

STATEWIDE IMPLEMENTATION INITIATIVE — BWJP

Community of Practice — Frequently Asked Questions

Everything to know about joining the Maryland DVPO Firearm Surrender Community of Practice: how it works, who it's for, and what participation involves.

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OVERVIEW

Q. What is the Maryland DVPO Firearm Surrender Community of Practice (CoP)?

The Maryland DVPO Firearm Surrender Community of Practice (CoP) is a statewide implementation initiative designed to strengthen how domestic violence protective order (DVPO) firearm surrender laws are carried out across Maryland. The CoP brings together courts, law enforcement, prosecutors, advocates, clerks, and other system partners to improve coordination, accountability, and survivor safety through collaborative learning and practical problem-solving.

Q. Why was the Community of Practice created?

Maryland's statewide needs assessment identified significant variation in firearm surrender practices across jurisdictions, including challenges related to service of process, compliance verification, communication, data tracking, survivor notification, and accountability. The CoP was created to help jurisdictions address these implementation challenges by learning from one another and developing practical solutions that can be used statewide.

Q. What is the goal of the CoP?

The goal of the CoP is to strengthen implementation of firearm surrender practices during some of the highest-risk periods for survivors of domestic violence. By improving implementation — not changing the law — the project seeks to:

- Reduce delays in firearm removal
- Increase verified compliance with surrender orders
- Improve cross-system communication and coordination
- Enhance survivor safety
- Reduce firearm-related injuries and deaths connected to domestic violence

PARTICIPATION

Q. Who should participate?

The CoP is designed for professionals involved in the protective order process, including:

- Law enforcement personnel
- Court and judicial staff
- Clerks and court administrators
- Prosecutors
- Victim advocates
- Legal services providers
- Firearm surrender and compliance personnel
- Probation and pretrial service professionals
- Public health and community partners

The CoP is multidisciplinary because effective firearm surrender implementation requires coordination across agencies and systems.

Q. Do I have to be an expert in firearm surrender to participate?

No. The Community of Practice is designed for participants with different levels of experience. What matters most is a commitment to learning, collaboration, and improving implementation. Participants are encouraged to bring their expertise, questions, challenges, and ideas to the discussion — the CoP is a collaborative learning environment where professionals work together to strengthen practices across Maryland.

Q. Are participants expected to implement changes in their jurisdiction?

The CoP is designed to support implementation, not simply discussion. Participants are encouraged to identify a practice, workflow, protocol, or tool that could be improved within their jurisdiction and use the CoP to explore solutions. While implementation decisions remain local, participants have access to peer support, technical assistance, model resources, and promising practices that can help advance change efforts.

HOW THE COP WORKS

Q. How is the CoP different from a training?

A traditional training typically focuses on sharing information. The CoP goes further by helping participants apply information to their own systems and workflows. Participants engage in:

- Peer learning
- Structured problem-solving
- Resource sharing
- Technical assistance
- Tool development
- Practice improvement planning

The focus is on implementation, not just education — participants leave with practical products and strategies that can be used in their jurisdictions.

Q. How does the CoP support implementation?

Collaborative Learning — Participants share challenges, promising practices, and lessons learned from jurisdictions across Maryland.

Practical Tool Development — Each track works collaboratively to develop model tools, protocols, workflows, templates, or guidance documents that address real implementation challenges.

Technical Assistance — Participants have access to expert consultation and implementation support throughout the project, helping jurisdictions adapt new tools and practices to local needs and circumstances.

Ongoing Peer Support — Participants build relationships across disciplines and jurisdictions that strengthen statewide coordination and long-term problem-solving capacity.

THE THREE TRACKS

Every participant joins one track, working alongside peers to build a tool their jurisdiction can put to use.

TRACK 1 Service, Surrender & Implementation Workflows - Service of protective orders - Firearm recovery and surrender - Workflow development - Interagency coordination - Implementation consistency Deliverable: Model workflows, protocols, or implementation guides	TRACK 2 Compliance, Verification & Accountability - Compliance monitoring - Firearm surrender verification - Data collection and tracking - Accountability systems - Cross-agency information sharing Deliverable: Verification, tracking, or accountability tools	TRACK 3 Communication, Survivor Engagement & Access - Survivor notification - Language access - Public education - Respondent communication - Survivor-centered information sharing Deliverable: Communication tools, notification templates, and educational resources
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Q. What will participants create?

Each track produces at least one practical implementation product. Examples may include:

- Firearm surrender protocols
- Court verification checklists
- Interagency communication workflows
- Compliance monitoring tools
- Survivor notification templates
- Safety planning resources
- Multilingual communication materials
- Judicial reference tools
- Respondent instruction guides

These materials are designed to be adapted and used by jurisdictions throughout Maryland.

