staff for content and length and revisions were made based on this feedback. Goals for the final revisions included adherence to the domains identified by the research team, appropriate literacy level for respondents, and brevity (average completion time of less than 30 minutes). Because a substantial proportion of litigants in the court are native Spanish speakers, both victim and defendant surveys were translated into Spanish by a member of the Center program staff (the litigant survey can be found in Appendix A of this report).

Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews were conducted with the dedicated victim advocate and probation officer in the Yonkers IDV Court. Interviews followed a semi-structured design (see Appendix B for Interview Protocols). The rationale for conducting these interviews was that, as direct service providers to victims and defendants respectively, the interviewees might be able to provide context for trends found in the data. Interviewees' own perceptions of the IDV court model were also discussed. Responses to interview questions were recorded verbatim by the researcher (see Appendix B for Interview Protocols).

Analysis Plan

First, survey responses were analyzed with the purpose of creating a general profile of the respondent sample in terms of demographics and case characteristics (i.e., case types and dispositions). These findings were compared with case characteristics of the full population of litigants in the Yonkers IDV Court during the research period, as drawn from the statewide IDV court database. The primary purpose of this comparison was to ensure that the sample did not deviate significantly from the court's population generally. Because demographic data for the

full population was not available through the automated management information system, we do not know the extent to which the sample differs from the overall court population in terms of demographics.

Next, in order to gain a general idea of litigant perceptions of the IDV court across the four primary domains of interest, descriptive analyses were run on all litigant perception variables (distinguishing between responses of victims and defendants), including measures of case processing efficiency, procedural justice, case outcomes, and the overall IDV court model. Bivariate analyses were run to detect any possible correlations between perceptions of court efficiency, procedural fairness, and case outcomes. Finally, both thematic findings and direct quotations from interviews with the dedicated victim advocate and probation officer were included throughout the chapters wherever they shed additional light on litigant experiences.

Study Limitations

The primary limitation of the study is the small sample size, which makes any inferential analyses challenging. In particular, the small sample size precluded comparisons of perceptions among some litigant subgroups, such as defendants whose cases had been dismissed versus those convicted or comparisons of demographic subgroups. Additionally, in order to ensure the anonymity of respondents, litigant surveys were not associated with specific court records, making it impossible to link responding victims and defendants who were members of the same family or to verify self-report data concerning case types, dispositions, or case processing outcomes. Finally, the research took place in a single IDV court. Thus, the findings should be considered exploratory and should not be generalized to represent New York State IDV courts as a whole.

III. POPULATION AND SURVEY SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Participants were recruited onsite at the Yonkers City Court by the principal researcher with the cooperation of the staff of the Yonkers IDV Court. The researcher attended Yonkers IDV court sessions (once per week) and approached litigants outside of the courtroom before or after their case hearings. Litigants were informed that the researcher was conducting a short survey to find out more about people with cases in the IDV court, that participation in the research was completely voluntary and anonymous, and that participation would not affect their case or their relationship with the court.

Recruitment lasted for approximately one year, from March 2007 through March 2008. The final sample included 46 survey respondents. Eight litigants were approached but declined to participate in the research, a refusal rate of 15%. Litigants were subdivided into victim and defendant subgroups based on whether they reported recently being arrested and becoming the defendant in a criminal case in the Yonkers IDV Court.

Table 1 displays the demographic characteristics of the respondent sample. As shown, just over half of the sample is female (52%), the majority of whom identified as domestic violence victims; and 48% is male, the majority of whom identified as defendants according to our survey's criteria (i.e., answering yes to the question, "As a part of this case, were you recently arrested on domestic violence charges?"). Just under half of respondents self-identified as Latino (45%), twenty-six percent as white, and twenty-five percent as Black or African-American. At the time of the survey, approximately one-quarter of respondents were unemployed. Amongst both defendants and victims, the majority reported that they were no longer in a relationship with the other party in the case (71% overall).

Litigant Population Characteristics

Across the course of the 12 months of data collection, a total of 83 new families entered the Yonkers IDV Court, according to the statewide IDV court management information system. The study did not link respondents to court files and thus it is impossible to know the extent of case overlap among defendants and victims that responded. Thus, the survey sample may represent anywhere in the range of 31% to 55% of the total number of families entering the court over the research period, depending on the extent of overlap between victim and defendant respondents.

Case Characteristics

Table 2 displays the case characteristics from March 2007-February 2008 for the full population of litigants in the Yonkers IDV Court based on data drawn from the statewide IDV court management information system. As the table shows, the majority of new cases were family court cases (75%), most of which were custody or visitation petitions (77%). Criminal cases made up one-quarter of the total caseload over the sample period, with the most common arrest charges including criminal contempt (39%) and harassment (35%).

With respect to family case types, the findings in Table 2 are similar to the self-report of the survey sample (see Table 3). A majority of the survey sample, for example, had been to the court at least once for a custody or visitation case (72%) and about 20% had filed a petition requesting a protective order (family offense petition). The survey did not ask respondents about specific

charges in their criminal case and so a direct comparison on charge type could not be made. Table 3 displays all the reasons respondents gave for appearing in court.

**Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents:
Yonkers Integrated Domestic Violence Court¹**

	Victims	Defendants	All Litigants
<i>N</i>	20	26	46
Sex			
Male	5%	81%	48%
Female	95%	19%	52%
Average Age (years)	36.7	36.8	36.7
Race			
Black	33%	25%	29%
White	39%	15%	26%
Latino	28%	60%	45%
Employment Status			
Full Time	56%	76%	68%
Part-Time	19%	0%	8%
Unemployed	25%	24%	24%
Previously been to a family or criminal court	42%	45%	44%
Relationship Status			
“Exes”	75%	68%	71%
Married/Living Together	10%	23%	17%
Other	15%	9%	12%

¹ Demographics based on self-reported survey data; Percentages based on nonmissing responses as presented in each column;

**Table 2. Case Profile Yonkers IDV Court
March 2007-February 2008**

	Number of New Cases Filed	% of Total Cases Filed
<i>N</i>	284	100%
Family Cases	220	75%
Custody and Visitation	169	77%
Family Offense	43	23%
Criminal Cases	71	25%
Criminal Contempt	28	39%
Harrassment	25	35%
Assault	9	13%
Other	9	13%

Table 3. Reasons for Coming to Yonkers IDV Court

	Victims	Defendants	All Litigants
<i>N</i>	19	24	43
For a custody/visitation case	74%	71%	72%
To request an order of protection	37%	4%	19%
To modify a protective order	47%	8%	25%
To testify in a criminal case	21%	0%	9%
For judicial monitoring	0%	33%	19%
Other	5%	13%	9%

