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## **D.C. Court to open first-ever satellite Domestic Violence Intake Center to serve domestic violence victims in Southeast D.C.**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The D.C. Superior Court officially opened the first-ever satellite Domestic Violence Intake Center today. The Center is a partnership of the Superior Court and Women Empowered Against Violence (WEAVE), the U.S. Attorney's Office for D.C., the Metropolitan Police Department, the Office of Corporation Council, and the D.C. Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

"This is a major milestone for the Court and one that will bring us closer to the community we serve. I am gratified to see the partnership that has flourished among all the agencies represented here today and know that people turning to the domestic violence courts will be better and more conveniently served," said D.C. Superior Court Chief Judge Rufus King III.

The Center will operate out of space in the Greater Southeast Community Hospital and will allow domestic violence victims to petition for a Temporary Protection Order (TPO) via web-camera to a judge in a courtroom in the Moultrie Courthouse at 500 Indiana Avenue, N.W. The judge can then issue the TPO and fax it to the Center.

Judge Brook Hedge, Presiding Judge of the Court's Domestic Violence Unit, championed the effort to establish a satellite center. She explained, "More than 60% of domestic violence victims that appear before the Court are from Southeast. The Center will allow those victims to take the initial step towards protecting themselves - getting a Temporary Protection Order - in a location that is close and convenient. We hope that it encourages more victims to come forward more quickly and prevent further violence."

The Center was the brainchild of Meshall Thomas, who was WEAVE's Program Manager at the Domestic Violence Intake Center at the Moultrie Courthouse and who will now serve at the Greater Southeast Domestic Violence Intake Center as the Operations Director

The Court will provide a domestic violence clerk to assist in court proceedings via web-camera. The person requesting the TPO and the judge will be able to see and hear each other over the web. The judge will be in a courtroom in the Moultrie Courthouse downtown. In addition, the Court will station a crime victims compensation program advocate at the Center to explain to victims and their families what resources are available to them to deal with crime-related expenses.

Each of the partners is providing personnel either at the Court, the Greater Southeast Intake Center, or both. In addition, the Court is funding necessary furniture, computer and camera equipment; Greater Southeast Hospital is donating four months of rent; Verizon Wireless is providing cell phones for victims and a monetary contribution as well. The District of Columbia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council provided a \$30,000 grant to cover first-year office rental.

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