DATE: June 29, 2005

SUBJECT: Final Report and <u>Recommendations</u> from "Evaluation of
                       Pennsylvania's Protection from Abuse Database"

TO: All Readers

FROM: Doug Hoffman, Director
                       Center for Research, Evaluation, and Statistical Analysis

The "Evaluation of Pennsylvania's Protection from Abuse Database (PFAD)" was conducted by the National Center for State Courts. The evaluation was funded by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) and guided by an advisory committee that included representatives of PCCD, the Pennsylvania State Police, the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts, the Pennsylvania Justice Network (JNET), and the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence. County and local government officials also served on the advisory committee representing the Courts of Common Pleas, Prothonotaries, District Attorneys, Domestic Violence Services, District Justices, and local police agencies. These agencies and representatives were selected based on their working knowledge of protection from abuse activities within the state. PCCD employs such advisory committees to enable researchers to gain access and insight into the issues they are evaluating. PCCD also uses the advisory committees to help interpret the findings of the research and make recommendations for action.

The eight numbered recommendations found in the Executive Summary and on page 20 of the full report are the recommendations of the advisory committee. The findings listed in the report or any other "recommendations" are those of the evaluators. A great deal of discussion among advisory committee members went into these eight recommendations and little of that discussion is captured in the report. Of particular note is a recommendation by the National Center for State Courts that is contained in the body of the report. That recommendation is that the PFAD be owned and operated by the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts. While the advisory committee agreed that for PFAD to reach its full potential, state ownership and support were necessary, it did not agree that the courts were the best choice for ownership.

For evaluation activities to be useful, evaluators must be independent and able to express their findings and suggest actions. At the same time, funding agents and practitioners must be able to interpret those findings and incorporate lessons learned to improve their programs as they see fit. While we believe this evaluation allowed both of these to occur, the report did not effectively delineate between those two processes.

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Evaluation of Pennsylvania's Protection from Abuse Database

Final Report

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Prepared for
The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency

Executive Summary

In May 2003, the National Center for State Courts began evaluating the Protection from Abuse Database (PFAD). The project, funded by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, explored the following areas: PFAD usage, satisfaction levels, victim safety, data transmission, and system integration. The evaluation was conducted through secondary data analysis, county-level surveys, user surveys, case studies, and system analysis.

Key Findings

Finding 1: PFAD has become an indispensable tool in Pennsylvania.

PFAD has literally reshaped the process of obtaining a protection from abuse order. In those counties that use PFAD[1], the process now centers on the use of PFAD for the creation of the petition and order and their subsequent filing by the prothonotary as well as their dissemination to the Pennsylvania State Police and local law enforcement. However, the database is administered by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV)—a nongovernmental entity—and is dependent on grants for continued funding. In order to appropriately institutionalize the use of PFAD, it should be placed under a government agency, preferably the Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC), administratively, operationally, and for funding purposes. The government agency should consider contracting with PCADV to perform the administrative and operational functions required to ensure the continued quality and utility of PFAD.

Finding 2: There is a high level of user satisfaction with the implementation, training, and technical assistance associated with PFAD.

PCADV is the administrator of PFAD and is solely responsible for training and technical assistance. County officials repeatedly gave PCADV high marks in the implementation of PFAD within their county, and credit PCADV with providing excellent technical services and training. Individual users also tended to be very satisfied with all aspects of the database and its associated support services.

Finding 3: Administration of PFAD can be improved by documenting current user information and validating the data.

PFAD should be able to audit both the logon and use of its system. Currently, PCADV does not maintain a list of active users. Consequently, it is impossible to gauge the actual level of usage.[2] PFAD should be able to audit both the logon and use of its system, and maintain a contact database for current users. Another major component of system and database administration is a periodic verification of the data stored in the database. Typically the system owner provides to the data owner some list or indication as to what data have been entered into the system by the data owner. In this instance, because the data concerns court orders, the prothonotary would need to ensure that the data are both correct and valid or at least reflects the court order. All databases used by the justice partnership, and this one in particular, should be periodically evaluated to ensure that the data used in making potentially life-and-death decisions is complete, correct, and valid.

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[1] Fifty-five of Pennsylvania's sixty-seven counties currently use PFAD.

[2] PCADV reports over 6,000 authorized users of PFAD. However, the number of *authorized* users far exceeds the number of *actual* users.

Finding 4: Local PFA processes determine PFAD usage patterns and the timeliness and accuracy of entering PFAs into the Pennsylvania State Police Protection Order Registry.

Although PFAD has standardized many aspects of the PFA process, both the use of PFAD and the PFA process vary greatly from county to county. The way that a county shares the work involved in the PFA process and the level of coordination among the court, DV programs, law enforcement and other organizations can have a significant impact on how quickly PFAs are entered into the PSP registry, the speed and effectiveness of service of PFAs, how many resources users must provide, and ultimately, how well the interests of domestic violence victims are served. The variations in PFA processes and the use of PFAD's functions have implications for the statewide implementation of PFAD. Standardizing the major components of the PFA process can ensure that processes do not vary so much by county that statewide use of PFAD is compromised. The accuracy and reliability of PFAD are critical for law enforcement, court staff, advocates, legal services providers and others striving to maximize the effectiveness of PFAs.

Finding 5: PFAD has great potential as a law enforcement tool, which will be realized only when the database is fully integrated with CLEAN.

Usage patterns, surveys, and case studies confirmed the limited use of PFAD by law enforcement. PFAD has the potential to enhance enforcement of PFAs because it stores the actual order and therefore makes the exact terms and conditions of the order known to law enforcement, rather than the summarized and coded terms and conditions of the order stored in the registry and accessed through CLEAN. While PFAD is available to authorized users in law enforcement through their Internet service provider and some local law enforcement agencies use PFAD, the PSP's CLEAN system is the official record. In the near future, PFAD data will be integrated into the CLEAN system by electronic transmission. This technological advance will significantly reduce delay and errors and should promote the use of PFAD by law enforcement.

Finding 6: PFAD serves the interests of domestic violence victims and improves victim safety.

PFAD improves coordination of services within counties, makes PFA information more widely accessible, simplifies the petition process, and sensitizes court staff to the problem of domestic violence. PFAD is a useful tool that provides advocates with a structure to facilitate intervention while minimizing the frequency with which victims must repeat their personal experiences. Because PFAD is easy to use and prompts the user for required information, intake providers can draft petitions that are detailed and document the grounds for the PFA—ultimately increasing the chances that a PFA will be granted. Petitions can be prepared more easily and quickly, and they can be presented to the court in a timely manner. In addition, access to PFA information on a 24/7 basis from previous incidents and other Pennsylvania counties can help make the work of the advocates, law enforcement, and court staff more effective. In addition, PFAD's production of the PSP datasheet speeds transmission to the PSP registry because the datasheets contain the codes needed for the registry. However, the full potential of PFAD on victim safety will be realized only when the information contained in PFAD is used to enforce orders.