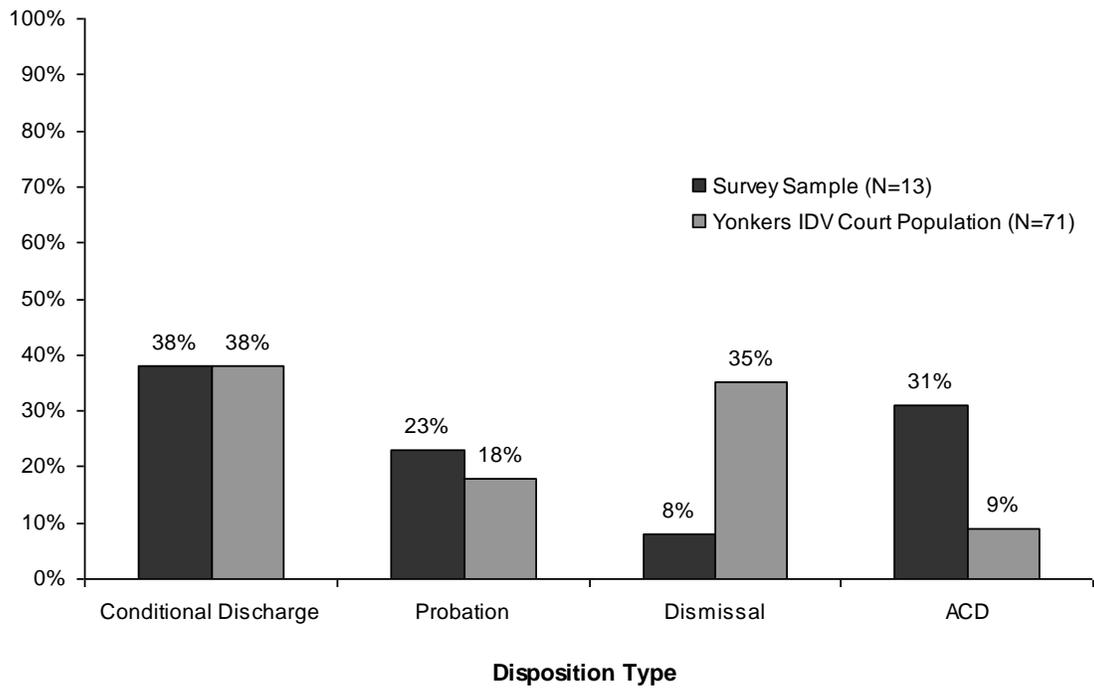
Note: Percentages in each column may add up to more than 100% because litigants were asked to identify all reasons that they had appeared in the court

Criminal Case Dispositions

Survey respondents were asked about the outcome of their criminal case based on a list of possible dispositions and sentences. These responses were compared to disposition data for the court population as a whole, as displayed in Figure 1. The population and the survey sample show similar rates of conditional discharge (42% vs. 38%) and probation (18% vs. 15%) dispositions. On the other hand, respondents in our survey sample were more likely to have received a disposition of adjournment in contemplation of dismissal (ACD) and less likely than the overall population to have received a straight dismissal. This finding is unsurprising since defendants receiving a straight dismissal would not have returned to court for judicial compliance monitoring, and so would be less likely to have been at the court on the days that the survey respondents were recruited.

All seven of the defendants in the survey sample who reported a disposition of conditional discharge or probation also reported that they were attending a batterer program or other program as part of their sentence. Two of the four respondents who received an ACD were also given program mandates. Although the sample size is small, this finding suggests that program mandates are frequently attached to conditional discharge and probation dispositions in the Yonkers IDV Court, and that a program may also be a common sentence for defendants receiving an ACD.

Figure 1. Criminal Case Dispositions, Survey Sample vs. Full IDV Court Population

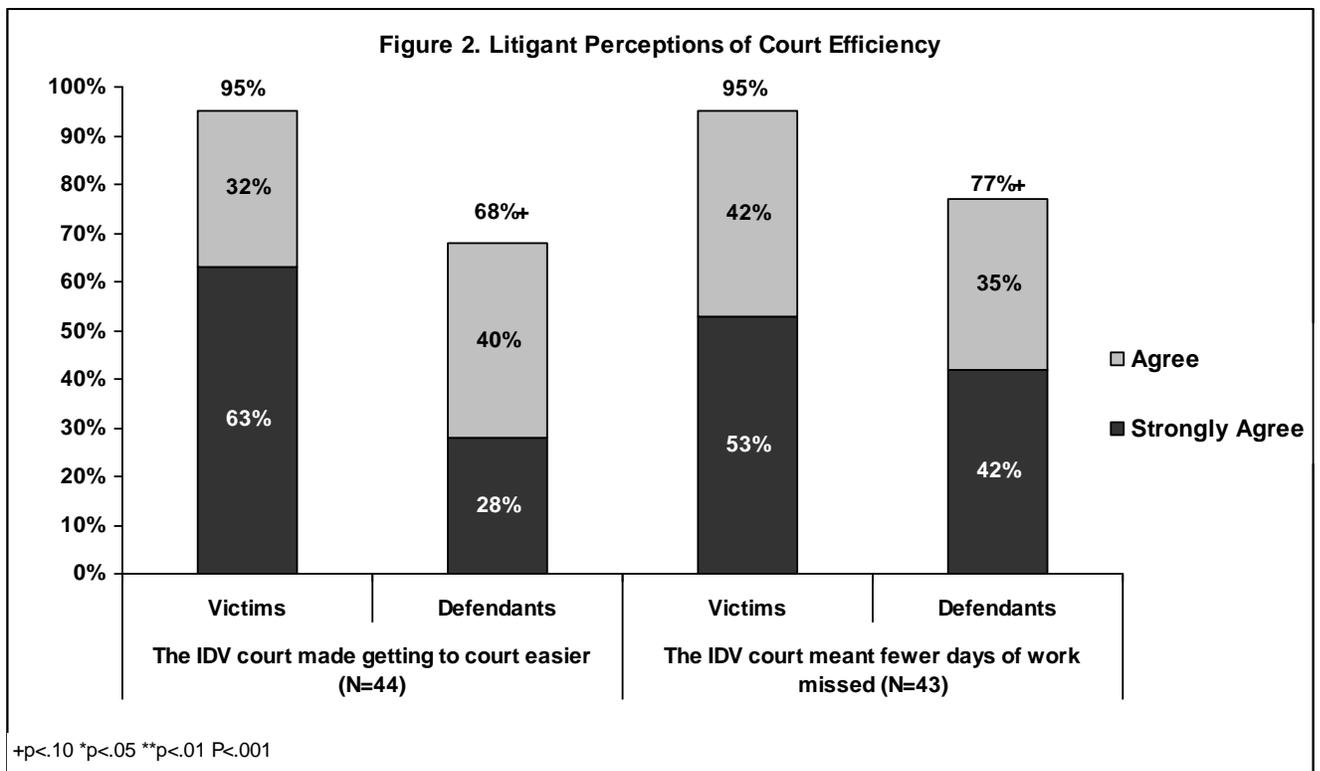


Note: Among the 26 offenders in the survey sample, 10 reported that their criminal case was not yet finished and so they were excluded from questions about disposition; Data was missing in another three cases. Although victims in the survey sample were asked about the outcome of their criminal case, they were excluded from this analysis because the potential overlap between the two groups could not be ascertained.

IV. FINDINGS: COURT EFFICIENCY FOR LITIGANTS

The reduction of case processing time, waiting time, days of work missed, and trips to court have been important indicators for both unified family courts and IDV courts. Therefore, survey respondents were asked to estimate their overall case processing time at the point of survey, including the total number of trips to court they had made up to that point, and how long, on average, they waited to see the judge at each appearance. At the time they completed the survey, litigants reported having been in the IDV court for 12 months, on average. This average represents a range of six to 36 months. There was a wide range in the approximate number of reported trips to court (two trips to 33 trips). On average, defendants reported making substantially more trips to court than did victims (12 vs. 7), presumably due to ongoing judicial compliance monitoring.

