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NEWS RELEASE

The Harris County District Attorney's Office will partner in a new program to expedite the protective order process for victims of family violence, District Attorney Kenneth Magidson announced Monday.

The Domestic Violence Enforcement Program will formally begin in September with a three-year, \$850,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to the Houston Police Department's Family Violence Unit and the Houston Area Women's Center.

Those agencies receiving the grant will collaborate with the District Attorney's Family Criminal Law Division, which will not be receiving any funding, to speed up the response and available services for domestic violence victims. Improvements will help in quickly identifying habitual offenders and frequent abuse victims.

Under the program, the DA's division will provide police officers with specialized training in domestic violence laws and procedures. Prosecutors will help HPD set up Protective Order Clinics to enable victims to apply on-site, reducing the steps typically needed to obtain the orders.

Delays will be further reduced through overtime funding for teams of HPD officers to serve offenders with arrest warrants and protective order notices.

In general, the two-year orders enable authorities to arrest and jail offenders who threaten or contact family abuse victims.

Jane Waters, Chief of Family Criminal Law for the DA, noted that her staff annually serves 8,000 citizens and obtains about 2,000 protective orders.

"This program will definitely help us in protecting the safety of victims of family violence," Waters said.

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