Finding 7: Most PFAD users do not take advantage of the full range of PFAD's functions and capabilities.

PFAD is used primarily to record actions directly related to petitions and orders. A survey of users showed that PFAD is most often used to propose temporary orders, initiate petitions, create notices of hearings, edit proposed orders, and prepare final orders. Yet counties varied in their use of various PFAD functions. For instance, affidavits and notices accounted for 35 percent of PFAD activity in 10 counties, but six counties did not use these functions at all. Case study interviews revealed that many users are not aware of all the

functions of PFAD. Furthermore, while some courts and organizations have made PFAD the central tool for PFA related work, others duplicate work by completing forms by hand and then entering them into PFAD. Still others do not use available forms for actions such as filing indirect criminal contempt motions. Whether the focus is safety planning or forms completion, PFAD training should include some training in process re-engineering and best practices to ensure that an organization is maximizing PFAD's potential rather than adding unnecessary steps to the PFA process. A usage guide might also be developed to assist users who wish to explore all the possible functions that PFAD can perform.

Finding 8: PFAD's ICC function is a valuable tool that fills a gap in the PFA process.

Currently, 21 counties use the Indirect Criminal Contempt (ICC) function in PFAD to transmit live data on ICC charges. In these counties, the District Attorney, law enforcement, and advocates can find and retrieve prior PFA violations with docket numbers. Without the ICC function of PFAD, access to criminal histories can require time-consuming searches of criminal case files. Furthermore, ICC information may not be available statewide, and the NCIC Protection Order File does not contain a history of violations. Effective enforcement of PFAs through the ICC process therefore can be greatly enhanced by using the ICC function in PFAD.

Recommendations
The following recommendations were put forward by the National Center for State Courts evaluation team, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, and members of the advisory board.

Recommendation 1: Eliminate data duplication by adopting GJXDD (Global Justice XML Data Dictionary) standards and methods.

By adopting the XML protocols contained within the Global Justice XML Dictionary and Data Model, the potential exists to update data in a court's case management system from PFAD. First, modifications to the PFAD application must be written to generate the appropriate XML schema around the data entered in the form. Then the XML schema must be mapped to the corresponding data elements in the court's case management system. The data can then be electronically transferred from PFAD to the court's case management system, thereby reducing the need for duplicate data entry.

Recommendation 2: Create a standardized PFA process in Pennsylvania.

Only Pennsylvania's Supreme Court can postulate court rules that are applicable across the Commonwealth. Their oversight, through the Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC), of the PFAD database would provide a legitimacy and control that would assist the prothonotaries in adopting more standard and consistent procedures when working with PFAs. In addition, the AOPC can work with both courts and prothonotaries to identify and adopt best practices that would also assist in standardizing the PFA process.

Recommendation 3: Educate courts and prothonotaries on the importance of PFAD, Supreme Court forms, state registry requirements, and domestic violence dynamics.

PFAD is driven by the Supreme Court forms. Yet some court staff and prothonotaries are not aware of the state-mandated forms, state statutes related to domestic violence, the requirements of the PSP's Protection Order Registry and NCIC Protection Order File, and the dynamics of domestic violence. It is important to ensure that courts and prothonotaries understand the different requirements of the systems in which protection

order information is housed to ensure that orders receive the widest possible dissemination and are available to the justice partnership throughout both Pennsylvania and the United States. Furthermore, an appreciation of the enforcement powers of a PFA and greater understanding of domestic violence dynamics should encourage a proactive use of PFAD and enhance interagency coordination. Statewide and regional conferences can be conducted to provide information and resources to court staff and prothonotaries.

Recommendation 4: Improve data interchange and access electronically between PFAD and PSP's Protection Order Registry maintained and accessed by and through CLEAN.

The PSP datasheet is currently delivered to PSP for data entry either by hand or electronically via fax. PCADV and PSP are working with JNET to design and develop a system of electronic transmission of order data from PFAD via JNET to the PSP registry. Once this electronic transfer is implemented, it will no longer be necessary to re-key the data into the PSP Protection Order Registry. Implementation of this single feature will increase the accuracy of orders and reduce the time before an order becomes available to law enforcement. In addition, the electronic transfer of data should reduce the level of PSP effort required to enter orders into both the PSP Protection Order Registry and the NCIC Protection Order File.

Recommendation 5: Ensure the continued involvement of PCADV in PFAD.

PCADV created PFAD and currently administers the database and provides technical support and training. Their expertise and level of service is exemplary. Should PFAD become an "official" application under the auspices of a state agency, the agency should contract with PCADV to continue its provision of administration, technical assistance and training.

Recommendation 6: Incorporate PFAD and all of its functions into a locally coordinated PFA process.

PFAD should be the core of a comprehensive management plan for the entire state and can provide the framework for additional orders and tools. PFAD should drive the PFA process and be a central component of meeting clients, formulating safety plans, and creating a petition and order. Whether the focus is safety planning or forms completion, PFAD training should include discussions of process re-engineering to ensure that PFA local practices are coordinated and that each organization is maximizing PFAD's potential.

Recommendation 7: Make PFAD the official registry owned and administered by a state agency with state funding.

PFAD is currently supported through grant funding. For those counties using PFAD, it has become the vehicle for the generation of protection orders and has, de facto, become mission-critical. Should PFAD go statewide under the current funding stream, any reduction in support or cessation of support from grant funding will leave the PFA process without the automated support on which it has become dependent. PFAD must be funded through the Commonwealth with support from the AOPC.

Recommendation 8: Improve documentation of usage and validation of data.

PFAD should convene a user meeting to discuss both documentation of PFAD usage and validation of PFAD data. To ensure that PFAD is fully protected, its use should be completely auditable. PFAD should be able to produce statistics as to who is logged on, length of session, and types of transactions performed during that session. In addition, PFAD should periodically provide each court/prothonotary having orders housed in PFAD with a list of those orders, their current status in PFAD, and the data contained in those orders. This

will provide courts and prothonotaries with the opportunity to validate the data in PFAD, its status, and its correctness as well as make any necessary modifications.