Litigants were also asked whether having all of their cases in one court made getting to and from court easier and/or enabled them to take fewer days off work. A majority of litigants (73%) reported that having all of their cases in one court made getting to and from court easier, with victims more likely to agree with this statement ($p < .10$). Most litigants (77%) also reported that the IDV court meant they had to take fewer days off work, with victims again more likely to agree ($p < .10$). These results are displayed in Figure 2.

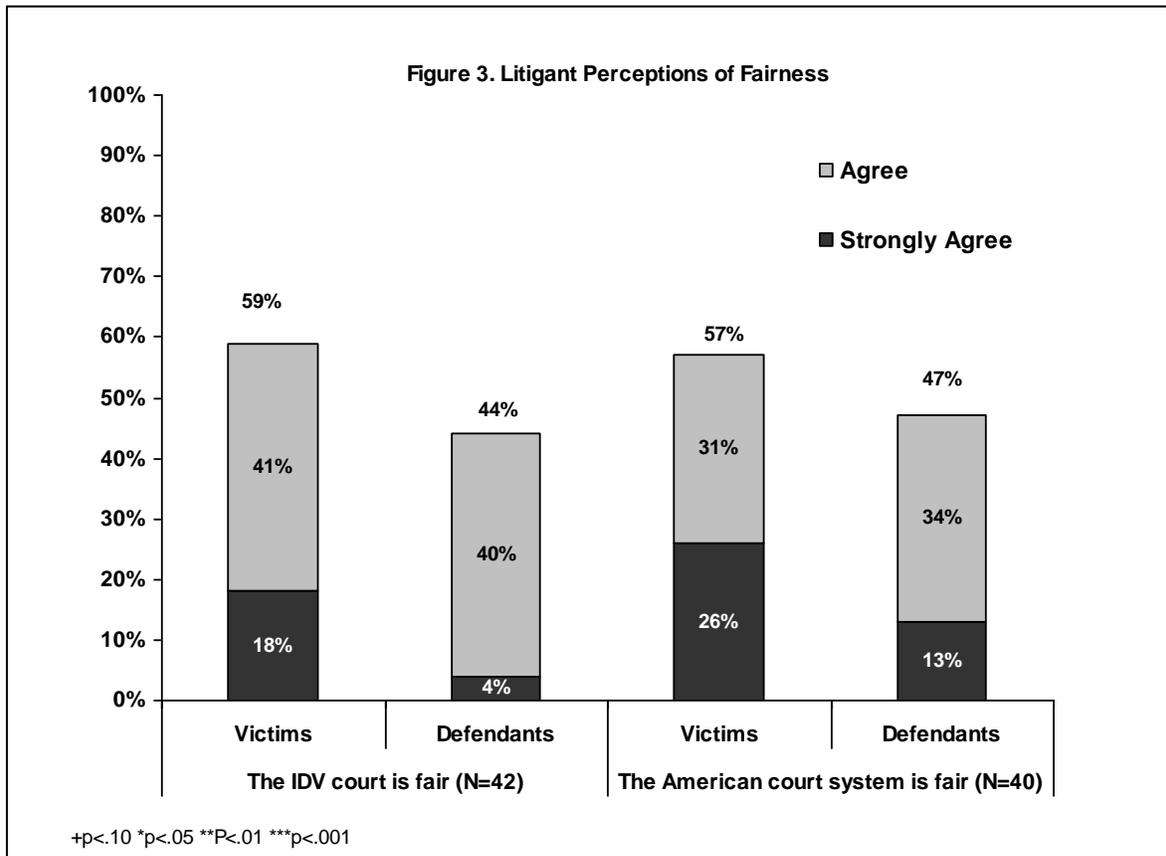


V. FINDINGS: PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS

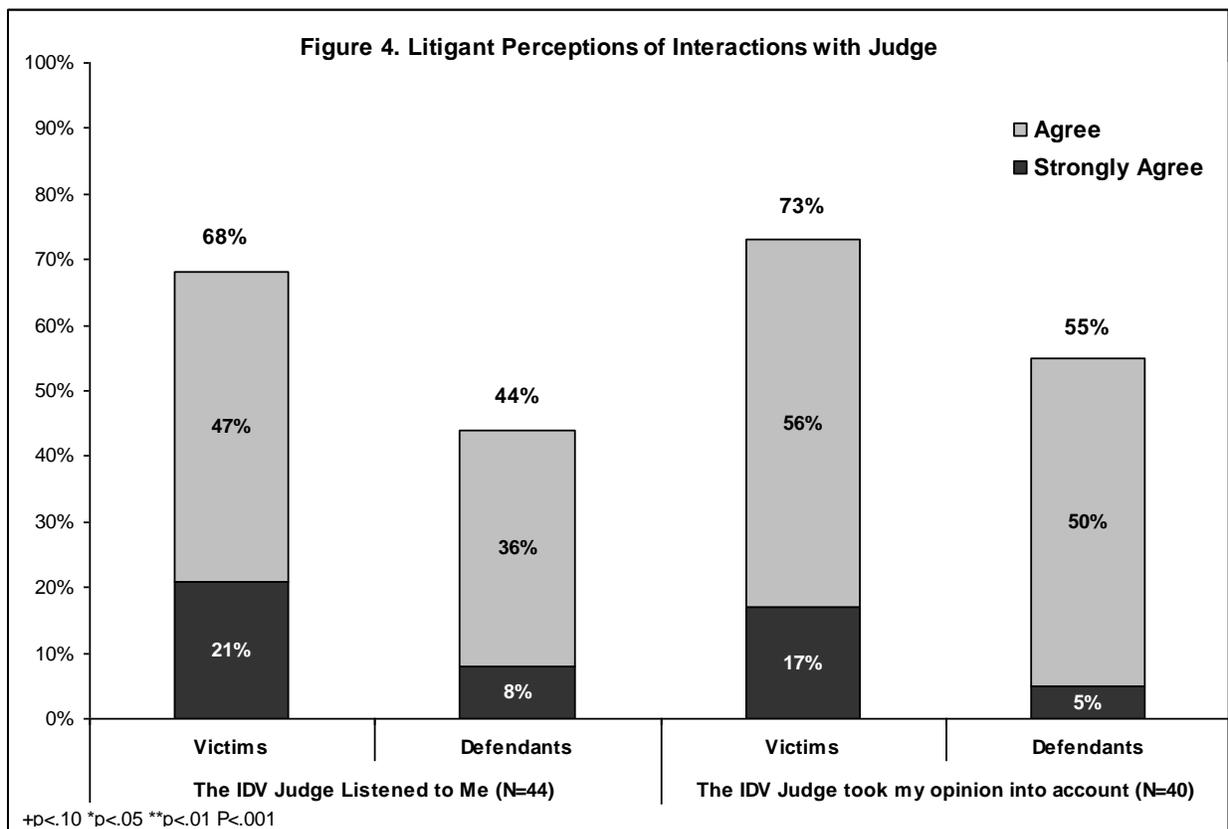
Using a four-point Likert scale, litigants were asked to rate their agreement with the following statements:

- Overall, this court has treated my case fairly.
- Overall, the American court system treats people fairly.
- The judge listened carefully to my side of the story.
- The judge took my opinion into account when making decisions.

