

Legal Assistance for Victims Grant Program

The Legal Assistance for Victims Grant Program (LAV Program) is intended to support victims of domestic/sexual violence who are seeking relief in legal matters arising from their abuse. The LAV Program develops innovative, collaborative projects that provide quality representation to victims of domestic/sexual violence, and provides opportunities for communities to examine how the legal needs of victims can be met.

THE LAV PROGRAM MAKES AWARDS TO LAW SCHOOL CLINICS, DOMESTIC violence services programs and shelters, bar associations, rape crisis centers, and other sexual assault services programs; private nonprofit entities; Indian tribal governments and tribal organizations; territorial organizations; legal aid or statewide legal services; and faith- and/or community-based legal service providers. Grant funds may be used for direct legal services to victims of domestic/sexual violence. In addition, grant funds may be used to provide enhanced training for lawyers representing these victims as well as for advocates.

272 Grantees Reporting

Between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2017, 272 unique grantees reported activities funded by the LAV Program.

28,204 Victims Served

On average, grantees served or partially served 28,204 victims during each 6-month reporting period.

40,816 Legal Issues Addressed

Grantees addressed an average of 40,816 legal issues and achieved a total of 105,162 outcomes.

Grantees may provide assistance to adult and youth victims in family, immigration, employment, administrative agency, and housing matters; campus administrative, protection or stay away order proceedings, or other similar matters; in addition to criminal justice investigations, prosecutions, and post-trial matters (including sentencing, parole, and probation) that impact the victim's safety and privacy.

Legal representation in family matters is especially crucial for victims of domestic violence, because offenders may continue to exert control over victims by using the legal system to force contact, restrict victims' access to protection, make implicit threats, and create ongoing challenges through litigation. Through these forms of "paper abuse," offenders can exert coercive control long after victims end the abusive relationship. Civil legal advocacy has been shown to decrease revictimization and improve self-sufficiency and psychological and economic well-being, thus working against these kinds of ongoing abuse (Coppes Hartley, & Renner, 2016; Douglas, 2017a; Miller & Smolter, 2011).



DE • Grantee Perspective

LAV Program funding has allowed La Esperanza to represent victims of crime in regard to family court matters. Previously, we would refer victims and survivors to other family law attorneys in the area. This, however, was a challenge for our clients because most of the attorneys charge for their services and there was a language barrier. Now that we have LAV funding, we are able to hire and retain a family law attorney and a bilingual family law paralegal. We are able to process more cases and maintain constant communication in regard to the cases, without having to go through third parties.

LA ESPERANZA, DELAWARE



CA • Grantee Perspective

Through the LAV Program, we have increased the number of people we can serve; improved inter-agency referral systems, as well as referral systems within all program areas; and improved the quality of services we can provide to survivors of sexual assault. We have improved our services for survivors of sexual assault by developing expertise and best practices through inter-agency collaboration, and by increasing awareness among our staff of issues facing survivors of sexual assault and resources available for them. The Healing with Justice Project has made the Family Violence Law Center a visible ally for sexual assault survivors in the community. This has resulted in partnerships that would not be possible without LAV funding.

FAMILY VIOLENCE LAW CENTER, CALIFORNIA



SC • Grantee Perspective

LAV funding allowed Hopeful Horizons to hire a full-time paralegal, whose litigation support and assistance to the attorney and Hopeful Horizons' Legal Program in general has resulted in significant improvements in efficiency. The paralegal not only makes it possible for Hopeful Horizons' legal team to serve more clients, she also permits Hopeful Horizons to become involved in more intricate issues that result in more lengthy and complex litigation.

HOPEFUL HORIZONS (FORMERLY CITIZENS OPPOSED TO DOMESTIC ABUSE), SOUTH CAROLINA

Grantees engage in the following purpose areas:

- Implement, expand, and establish cooperative efforts and projects between domestic violence and sexual assault victim services organizations and legal assistance providers to help victims of domestic/sexual violence; and
- Implement, expand, and establish efforts and projects to provide legal assistance to victims of domestic/sexual violence by organizations with a demonstrated history of providing such direct legal or advocacy services.