Project Description

In May 2003, the National Center for State Courts began evaluating the Protection from Abuse Database (PFAD), which is currently administered by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV). The project, funded by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, explored the following areas: PFAD usage, satisfaction levels, victim safety, data transmission, and system integration. The evaluation was conducted through secondary data analysis, county-level surveys, user surveys, case studies, and system analysis.

Project Methodology

The evaluation was conducted through secondary data analysis, county-level surveys, user surveys, case studies, and system analysis. Each research strategy has limitations. For instance, the accuracy of survey data are affected by the accessibility of the target group and response rates. Similarly, case studies of a select number of counties limit the application of findings statewide. Because each evaluation strategy has limitations, triangulation—the use of more than one approach—was used in the evaluation of PFAD. Triangulation enhances confidence in the ensuing findings by highlighting consistencies obtained through multiple methods.

The exhibit below summarizes the evaluation strategies used to evaluate PFAD. In addition to a system analysis of the database, analysis was conducted at both the individual user and the county levels. In-depth reports and a complete description of each element of the study can be found in the attachments.

Exhibit: Summary of Evaluation Methods

Evaluation Strategies	Dates Conducted	Sources of Data and Limitations
Secondary Data Analysis	6/03 to 11/03	• Source of data: PCADV • Longitudinal data compared for 38 active counties • System unable to identify unique users
County-Level Surveys	11/03 to 12/03	• Survey of 62 active and inactive counties • Prothonotary most common respondent
User Surveys	11/03 to 3/04	• Responses from 90 PFAD users • Limited reliability due to the lack of a contact list of active PFAD users resulting in questionable response rates
Case Studies	6/04 to 8/04	• Semi-formal interviews conducted in six counties: Armstrong, Beaver, Centre, Dauphin, Lancaster, and Potter
System Analysis	6/03 to 9/04	• Review of user documentation, training packets, and software and hardware documentation • Analysis of the system to assess navigation, screen sequencing, and responsiveness • Interviews with staff and survey of users

Two methodological complications hampered the evaluation. Both complications arose from the inability to identify unique PFAD users and the absence of user contact information. First, PFAD usage data was limited to the number of system queries and orders (individual users could not be documented). Second, the reliability of findings from the user survey is questionable because of the unavailability of contact information for PFAD users. Documentation, evaluation, and assessment attempts will be further thwarted until the administrators of PFAD can compile contact information for <u>currently active</u> PFAD users.

Findings

The proposal identified fourteen questions pertaining to PFAD usage, satisfaction, victim safety, data transmission, and system integration to be explored through this evaluation.[3] The findings presented below summarize the results within each of these areas.

PFAD Usage

1. **Who is using the database and to what extent?**

- Fifty-five of Pennsylvania's sixty-seven counties currently use PFAD.
- From January 2002 through June 2003, 43,030 temporary and final PFA orders were entered into the system.
- Two categories of users are the primary PFAD users: prothonotaries/court staff and service providers.
- The number of *active* PFAD users is unknown.

Currently, 55 counties are either using or being trained to use PFAD.[4] The most notable absence is Philadelphia County. However, PCADV staff are in conversations with Philadelphia and Lehigh counties regarding data transmission between their current information management systems and PFAD. Half of the counties that do not participate in PFAD have populations under 100,000. Since its inception, PFAD has expanded to include indirect criminal contempt (21 counties) and civil contempt forms and orders (2 counties).

From January 2002 through June 2003, 43,030 temporary and final Protection from Abuse (PFA) orders were entered into the system. The majority of county-level respondents noted that the use of PFAD had increased, attributing the increase most commonly to an increase in PFA filings, the addition of Indirect Criminal Contempts (ICCs) to the PFAD database, and accessibility to PFAD by a greater number of agencies. Query information provided by PCADV shows two primary user groups: court staff, which includes Prothonotary staff (69 percent of queries), and service providers (24 percent of queries). All other users accounted for 7 percent of all queries. Prothonotary offices were most commonly cited in the county surveys as the agency responsible for local administration of PFAD.

PCADV reports over 6,000 authorized users of PFAD. However, the number of *authorized* users far exceeds the number of *active* users. For instance, during the 3-1/2 months in which the user survey was active, PCADV estimated that 361 users accessed the system. PCADV was unable to distinguish unique users—many of the 361 users presumably accessed PFAD more than once during this time period. Because of the

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[3] The proposal identified 15 questions—one of which pertained to recommendations. A full discussion of recommendations can be found later in this report.

[4] The following counties do not use PFAD (as of 8/16/04): Bucks, Cambria, Columbia, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lehigh, Mercer, Mifflin, Montour, Philadelphia, Somerset, and Washington.

lack of current user information and the inability to contact users (except through the use of pop-up windows), it is not possible to document the number of active PFAD users.

2. **How is the information being used?**

- PFAD is most commonly used to propose temporary orders, initiate petitions, create notices of hearings, edit proposed orders, and prepare final orders.
- PFAD is seldom queried for enforcement of orders.

PFAD is used primarily to record actions directly related to petitions and orders. A survey of users showed that PFAD is most often used to propose temporary orders, initiate petitions, create notices of hearings, edit proposed orders, and prepare final orders. Yet counties varied in their use of various PFAD functions. For instance, affidavits and notices accounted for 35 percent of PFAD activity in 10 counties, but six counties did not use these functions at all.

Query data from January 2002 through June 2003 showed that law enforcement accounted for six percent of all queries. Surveys and case studies confirmed the limited use of PFAD by law enforcement. Consequently, the database is not likely to affect the enforcement of orders—until the Pennsylvania State Police recognizes PFAD as an official data source and law enforcement agencies support its use.

3. **How does the PFAD impact timeliness and accuracy of entering PFAs into the PSP registry?**

- Timeliness and accuracy of data input and transfer to the PSP are dependent upon local practices.
- Timeliness and accuracy of PFA data will improve once order data are electronically transmitted to the Pennsylvania State Police Protection Order Registry.

Local practices influence the accuracy of information entered into PFAD and the timely transfer of information into the PSP registry. Currently, there are no validation efforts to systematically check the accuracy of the data in PFAD against the actual order. Most PFAD users who responded to a survey felt that PFAs are entered into PFAD accurately and timely, and that the information was complete or accurate nearly always or most of the time. However, a small number of respondents from several different counties indicated relatively high levels of inaccuracy or delays in data entry. In addition, some counties reported that local PSP policy prohibited faxed orders, essentially requiring court staff to hand deliver the documents to PSP on a daily basis.