Victims' responses were generally more positive than those of defendants in each area, although this difference was greater with respect to interactions with the judge and smaller with respect to perceived fairness of the court. Half (50%) of the total survey sample agreed that the court had treated their case fairly, representing 59% of victims and 44% defendants, as illustrated in Figure 3. Similarly, approximately half of all respondents agreed that the American court system treats people fairly, with victims (57%) somewhat more likely to agree than defendants (47%). While the differences between victim and defendant responses did not reach statistical significance, those litigants agreeing that the American court system is fair in general were significantly more likely to perceive Yonkers IDV Court as fair ($p < .001$), suggesting that preexisting attitudes toward the justice system affects litigants perceptions of the IDV court.



Similar findings resulted from our analysis of litigant perceptions of their interactions with the judge. Overall, litigants felt that the judge had listened carefully to their side of the story (55%) and had taken their opinion into account when making decisions (53%). Again, victims were more likely than defendants to agree with these statements (see Figure 4 below), although the differences did not reach statistical significance.



Over half of victims (59%) and 44% of defendants agreed that the Yonkers IDV court had treated their case fairly. However, a substantial minority of the defendant sample strongly disagreed with this statement (26%). During an in-depth interview, the dedicated probation officer in the Yonkers IDV Court, suggested that this trend may not be particular to the IDV court in Yonkers. From his perspective, domestic violence defendants, in general, often perceive courts as unfair: “This is obviously a stereotype, but one thing I’ve learned about domestic violence defendants is that they are *always innocent* in their own minds. This is not like a DUI (driving under the influence) or drug case where often a defendant will come in saying they know they messed up.”

VI. FINDINGS: COMPLIANCE WITH COURT ORDERS

For both criminal domestic violence courts and IDV courts, protective orders are a commonly used tool for promoting victim safety and defendant compliance with court orders. In Yonkers, as in most criminal domestic violence and IDV courts throughout New York State, temporary protective orders are put in place at the defendant's first IDV court appearance. However, these orders are frequently modified after the first family court appearance so that the needs of the family as a whole may be considered (e.g., visitation and financial support issues). Protective orders can be controversial from the litigant perspective, as both victims and defendants stand to be dissatisfied with some or all of the provisions. This is borne out by survey responses, with a quarter of all respondents (47% of victims and 8% of defendants) reporting they had been to the court to ask for a modification in their protective order or to request that the court drop a protective order.

Rather than merely examining satisfaction with protective orders, the survey attempted to take a more nuanced approach to this important issue. First, all litigants were asked whether there was a protective order currently in place in their case. Victims who reported a current protective order were asked whether they felt that a violation of the order would be discovered by the court and taken seriously by the judge. Defendants who had a protective order were asked whether they understood the order and whether they intended to follow it.

The majority (77%) of victims felt it was very (23%) or somewhat (54%) likely that the court would learn of a violation of their order of protection. Most victims were also confident that the IDV court would take a violation seriously if it were discovered. Specifically, 57% of respondents felt the judge would take a violation "very seriously," while 14% felt it would be taken "somewhat seriously." Bivariate analysis revealed that those victims who felt it was likely that a violation would be discovered were significantly more likely to feel that the violation would be taken seriously ($p < .10$).

Results from the interview with the dedicated victim advocate shed some light on victims' perspectives regarding protective orders in the Yonkers IDV court. Specifically, the advocate argued that the judge's ability to eliminate conflicting orders—e.g., a family court visitation order that allows an defendant to visit his children at home while a concurrent criminal court gives the same defendant an order requiring that he not return home—is one of the IDV court's most powerful tools. She reported that in her experience, many victims who have dealt with conflicts between multiple court orders in the past are surprised to find that the IDV judge is able to resolve some of these issues: "I often hear from women in the court, 'I'm so glad there's one judge here, other judges didn't get it.'"

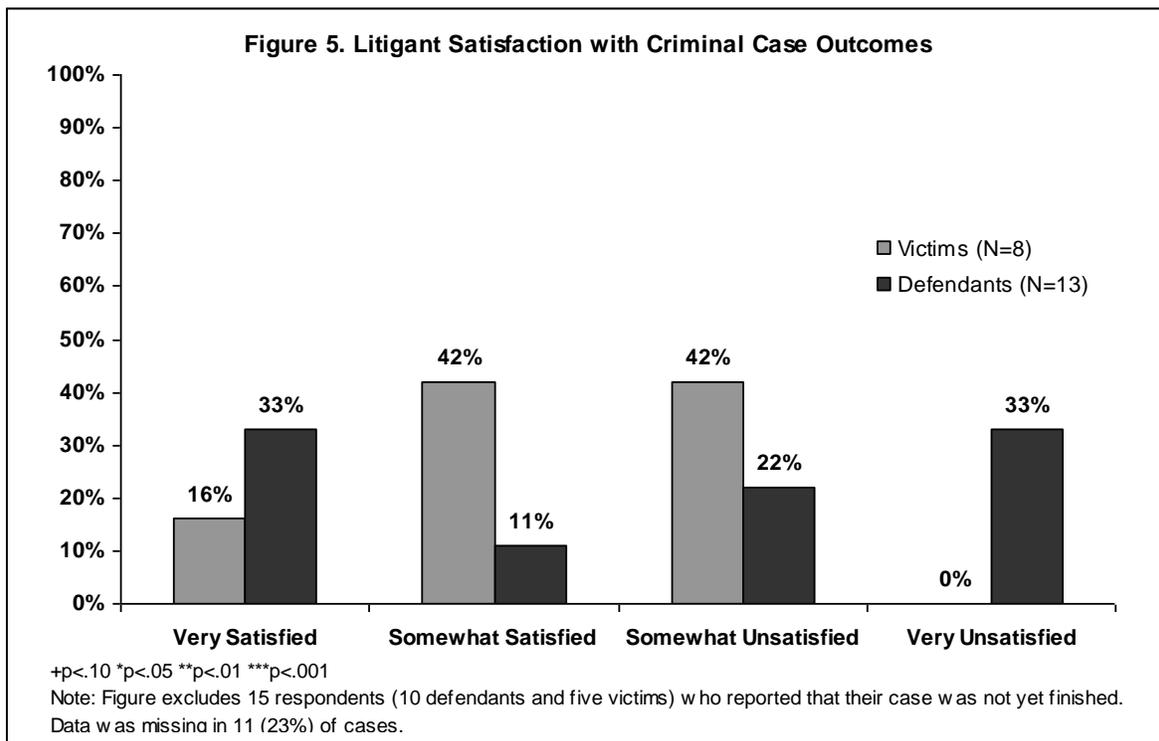
It should also be noted that almost half (47%) of the victims in the survey reported that they had been to the IDV court to request a modification in an order of protection, which could include anything from a request to drop the order to a request to prohibit the defendant from having any contact with the victim. This seems to support the victim advocate's opinion that protective orders are central to victims' IDV court experience. It may also suggest that victims in Yonkers IDV Court are confident that making such requests will result in more effective protection orders in their case.

