



Operation Safe Families: Protecting Families from Gun Violence

The U.S. Attorney's Office has made combatting domestic violence, and the community violence it often leads to, a top priority. In October 2020, the Office announced a new initiative, Operation Safe Families, to fight domestic violence in the Northern District of Alabama. Through Operation Safe Families, the U.S. Attorney's Office works with federal, state, and local law enforcement to use federal firearm laws to combat domestic violence. One Place Metro Family Justice Center, the YWCA, the Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama, and the Crisis Center partner with the U.S. Attorney's Office to focus on prevention, education, and survivor support.

FEDERAL LAW BARS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OFFENDERS FROM POSSESSING FIREARMS OR AMMUNITION.

It is a federal crime to possess a firearm or ammunition while subject to a valid qualifying Protection Order. 18 U.S.C. §922(g)(8)

It is a federal crime to possess a firearm or ammunition after conviction of a qualifying misdemeanor crime of domestic violence. 18 U.S.C. §922(g)(9)

The law doesn't prevent abusers from merely *buying* guns. It also prohibits abusers from *having* guns – owning them, borrowing them, storing them, carrying them, or shooting them.

Federal prosecution of firearms possession may allow victims to receive swifter, more certain, and more significant sentences against their abusers.

FIREARMS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ARE A THREAT TO PUBLIC SAFETY

Nearly 100 domestic assaults are reported to law enforcement each day in Alabama.

Since 2016, there have been more than 150 domestic violence homicides and more than 20,000 aggravated domestic assaults in Alabama.

An abuser's access to firearms is the single greatest risk factor for intimate partner homicide. When an abuser has access to a firearm, the likelihood of the victim being killed increases 500%.

54% (85 of 156) of mass shootings between 2009-2016 involved shooters with histories of domestic or family violence.

Often victims feel threatened from seeking protection from the law. But, there are federal laws that we are using to take the threat of violence away from domestic abusers. By going after their guns, we are able to pursue a conviction – often without the need for the victim's testimony.

PROTECTING VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE AND HEALING OUR COMMUNITY

We can and must do better.

We must treat domestic violence cases as violent crimes and understand that *misdemeanors matter*.

We must reduce unprecedented rates of violence in our community today by elevating our collective response to domestic violence.

When we don't, there are ripple effects in our community beyond what occurs between two individuals behind closed doors.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Ensure that protection from abuse orders:

- a) Include language that indicates whether the offender received notice of the final hearing **AND** whether the offender appeared in court; **AND**
- b) Include language that specifically restrains offenders from harassing, stalking, or threatening an intimate partner **OR** that restrains them from engaging in other conduct that would place an intimate partner and/or his/her child in reasonable fear of bodily injury to the partner; **AND**
- b) Explicitly prohibit the use, attempted use or threatened use of physical force against such intimate partner that would reasonably be expected to cause bodily injury, **OR** include a finding that the defendant was a credible threat to the physical safety of the intimate partner.

2. Notify people who are subject to protection orders or possessing misdemeanor domestic violence convictions that they are prohibited from possessing firearms and ammunition.

3. Notify people that are subject to a protection order or having a misdemeanor domestic violence conviction of their prohibited status on the record.