PFAD enhances the timeliness of data entry in that the PSP datasheet is a direct output of the PFA process when PFAD is utilized to generate the petition and order. Data are taken from the order and formatted and coded into the PSP datasheet as soon as the order is granted and filed by the PFAD application. Currently the PSP datasheet is faxed or hand-delivered to PSP for entry into the registry within 24 hours of the order being granted. This initial implementation of the PFA process utilizing fax as the medium of transfer, while representing an enhancement over mailing or arranging hand-delivery of the datasheet and PFA, is a significant barrier for the timely enforcement of these orders. To eliminate this barrier, PCADV and PSP are working with JNET to design and develop a system of electronic transmission of order data from PFAD via JNET to the PSP Registry. This advance in PFAD's functionality will significantly reduce delay and errors. Orders will be available to law enforcement throughout the Commonwealth as soon as they are filed by the prothonotary and accepted into the PSP Registry.

4. **How does the PFAD impact the availability of PFAs to law enforcement for timely and effective PFA enforcement?**

- PFAD's PSP datasheet hastens the entry of data into the PSP's CLEAN system by automatically providing coded versions of orders.
- All law enforcement will have PFAD information available once the PFAD application becomes the path to the official state registry.

Because the PSP datasheet is an automatic outcome of the petition and filing process utilizing PFAD, no additional step is required to generate the appropriate data for forwarding to PSP. A summarized and coded version of orders entered into the registry is available to all Pennsylvania law enforcement through CLEAN as soon as the PSP entry function is completed. CLEAN is available to law enforcement officers either directly in their car or through their dispatch center. PFAD has the potential to enhance enforcement of PFAs because it stores the actual order and therefore makes the exact terms and conditions of the order known to law enforcement, rather than the summarized and coded terms and conditions of the order stored in the registry and accessed through CLEAN. While PFAD is available to authorized users in law enforcement through their Internet service provider and some local law enforcement agencies use PFAD, law enforcement officers are trained to verify order information through CLEAN before enforcement of the order.

5. **What factors affect participation from counties and agencies?**

- Advantages of PFAD cited by participating counties include the creation of consistent and automated orders; the inclusion of data from most Pennsylvania counties; and the automation of the PSP datasheet.
- Counties that did not participate in PFAD most often cited the duplication of data entry that would be required by an additional database and the lack of need.

In fall 2003, 62 Pennsylvania counties were surveyed. At that time, twenty of the counties did not use PFAD. Eleven of the twenty inactive counties have since implemented PFAD or are being trained to use it. Of the five counties that did not participate in the survey because they were in training at the time the survey was conducted, all but one implemented PFAD.[5] The increase in county participation over this short time span suggests that PFAD has the capacity to become a truly statewide database.

The prothonotaries and court administrators who responded to the county-level survey identified the top three advantages of PFAD: (1) orders are consistent and automated; (2) PFAD contains data from most Pennsylvania counties; and (3) PFAD automates the PSP datasheet. In addition, respondents cited the efficiency of PFAD, accessibility of the data, the ability of community advocates to enter data, and reduced paperwork. These respondents indicated that the primary disadvantages of PFAD are the duplication of data that are entered in another system and the additional time that using PFAD requires.

Counties that did not participate in PFAD most commonly cited two factors. First, PFAD requires the duplication of data entry. Second, the prothonotary did not perceive a need for PFAD. Half of the inactive counties did not see any advantages to PFAD, while the disadvantages included duplication and the consequent need for additional staff. A small but vocal group of inactive counties expressed opposition to using a system for court data developed and managed by a non-governmental agency, and would implement

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[5] Washington County is expected to implement PFAD shortly.

PFAD only if the state were to mandate participation. Two-thirds of the inactive counties felt they would need additional resources (staff, technology, office space) to implement PFAD.

6. **How well does the PFAD serve the needs of those who use the system?**

- PFAD serves the needs of prothonotaries, court staff, and service providers, and has become an indispensable tool.
- Nearly all PFAD users recommend the use of PFAD to others in their position.

PFAD clearly serves the needs of prothonotaries, court staff, and service providers. The database has become part of counties' PFA processes and is indispensable as a data repository. It remains to be seen how well PFAD will serve the needs of law enforcement agencies, since few of them currently use it. The vast majority of PFAD users who participated in a survey were pleased with PFAD's ease of use and its technical aspects (see question 7 below). Survey respondents reported that the benefits of PFAD outweighed any burdens and that PFAD made their jobs easier. They recommended PFAD to others in their position. However, site visits and surveys also showed that PFAD users are not familiar with all the features and functions of PFAD (e.g., utility of reports) and a number of users expressed uncertainty as to whether they were using the database to its full capacity.

Satisfaction with PFAD

7. **How satisfied are end-users with various components of the PFAD process?**

- PFAD users reported high levels of satisfaction with PFAD's ease of use, utility, and technical aspects.
- Participating counties were satisfied with their overall experience with PFAD.

Respondents of the PFAD user survey were asked several questions regarding their level of satisfaction with various PFAD components, such as its ease of use, its utility, levels of completeness and accuracy of PFAs in PFAD, and technical aspects of PFAD. The vast majority of users were satisfied with issues related to ease of use (navigating PFAD, the digital recertification process, data entry) and felt that the information contained in PFAD is valuable. Users were less familiar with the utility of PFAD reports or how information from PFAD can be utilized to create datasheets for the Pennsylvania State Police (even though this is one the most commonly cited advantages by prothonotaries and court administrators in the county-level survey).

Nearly all county entities responsible for the administration of PFAD were satisfied with their overall experience with PFAD, with two-thirds of counties being "very satisfied." Reasons for satisfaction most commonly cited include the following: (1) technical assistance is very good; (2) PFAD is efficient; (3) PFAD provides automated orders that are consistent; (4) PFAD is user-friendly; and (5) PFAD enables advocates to enter data. The few counties that were "somewhat dissatisfied" tended to cite process issues that were internal to their county rather than problems with PFAD itself.

8. **How satisfied are end-users with training provided by PCADV on the implementation and use of PFAD?**

- PFAD users are very satisfied with training and assistance provided by PCADV on the implementation and use of PFAD.

The county-level survey showed high levels of satisfaction with the initial training and technical assistance before going "live," and with follow-up technical assistance after "start-up." All respondents who were knowledgeable about the implementation stage were satisfied—four of every five were "very satisfied" with all aspects of PFAD implementation.

PFAD users were asked about their satisfaction with training, although the questions were not specific to training provided by PCADV. About one in three PFAD users who responded to the survey reported receiving training in the previous year, primarily in the form of on-site training or training from a co-worker. Those who received training tended to be satisfied with the training (68 percent were "very satisfied").

