



CUYAHOGA COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS DIVISION OF DOMESTIC RELATIONS

ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE
HON. DIANE M. PALOS

COURT ADMINISTRATOR
JAMES S. ZAK

JUDGES
HON. LESLIE ANN CELEBREZZE
HON. FRANCINE B. GOLDBERG
HON. TONYA R. JONES
HON. COLLEEN ANN REALI

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PAVE Presiding Judge Leslie Ann Celebrezze Announces Pilot Program for Parenting After Violence

Cleveland, Ohio: Cuyahoga County Domestic Relations Court Judge Leslie Ann Celebrezze announced today the Parenting After Violence (PAVE) Program pilot is scheduled to launch this fall. PAVE is a voluntary program that includes regular court appearances and completion of a 26-week curriculum that addresses past violence and provides tools for positive, healthy parenting. The PAVE Program was developed to promote and encourage survivor safety, foster abusive partner accountability as a means to change behavior, and provide effective long-term strategies for successful parenting after violence.

Judge Celebrezze recognized the need and developed the program concept after seeing many contested divorce cases with children having allegations of violence or active protection orders.

"Everyone deserves to be safe in their relationships and live a life free of violence," said Celebrezze.

"PAVE was designed to provide support for survivor partners and their children and to help guide abusive partners in taking accountability for their actions, end violence, learn child centered parenting skills, and over time, begin to build trust with their children and parenting partners," explained Celebrezze.

Participants who have used violence will complete the curriculum and have status hearings with the court, the majority of which will be offered remotely. At the hearings, the Judge will talk with participants about their progress, participation in the curriculum, and overall well-being. The Judge will also engage participants about their relationship with their children and their children's needs. Survivor participants will have access to support including service referrals as well as an advocate to work with them and their children and to maintain communication with them during the program.

Program development and implementation was supported through generous grant funding from the Ohio State Bar Foundation and the State Justice Institute. The Ohio State Bar

Foundation awards grants for projects addressing specific, unmet legal needs in communities across Ohio. Since 1992, the Foundation has awarded more than \$16 million to law-related organizations and projects across Ohio. The State Justice Institute (SJI) was established by federal law in 1984 to award grants nationally. SJI funding supports projects that improve the quality of justice in state courts, and that foster innovative, efficient solutions to common issues faced by all courts.

Leveraging the expertise of Juan Carlos Areán, Ph.D. with Futures Without Violence, who created the National Institute for Fatherhood and Domestic Violence, the Center for Justice Innovation that provides national training and technical assistance on abusive partner intervention programming, and nationally recognized domestic violence expert James Henderson, the PAVE Program was developed with the support and input of a collaboration board comprised of local subject matter experts.

Local attorney Alexandria Ruden serves on the collaboration board and worked with Judge Celebrezze to develop the program concept.

Judge Celebrezze explained, "I reached out to Alex for feedback on the parenting after violence program concept because I wanted the program to serve the entire family, and I knew this would look different for each family in the program."

Having worked over four decades at The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, Attorney Ruden has dedicated her career to championing the rights and safety of domestic violence survivors. When Judge Celebrezze shared her vision of the program, Attorney Ruden recognized the value to survivors and their children.

"The importance of PAVE cannot be understated. In the US, there are few services that help parents who have used violence that specifically focus on improving parenting practice. PAVE is designed to help those improve their relationships with their children while holding them accountable for their abusive behaviors," stated Ruden.

Ruden explained, "When representing clients who have been abused and who have children, I often hear "I can't trust my partner to be around me or the children. If they could learn to accept responsibility for his actions, understand the impact the abuse has on the children and want to change his behavior, I would have no problem with him having parenting time."

Ruden continued, "That says to me that the survivor seeks to protect the children from their partner until they are sure that they can trust their partner to be with the children and focus on the children's needs, rather than seek to continue to control the mother. The result of such a program may begin to reduce or eliminate further abuse and neglect towards the children and promote respectful and non-abusive parenting practices."

Internationally recognized activist, public speaker, trainer and facilitator Juan Carlos Areán played an integral role in creating the PAVE curriculum providing guidance, feedback, and curriculum content.

"A lot of my work has focused on the intersection between fatherhood and violence. For some men fatherhood can be a very powerful motivator for change and the PAVE curriculum is based on this approach," Areán explained.

Areán continued, "The beauty about this approach is that there's something about inviting men to do something for kids that seems to be a very effective engagement tool. Sometimes, when they realize that their violence to their partners is doing damage to their kids, that can be the first step towards change."

Cleveland Municipal Court Chief Probation Officer and DIET Program creator and facilitator Dean Jenkins serves on the collaboration board and is cofacilitating the curriculum pilot with James Henderson. Henderson, a technical assistance provider for the US Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women through the Battered Women's Justice Project, is nationally recognized for his work in the domestic violence field that spans over thirty years.

"Our goal with PAVE has been to build and deliver the best possible curriculum. I'm confident that our collective expertise and passion for working with individuals that have engaged in abusive behavior will change lives," explained Jenkins.

Anchored in the belief that individuals are capable of change if given the support, tools, and resources needed to do so, participants work with facilitators to better understand why their behavior is abusive, identify underlying thought patterns that influence this behavior, and are provided skills for engaging in positive and healthy parenting. Programming is enhanced with the delivery of wraparound services, including ongoing case management and service referrals.

"We want participants to understand that no matter who you are or what state of life you're in, we'll meet you there," Jenkins concluded.

Brittany Davis with the Center for Justice Innovation worked closely with the collaboration board on the project. "This new curriculum fills a significant gap nationally where communities often focus on parenting and intimate partner violence intervention in separate programs. The deep integration of these concepts allows for exploration of the ways in which people who cause harm can move from using parenting as an extension of their power and control to instead taking accountability for their use of violence and developing healthy parent-child relationships and safe shared parenting," explained Davis.

"We believe PAVE can be a helpful resource for communities hoping to create additional pathways to safety, accountability, and change for families," concluded Davis.

Program development and planning has taken over two years. Judge Celebrezze, the collaboration board, and PAVE staff are excited for the pilot to begin.

"We've developed an innovative curriculum and compliance docket that enables us to provide individuals with the tools and resources to change their lives for the better. I'm proud of the PAVE Program and how it will positively impact Cuyahoga County families," concluded Celebrezze.

For more information about the PAVE Program or if interested in participating in the pilot, contact Program Administrator Ken Robinson krobinson@cuyahogacounty.us or 216.443.8860.

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