



COLORADO COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence Praises Colorado Supreme Court Ruling Protecting Victim Safety

Court Rules That Victim Advocate Confidentiality Is Absolute

(Denver, CO—, March 28) – The Colorado Supreme Court ruled today that the state statute governing confidentiality and communications between a victim of domestic violence and their advocate cannot be reviewed by a defendant unless the victim gives specific permission to do so.

"This is a significant ruling that protects the safety of victims of domestic violence who seek services from domestic violence programs across Colorado. Confidentiality is at the foundation of victim advocacy and we are thrilled that the Colorado Supreme Court has recognized it is critical to providing safety to victims," said Trish Thibodo, executive director of the Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

The ruling was in response to a challenge from a Chafee County defendant charged with domestic violence crimes in November 2003. The defendant challenged the confidentiality statute when it was discovered that the victim in the case had contact with the Alliance Against Domestic Abuse, a non-profit community based domestic violence advocacy organization in Salida, Colorado. The defendant subpoenaed the organization for all records relating the communication. The trial court sided with the defendant and the Alliance filed an appeal to the Supreme Court.

The court noted the legislative intent of the statute and the cycle of abuse that women face while in an abusive relationship and the obstacles they face when trying to leave. Today's ruling affirms that any communication between a victim of domestic violence and a victim advocate from a community based advocacy is absolute and cannot be reviewed by outside parties without the victim's specific consent. This ruling also covers communications between victims of sexual assault and their advocate.

The Supreme Court case is People v. Turner, 04SA178.

Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) - www.ccadv.org - is a 25-year old statewide, grassroots, nonprofit organization providing resources, education, and training, and serving as a voice to more than 80 members and 60 programs serving some 40,000 battered women and children in Colorado each year.