

**From:** [Sequoia Williams](#)  
**To:** [RulesCommittee](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment Supporting Proposals 25-09 and 26-07 and Requesting Expansion of Official Court Recording Requirements in Family Law Proceedings (September 3, 2026 Meeting)  
**Date:** Sunday, July 26, 2026 12:01:51 PM

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To the Illinois Supreme Court Rules Committee:

**I respectfully submit** this comment in strong support of Proposal **25-09** and Proposal **26-07**.

**I submit** this comment as a **survivor of domestic violence, a parent, a self-represented litigant,** and a **parent advocate** committed to **improving** the safety, fairness, and accountability of the family court system for children and families throughout Illinois.

My perspective comes not only from my own experience navigating the courts, but also from witnessing the challenges faced by parents who are attempting to protect their children, preserve their relationships, and seek justice in circumstances involving domestic violence and high-conflict family proceedings. Parents who come before the court are often placing the most important parts of their lives—their safety, their children’s well-being, and their future—in the hands of the judicial system. The system must have safeguards in place to ensure those voices are accurately heard and preserved.

When a person comes before the court seeking protection, safety, and justice, every hearing matters. Every statement matters. Every decision matters. The words spoken and the findings made in those moments can affect a person’s safety, a child’s emotional and physical well-being, and the future of an entire family.

Yet when there is **no official record** of what occurred, survivors and parents may be left carrying the burden of proving what happened in a system that has the **ability** to **preserve** the truth. The **absence** of a **verbatim record** can **significantly impede meaningful appellate review, hinder accountability,** and **create unnecessary barriers** to enforcing legal rights.

As a self-represented litigant, I have **personally experienced** the fear and **uncertainty** that can come with navigating the court system without the

protection of a **complete** and **reliable** record. The courtroom should be a place where individuals can trust that their voices will be heard and that important proceedings will be accurately preserved. Without an official record, a survivor or parent may leave the courtroom knowing that something significant occurred, but without the ability to later demonstrate exactly what was said, what evidence was presented, or how important decisions were reached.

Proposal **25-09** represents an important advancement in protecting due process by requiring that proceedings involving Orders of Protection and related protective orders be officially recorded. An accurate record promotes transparency, preserves the integrity of judicial proceedings, and ensures that survivors, parents, law enforcement, reviewing courts, and future litigants have access to an objective account of what occurred.

I also strongly support Proposal **26-07**, which **recognizes** the importance of specialized education regarding intimate partner domestic abuse for attorneys appointed in child custody and allocation of parental responsibilities matters.

Domestic violence cases are not ordinary family disputes. They often involve **coercive control, intimidation, manipulation, financial abuse, emotional abuse, and patterns of behavior** that may continue long after separation. The impact of domestic violence on children and survivors is **complex** and **cannot** be fully understood **without** specialized training.

As a **parent advocate**, I believe that children deserve a court process that **recognizes the difference between ordinary parental conflict and situations where fear, control, and abuse are affecting family dynamics**. Professionals involved in these cases **must be equipped** with the knowledge necessary to identify risks, understand trauma, and make decisions that truly serve the best interests of children.

Requiring education on coercive control, post-separation abuse, the impact of domestic violence on children and survivors, and appropriate safety considerations **will better equip** court-appointed attorneys to **recognize** the realities presented in these cases and advocate more **effectively** for the best interests of children and the safety of survivors.

I **respectfully urge** the Committee, however, to **consider extending** the **principles embodied** in Proposal **25-09** to **family court proceedings**

**involving child custody, allocation of parental responsibilities, visitation, and parenting time.**

In my experience as a pro se litigant in Cook County during **2025 and 2026, judicial assignments changed “more than three”** times within a single year. With each change, I **experienced** the painful reality that the history of my case had to be rebuilt again and again. Matters involving domestic violence, child safety, and parental rights are **not simply files on a docket**—they **represent** the lives, fears, trauma, and hopes of real people.

Without an **official record of prior proceedings, critical testimony, safety concerns, and judicial findings risk** being **lost** with each transition. As a survivor, parent, and advocate, I understand the harm that can occur when important information is **not preserved**. Parents should **not** have to **repeatedly relive** painful experiences while also trying to ensure that the court has an **accurate** understanding of what has already occurred.

No survivor or parent should have to wonder whether the most important moments affecting their child’s safety and their family’s future will be remembered **accurately** or whether they will **disappear** because there was **no official record**.

The administration of justice should **not depend upon memory, incomplete notes, or changing recollections** when fundamental parental rights, child safety, and survivor protection are at **stake**. When courts make decisions about where children live, who has access to them, and whether safety concerns are recognized, those proceedings **deserve the same level of preservation and accountability as other critical legal matters**.

**Requiring an official record in family law proceedings involving custody, allocation of parental responsibilities, visitation, parenting time, and related matters would promote** consistency, **preserve** judicial accountability, **facilitate** meaningful appellate review, and **strengthen** public confidence in Illinois courts.

For these reasons, I **respectfully urge** the Illinois Supreme Court to adopt **Proposal 25-09 and Proposal 26-07** and to give **serious consideration to extending comparable recording requirements to family court proceedings where the safety, stability, and well-being of children and survivors** are at issue.

Thank you for your **consideration** and your **continued commitment** to **improving access** to justice for all Illinois residents.

Best regards,

**Sequoia Williams**

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“When those in power fail to act, it becomes the duty of the people to demand change.”

“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”

“Equity is not charity; it is justice.”