Of the 26 defendants who responded to the survey, 86% reported that there was currently an order of protection against them. Those defendants who had a protective order in place at the time they completed the survey were also asked whether they understood what the order of protection required and whether they planned to abide by the protective order. A majority of defendants reported both that they understood what the order of protection requires (89%) and that they intended to adhere to these requirements (95%); one respondent (5%) indicated that he would “maybe” follow the order. Another three (11%) defendants with protective orders reported that they *did not* understand the requirements of the order, but nonetheless intended to follow the protective order. It is possible that these defendants misinterpreted one or both of the questions or that they felt they understood some but not all of the requirements of the protective order. Alternatively, this finding may indicate that, while they do not feel they understand the requirements of the protective order, these respondents intend to follow it to the best of their ability—or that they do not knowingly intend to violate the order.

VII. FINDINGS: CRIMINAL CASE OUTCOMES

Respondents reporting that the judge had made a final decision in their criminal case (n=21) were asked to rate their satisfaction with the case outcome on a four-point Likert scale. As reported previously, about three-quarters of the 13 defendants who reported that their criminal case had been decided also reported that they were mandated to a batterer program or other type of program mandate. Over half (59%) of victims that responded to the survey were satisfied with the outcome of their criminal case; 44% of defendants were satisfied with their criminal case outcome. Defendants were more likely than victims to have strong feelings about the criminal case outcome (i.e., to be either *very* satisfied or *very* unsatisfied) and were generally less satisfied with the outcome, as illustrated in Figure 5. Due to the low sample size, these differences did not reach statistical significance.

Bivariate analyses reveal that, for defendants, type of sentence was significantly related to satisfaction with the criminal case outcome. Specifically, defendants who received a batterer program mandate were significantly more likely to report dissatisfaction with the sentence ($p < .10$). Among victims, there was no correlation between the criminal case outcome and their level of satisfaction. Overall, litigants who were generally satisfied with their criminal case outcome were also more likely to agree that the IDV judge took their opinion into account ($p < .05$) and that they had been treated fairly in the IDV court ($p < .10$).



It should be noted that because the subsample of respondents who reported dispositions in their criminal case is small (n=21), the above findings should be interpreted cautiously. Moreover, a large number of defendants reported that their criminal case was not yet finished. This suggests

there may have been a lack of clarity regarding whether cases that were returning to court for post-disposition judicial monitoring, were considered finished or not.

VIII. FINDINGS: FAMILY CASE OUTCOMES

Respondents were asked for their reaction to the judge's decision in their most recently filed family court case. Specifically, they were asked whether they got all, some, very little, or none of what they wanted in the case outcome. The majority of these cases were visitation (43%) and family offense (43%) cases, followed by custody cases (14%).

Litigant reactions to family case outcomes were less positive as a whole than reactions to criminal case outcomes. Over two-thirds (69%) of both victims and defendants reported that they got very little or none of what they wanted from the judge's most recent decision in their family case. Defendants (75%) were somewhat more likely to report dissatisfaction with their family case outcome than victims (64%) but this difference was not statistically significant, possibly due to small sample size.

These findings are particularly notable because the survey also suggests that family case outcomes are perceived as more important than criminal case outcomes by the majority of victims and a substantial minority of defendants. Specifically, 53% of victims and 30% of defendants reported that the outcome of their family case was "more important" to them than the outcome of their criminal case. Comparatively, only 8% of defendants and none of the victims responding to the survey reported that the outcome in their criminal case was more important to them, while the remaining 55 percent (47% of victims and 61% of defendants) rated their criminal and family case outcomes as equally important.

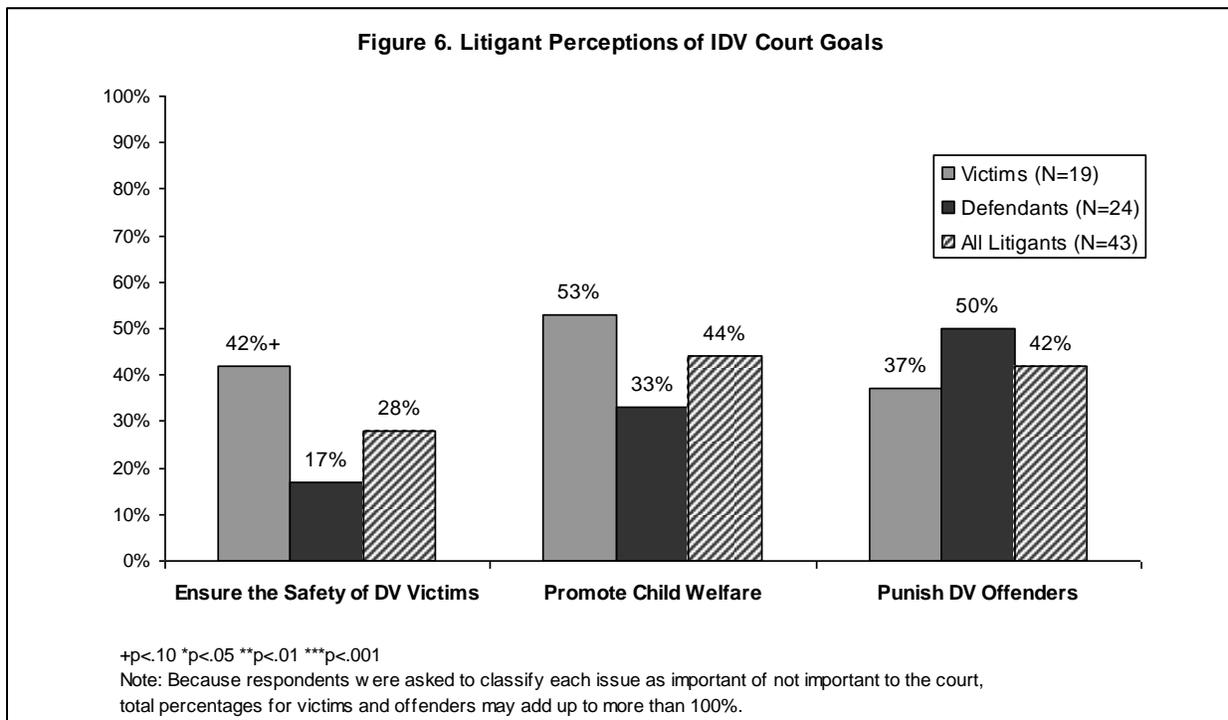
As with criminal cases, the level of satisfaction with family case outcomes was found to be significantly related to perceptions of fairness in the IDV court. Litigants who reported getting little or none of what they wanted from their family case outcome were significantly less likely to agree that the judge listened carefully to their side of the story ($p < .05$) or that the judge took their opinions into account ($p < .05$). Respondents who reported satisfaction with family case outcomes were also more likely to feel that both the Yonkers IDV Court and the American court system are fair overall ($p < .10$).

Overall, dissatisfaction with criminal case outcomes was found to be significantly correlated with dissatisfaction with family case outcomes ($p < .10$, $n=16$). Specifically, of seven litigants who reported being very or extremely dissatisfied with their criminal case disposition, six (85%) also reported getting very little or none of they wanted in their most recent family case outcome. Conversely, five of nine (56%) litigants who were satisfied with their criminal case outcome also reported satisfaction with their most recent family case outcome. The majority of respondents (76%) reported having legal representation in their family court case and most (94%) reported that having representation made their family case stronger.

