

American Bar Association
News Release



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**FIRST EVER STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR LAWYERS IN
CIVIL PROTECTION ORDER CASES RELEASED**

Washington, D.C., Oct. 15, 2007 – The American Bar Association adopted Standards of Practice for Lawyers Representing Victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking in Civil Protection Order Cases at its Annual Meeting in August 2007. These standards, which have now been published, raise awareness of the need for high quality legal representation for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking.

Every year in the United States, approximately 1.5 million women are assaulted by their intimate partner. Access to legal services is identified as one of the most effective tools for victims to become safe; however, survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking are frequently unable to access the remedies provided to them by the justice system.

The standards recommend lawyers become knowledgeable about the dynamics of domestic violence and its intersection with sexual assault and stalking before undertaking representation of a victim in a protection order case. Other considerations addressed include understanding the role culture, language, immigration status, age and/or disability of the victim may play in effective representation of diverse clients, ensuring effective communication between the lawyer and client, and being able to identify the potential need for interpreters.

The ABA published the standards, which are being disseminated nationally to those on the front lines: lawyers at legal aid offices, pro bono legal service providers and individual lawyers who represent victims.

The ABA Commission on Domestic Violence developed the standards in partnership with the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, National Center for the Prosecution of Violence Against Women, National District Attorneys Association and the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice.

"These standards of practice provide a necessary tool to pro bono and new attorneys seeking to provide effective and responsible assistance to victims of violence in their communities," said Judge Pamila Brown, chairwoman of the commission.

Copies of the standards of practice are available in hardcopy and Braille by emailing abacdvt@abanet.org. They are also available electronically via download from the commission's Web site at <http://www.abanet.org/domviol/pubs.html>

Founded in 1994, the ABA Commission on Domestic Violence has a mission to increase access to justice and safety for victims of domestic violence by mobilizing the legal profession.

With more than 413,000 members, the American Bar Association is the largest voluntary professional membership organization in the world. As the national voice of the legal profession, the ABA works to improve the administration of justice, promotes programs that assist lawyers and judges in their work, accredits law schools, provides continuing legal education, and works to build public understanding around the world of the importance of the rule of law.