9. How satisfied are end-users with on-going technical assistance provided by PCADV?

- PFAD users tend to be very satisfied with on-going technical assistance provided by PCADV.

The survey of counties revealed that most respondents had requested some level of technical assistance in the previous year. These respondents tended to be "very satisfied" with on-going technical assistance and technical assistance for system changes and upgrades. The survey of individual PFAD users also demonstrated high levels of satisfaction. In this survey, respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction on (1) the helpfulness of PCADV's response in addressing problems, (2) the speed of response, (3) the level of effort to address problem, and (4) the ease of reaching the appropriate person. At least 75 percent of respondents who had asked for technical assistance were "very satisfied" in all four areas, with most other respondents indicating satisfaction.

More technically-advanced respondents were asked to complete questions specific to highly technical aspects of PFAD, such as the placement of data on the screen, the use of drop-down boxes, and system response to a query. Overall, this self-selected group of respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with the technical aspects of PFAD.

Victim Safety Issues

10. How is the database serving the interests of domestic violence victims?

- PFAD serves the interests of domestic violence victims by improving coordination of services within counties, making PFA information more widely accessible, and sensitizing court staff to the problem of domestic violence.
- PFAD is a useful tool that provides advocates with a structure to facilitate intervention while minimizing the frequency with which victims must repeat their personal experiences.
- The full potential of PFAD will be realized when PFAD information becomes available to law enforcement through the CLEAN application.

Data from the survey of counties and case studies suggest that PFAD contributes to greater levels of coordination and communication among service providers, courts, and law enforcement. For instance, over 80 percent of PFAD users who completed the survey felt that PFAD had improved the level of service to domestic violence victims. Personal interviews with a wide variety of PFAD users in six counties demonstrated relatively high levels of cooperation between agencies and service providers, a direct result of PFAD and the ability of advocates to initiate petitions. PFAD also has standardized the PFA process and the

information needed by the court, law enforcement, and service providers. This standardization has improved services for domestic violence victims and increased their comfort with using the justice system.

In many counties, PFAD has improved the court process and educated court staff about the importance of PFAs. Court staff in some counties have participated in training on domestic violence and have become more sympathetic to domestic violence victims and aware of its effects on victims. Courts that use PFAD also regularly refer plaintiffs to domestic violence agencies. In some counties, implementing PFAD has created a de facto division of the court for PFAs, which has improved the process by bringing more attention and resources to it.

A primary feature of PFAD is its accessibility. Advocates are able to enter information required in the petition, thus saving victims the ordeal of discussing private information at a public counter in the courthouse. Advocates tend to be well-trained in both sensitivity to the victim and the preparation of petitions. Because PFAD is easy to use, the advocate can listen to the client as she talks, enter the information needed in the petition, and read it back to the client for verification. Consequently, advocates can provide a private, comfortable environment for the victim while drafting petitions that are detailed and sufficiently documented—ultimately increasing the chances that a PFA will be granted. In addition, access to PFA information on a 24/7 basis from previous incidents and other Pennsylvania counties can help make the work of advocates, law enforcement, and court staff more effective.

Ultimately, the true test of PFAD on victim safety will come when PFAD information is available through the PSP's CLEAN application. The PSP's incorporation of PFAD information into its system, and the subsequent impact on local law enforcement usage, is likely to enhance victim safety by providing officers with details of the orders, rather than simplistic codes. For instance, in counties where law enforcement uses PFAD information, officers can enforce specific terms of PFAs not available from the PSP registry, such as custody and visitation.

11. How do advocates perceive the effect of PFAD on victim safety?

- PFAD has led to improvements in the PFA process in many counties.
- PFAD has made statewide PFA information available on a 24/7 basis, which has made safety planning more effective.
- PFAD has the potential to improve the timeliness of the PFA process, although local practices continue to dictate the process.

Nearly all advocates who responded to the PFAD users survey agreed that PFAD had improved the PFA process in their county, and four of five respondents agreed that PFAD had improved their relationship with the courts. Similarly, prothonotaries and court staff agreed that PFAD had improved the efficiency of court staff and the effective service of temporary PFAs. A more efficient cooperative process ultimately benefits domestic violence victims who seek relief through a PFA.

PFAD is accessible on a 24/7 basis, and because the database includes information from most of Pennsylvania's counties, advocates have access to previous domestic violence incidents involving the same plaintiff or defendant. Consequently, advocates are able to use this information to better assist their clients in safety planning and decision-making. The information can also be used to alert local authorities to conditions that seem particularly threatening.

PFAD has the potential to improve the timeliness of the PFA process. In many counties, petitions can be prepared more easily and quickly, and they can be presented to the court in a timely manner. In addition, PFAD's production of the PSP datasheet speeds transmission to the PSP registry because the datasheets contain the codes needed for the registry. However, local practices and resources are more likely to affect timeliness than PFAD. For instance, in some counties court and agency staff may not be readily available to assist a petitioner, in which case the PFA process may be delayed.

Data Transmission

12. How well does the system perform in the direct electronic transmission of data?

- Plans are underway to implement an electronic data transfer of the standard tags in the PSP datasheet between PFAD and PSP.
- The electronic transfer of court case management information between PFAD and a court's case management system would eliminate data duplication.

The availability of PFAD through the Internet provides immediate accessibility to any authorized user. The speed of data delivery is then dependent on the user's connection to the Internet, which can be anything from 28.8 Kbps[6] over a dial-up connection to T1[7] via a digital network. The primary issue with PFAD has been the delay from the time the order is granted and filed until that order was available to law enforcement through the PSP registry. This problem is being addressed with the planned implementation of an electronic data transfer of the PSP datasheet between PFAD and PSP.

Typically, counties that use PFAD also have a court case management system that includes PFA information. The existence of two or more independent computer systems requires staff to manually enter PFA information more than once. Dual entries result in inefficiencies in the process, resistance from some counties to participate in PFAD, and more limited use of PFAD. PCADV has had ongoing conversations with several counties about a data transfer from PFAD to the various county case management systems.

System Integration

13. What is the degree of information sharing between the PFAD and the PSP?

- Information sharing is currently limited to those data elements available in the PSP registry through CLEAN.