IX. FINDINGS: THE IDV MODEL

To measure litigant perceptions of the IDV court, respondents were asked to classify three potential goals as important or not important to the court: the punishment of domestic violence perpetrators, ensuring the safety of domestic violence victims, and promoting child welfare in domestic violence cases. As illustrated in Figure 6, a substantial minority reported that the punishment of domestic violence offenders was important to the court (44%), followed by the welfare of children in the case (42%). About one-third of litigants felt that victim safety was an important issue in the court (28%). There were also some noticeable differences between victim and defendant responses to this question. Victims most often viewed the promotion of child safety as an important issue for the IDV court, while defendants were more likely to view the punishment of perpetrators as a top priority. Victims were significantly more likely to view the safety of domestic violence victims as important ($p < .10$).

The survey also included several questions designed to elicit litigant opinions about one critical aspect of the IDV model: the hearing of all cases by a single judge. Specifically, respondents were asked whether the judge used information from their criminal case to inform decisions in their family court case or vice-versa. Respondents were also asked whether having all their cases in front of a single judge helped them to get positive results in their cases. A large majority of both victims (80%) and defendants (86%) reported that the judge may have used things he learned in the criminal case to decide the family case and vice versa.³ Victims were significantly more likely than defendants to agree that having all of their cases in front of a single judge helped them get positive results in their cases (70% v. 47%, $p < .05$).



³ Legally, all cases transferred to New York State IDV courts continue to be governed by the procedural and substantive law of the originating court. The Yonkers IDV Court maintains a separate criminal and family court calendars and the cases of transferred families are not “combined” in any legal sense.

X. FINDINGS: VICTIM EXPERIENCES

Courtroom Safety

Creating a safe courtroom environment for victims and families is a priority for IDV courts. Physical safety in and around the courthouse may be particularly important in IDV courts, since victims are required to come to court for hearings on family cases (whereas victims do not typically attend hearings in criminal domestic violence courts).

The Yonkers IDV Court has taken several steps to ensure safety for victims who come to court, including setting aside a private office for the victim advocate, segregating victims and defendants on separate sides of the courtroom, and placing several court officers in and near the courtroom. Victims responding to the survey were first asked to rate how safe they felt in the courtroom on a four-point Likert scale. A follow-up question asked victims how the court officers affected their sense of safety. The large majority of victims felt very safe (76%) or somewhat safe (19%) in the courtroom and most (80%) felt that the presence of court officers increased their sense of safety.

Prosecution

A substantial proportion (42%) of victims in the Yonkers IDV Court reported wanting to pursue criminal charges after the arrest of their batterer. A smaller percentage of victims reported being unsure of what they wanted at the time of the arrest (16%) or wanting to get help for the defendant through the court (16%). Only two victims (10%) reported that they wanted to drop the criminal charges at the time of arrest.⁴ Victims were also asked whether they shared their wishes regarding prosecution with the prosecutor, whether they felt the prosecutor took their wishes seriously, and whether they felt pressured by the prosecutor to do anything they did not want to do. These results are presented in Table 4. The table compares the responses of victims who wished to pursue criminal charges with those who wished to drop charges or get help for the defendant and those who were unsure of what they wanted at the time of the arrest.

Table 4. Victim Wishes Concerning Prosecution and Interaction with Prosecutor

	Wished to Pursue Charges	Wished to drop charges/get help	Unsure/Other
N	8	5	6
Discussed wishes with the prosecutor	75%	75%	33%
Prosecutor took wishes seriously	71%	80%	67%
Felt pressured by prosecutor	100%	40%+	33%+

+p<.10 *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Note: All significance levels represent differences compared to those who wanted to press charges

As the table demonstrates, the majority of victims discussed their wishes with the district attorney. Almost two-thirds of victims felt the prosecutor took their wishes seriously, including those who did not explicitly discuss them with the district attorney. All eight of the victims who wanted to pursue charges at the time of arrest also reported feeling pressured by the prosecutor to

⁴ Three victims (16%) had “other” unspecified wishes.

do something they did not want to do. In contrast, only 40% of victims who wanted to drop the charges or get help for the defendant also felt pressured by the prosecution ($p < .10$).

During her interview, the victim advocate suggested that some victims did not fully understand the criminal prosecution process, in particular the goal of the prosecutor to convict defendants independent of the victim's wishes: "Sometimes victims decide not to respond to follow-up calls from the district attorney, believing that will be the end of the case." She also reported the reality that victims often change their minds in the midst of the court process presented challenges: "Some cases are still in the system when victims, in their mind at least, have moved on. These are sad situations."

Victim Services

Less than half (47%) of victims responding to the survey reported having any contact with the dedicated IDV court victim advocate. Of those who had contact with the advocate, the most common service received was safety planning (57%). Other services offered by the court advocate include referrals to outside organizations for counseling, housing/shelter, childcare, and legal assistance. Referrals to an outside organization for services were rare in the survey sample; only one respondent reported a service referral.

It was not clear whether those victims who did not have contact with the victim advocate were interested in working with the advocate. Moreover, having had contact with a victim advocate did not correlate with any victim response trends on other issues addressed by the survey (e.g., procedural justice; wishes concerning prosecution; or the outcomes of either their criminal or family cases). The only significant correlation found was between number of appearances made and contact with a victim advocate. That is, the more times a victim had been to the IDV court, the more likely she was to have made contact with the victim advocate ($p < .05$). It may be that some respondents had not spoken with a victim advocate at the time they were surveyed but would make contact before their cases were ultimately resolved. It should also be noted that approximately nine months into the survey data collection, the Yonkers IDV Court replaced the dedicated victim advocate, which may have affected the rate at which victims had contact with the advocate.

XI. CONCLUSION

The New York State IDV court model attempts to address the complex needs of families with one or more family court matters and an underlying domestic violence problem, as evidenced by a criminal domestic violence case between the same parties. This study represents the first survey research to address the experience of both victims and defendants within an IDV court. Despite the small number of survey respondents, several trends emerged from this study. In general, litigants felt that the IDV court judge took their opinion into account, that the IDV court model saved them from taking extra time off of work, and that the court made getting to and from court easier. Victims had particularly positive views of the judge and the IDV court's overall fairness, despite reporting mixed experiences with respect to the prosecution of their criminal cases and to victim advocacy, aspects of criminal domestic violence courts that previous research has shown is influential in terms of victim experiences. In general, victims were more likely than defendants to have positive perceptions across all aspects of the court with the exception of satisfaction with family case outcomes. More than half both victims and defendants reported dissatisfaction with the most recent family case outcome. Dissatisfaction with the family case outcome was correlated with negative views of the courts fairness and dissatisfaction with the criminal case outcome for both victims and defendants.

Future Research Directions

Larger cross-sectional surveys with litigants in IDV courts could illuminate some lingering questions. For example: How do perceptions of the judge's role mitigate the overall experience of victims in specialized domestic violence courts and IDV courts? Do certain defendant subgroups have especially positive or negative perceptions of the IDV court? To what extent are the perceptions of victims and defendants affected by the outcome of their criminal or most recent family case? Future research comparing the experiences of litigants in IDV courts with other litigants who have overlapping criminal domestic violence and family cases that are handled in traditional courts could help to clarify some of these issues.