VAWA 2013 added the following new purpose area to this program:

- Implement, expand, and establish efforts and projects to provide competent, supervised pro bono legal assistance for victims of domestic/sexual violence.

In addition, VAWA 2013 clarified that victim services and legal assistance include services and assistance to **victims of domestic/sexual violence who are also victims of severe forms of trafficking in persons.**

These changes were implemented in FY 2014, meaning that grants made on or after October 1, 2014 could specifically address them. If an activity falling under the added purpose area could not be captured in sections of the existing form that grantees use to report, they could describe their accomplishments in narrative sections of the form.

General Grant Information

Information for this report was submitted by **272** individual grantees for the July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2017 progress reporting period.

- **17** (6%) grantees reported that their grants specifically addressed tribal populations.
- Grantees most frequently addressed the following purpose area:
 - Implement, expand, and establish efforts and projects to provide legal assistance for victims of domestic/sexual violence by organizations with a demonstrated history of providing direct legal or advocacy services on behalf of these victims.

Staff

Grant-funded staff provide direct legal services, training, and mentoring for lawyers representing victims, and support services for victims, to increase victim safety and offender accountability. **Being able to hire staff is critical to the overall function and success of programs.**

- **272** (100%) grantees used funds for staffing needs.
- Grantees funded an average of **411** full-time equivalent (FTE) staff during each 6-month period.
- Grantees most often used these staffing funds to support staff attorneys and victim advocates.

Table 1 | Staff supported with LAV grant funds, July 2015–June 2017: **Selected groups**

Staff funded	6-month average	
Total FTE staff funded	411	
Attorneys	235	57%
Victim advocates	43	10%
Paralegals	39	9%
Legal advocates	36	9%

NOTE: Data presented for the most frequently reported categories only (≥5%).

Pro Bono Attorneys and Law Students

The civil justice system can address the needs of victims of violence in many ways. Law schools, licensure programs, continuing legal education programs, pro bono projects, and law firms can provide and receive training on the many complex legal issues that victims face. Grantees may coordinate efforts between law firms and law schools, local and state bar associations, victim services organizations, and legal services programs to provide quality representation to victims.

- Grantees recruited **2,499** pro bono attorneys, trained **2,968** pro bono attorneys, and mentored **3,373** pro bono attorneys.
 - Of those trained and mentored, pro bono attorneys accepted **4,199** and completed **3,427** cases.
- Grantees recruited **2,846** law students, trained **2,951** law students, and mentored **2,038** law students.
 - Law students worked on an average of **6,009** cases during each 6-month period.



NY • Grantee Perspective

The LAV program funding has allowed our organization to hire a full-time immigration attorney/representative who dedicates her time exclusively to this project. Additionally, the LAV program funding allows us to have a dedicated bilingual advocate in the Integrated Domestic Violence Court in Suffolk County; prior to the LAV Program funding, Victims Information Bureau of Suffolk did not have an attorney on staff for the clients we serve. Most of our client population are low income and therefore unable to afford hiring a private attorney. With LAV Program funding we are able to refer clients in need of legal representation to our part-time LAV-funded attorney.

VICTIMS INFORMATION BUREAU OF SUFFOLK, NEW YORK



IA • Grantee Perspective

One of the most far-reaching impacts of the LAV grant for Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) Legal Clinic has been our ability to restart the partnership with University of Iowa College of Law Citizen Lawyer Program. This provides us an opportunity to educate the next generation of attorneys about the dynamics of domestic violence and sexual assault through direct contact with survivors and their legal issues. The number of survivors needing legal help is larger than the LAV grant alone could ever hope to address. We hope the students' experience ripples out to increase the pool of resources available to help survivors.

IOWA COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



WI • Grantee Perspective

This funding, while it may not allow us to provide all services pro bono, has dramatically increased our abilities to provide quality pro bono assistance to survivors of SA and DV. We have met with over 1,000 survivors since receiving this funding and helped coordinate services, helped them to identify immigration and family law options, and opened pro bono cases under the LAV grant.

END DOMESTIC ABUSE WISCONSIN



MA • Grantee Perspective

Prior to LAV funding, rape and sexual assault victims in MA did not have access to trauma-informed, survivor-centered, holistic civil legal services to help stabilize and rebuild their lives following sexual violence. LAV funding has allowed the Victim Rights Law Center to train service providers, law enforcement, medical and mental health professionals, and others in order to integrate civil legal services into a coordinated community response to sexual violence.

