



Stephen M. Howe

A MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY:

As I complete my second term in office, I would like to thank the people of Johnson County for their support and trust they placed in me. I pledge that under my leadership the office will focus on:

1. Pursuing public safety, not politics;
2. Running a professional office both inside and outside the courtroom;
3. Ensuring transparency in decisions made by government.

I have fulfilled those pledges and continue to make Johnson County a safer place. The job is not over. New challenges are on the horizon. Our office will continue to focus on public safety.

The population of Johnson County has increased greatly. We are the largest jurisdiction in Kansas. The challenges faced by law enforcement and my office have increased accordingly. But safety concerns can be kept to a minimum by working as a team with law enforcement agencies, community partners and the diverse communities within our county. This has been a major initiative of my office. We have made strides in reaching out to our partners and to the community at large, and it is my intention to continue to build upon this success.

The laws we enforce do not just happen. It would be easy to sit back and wait for the new statute books to arrive every July from Topeka. That's just not my nature. If I see that we have a problem, I strive to be part of the solution. Toward that end, I have advocated for a number of changes to the law which promote public safety and help victims of crime.

My office has initiated local innovative programs to protect victims, including the domestic violence lethality assessment, the F.A.S.T. team to protect our elderly, and a Veterans Treatment Court.

While we have placed great emphasis on protecting the most vulnerable of our community, we have also made it a priority to expand our efforts to combat two growing areas of criminal activity - white collar crime and consumer fraud.

It has been an honor to serve as your District Attorney. Our work over the past seven and a half years has resulted in a professional office with a renewed focus on achieving justice through the fair and open application of the law and evidence.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Case Filings	2
Case Trends.....	2
Lethality Assessment.....	3
Awards & Volunteers	4
Crime Victims' Rights Week...	5
Crisis Intervention Council.....	5
Veterans Treatment Court	6





WHO WE ARE

The District Attorney is both a state constitutional officer and a locally elected official. The DA's Office represents the "People of the State of Kansas" in the prosecution of criminal cases and in various civil actions. We work closely with the police agencies of Johnson County, providing and gaining support toward public safety. In addition to these services, the DA's Office provides a number of programs and services toward community education, law enforce-

ment training, and victim services.

The District Attorney's Office seeks to protect the safety of the public through a fair application of the law. The office seeks to achieve this by implementing the following values:

- Earn and maintain public trust by exhibiting personal integrity and professionalism,
- Advocate for victims' rights,
- Cooperate with partner agencies,
- Responsibly manage public funds, and
- Treat all individuals with fairness and sensitivity.

K.S.A. 22a-101 establishes the District Attorney of the 10th Judicial District. K.S.A. 22a-104 requires the District Attorney "to prosecute or defend, on behalf of the people... all matters arising under the laws of this state, and such civil matters... in which the state or any county in such judicial district is a party or has an interest."

CASE TRENDS

In 2015 case filings in many categories were up after several years of seeing a decline. For example, criminal case filings increased by more than 11.5% in 2015 compared to 2014, while juvenile offender cases increased by 4% and domestic violence cases increased by 2.5% over the same period of time. Other areas, however, saw decreases. Child in Need of Care (CINC) filings continued to decrease. They decreased by nearly 9% after seeing a 2% decrease in 2014 and traffic cases saw a 17.5% decrease from 2014 to 2015.

WHAT WE DO

In 2015 the District Attorney's Office consisted of 96 employees, including one District Attorney, 32 Assistant District Attorneys, 9 Legal Interns, and 54 support staff. With these resources in place, the Johnson County District Attorney's Office:

- Reviewed 10,920 cases for filing,
- Filed 3,060 criminal cases,
- Filed 1,634 domestic violence cases,
- Filed 1,651 juvenile offender cases,
- Filed 527 Child in Need of Care actions,
- Prosecuted 10,936 traffic citations,
- Diverted 444 criminal and 2,747 non-DUI traffic cases,
- Presented 63 jury trials,
- Served 9,940 new victims entering the justice system,
- Provided 34,332 victim notifications,
- Scanned 241,764 documents into the JIMSWeb document imaging program,
- Filed 71 appellate briefs and petitions for review,
- Handled 562 consumer fraud complaints,
- Juvenile participation in pre-filed diversion programs: Youth Court—158; MIP Program—138, and
- Assisted with 1,251 protection orders.

JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER CASE COMPLETED IN 2015

In 2015, District Attorney Steve Howe completed the prosecution of the person who murdered three people during a shooting spree in April, 2014. This case went to trial in August 2015, and the jury found the defendant guilty of capital murder and sentenced him to death. Steve's trial team included his Chief Deputy District Attorney, his Executive Assistant and a Victim Advocate. The case was investigated by the Overland Park Police Department with assistance from the Johnson County Sheriff's Crime Lab.



Lethality Assessments determine the safety threat posed to domestic violence victims by posing questions on topics such as the batterer's access to guns or other weapons.

LETHALITY ASSESSMENTS PROTECT VICTIMS

In July of 2011 the District Attorney's Office collaborated with local law enforcement agencies to implement the Johnson County Domestic Violence Lethality Assessment Protocol. This protocol calls upon responding officers to ask alleged victims of domestic violence a standardized list of questions to assess the potential lethality of the relationship under evaluation. This assessment tool, based on research conducted by the State of Maryland and U.S. Department of Justice that has been identified as a best practice, allows those victims in "high risk" situations to be immediately placed in contact with private social service agencies. These services seek to break the cycle of violence in hopes of reducing the number of domestic violence incidents and repeat emergency domestic violence law enforcement calls in Johnson County.

If the assessment conducted on-scene by a trained law enforcement officer reveals a domestic violence victim is at high risk for physical harm, that officer will take immediate steps to get that victim in touch with Safehome. Safehome, Johnson County's local domestic violence shelter, reported receiving nearly 2,300 phone calls since the inception of the program. Approximately 130 women and children were placed in the Safehome shelter with many more put in touch with other counseling and support services. This assessment tool is further used to determine appropriate case dispositions if charges are eventually filed and what additional services may be needed to ensure justice is provided for these victims.

Six other Kansas counties have received training from our office with two counties having implemented this program in their jurisdictions. Six additional counties from Kansas, four counties from Colorado and one county from Missouri have also reached out to our office receiving additional information regarding the program.

In August of 2015, the Lethality Assessment was made part of the protection order process within the Johnson County Victim Assistance Unit. As of the end of 2015, 200 lethality assessments were conducted along with 137 referrals to Safehome.

SERVING CRIME VICTIMS

The United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics reports in its annual Crime Victimization study that only about 50% of violent crimes and 40% of property crimes are reported to law enforcement. This means many crime victims live and work in our community who may not be receiving sorely needed assistance to recover from their victimization or to break a cycle of violence. This is why the District Attorney's Victim Assistance Unit remains committed to serving crime victims regardless of whether or not they are involved in a criminal prosecution. To that end, in 2015 Victim Assistance staff and volunteers spoke to almost 2,200 victims about filing civil protection orders and provided well over 6,000 referrals to community resources available to them. Though these advocates do not provide legal advice, letting victims know what resources are available and how to access them ensures all members of the community have the opportunity to be safe.

CONSUMER FRAUD UNIT

The consumer fraud unit has handled 562 complaints.

This has resulted in:

- Restitution collected for consumers in the amount of \$336,550.
- Fines and fees ordered from businesses who violate the act in the amount of \$275,500.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The District Attorney's Office is a firm believer and is actively involved in community outreach. The District Attorney's office has provided information and services to the community through many different avenues including involvement with Safehome, Sunflower House, MOCSA and other partner agencies, COMVAC and other community groups. Various units within the District Attorney's office have provided training to the Johnson County Police Academy, businesses, civic organizations, nonprofit organizations, schools and retirement centers.

2016 NAACP LEGACY AWARD

The Olathe NAACP branch recognized District Attorney Steve Howe with its Legacy Award for his fair and just implementation of the laws.



VOLUNTEERS ENHANCE SERVICES

In 2015, an average of 18 active volunteers per month donated a total of 4,819 service hours to the District Attorney's Office. This is the equivalent of nearly two and a half full-time employees over the course of the year!

District Attorney volunteers most often work within the Victim Assistance Unit to mail victim notification letters, help victims file protection orders, and to assist victims and prosecutors in the courtroom. Volunteers also help in Records, Economic Crime, Traffic, Diversion, and in the Juvenile Division.

To learn more about the District Attorney's volunteer program or to apply to become a volunteer, contact the Victim Assistance Unit at (913) 715-3004.

2015 KCSDV COMMUNITY ALLY OF THE YEAR

District Attorney Steve Howe won KCSDV's Community Ally of the Year Award for 2015. Mr. Howe was nominated by SAFEHOME for his work on instituting the Lethality Assessment in Johnson County. The assessment is used by police and advocates to identify and assist domestic violence victims who are in lethal danger.



NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS RIGHTS' WEEK

In April 2015 the District Attorney's Victim Assistance Unit expanded its efforts to recognize the far-reaching impacts of victimization in conjunction with National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Through a community partnership with Leawood Police Department the victim assistance unit put on a free self-defense training for the general public. This project, supported by funding from the National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators (NAVAA), brought the training of self-defense to an estimated crowd 25 individuals.



In 2015, the Victim Assistance Unit mailed to crime victims 34,332 notices of case filings, scheduled hearings, and case dispositions.

KANSAS LAW ENFORCEMENT CRISIS INTERVENTION COUNCIL

In 1988, Memphis, Tennessee introduced the first Crisis Intervention Team training as a vital component to the community's demand for safer first responder crisis services. Since that time the CIT movement has grown to encompass more than 600 communities nationwide. The Kansas Law Enforcement Crisis Intervention Council was established in Johnson County Kansas in 2004 and the District Attorney's Office has been involved since its inception. The council was created for the purpose of forming a partnership between law enforcement, the mental health system, the District Attorney's Office, the mentally ill, and their families. The council's primary mission is to provide training and CIT certification for law enforcement officers based on the CIT model created by the Memphis, Tennessee Police Department. The council is represented by a total of six law enforcement officers from the police departments of Lenexa, Leawood, Olathe, Shawnee, Overland Park, the Johnson County Sheriff's Office, two mental health professionals from Johnson County Mental Health Center, two staff from the District Attorney's Office, and two mental health advocates.

Through the efforts of the council, they strive to promote education, advocacy, and problem solving in our communities throughout the State of Kansas. The goal is to reduce dangerous confrontations between citizens in crisis and law enforcement officers, and reduce recidivism and arrests by diverting individuals with mental illness to appropriate community mental health providers.

The training is designed for law enforcement officers and dispatchers who, in their duties, are frequently called upon to deal with individuals who are suffering from brain disorders and mental health issues. CIT develops sensitivity and understanding regarding mental health issues and emphasizes accountability and responsibility through the specialization of the CIT officer.

Kansas Law Enforcement CIT Council puts on two local classes per year in Johnson County and two in Hutchinson, Kansas at the KLETC facility. To date over 1,000 law enforcement officers have been trained including over 600 from Johnson County.

To address these issues we instituted a mental health diversion for those minor offenders who have a persistent and severe mental illness.

JOHNSON COUNTY VETERANS TREATMENT COURT PROGRAM

For the first time in the State of Kansas, the 10th Judicial District Court of Johnson County has created a treatment court program designed specifically for veterans of our Armed Forces, who suffer from mental health and substance abuse issues related to their military service. The purpose of the Johnson County Veterans Treatment Court Program (VTC) is to provide a treatment based alternative for veterans from incarceration into supervised treatment and supportive services; in turn amplifying public safety and reducing the reentry of offenders to the criminal justice system. It is important to assist those who have given so much in service to this country.



The first class of Veterans entering into the Johnson County Veteran’s Treatment Court on January 13th, 2016. This program was a collaboration between the District Attorneys Office, District Court, Court Services, Veterans Administration and the Johnson County Bar Association.

JOHNSON COUNTY, KS DISTRICT ATTORNEY’S OFFICE

In working toward safer communities for us all, there are innumerable partners our office engages. These include internal partners, such as the programmers and network managers of the Justice Information Management System, who help our processes effectively move forward. This also includes community partners such as Safeshome, MOCSA, Sunflower House, CASA, TLC, and many more. To learn more, visit our website at <http://da.jocogov.org>.

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THANK YOU

None of the work accomplished in the District Attorney’s Office is done without the support, collaboration, and assistance of our many community partners. With that in mind, we would like to offer this special note of thanks to the following:

- Ed Eilert, Board of County Commissioners Chairman
- Ron Shaffer, 1st District County Commissioner
- Jim Allen, 2nd District County Commissioner
- Steven Klika, 3rd District County Commissioner
- Jason Osterhaus, 4th District County Commissioner
- Michael Ashcraft, 5th District County Commissioner
- John Toplikar, 6th District County Commissioner
- Frank Denning, Johnson County Sheriff
- Hannes Zacharias, Johnson County Manager
- Johnson County Chiefs of Police

District Attorney’s Office Units and Divisions:

Main Line	913-715-3000
Victim Assistance	913-715-3004
Diversion	913-715-3114
Traffic	913-715-3011
Juvenile	913-715-3149
Consumer Fraud Hotline	913-715-3003