

Facts about WATCH

What is WATCH?

WATCH is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the courts. Founded in 1992, our mission is to make the criminal justice system more effective and responsive in handling cases of violence, particularly against women and children, and to create a more informed and involved public.

What does WATCH do?

WATCH trains volunteers to monitor court hearings and keep track of what they see.

- In 2006, WATCH volunteers monitored and collected data at 5,945 court hearings involving violence against women and children. Volunteers logged 2,358 hours observing court proceedings.
- WATCH conducts research projects focused on particular courts or types of hearings to document patterns and recommend solutions.

WATCH promotes court monitoring as an essential component of an effective justice system.

- WATCH formed the National Association of Court Monitoring Programs to bring monitoring groups together to share information and strengthen their impact.
- WATCH provides training and technical assistance to emerging and established monitoring groups.

Who is involved in WATCH?

WATCH conducts three volunteer trainings every year; we currently have 125 active volunteers. WATCH welcomes volunteers from all backgrounds and walks of life. Many volunteers are college students, professionals, or retirees.

What difference is WATCH making?

WATCH volunteers provide a public presence in the courtroom, carrying red clipboards to remind the court that it is accountable to the public. Court monitoring promotes improvements in the justice system by identifying gaps, recommending solutions, and advocating for change.

The best ideas for change come from outsiders who are not biased by the assumptions and history that often blinds insiders to the need or potential for change.

Hennepin County judge