Information sharing is limited to those data elements available in the registry through CLEAN. Although not as complete as the data available directly from PFAD, PSP registry data are adequate to establish that a protection order is in place and provides to law enforcement basic information concerning the subject of the order, the protected party, and the terms and conditions of the order. The PSP registry is not designed to hold the specific language of the order nor can it hold the exact terms and conditions. PSP registry design was based on the NCIC Protection Order File, which must accept orders for all states and tribes and must therefore provide information in a generic format. PFAD is specifically designed for Pennsylvania and contains the language and format of orders already known to Pennsylvania law enforcement.

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[6] 28.8 Kbps is 28,800 bits per second. This speed is generally available through dial-up to an Internet service provider.

[7] A T1 circuit is a digital, full-duplex transmission facility operating at 1.544Mbps (million bits per second). It can be used to transmit digital voice, data, or video signals.

14. How well is PFAD integrated into Pennsylvania's National Criminal History Improvement Program (NCHIP) plan?

- Orders produced using PFAD have the language and requisite relationship indicators required by federal law making an individual ineligible to purchase or possess a gun.

NCHIP was authorized by the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993 and its purpose is to assist in the accurate and timely identification of persons ineligible to purchase a firearm in addition to other goals. It is this first goal that PFAD most readily accomplishes. Orders produced using PFAD have the language required by federal law making an individual ineligible to purchase or possess a gun. This standardization of the order and its format relieves individual courts from having to craft orders that incorporate the federal language necessary to prevent a gun purchase.

The development of the National Crime Information Center's (NCIC) Protection Order File was intended to assist in the identification of individuals subject to protection orders who are ineligible for possession of firearms. Individuals entered in the NCIC Protection Order File with a Brady Record Indicator of "Y" for yes are prohibited from possessing, purchasing, or receiving a firearm. Entry into this file is accomplished through CLEAN and is done by PSP utilizing the datasheet produced by PFAD. Unlike PFAD, CLEAN does not archive files.

Analysis

The effectiveness of PFAD is an outcome of the design and administration of the database as well as the PFA process, which is specific to each Pennsylvania county.

The Protection from Abuse Database
For the non-technically-oriented, PFAD is a question and answer conversation between the user and an application utilizing the Internet as the communications path and the web browser as the medium. It results in a standard, consistent printed order, storage of order data where it is accessible by others, and the creation of the PSP datasheet for use by the Pennsylvania State Police in entering data into the Pennsylvania Protection Order Registry. PFAD administration is done by PCADV. PCADV is responsible for the training of users, providing technical assistance to users, maintenance of PFAD, implementing enhancements to PFAD, updating PFAD to conform to statute changes, and issuing passwords and digital certificates.

PFAD is actually several databases: a training database that is also used for testing changes before implementation in the live database; the live database housing active orders; and the archive holding inactive cases from the live database. There is a corresponding archive for the training database as well. There are additional databases associated with changes and requests for PFAD accounts. The training database is linked to the live database to ensure that both databases share the same list of users, agencies, active sessions, and web page headings.

In addition to passwords issued by the PFAD administrator, the live PFAD database requires a digital (or client) certificate authenticating the user's identity. The certificate also ensures the identity of the remote computer, ensures that software came from a software publisher, protects the software from alteration after publication, protects e-mail messages, allows data to be signed with the current time, and provides other protections and assurances. Certificates must be periodically installed in the user's browser using the Tools Option within the browser.

A technical evaluation of software typically involves several different elements. In this instance the technology was evaluated by examining the merging of technical competence with usability. This approach was chosen for a basic reason: if software is not usable, it does not matter how technically competent it is. The real world view demands substance over form, usefulness over appreciation, and outcome over process.

Does PFAD accomplish its goal?

The goal of PFAD is to enhance the enforceability of protection from abuse orders. Components of this goal include the standardization of language used in orders, creating a uniform and consistent look to the orders, production of data for transfer to the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) for entry into CLEAN and NCIC, archiving both protection from abuse orders and violations, and providing the order's exact terms and conditions to law enforcement personnel.

PFAD's standard language and consistent format allow for easy recognition and understanding by law enforcement officers and other justice system personnel involved in the issuance, recordation, and enforcement of protection from abuse orders. Training attorneys and victim services personnel, court clerks, and law enforcement officers to craft, conform, and use the order is streamlined and simplified. Data for the PSP are produced by the application and is therefore consistent and correctly coded. Prior to the planned transfer of data electronically to PSP, PFAD produces printed data sheets increasing readability and reducing data entry errors arising from poor handwriting. Creating an archive of past orders and their violations allows attorneys, victim services personnel, and judges to better understand a petitioner's current situation and his/her need for a protection from abuse order. PFAD expands upon the information available from CLEAN (since that information is a subset of PFAD) providing law enforcement officers with the court's exact language and the conditions and requirements mandated in the order.

How does PFAD integrate with the business processes it is intended to support?

PFAD has literally reshaped the process of obtaining a protection from abuse order. The process now centers on the use of PFAD for the creation of the petition and order and their subsequent filing by the prothonotary as well as their dissemination to PSP and local law enforcement. It has replaced manual paperwork with a question/answer format that guides court staff, attorneys or other victim services providers through the petition process. The question/answer format covers all possible permutations of terms and conditions for a protection from abuse order providing an automatic checklist to ensure that all possibilities are addressed for the victim's safety. In most counties, information compiled and formatted by PFAD in the form of the PSP Datasheet is currently faxed to PSP, but in the future this data will be relayed electronically for immediate entry into the CLEAN and NCIC files. Data are keyed a single time into the database and in many instances, PFAD utilizes a checkbox to indicate the terms and conditions of the order. Data transfer from form to form is done automatically by the application.

PFAD does not replace either a court's case management system or criminal history. Therefore, some duplication of data as well as data entry into one or both of these systems is necessary. Long-term users of PFAD have expressed that its assistance in the creation of petitions, orders, and other forms has streamlined the PFA process even though that same or similar data may need to be entered into another system. This occurs more often in the Prothonotary's Office because prothonotaries have the statutory responsibility for court records, but there may also be some duplication of data and data entry into client management systems in organizations providing victim or legal services. PFAD is a useful tool in the creation of petitions, orders,

and other forms and produces a professional, readable, and useful product as well as serving as an archive and information resource.

How well does PFAD document usage?

