



CHANGING SYSTEMS  
TRANSFORMING LIVES



## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: MARYLAND

Across the country, communities are disarming domestic violence offenders by implementing and enforcing firearm prohibitions in domestic violence cases. Leaders and innovators in these communities have developed pragmatic and responsible policies, protocols and practices directed at all aspects of firearm surrender and seizure.

BWJP

## Baltimore, MD

In 2009, Maryland enacted a law requiring a judge to order firearms confiscated from people who have final protective orders filed against them.

Judges also had discretion to order firearm confiscation on temporary protective orders. Despite tough laws, enforcement was difficult in Baltimore where temporary protective orders were only being served on the prohibited person about 30% of the time. In 2013, the Baltimore City Sheriff's Office Domestic Violence Unit was created to improve the service of protective orders and confiscation of firearms.

### Tackling the service problem with a dedicated unit

The Baltimore City Sheriff's Office was established with the sole purpose to be the enforcement arm of the court system in Baltimore City. One section within the Sheriff's Office is the Domestic Violence Unit, which was created in response to public concern regarding the low number of temporary protective orders (TPOs) being served by the overtaxed Baltimore City Police Department. Without service, victims could not move to a final hearing and they were left without protection. Baltimore was one of a minority of jurisdictions where the police department was responsible for the service of protective orders. On July 1, 2013, the Sheriff's Office assumed responsibility for protective order service from the police department.

### Domestic Violence Unit works closely with victims

In the process of enacting a TPO, if it is learned during the interview with the petitioner that the respondent possesses any firearms or has any mental health issues, this information is relayed to the deputies who will be attempting to serve the order. If there are any weapons to seize, the deputies will exhaust all efforts to secure them. If it is learned that firearms to be seized are located in another jurisdiction, Baltimore Sheriff's Office will notify that jurisdiction and seek their assistance in retrieving the firearms. All firearms seized in Baltimore City are submitted under a property number to the Evidence Control Unit in Baltimore City Police Department. Only when the case is dismissed or the order expires, may the firearms be released to the respondent. The Baltimore City Sheriff's Office Domestic Violence Unit was awarded the Governor's Victim Assistance Award in 2015, for their unwavering commitment and dignified treatment of all victims.