VICTIM RIGHTS LAW CENTER, MASSACHUSETTS



MD • Grantee Perspective

Without LAV funding, staff would not be able to participate in the wide array of conferences and continuing education programs to improve their knowledge of family law, immigration, and the dynamics of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Not only can staff reap the benefits of studying emerging laws and trends, but they also benefit from meeting others in the field and establishing a network of support throughout the country.

SEXUAL ASSAULT/SPOUSE ABUSE RESOURCE CENTER, INC., MARYLAND



KS • Grantee Perspective

The LAV Project has allowed Kansas Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence to be a primary resource for technical assistance across the state for advocates, attorneys, law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, and other criminal justice and victim service professionals on legal matters impacting victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking. In addition, this project has allowed for networking, outreach, and training to attorneys across the state, especially in rural areas, to build their capacity to take on immigration, sexual assault, and complex family law matters, providing a network of qualified attorneys the Coalition can reach out to when survivors are in need of legal services.

KANSAS COALITION AGAINST SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Training

The 2013 reauthorization removed previously authorized purpose areas under the LAV Program that permitted grantees to provide training with their grant funds. The information below comes from grantees whose awards were made in FY 2013 and earlier years, before the VAWA 2013 changes went into effect. As such, these activities were reported with less frequency and at lower volumes in the periods covered by this report than in periods covered in earlier Reports to Congress.

Grantees provide training for lawyers and other professionals who serve victims of domestic/sexual violence facing complex legal issues. **This training improves the professional response to victims and increases offender accountability.**

- **160** (59%) grantees used funds for training.
- Grantees convened a total of **2,024** training events.
- Grantees trained a total of **50,139** people.
- Most often these trainings reached attorneys (**27%**), victim advocates (**15%**), law students (**9%**), law enforcement officers (**7%**), and multidisciplinary staff at the same training (**7%**).

Technical Assistance

The 2013 reauthorization removed previously authorized purpose areas under the LAV Program that permitted grantees to provide technical assistance with their grant funds. The information below comes from grantees whose awards were made in FY 2013 and earlier years, before the VAWA 2013 changes went into effect. As such, these activities were reported with less frequency and at lower volumes in the periods covered by this report than in periods covered in earlier Reports to Congress.

To improve the professional response to victims of domestic/sexual violence, grantees provide technical assistance to a range of professionals, including attorneys, victim advocates, judges, legal services staff, mediators, friends of the court, and guardians ad litem. Technical assistance encompasses a wide range of topics, such as training on identifying legal issues, assisting victims with securing protection orders, guidance on immigration paperwork, and/or preparing for a divorce trial.

- **109** (40%) grantees used funds for technical assistance.
- Grantees most frequently reported providing technical assistance to victim advocates (**27%**), attorneys (**23%**), legal services staff (**18%**), and prosecutors (**11%**).

Victim Services

Grantees provide an array of services to victims. Beyond traditional legal services, lawyers and non-lawyers provide safety planning and other support services. The partnerships between legal services providers and victim services organizations allow grantees to increase the number and type of support services they offer. The need for legal services includes emergency access to protection orders, legal representation in divorce and custody matters, housing, economic assistance, employment advocacy, and immigration assistance. **Victims require competent legal representation so they can become and remain safe from violence.**

- **269** (99%) grantees used funds for victim services.
- Grantees provided services to an average of **28,204** victims during each 6-month period.
- **93%** of victims who sought services received them during each 6-month period.

Non-legal Victim Services

Grantees provide support services and safety planning as needed.

During each 6-month period, on average, grant-funded lawyers provided:

- Safety planning to **10,487** victims;
- Support services to **4,177** victims; and
- Pro se clinics/group services to **940** victims.

During each 6-month period, on average, other grant-funded staff provided:

- Safety planning to **9,302** victims;
- Support services to **6,119** victims;
- Non-attorney legal advocacy services to **5,710** victims; and
- Pro se clinics/group services to **509** victims.

