

Victim protection studied

County anti-intimidation program in works

**By Sharon Coolidge
The Cincinnati Enquirer**

After months of talking about how to best help witnesses and victims involved in criminal cases to come forward without fear, Hamilton County Prosecutor Mike Allen is creating an assistance program.

Allen reassigned Brian Hurley, who heads the office's civil division, to develop and implement the safety program.

"The veteran prosecutor will be given carte blanche to design the security program from the ground up to protect witnesses and to prosecute anyone who intimidates them," Allen said. "I believe the entire community wants this program to happen."

The move comes five days after an *Enquirer* article detailed how witness and victim intimidation has become a growing problem in Hamilton County.

Two weeks ago Hamilton County Common Pleas Judge Patrick Dinkelacker - tired of having to dismiss cases because of uncooperative witnesses and victims - sentenced a rape victim to five days in jail on a contempt of court charge. She had failed to show up for several court hearings because she was afraid of retaliation.

Without her, the judge was forced to dismiss charges against the man accused of attacking her. That man has since been re-indicted on a kidnapping and rape charge.

Details of the new program - how much it will cost, who will pay for it, who will oversee it and how it will work - have not been determined.

Allen said Hurley would work with Hamilton County commissioners, local law enforcement, federal officials and others to fashion a program that could possibly include safe havens for victims and witnesses of crimes of violence.

They'll look at programs in Baltimore, Seattle and Los Angeles for guidance.

Lucy Logan, director of the local advocate group Who Killed Our Kids, said Allen's move is good news.

"Hopefully he can get everyone working together," said Logan, who has been working to bring a witness and victim assistance program to Hamilton County for several months.

She hopes the new program will include an advocate team.

"We need people to keep track of witnesses, help them come to court and make them feel safe, give them options," she said.

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