

OFFICE OF THE COLE COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

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NEWS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cole County receives grant award for batterer's intervention program

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI (February 16, 2010) – Cole County has been awarded a grant from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to assist in funding a batterer's intervention program for offenders of domestic violence. The federal funds, totaling \$17,964.90, will be used by the Cole County Circuit Court from January 1, 2010, to April 30, 2011.

The batterer's intervention program, called Men Exploring Non-Violent Directions, or MEND, is facilitated by the Family Counseling Center of Missouri's Jefferson City Outpatient Clinic and is designed to improve the response of the criminal justice system to violent crimes against women. The circuit court uses the program as a sanction for offenders of domestic violence.

"The increase in domestic violence cases over the past several years makes this program a huge asset for the court," said Marilue Hemmel, administrator for the Cole County Circuit Court.

Federal funding will allow those persons approved by the court to participate in MEND according to an income-based sliding scale that ranges from \$10-\$40 per session. The program itself requires 27 weeks to complete and operates at a cost of \$40 per person, per session. Until now, MEND was not a viable sanction for the court to impose, according to Hemmel, as the majority of offenders could afford to pay the full cost to participate. With the funding from the grant, more persons will now be able to participate in the program.

"This is a great opportunity to work to reduce domestic violence in Cole County, at no additional cost to local taxpayers," said Cole County Presiding Commissioner Marc Ellinger.

MEND is the result of a collaborative effort among the Cole County Circuit Court, the Cole County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, the Family Counseling Center of Missouri, and is expanding to include the Jefferson City Rape and Abuse Crisis Service (RACS), local law enforcement agencies, and the Missouri Board of Probation and Parole.

"Such cooperation is crucial to effectively address the county's domestic violence problem and to better ensure the safety of our community," said Goldie Tompkins, Cole County Assistant Prosecuting Attorney.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's STOP Violence Against Women Grant is administered by the Missouri Department of Public Safety's Office of the Director.