
Promising Practices

Improving the Issuance of Protective Orders in Arizona: The Creation of AZPOINT

After the 2011 shooting of then-Congresswoman Gabby Giffords, Arizona created a taskforce to improve firearms reporting into the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). The Arizona Criminal Justice Commission (ACJC), the state administering agency, partnered with the task force in 2015 to complete a statewide assessment of performance relating to protective orders. The results indicated two major issues with the paper-based system: only half of the issued protective orders were being served and an average of 23 days elapsed between issuance and service.

This assessment served as the catalyst for the creation of the online protective order system, [AZPOINT](#) (Arizona Protective Order Initiation and Notification Tool), which went live in January of 2020. A partnership between the ACJC and the Arizona Judicial Branch, this innovative system was built from the ground up, with no prior model available to inform this work.



Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is critical to the success of this system, both in terms of planning and implementation. Major stakeholders involved in the creation of this system included the Administrative Office of the Courts, clerks, sheriffs, local law enforcement, the NICS Task Force and the Department of Public Safety. Additionally, victims' services and victims' advocates, including the Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic

Violence (ACESDV), played a crucial role in the creation and usability of the system, with a specific emphasis on ensuring online safety.

Importantly, stakeholders remain engaged in the functionality of this system, specifically through participation in user groups. User groups are held quarterly with advocates and law enforcement; these groups offer the space for stakeholders to voice ongoing challenges and barriers and allow the court technical team to respond to feedback and incorporate updates into the system.

How the System Works

The free AZPOINT system allows petitioners to complete an order of protection, an injunction against harassment or an injunction against workplace harassment completely electronically from any device. The system also provides general information, tips and resources for filing protective orders. Petitions stay in the online system for 90 days and individuals can return to complete their online submission at any time. Additionally, the site encourages petitioners to contact an advocate prior to completing the form—whether that be for assistance with the petition, connection to services or to create a safety plan.



After completing the petition online, the individual records the reference number attached to their petition and takes it to court, where they meet with a judge for a hearing. Once the order is granted, AZPOINT assigns the order to law enforcement for service where the defendant resides.

When the defendant is served, the system notifies both the victim and the National Crime Information Center, a database available to police agencies nationwide.

With AZPOINT, most protective orders are now served within seven days, with about half served within two days. All orders are uploaded into NICS within a few hours of service.

Program Funding

In the beginning stages, funding for the system was largely legislatively driven, with a substantial investment by the state. ACJC and its stakeholders are currently working on enhancing the system; these enhancements are funded through a NICS Act Record Improvement Program grant and ongoing administrative support is funded legislatively through state appropriations. The court's technical team is a major partner in terms of both maintaining and improving the system.



Future Plans & Enhancements

The enhanced public facing portal will be available by the end of March 2023. Improvements focus on creating a bilingual portal, improving the conciseness of the language, refining the mobile version and ensuring real time submission to NICS.

Additional planned updates will enhance the user experience. Enhancements will focus on speed, search improvements, improving capabilities and

making it easier for individuals to manage the system and its components while safeguarding security.

The strength of AZPOINT, beyond being cutting edge, lies in the increased accessibility and convenience of completing a petition online and the improved service time for protective orders. An additional strength is the robustness of AZPOINT's technology and the ability for the system to potentially be used for cross-system purposes in the near future.

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