

# SUPERIOR COURT OF NEW JERSEY MIDDLESEX VICINAGE

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## **Middlesex Vicinage Forges Cooperative Program with Hospital to Aid Domestic Violence Victims**

In an effort to help victims of domestic violence, Middlesex Vicinage has begun a program with St. Peter's University Hospital in New Brunswick that helps domestic violence victims receiving medical treatment to apply for a temporary restraining order (TRO) at the hospital. Under the Hospital to Court Safety Assistance Project, victims can videoconference with a domestic violence hearing officer or judge to seek a TRO without traveling to the courthouse.

When a victim files for a restraining order from the hospital during court hours, a court professional conducts the initial interview and helps the victim complete the application for a restraining order using a phone or a videoconferencing system. If necessary, the court also will provide an interpreter. After the application is complete, the victim appears before a judge or hearing officer over the video network to discuss the case.

If the judge or hearing officer grants the TRO, court staff will fax it directly to the hospital for the victim's signature. After the hearing, the victim will receive additional information about the court process and other available resources. The victim will be given a date to appear in court to obtain a final restraining order.

The program provides important protection to victims of domestic violence. Social workers and nurses at the medical center will be able to support the victim through the process of obtaining the restraining order by videoconference with the court. The goal is to improve victim safety by allowing victims to have a TRO in place before they are release from the hospital.

The program is funded through a grant to the courts under the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).

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