Q. What resources will be available through the Maryland Resource Center?

The Maryland Resource Center (MRC) serves as the public-facing resource hub for the initiative and houses:

- Community of Practice products
- Model protocols and workflows
- Implementation guides
- Training materials
- Recorded webinars
- Promising practices
- Referral information
- Survivor safety resources
- Technical assistance materials

Resources remain available beyond the completion of the CoP to support ongoing statewide implementation efforts.

TIME COMMITMENT & STIPEND

Q. What is the time commitment for participants?

The Community of Practice is designed to be manageable for busy professionals while still providing meaningful opportunities for collaboration and implementation. Participants are expected to attend:

- One statewide launch meeting
- Five Community of Practice sessions within their selected track
- One final virtual convening
- Limited preparation and follow-up activities between sessions, as needed
- Optional discussion board and resource-sharing activities through the Learning Community Portal

In total, participants can expect to engage in approximately 10–15 hours over the course of the project, depending on their level of involvement in tool development and implementation activities.

Q. Is a participant stipend available?

Yes. A limited participant stipend is available to support participation in the Community of Practice. Participants may indicate their interest during the application process. Participation in the CoP is not contingent on receiving a stipend, and individuals are welcome to participate even if they choose not to receive one.

Q. How much is the participant stipend?

\$568.75 MAXIMUM STIPEND	\$81.25 per required event × 7 required events (1 launch meeting, 5 CoP sessions, 1 final convening)
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Additional payment details will be provided to selected participants.

Q. When is the stipend paid?

Stipends are issued after the completion of the Community of Practice and verification of participation requirements. This approach reduces administrative burden and allows BWJP to confirm attendance and engagement across the full CoP experience before processing payments. Additional information regarding payment procedures, required documentation, and timelines will be provided to accepted participants.

Q. What if I cannot attend all sessions?

We understand that professional schedules and unexpected circumstances may affect participation. To be eligible for a stipend, participants must attend at least 70% of the Community of Practice activities during the project period. Given the condensed timeline and collaborative nature of the CoP, consistent participation is important to ensure meaningful contributions to discussions, tool development, and shared learning. Participants who are unable to meet the attendance threshold may still participate in the CoP but may not be eligible for the stipend.

Q. Can I participate without receiving a stipend?

Absolutely. The CoP is open to individuals who are interested in learning, collaborating, and improving firearm surrender implementation practices, regardless of whether they receive a stipend. Many participants join to:

- Learn about promising practices

- Build relationships with multidisciplinary partners
- Access training and technical assistance
- Obtain practical tools and implementation resources
- Contribute to statewide efforts to improve survivor safety

Q. Why is attendance important?

The Community of Practice is designed as a collaborative learning experience where each session builds on previous discussions. Participants work together to identify challenges, develop tools, and explore implementation strategies. Regular attendance helps ensure:

- Strong multidisciplinary collaboration
- Continuity across sessions
- Successful development of track deliverables
- Meaningful peer learning and problem-solving
- Greater impact for participating jurisdictions

Because each track develops practical resources for statewide use, active and consistent participation strengthens outcomes for everyone involved.

SUPPORT & OUTCOMES

Q. Will technical assistance be available?

Yes. Participants receive access to subject matter experts, expert-led webinars, implementation support, and technical assistance throughout the project. The goal is to help jurisdictions move from ideas to implementation.

Q. What support is available between sessions?

Participants have access to a variety of supports throughout the project, including:

- Subject matter experts
- Peer learning and consultation
- Community discussion forums
- Resource sharing through the Learning Community Portal
- Technical assistance and implementation support
- Training webinars and guidance materials
- Resources and tools available through the Maryland Resource Center

These supports help participants apply what they learn and adapt promising practices to their local jurisdiction.

Q. How will success be measured?

Success is measured through both participation and implementation outcomes, including:

- Development of practical tools and protocols
- Increased understanding of cross-system roles and responsibilities
- Adoption of improved practices by participating jurisdictions
- Increased compliance verification
- Stronger statewide collaboration and communication
- Expanded access to implementation resources through the Maryland Resource Center

Q. What happens after the CoP concludes?

The CoP is designed to build sustainable statewide infrastructure. Resources developed through the project will be compiled into a Maryland Promising Practices Guide and housed within the Maryland Resource Center. Participants will remain part of a growing statewide network committed to improving firearm surrender implementation and survivor safety across Maryland.

Q. Who ultimately benefits from this work?

While the CoP focuses on strengthening professional practice and system coordination, the ultimate beneficiaries are survivors of domestic violence and their families. By improving the speed, consistency, and accountability of firearm surrender implementation, Maryland can help reduce risk and improve safety during some of the most dangerous periods following abuse.

Have more questions?

Contact the Battered Women's Justice Project (BWJP) for additional information about eligibility, applications, and the Maryland Resource Center.