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FROM: Council Member Sarah Rumbaugh
COPY: Community, Vitality and Safety Committee; Toni Esparza, Executive Liaison
PRESENTER: Council Member Sarah Rumbaugh and Nancy Shattuck, MPA. Empowering Voices Today
SUBJECT: Improving Outcomes with System Based Advocates
DATE: May 28, 2026

PRESENTATION TYPE:
Informational Briefing

SUMMARY:

The presentation will explain what a System Based advocate is and how System Based advocates improve outcomes for victims of domestic violence.

BACKGROUND:

System based domestic violence victim advocates can offer a range of services, primarily serving as an intermediary between the victim and the criminal legal system.

System Based Advocates communicate to the prosecutor and the court the victim's wishes/concerns in their case. They also ensure that the victim is kept informed about the case as it proceeds through the criminal legal system and that the victim understands their rights as related to the case. They accompany victims to arraignments, bond hearings, defense interviews, and/or trial when victim is called to testify, and sentencings. System Based Advocates coordinate with police departments and assist them in establishing contact with the victim or providing the detectives with additional follow up and investigation of new or continued criminal activity. They may also coordinate with local probation and/or Department of Corrections and provide case information to Community Corrections Officers and the DOC Victim Advocate Liaison to ensure offender accountability and continued centering of victim safety.

Additional advocacy services may include:

- safety planning;
- assistance in preparing Victim Impact Statements to the court for sentencing.
- providing information about Crime Victims Compensation benefits and assisting with the application process;
- working with landlords to address any safety issues or to educate landlords regarding DV housing laws that protect victims; and
- providing the victim with community-based resources such as emergency housing, counseling, civil legal assistance, emergency financial assistance, children/youth resources, sexual assault resources, stalking resources and information, crisis information contact info, and drug and alcohol information.

Research indicates municipalities with System Based Advocates have higher victim satisfaction, increased prosecution success through offender accountability, better long-term safety outcomes, and stronger trust in the criminal legal system.



ISSUE:

Victims of domestic violence engage with the court system. However, according to the Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center¹, nearly 60 percent of survivors reported that they did not feel they had gotten justice, many had little hope that their partners could or would take responsibility for the harm they had caused, and most shared that their paths to safety were difficult and scary at times.

ALTERNATIVES:

This is an information briefing only. There are no alternatives presented.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This is an information briefing only. There is no fiscal impact.

RECOMMENDATION:

This is an information briefing only. There is no recommendation.

¹ https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/Striving_toward_Justice_Diverse_Domestic_Violence_Survivors_and_Practitioners_Perceptions_of_Justice_Accountability_and_Safety.pdf