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Columbus City Attorney Advances Victim Advocacy Services with New Trauma-Informed Care Approach

Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit implements new strategies to help victims dealing with traumatic life events

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein today announced several changes his office has been undertaking to update the services and resources provided to people who are dealing with traumatic, oftentimes life-altering, events. While the bulk of the new changes will help the Prosecution Division and Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit, every City Attorney employee was afforded enhanced training to better ensure the office provides trauma responsive services. The trauma informed care approach uses the latest research to help practitioners understand possible trauma responses and avoid causing trauma responses to the best of their ability.

The Columbus City Attorney's Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit has long been recognized for leading the way in fighting domestic abuse and supporting victims. Along with being first in the state to [implement a program to provide lethality predictor tools to help first responders address dangerous and potentially lethal incidents of domestic violence](#) and [hosting advanced training conferences](#), the unit's [expertise also has been tapped by the U.S. Department of Justice](#). By establishing trauma informed care training for his office, City Attorney Klein is continuing the tradition of innovation and adaption to best serve the needs of victims.

“I made this training a priority for our office because of our daily interactions with victims moving through the court system who are often dealing with stressful and traumatic situations,” said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein. “To best serve our community, I believe it’s important that we all better understand people’s natural reactions to trauma, and I want my staff to be skilled at avoiding triggers and helping victims heal.”

Last year, City Attorney Klein invited local experts from the Crime and Trauma Assistance Program (CTAP) to conduct an assessment of the City Attorney's Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit, including a physical space review and analysis of the staff's understanding of trauma informed care practices. Based upon the resulting recommendations, the City Attorney applied for and received grant funding to implement several environmental and process changes to increase the staff's knowledge of trauma informed practices and be even more trauma responsive. The DVSU lobby and waiting area received a “facelift,” and the new space is now more inviting and hospitable with softer lighting, soothing and meditative music, rotating art displays, and more. Research also shows that tactile activities help individuals relax, regulate and focus. As such, the City Attorney's office acquired anxiety reducing/self-regulating materials available for victims and their children to use while waiting for interviews, hearings, court appearances, etc.

The first training session for the entire staff was held in December 2018 and focused on:

- Defining trauma.
- Providing an overview of trauma responses.
- Offering practical knowledge of how to respond to individuals who are experiencing traumatic stress.
- Increasing awareness of treatments available for trauma survivors, gaining insight into appropriate referrals.
- Increasing insight into the importance of self-care as it relates to working with trauma survivors.

Subsequent sessions are intended to provide more in-depth training for those who most closely and frequently work with victims who have been traumatized. Last week, specialized staff members were introduced to a more comprehensive view of the interplay of trauma and domestic violence, including increased skills for responding to individuals experiencing traumatic stress. Future training sessions, including an introduction to the Neuroscience of Trauma, are scheduled for March and May of this year.

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