PCADV keeps a log on usage that identifies the individual user who logged on. However, during the course of this evaluation, the evaluation team needed a list of users as well as their email addresses in order to deliver and administer the user survey. This list was not available. In addition, PFAD[8] states on http://www.pfad.org/pfadinfo.html that there are 6,175 PFAD users. A survey of usage logs over a three-month period (11/18/203 – 03/01/2004) revealed that there had been approximately 361 users. The system was not able to distinguish whether there were 361 unique users or 361 logons to PFAD during this period. One explanation for the disparity between the number of users reported by PFAD and the number of uses actually counted during a specific timeframe is that many user ID's and passwords have been issued but no mechanism is in place to ensure that the issued user ID's and passwords are still required. For example, every attendee at a training session is issued a user ID and password irrespective of the individual's real need to use the system within the context of his/her job. As job responsibilities change and as individuals change jobs, PFAD may not have been notified that ID's and passwords were no longer required. And since PFAD does not have a user contact list, it is unable to contact users having ID's and passwords to determine if they are still needed. One possibility is to rescind all ID's and passwords that are not associated with an unexpired digital certificate. As most users need PFAD assistance in installing his/her certificate, PFAD would know relatively quickly whether that individual was using PFAD or not. Needless to say, it is a job requirement for PFAD administration to know who PFAD users are and to be able to contact them. In addition, PFAD should be able to audit both the logon and use of its system.

Does PFAD include validation processes?

A major component of system and database administration is a periodic verification of the data stored on the database. NCIC[9] as well as most state level wanted and missing persons and stolen property system administrators periodically ask data owners (1) to ensure that the data on file are correct and the status of the data are still valid (e.g., Is the wanted person still wanted? Has the stolen gun been recovered?) and (2) to then make any adjustments in the data that are necessary. Typically the system owner provides to the data owner a list or some type of indication as to what data have been entered into the system by the data owner. In this instance, because the data concerns court orders, the prothonotary would need to ensure that the data are both correct and valid or at least reflects the court order. All databases used by the justice partnership, and this one in particular, should be periodically evaluated to ensure that the data used in making potentially life-and-death decisions are complete, correct, and valid.

Is PFAD intuitive?

A significant marketing focus for a software developer is typically the boast that little or no training is required to master the use of the software. Because PFAD was developed through a collaborative process involving many different partners within the domestic violence community including courts, police, prothonotaries, domestic violence service providers, and attorneys, it is already familiar to many users as are the forms it produces. Persons interviewed expressed few, if any problems learning to use PFAD whether or

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[8] In this instance, PFAD refers to the unit of PCADV responsible for PFAD (as the application and database) administration.

[9] The FBI's National Crime Information Center.

not that training had been provided by PFAD trainers or by co-workers. To the extent that PFAD has become an integral component of the PFA process, it appears easy to use as well as logical to use – and therefore, intuitive.

What is the software's long-term viability?

In order for a software application to last, it must be logically and reasonably organized in its database, screen composition, and screen sequence and navigation; both its logic and database organization should be flexible to allow for correction, modification, and enhancement. The code itself should belong to and be accessible to the entity responsible for its operation. Documentation should be thorough and transparent. The application should be institutionalized within the organization it supports. Its funding stream should be secure and continuous for as long as the function it supports is required.

Users expressed satisfaction with the functionality and organization of PFAD. The pre-fill of data on succeeding screens are especially useful as it supports consistency and reduces errors (or, at least, allows for consistent errors). The database itself appears organized in such a manner as to support reasonably quick response times. Since its inception, PFAD has had numerous modifications and enhancements, all increasing the usability of the database and the information it houses. Roll-out of these changes appears to have been accomplished with little disruption in typical service. Technical assistance, when needed, has been efficient and effective. In some instances, the only calls received by PFAD for technical assistance have focused on the renewal of digital certificates. PFAD should check-in with users on some scheduled basis to check satisfaction levels, answer any outstanding questions that the user may have but did not contact PFAD to ask, and solicit improvement and enhancement suggestions. Code for PFAD is owned by PCADV even though it was developed by Transfer Technology, Inc. This vendor also provides some modification and enhancement services for PFAD.

User documentation is adequate and easy to use. Some type of on-line user documentation that would permit "HELP" from specific fields on specific screens would be a nice enhancement. The availability of a training database is also very helpful – allowing the first-time and learning user to make as many mistakes as necessary without contaminating actual data.

PFAD is currently housed within PCADV – a non-governmental entity – and is dependent on grants for continued funding. This arrangement creates several obstacles. PFAD is mission-critical to the PFA process as it is PFAD that produces the PSP Datasheet and the hard-copy order itself. Yet the support of PFAD is done by employees of PCADV, not employees of the court or of the prothonotaries. While this scenario provided necessary impetus and energy for the development, spread, and implementation of PFAD, it also tends to marginalize PFAD itself as an add-on to the court's issuance of a protection from abuse order. In order to appropriately institutionalize the use of PFAD, it should be placed under a governmental entity administratively, operationally, and for funding purposes. Although PFAD is a component of the larger process of victim safety planning, it holds key information that is created only when a court order is in place. Therefore, NCSC recommends that PFAD be placed under the auspices of the Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC). AOPC could choose to contract with PCADV for the continued delivery of PFAD services, as PCADV is viewed as very responsive to the user community as well as to continue its important role as a component of victim safety planning. In addition, the special knowledge of PCADV as a subject matter expert in the area of domestic violence positively influences the training of PFAD users and the context in which the PFAD operates.

The PFA Process

In most counties using PFAD, the database has become an integral part of the process for obtaining a PFA. In fact, in at least one county, the court does not accept PFA petitions that are not generated by PFAD. Although PFAD has standardized many aspects of the PFA process, both the use of PFAD and the PFA process vary greatly from county to county, with one exception: only the county Prothonotary's Office can file a PFA, i.e., render the order active. The Prothonotary also is responsible for administering PFAD in most counties, but court administration has the primary responsibility in a few counties. The primary users of PFAD also vary across counties, as do the organizations that initiate the PFA process. In some counties the DV program and a division of the court share intake for PFAs; in other counties a division of the court initiates all PFAs, while in some counties the DV program is the sole provider of intake services for PFAs. Similarly, various entities handle final orders.

The way that a county shares the work involved in the PFA process and the level of coordination among the court, DV programs, law enforcement and other organizations can have a significant impact on how effectively the process is carried out, how quickly PFAs are entered into the PSP registry, the speed and effectiveness of service of PFAs, how many resources the court and the other organizations must apply to the process, and ultimately, how well the interests of domestic violence victims are served. PFAD program documentation indicates that the counties have four different PFAD processes. The four categories of processes are based on which county entities are involved in preparing petitions, temporary orders and final orders. Within these categories, the combinations of entities vary greatly (see Appendix F for a summary of the PFA process in six counties).