Victims Seeking Services

Grantees serve victims of domestic/sexual violence. Between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2017:

- The majority of victims served or partially served were victims of **domestic/dating violence** (78%).

Victims with children are particularly vulnerable because offenders routinely use the courts to challenge custody, child support, and visitation arrangements. Furthermore, judges and court-appointed third parties, like mediators and custody evaluators, do not necessarily have the requisite understanding of domestic violence and their decisions and recommendations do not always account for the safety needs of domestic violence victims and their children (Saunders, 2015).



KY • Grantee Perspective

These funds allow us to serve about 29% more victims and provide 55% more long-term assistance with divorce, custody, and immigration issues than we otherwise could. With LAV funds, we can serve the most vulnerable victims in our service area, rural and immigrant victims. About 34% of our cases for this reporting period are immigration issues. We are representing undocumented immigrant victims who were very isolated because of a lack of family support, their immigration status which mainly kept them hidden; and their inability to speak the language. Without this funding, that service would not be available.

LEGAL AID OF THE BLUEGRASS, KENTUCKY



NY • Grantee Perspective

Thanks to our LAV funding, our clients firstly have access to attorneys who are trained in domestic violence and disability, but also who work closely with counselors specializing in both domestic violence and disability. LAV has allowed us to remain open to taking on new and complex cases for direct representation and advocacy. With a high demand for civil legal attorneys in Queens, we are able to fill this gap and provide representation that is both sensitive to and focused on serving victims with disabilities.

URBAN JUSTICE CENTER, NEW YORK



FL • Grantee Perspective

Before LAV funding we could only make suggestions and refer to an out-of-county, limited legal service. Victims who were not ready to leave their abuser, emotionally or financially, knew that we would be here to help when they were ready. And now, because of the stability LAV funding has provided, those same victims have returned and found the help they need still available years later. Knowing Center for Abuse and Rape Emergencies is available whether a month from now or a year from now, allows a victim to trust that recovery, stability, and safety is attainable.

CENTER FOR ABUSE AND RAPE EMERGENCIES, INC., FLORIDA



NY • Grantee Perspective

Each year Domestic Violence Program (DVP) serves approximately 300 clients from 20 different Latin American countries. LAV funds have allowed us to increase the number of clients served while maintaining our holistic interdisciplinary approach. With these funds, DVP has been able to expand its offerings by not only focusing on our clients' immigration status but by also providing the necessary services to stabilize them in the community with the goal of serving as a catalyst for survivors seeking safety and resources to help them live a life free of violence.

NORTHERN MANHATTAN IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION, NEW YORK



FL • Grantee Perspective

LAV funds have allowed us to contract with domestic violence centers to provide victims with safety planning, non-attorney legal advocacy, and support services which are coordinated with the legal services provided by our attorneys. As a result, the victims we serve are better able to overcome obstacles which might hinder their ability to leave their abusers and are better able to become self-sufficient and permanently end their abusive relationships.

BAY AREA LEGAL SERVICES INC., FLORIDA

Figure 1 Provision of victim services by LAV Program grantees, by type of presenting victimization

Victims served and partially served by type of victimization (6-month average)

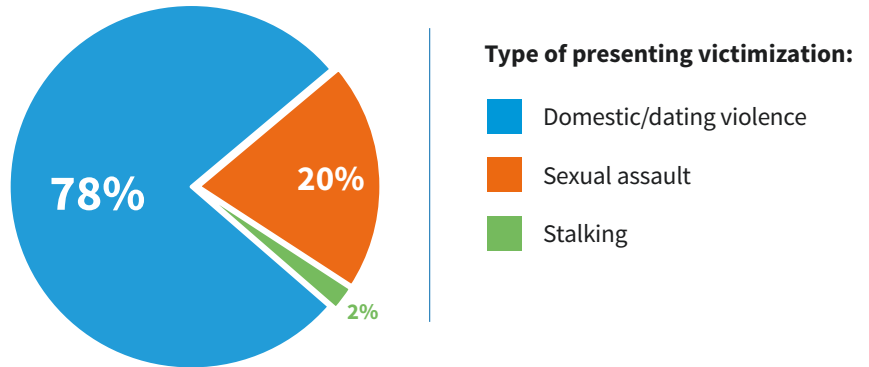


Table 2 Victims seeking services with LAV grant funds, July 2015–June 2017

Victims seeking services	6-month average	
Total victims seeking services	30,240	
Victims served	24,226	80%
Victims partially served	3,977	13%
Victims not served	2,036	7%

NOTE: "Partially served" represents victims who received some but not all of the service(s) they requested, provided those services were funded under the LAV Program grant. "Not served" represents victims who sought services and did not receive the service(s) they were seeking, provided those services were funded under the LAV Program grant.