We also found that litigant perceptions of the fairness of the court system as a whole were correlated with their perceptions of fairness in the Yonkers IDV Court. Specifically, litigants with a more positive view of fairness in the American court system also had more positive views of the IDV court process and the IDV court judge (and those with more positive views of the IDV court were more satisfied with their case outcomes). Further, people who had previously been to a criminal or family court were more likely to report negative views of the court system in general, suggesting that their experience in IDV courts may be shaped at least partially before they arrive in court. More in-depth research examining the cumulative impact of justice system experiences on families in specialized domestic violence courts could uncover some previously unknown factors affecting the impact of these courts on victims and defendants.

Policy and Practice Implications

The results reported here reflect an exploratory study of litigant experiences in a single court and should not be interpreted to reflect the experiences of IDV litigants in general. The findings nonetheless provide useful insight regarding the litigant experience in the Yonkers IDV court. Practitioners in other IDV, criminal domestic violence, and family courts may be interested in the perspective of litigants regarding the IDV court model, a substantially understudied topic.

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APPENDIX A: LITIGANT SURVEY

CENTER FOR COURT INNOVATION YONKERS INTEGRATED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURT LITIGANT SURVEY

Hello, I am a researcher with the Center for Court Innovation and we are doing a study to understand the experiences of people with cases in the Yonkers Integrated Domestic Violence Court. We would like to ask you a few questions about your experiences in this court. This survey is completely anonymous. No one, including the judge, your attorney, or the police, will know your answers. The survey will not affect your court cases.

Please do not put your name on this survey.

The survey is voluntary. You do not have to take the survey.

Feel free to ask the researcher any questions you have while you are completing the survey. If you have questions later (after you have left the court), you can call Sarah Bradley at the Center for Court Innovation: 212-716-1369.

Instructions: Read each question carefully and place a check (✓) in the box next to your answer(s).

1. **Have you completed this survey at a previous court date?**
 - Yes
 - No

2. **Were you recently arrested for domestic violence and became a defendant in a criminal court case?**
 - Yes
 - No

3. **Are you in court because someone else was recently arrested for committing domestic violence against you?**
 - Yes
 - No

4. **Is this your first time at this court?**
 - Yes
 - No

YOUR REASONS FOR COMING TO THIS COURT

5. **Think about all the times you have been to this court. Have you ever been to this court in order to... (please check all that apply)**
 - Get visits with your children
 - Get custody of your children
 - Stop the other parent or guardian in your case from having visits with your children
 - Stop the other parent or guardian in your case from getting custody of your children
 - Ask for an Order of Protection against the other person in your case (*an Order of Protection tells the other person in this case not to come in contact with you or to have less contact with you*)
 - Ask for a change in an Order of Protection

- (VICTIMS ONLY)** Testify against the person who was arrested in your case
- (DEFENDANTS ONLY)** Report to the judge about a program your attending
- Other _____

YOUR CRIMINAL CASE

Everyone who comes to Yonkers IDV court has at least two cases, one criminal case and one family case. The next questions ask you about your criminal case, or the one related to the arrest of you or the other person in this case for domestic violence. Please check (✓) the box next to the answer that best describes your situation.

1. **(VICTIMS ONLY) Do you currently have an Order of Protection against the person arrested in this case?** *(Is the person who was arrested in this case not allowed to contact you or required to have less contact with you?)*
 - Yes
 - No
6. **(VICTIMS ONLY) If you have an Order of Protection, how likely do you think it is that a violation of the Order of Protection would be discovered by the Court?**
 - Very Likely
 - Somewhat Likely
 - Somewhat Unlikely
 - Very Unlikely
 - I do not have an Order of Protection
7. **(VICTIMS ONLY) If you have an Order of Protection, how seriously do you think the Judge would take it if the Order of Protection were broken?**
 - Very Seriously
 - Somewhat seriously
 - Not seriously
8. **(VICTIMS ONLY) After the arrest of the other person in your case, what did you want to happen?**
 - I wanted to pursue criminal charges against the other person in this case
 - I wanted to drop the charges
 - I wanted to drop the charges if the other person got help *(for example, attended a domestic violence education program or a drug /alcohol treatment program)*
 - I wasn't sure what I wanted to do at the time
 - Other _____
9. **(VICTIMS ONLY) Did you discuss your wishes with the prosecutor (the District Attorney) in this case?**
 - Yes
 - No → Skip question 7 and 8. Go Directly to Question 9.
 - Not sure
10. **(VICTIMS ONLY) How seriously do you think the District Attorney (the prosecutor) took your wishes about the criminal case?**
 - Very Seriously
 - Somewhat Seriously
 - Not Seriously
 - Not Sure
11. **(VICTIMS ONLY) Did you feel pressured by the District Attorney (prosecutor) to do anything you didn't really want to do?**
 - I did not feel at all pressured

- I felt a little pressured
- I felt very pressured
- Not sure

12. (VICTIMS ONLY) Were you at the court while the criminal case was being heard by the judge?

- Yes
- No

13. Has your criminal case finished yet?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

14. If your criminal case is finished, what decision did the judge make? (check all that apply)

- The judge gave a sentence to attend a domestic violence program
- The judge gave a sentence to attend another program (for example, drug or alcohol treatment)
- The judge gave a sentence of jail time
- The judge gave a sentence of probation
- The case was dismissed
- The judge gave an Adjournment in Contemplation of Dismissal (ACD)
- Other _____
- Not sure

15. Are you satisfied with the judge's decision?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

16. (DEFENDANTS ONLY) Are you currently attending a program that the court requires you to attend? (check all that apply)

- Yes, I am attending a domestic violence program
- Yes, I am attending a drug or alcohol treatment program
- Yes, I am in another program (please specify): _____
- No, I am not attending a program

17. (DEFENDANTS ONLY) Do you currently have an Order of Protection against you from this court?

- Yes
- No → Skip Questions 3 and 4. Go directly to question 5.

18. (DEFENDANTS ONLY) If there is an Order of Protection against you, do you understand what the Order of Protection in your case requires?

- Yes
- No
- There is no Order of Protection against me from this court

19. (DEFENDANTS ONLY) If there is an Order of Protection against you, do you plan to follow this order?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- There is no Order of Protection against me from this court

20. (DEFENDANTS ONLY) Are you currently on probation as part of your case with this court?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

21. (DEFENDANTS ONLY) If yes, how long have you been on probation with this court?

___ ___ Months

22. (DEFENDANTS ONLY) If you are on probation, how often have you had contact with this court's probation officer?

- Four or more times in the last month
- Two or three times in the last month
- One time in the last month
- Zero times in the last month

YOUR FAMILY CASE

The next questions ask you about your family case (for example, a child custody or child visitation case). Please check the answer that best describes your current situation.

