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On Good Authority

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On Good Authority is a periodic briefing on trends and issues in criminal justice program evaluation. This report was written by staff Research Analyst Kimberly Burke. It is a summary of an implementation evaluation of domestic violence programs in Lake, Winnebago, and Kankakee counties. The evaluation was conducted by Justice Research Associates. Copies of the evaluation are available from the Authority's Research and Analysis Unit.

The **Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority** is a state agency dedicated to improving the administration of criminal justice in Illinois. The basic functions of the Authority are criminal justice research, federal and state grants administration, and information systems development and support.

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Domestic violence probation in Lake, Winnebago, and Kankakee counties

The number of domestic violence incidents being addressed by the criminal justice system has increased in recent years, with more victims pressing charges and proceeding with their cases. The number of orders of protection issued rose 12 percent between 1996 and 2000, and the number of women served by shelters increased 12 percent from 1998 to 2000, according to the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence. In addition, the number of offenders on probation for domestic violence offenses more than doubled in Illinois between 1997 and 2000

In June 1999, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority launched a plan to use federal Anti-Drug Abuse Act funds to establish and enhance domestic violence probation programs in Illinois, including programs in Lake, Winnebago, and Kankakee counties. This *On Good Authority* summarizes an assessment of these domestic violence probation programs.

Justice Research Associates conducted an implementation evaluation of the programs beginning in 1999. In a succession of site visits and interviews, investigators collected data to describe the general manner in which each county approached the issue of domestic violence, and how the project impacted the process of handling domestic violence cases.

The three jurisdictions maintained a philosophy of ensuring victim safety throughout the process. They adopted a victim-centered approach, but had difficulties maintaining victim involvement. There was an emphasis on a coordinated community response to domestic violence that incorporated sanctions, supervision, and treatment for the offenders. In Lake County, the groundwork for the specialized domestic violence probation program included a domestic violence court and a pre-existing domestic violence probation program, which they enhanced by creating a surveillance unit. In Kankakee and Winnebago counties, the grants were used to provide specialized probation services in existing domestic violence courts.

Lake County

Domestic violence probation population

To provide a context for summarizing the implementation evaluation of the domestic violence probation program in Lake County, characteristics of the targeted population were studied. In a sample of 161 domestic violence cases assigned to probation between July and December 1999, 58 percent of victims reported being intimate partners of the probationer, and 22 percent were married to the probationer. More than 75 percent of probationers reported being employed at the time of the offense. Ninety percent of probationers received an order to complete domestic violence treatment. The majority