Victims' Relationship to Offender

Grantees serve victims of domestic/sexual violence. Between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2017:

- The majority of victims served or partially served were victimized by a **spouse or intimate partner (80%)**.
- The remaining victims were most commonly victimized in the context of a **dating relationship (7%)** or by another **family or household member (6%)**.

Figure 2 Type of victimization by relationship to offender: Domestic/dating violence (6-month average)

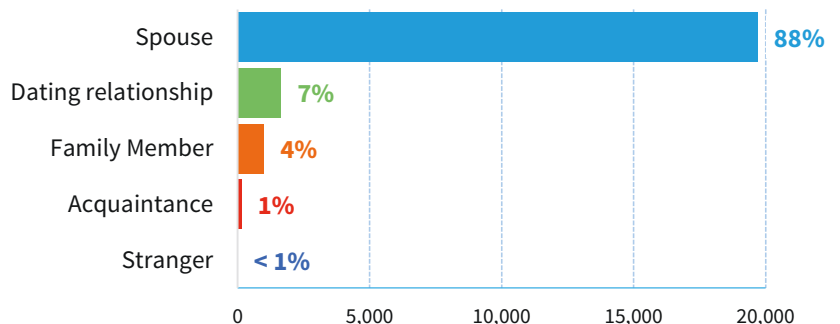


Figure 3 | Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Sexual assault**
(6-month average)

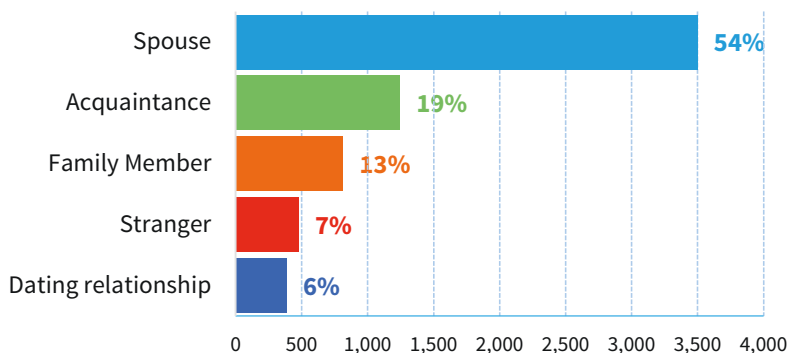
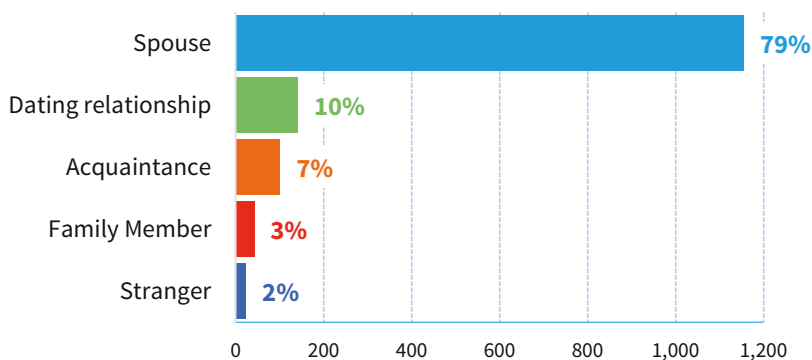


Figure 4 | Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Stalking**
(6-month average)



Reasons Victims Were Not Served or Were Partially Served

During each reporting period, grantees most frequently noted the following barriers as reasons why victims were not served or partially served:

- Program unable to provide services because of limited resources;
- Victim did not meet eligibility or statutory requirements;
- Program reached capacity;
- Conflict of interest; or
- Services were not appropriate for victim.