One characteristic of the various PFAD and PFA processes that stands out is the high level of responsibility that domestic violence programs have in carrying out the PFAD and PFA processes in most counties. The integration of DV programs into the PFAD and PFA processes promotes a holistic approach to addressing victim safety, autonomy, and self-sufficiency. However, at least one county relies on non-governmental entities to carry out functions that are essential responsibilities of the court (e.g., setting the court docket). Clearly defined roles between the courts and DV program are necessary to ensure equal access to the justice system and enhance the efficiency of PFA processes.

The variations in PFA processes and the use of PFAD's functions have implications for the statewide implementation of PFAD. Although counties will need to vary the process to accommodate the availability of resources, they should consider how the process they use affects the efficiency of the system and victim safety. Standardizing some of the major components of the PFA process can ensure that processes do not vary so much by county that statewide use of PFAD is compromised. PFAD users in one county should be able to count on the accuracy and currency of information from another county in PFAD. Reliability is important not only for law enforcement, but also for court staff, advocates and legal services providers, district attorneys, probation departments and others involved in maximizing the effectiveness of PFAs.

Case studies of six county PFA processes form the basis of a separate document, "Recommended PFA Practices," available online at the National Center for State Courts' web site (www.ncsconline.org). The document recommends the following practices and provides details on how each practice can be implemented.

1. Coordinate with key agencies and service providers to eliminate gaps in the PFA process.
2. Use PFAD to prepare petitions and all orders.
3. Prioritize the review and issuance of temporary orders.
4. Transmit PFA information to the PSP, Sheriff, and 911 dispatch center.
5. Use PFAD to document service.

6. Ensure final orders are made available to the petitioner and all relevant parties in a timely fashion.
7. Use PFAD to facilitate enforcement of PFA orders.
8. Encourage criminal justice system partners to use PFAD.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were put forward by the National Center for State Courts evaluation team, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, and members of the advisory board.

Recommendation 1: Eliminate data duplication by adopting GJXDD (Global Justice XML Data Dictionary) standards and methods.

By adopting the XML protocols contained within the Global Justice XML Dictionary and Data Model, the potential exists to update data in a court's case management system from PFAD. First, modifications to the PFAD application must be written to generate the appropriate XML schema around the data entered in the form. Then the XML schema must be mapped to the corresponding data elements in the court's case management system. The data can then be electronically transferred from PFAD to the court's case management system, thereby reducing the need for duplicate data entry.

Recommendation 2: Create a standardized PFA process in Pennsylvania.

Only Pennsylvania's Supreme Court can postulate court rules that are applicable across the Commonwealth. Their oversight, through the Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC), of the PFAD database would provide a legitimacy and control that would assist the prothonotaries in adopting more standard and consistent procedures when working with PFAs. In addition, the AOPC can work with both courts and prothonotaries to identify and adopt best practices that would also assist in standardizing the PFA process.

Recommendation 3: Educate courts and prothonotaries on the importance of PFAD, Supreme Court forms, state registry requirements, and domestic violence dynamics.

PFAD is driven by the Supreme Court forms. Yet some court staff and prothonotaries are not aware of the state-mandated forms, state statutes related to domestic violence, the requirements of the PSP's Protection Order Registry and NCIC Protection Order File, and the dynamics of domestic violence. It is important to ensure that courts and prothonotaries understand the different requirements of the systems in which protection order information is housed to ensure that orders receive the widest possible dissemination and are available to the justice partnership throughout both Pennsylvania and the United States. Furthermore, an appreciation of the enforcement powers of a PFA and greater understanding of domestic violence dynamics should encourage a proactive use of PFAD and enhance interagency coordination. Statewide and regional conferences can be conducted to provide information and resources to court staff and prothonotaries.

Recommendation 4: Improve data interchange and access electronically between PFAD and PSP's Protection Order Registry maintained and accessed by and through CLEAN.

The PSP datasheet is currently delivered to PSP for data entry either by hand or electronically via fax. PCADV and PSP are working with JNET to design and develop a system of electronic transmission of order data from PFAD via JNET to the PSP registry. Once this electronic transfer is implemented, it will no longer be necessary to re-key the data into the PSP Protection Order Registry. Implementation of this single feature

will increase the accuracy of orders and reduce the time before an order becomes available to law enforcement. In addition, the electronic transfer of data should reduce the level of PSP effort required to enter orders into both the PSP Protection Order Registry and the NCIC Protection Order File.

Recommendation 5: Ensure the continued involvement of PCADV in PFAD.

PCADV created PFAD and currently administers the database and provides technical support and training. Their expertise and level of service is exemplary. Should PFAD become an "official" application under the auspices of a state agency, the agency should contract with PCADV to continue its provision of administration, technical assistance and training.

Recommendation 6: Incorporate PFAD and all of its functions into a locally coordinated PFA process.

PFAD should be the core of a comprehensive management plan for the entire state and can provide the framework for additional orders and tools. PFAD should drive the PFA process and be a central component of meeting clients, formulating safety plans, and creating a petition and order. Whether the focus is safety planning or forms completion, PFAD training should include discussions of process re-engineering to ensure that PFA local practices are coordinated and that each organization is maximizing PFAD's potential.

Recommendation 7: Make PFAD the official registry owned and administered by a state agency with state funding.

PFAD is currently supported through grant funding. For those counties using PFAD, it has become the vehicle for the generation of protection orders and has, de facto, become mission-critical. Should PFAD go statewide under the current funding stream, any reduction in support or cessation of support from grant funding will leave the PFA process without the automated support on which it has become dependent. PFAD must be funded through the Commonwealth with support from the AOPC.

Recommendation 8: Improve documentation of usage and validation of data.

PCADV should convene a user meeting to discuss both documentation of PFAD usage and validation of PFAD data. To ensure that PFAD is fully protected, its use should be completely auditable. PFAD should be able to document the number and identity of active users over time, have current contact information, and periodically update its authorized users list. In addition, PFAD should periodically provide each court/prothonotary having orders housed in PFAD with a list of those orders, their current status in PFAD, and the data contained in those orders. This will provide courts and prothonotaries with the opportunity to validate the data in PFAD, its status, and its correctness as well as make any necessary modifications.

Conclusion

PFAD is a success story. The database has participation from the vast majority of Pennsylvania counties and is a national model of protection order databases. Counties that currently use PFAD would be hard-pressed to revert to the previous cumbersome paper-oriented tasks; a loud protest would be sounded should PFAD suddenly "disappear." Yet the database continues to be an independently managed database dependent on grant funds for its survival. The Commonwealth would be best served to make the PFAD an official database with government oversight, while capitalizing on the expertise and exemplary service and training provided by PCADV.