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New Kansas Protection Order Portal available statewide

TOPEKA—A web portal that allows a victim to file for a protection order online is now available in any county in Kansas.

The [Kansas Protection Order Portal \(KSPOP\)](#) lets a person with a computer or smartphone complete the process to ask a judge to issue an order of protection from abuse, stalking, sexual assault, or human trafficking.

The Kansas judicial branch began testing the portal December 1 in Harvey, Johnson, and Riley counties. Ellis County joined the project March 1.

In fiscal year 2020, nearly 12,500 cases were filed in Kansas district courts by people seeking a protection order.

Many people who file for a protection order do so without help from an attorney, and they often visit a courthouse in person to fill out the forms to start the process. But a victim may not have a way to get to the courthouse, might live in a rural area far from the courthouse, or could feel unsafe leaving home.

"Access to justice is important, especially to someone who needs a protection order," said Amy Raymond, director of trial court programs for the Office of Judicial Administration. "The portal gives people another option to seek that protection order, and it's one that's easier to access for many people."

The portal does not replace existing ways to file for a protection order. A person can still go to a courthouse for the necessary forms or contact law enforcement.

Online process

Once on the portal, a person is asked questions and the answers are used to complete the forms a judge will review before deciding whether to issue the protection order. If the judge issues the order, it will be sent to the filer by email.

The portal also:

- explains what is required to qualify for an order for protection from abuse, stalking, sexual assault, or human trafficking;
- connects people with resources for emergency support, shelter, community assistance, advocacy support, and legal aid; and
- includes a "safely exit" option for a person to quickly leave the site if the person's internet use is witnessed, discovered, or seen.

District court staff process the filings during regular business hours. A person needing immediate help must contact local law enforcement.

Lanna Nichols, whose court was part of the pilot project, believes the portal has improved people's access to the court system. She is court administrator for the 21st Judicial District, composed of Riley and Clay counties.

"No longer do victims seeking a protection order need to worry about bringing the children with them or trying to leave work early to get to the courthouse before we close," she said.

Nichols said 84 people in Riley County have used the portal since December 1. During the same time, 27 people have filed by visiting the courthouse in Manhattan.

Grant funding

The judicial branch created the portal in partnership with the University of Missouri-

Kansas City School of Law. A Federal Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental Funding Program grant was used to create the portal.

The judicial branch received an additional grant from the federal S.T.O.P. Violence Against Women Act, awarded through the Kansas governor's office. The additional grant will be used to:

- integrate the protection portal with the state's eCourt system, which will allow people who don't have an attorney to file legal forms electronically;
- send automatic updates to filers by email or text message;
- create a mobile app for the protection portal;
- add instructions and forms in other languages to the protection portal; and
- develop more self-guided interviews and instructions on the protection portal to help victims complete other legal forms and file certain legal actions.