23. What kind of family case do you have in this court? (check all that apply)

- A child visitation or custody case
- A family offense case (*In this type of case you or the other person is asking for an Order of Protection*)
- Other _____
- Not sure

24. Do you have a lawyer in your family court case?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

25. If you have a lawyer, how do you think it has affected your case?

- Having a lawyer has made my family case stronger
- Having a lawyer has made my family case weaker
- Having a lawyer has not affected my case
- Not sure
- I do not have a lawyer in my family court case

26. Think about the last time, including today, that you went before the judge in your family case. Did he make a new decision? (check all that apply)

- Yes, the judge made a decision about my visits with my child or children
- Yes, the judge made a decision about the other parent or guardian's visits with our child or children
- Yes, the judge made a decision about child custody
- Yes, the judge made a decision about an Order of Protection
- No, the judge left the decision the same as it was at the last court date
- I have not yet been before the judge in my family case

27. If the judge made a decision in your family case, did you get what you wanted?

- Yes, I got all of what I wanted
- Yes, I got some of what I wanted
- No, I got very little of what I wanted
- No, I got none of what I wanted
- I have not yet been before the judge in my family case

28. Is the outcome of one of your cases (criminal or family) more important to you?

- Yes, the outcome of my family case
- Yes, the outcome of my criminal case
- The outcome of each of my cases is equally important to me

YOUR COURT EXPERIENCE

29. About how many times have you been to this court?

___ ___ Times

- Today is my first time at this court

30. How long have you been coming to this court?

___ ___ Months ___ ___ Weeks

- Today is my first time at this court

31. Thinking about the last time you were here, including today, about how long after you arrived at the courthouse did you wait for your case to be heard?

___ ___ Hours ___ ___ Minutes

32. How easy is it for you to get to and from the courthouse?

- Very easy
- Somewhat easy
- Somewhat difficult
- Very difficult

33. Think about the last time, including today, that you were in this court. When it was your time to see the judge, did you feel rushed?

- I felt very rushed
- I felt somewhat rushed
- I did not feel rushed
- Not sure

34. (VICTIMS ONLY) How safe do you feel in the courtroom?

- Very Safe
- Somewhat Safe
- Somewhat Unsafe
- Very Unsafe
- Not sure

35. (VICTIMS ONLY) Do the security officers in the courtroom affect your sense of safety?

- Yes, the security officers make me feel more safe
- Yes, the security officers make me feel less safe
- The presence of the security officers do not affect my sense of safety
- Not sure

36. (VICTIMS ONLY) Have you had contact with a victim advocate through this court?

- Yes
- No

37. (VICTIMS ONLY) Did the advocate discuss referral to any of the following services with you? (Please check all that apply.)

- Safety Planning
- Housing / Shelter
- Legal Assistance
- Counseling
- Childcare
- Other _____
- The advocate did not discuss referral to any services
- I have not had contact with the victim advocate

38. Thinking about all the times that you have appeared before this judge, how often have you understood which case (Criminal or Family) was being discussed?

- I always understood which case was being discussed
- I usually understood which case was being discussed
- I usually did not understand which case was being discussed
- I never understood which case was being discussed
- Today is my first time at this court

YOUR OPINIONS OF THIS COURT

39. Think about all the times you have been in this court. What issues seem to be most important to the Court? (When we say “the Court”, we mean the judge, the court attorneys, the probation officer, etc.)

- The punishment of people who have committed domestic violence
- The safety of domestic violence victims
- The welfare of the children in the case
- Helping out people who have committed domestic violence
- Other _____

40. Of the people appearing in court on your criminal case, who do you think the judge listens to most when making a decision?

- The judge listens to the defense attorney the most
- The judge listens to the District Attorney (the prosecutor) the most
- The judge listens to both the defense and the District Attorney (the prosecutor) about the same amount
- Not sure

41. Of the people appearing in court on your family case, who do you think the judge listens to most when making a decision?

- My lawyer
- The lawyer for the other parent in this case

- The children's lawyer (the law guardian)

42. In general, what is your opinion of this court's response to domestic violence?

- The court's response to domestic violence is too harsh
- The court's response to domestic violence is too easy
- The court's response to domestic violence is about right

AGREE OR DISAGREE?

43. Having all of my cases in one court made getting to and from court easier.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

44. Because I have all of my cases in one court, I have had to take fewer days off work to deal with court matters.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

45. The judge here listens carefully to my side of the story.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

46. Having all my cases in front of one judge has helped me to get positive results in my cases.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I have not had any of my cases decided yet

47. Having all my cases in one court made getting childcare easier.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

48. The outcome(s) of my case(s) would have been the same in any court.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

49. The judge took my opinions into account when making decisions.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

50. Having the same judge know the details of my family and criminal case may have a negative affect on his decision in one or both of my cases.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

51. The judge uses things he learns from my criminal case when making a decision about my family case and vice-versa.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

52. Overall, I would say the American court system treats people fairly.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

53. Overall, this court has handled my case(s) fairly.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOU

54. How old are you?

__ __ Years

55. What is your sex?

- Male
- Female

56. How much schooling have you completed?

- No high school diploma or GED
- High school diploma or GED
- Some college
- Associates degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Some graduate school
- Graduate or professional degree

57. Other than the Yonkers Integrated Domestic Violence Court, have you ever been to a family or criminal court?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

58. Are you currently employed?

- Yes, I have a full-time job
- Yes, I have a part-time job
- No

59. What is your race (check all that apply)?

- Black or African-American (African, African American, Afro-Caribbean)
- Caucasian or white
- Asian American / Pacific Islander
- American Indian / Alaska Native
- Other (please specify)_____

60. Are you Hispanic/Latino?

- Yes
- No

61. What is your current relationship with the other person in this case?

- We are "exes" (no longer in a relationship)
- We are in a relationship, but not married or living together
- We are married or living together
- Other_____

Do you have any Comments or Questions?

Thank you very much for completing this survey. Please return your completed survey, including the cover page, to the researcher.

APPENDIX B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

PROBATION OFFICER

- (1) Describe your professional background working with DV defendants in criminal, family and specialized courts?
- (2) In terms of probation supervision, what is different or unique about domestic violence cases? What is unique about IDV cases?
- (3) What are the differences between how domestic violence cases are dealt with in the IDV court as opposed to the criminal court?
- (4) What are the differences between how domestic violence cases are dealt with in the family court as opposed to IDV court?
- (5) Are there service or supervision needs that are unique to defendants in the IDV Court? Are these needs met in the IDV court?
- (6) What, if anything, do defendants typically share with you about their court experience?
- (7) From the defendant's perspective, what are the advantages/disadvantages of the IDV court?
- (8) From *your perspective*, what are the advantages/disadvantages of the IDV court?

VICTIM ADVOCATE

- (1) Describe your professional background as a victim advocate.
- (2) In terms of advocacy, what is unique about working in a Domestic Violence Court? An IDV Court?
- (3) What are the differences between how domestic violence cases are dealt with in the IDV court as opposed to a criminal court?
- (4) What are the differences between how domestic violence cases are dealt with in the IDV court as opposed to a family court?
- (5) From your perspective, what are the advantages/disadvantages of the IDV court?
- (6) What outcome are victims typically looking for in their criminal case (e.g., get help for the defendant, drop charges, fully prosecute)?
- (7) What outcome are victims typically looking for in their family case (e.g., full custody)?
- (8) What services do most victims in the IDV court need?
- (9) What themes come up when victims describe their court experience?
- (10) From the perspective of victims, what are the advantages/disadvantages of the IDV court?