Demographics of Victims Served and Partially Served

Grantees served or partially served an average of **28,204** victims during each 6-month period. Victims most frequently served or partially served were **white** (42%), **female** (94%), and between the ages of **25 and 59** (79%).



NY • Grantee Perspective

LAV funding empowers partners to provide advocacy and legal representation to a client with multiple legal issues, saving that client from having to develop rapport and trust with additional attorneys especially due to the sensitive nature of the facts of their cases. The LAV Program ensures that victims have access to a highly trained and qualified attorney, who is not only knowledgeable about legal matters but also knowledgeable about victimization and tactics of control that abusive partners may utilize. This is invaluable in ensuring a process that feels supportive and effective for survivors.

LEGAL SERVICES OF THE HUDSON VALLEY, NEW YORK



TX • Grantee Perspective

This funding has provided our ten county service area with a legal team focused on serving this unique population which is most in need of legal services. The funding has expanded our range of services and allowed us to pursue a deeper partnership with our named domestic violence/sexual assault partner agencies who are often first responders to this vulnerable population. This project gives victims the ability to receive holistic legal and non-legal services through collaboration of service providers.

LONE STAR LEGAL AID, TEXAS



PA • Grantee Perspective

LAV Program funding allowed the victim services advocate to be present in the abuse filing unit in Philadelphia’s Family Court. For the first time older victims of domestic violence are receiving assistance with filing and are screened at the courthouse for services and referrals. The victim service advocate is able to direct victim clients to additional benefit programs, to provide additional advocacy to ensure the safety of the victim client and provides valuable paralegal type support to the project attorneys.

SENIOR LAW CENTER, PENNSYLVANIA



AR • Grantee Perspective

Before receiving this grant, Peace at Home helped clients file for protection orders, safety planned with them, prepared them for court, and gave them attorney referrals. Unfortunately, that’s all we were able to do. As a result of this LAV grant, we are now able to provide free direct legal representation to victims of domestic violence. This takes a lot of emotional and financial strain off our clients.

PEACE AT HOME FAMILY SHELTER, INC., ARKANSAS



ND • Grantee Perspective

Through LAV funding, Community Violence Intervention Center has been able to provide holistic services, including free legal assistance, to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. It has enabled the LAV team to serve survivors who do not have resources or serve survivors whose partners use financial control as another tool to continue the pattern of power and control. The funding has given victims a stronger voice in their own civil legal matters and has provided survivors with a fair shot against their abusers who attempt to use the court system against them.

COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION CENTER, NORTH DAKOTA

Figure 5 Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Race/ethnicity** (6-month average)

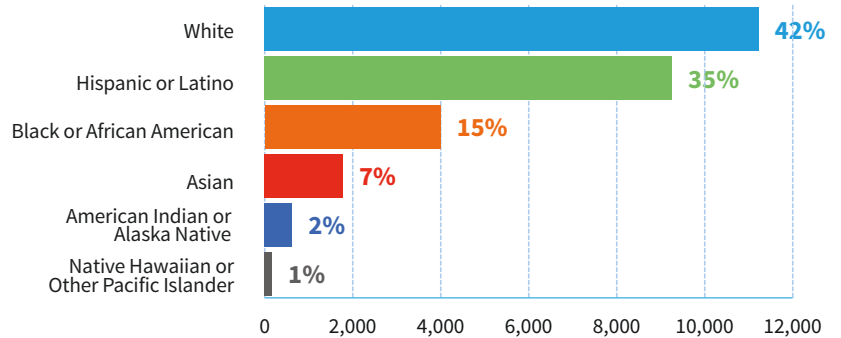


Figure 6 Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Gender** (6-month average)

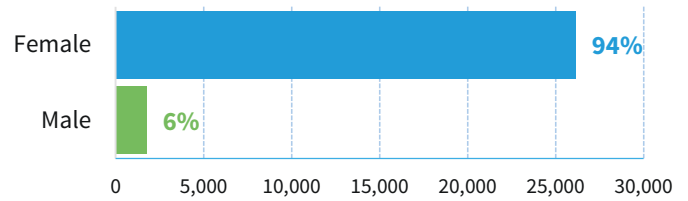


Figure 7 Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Age** (6-month average)

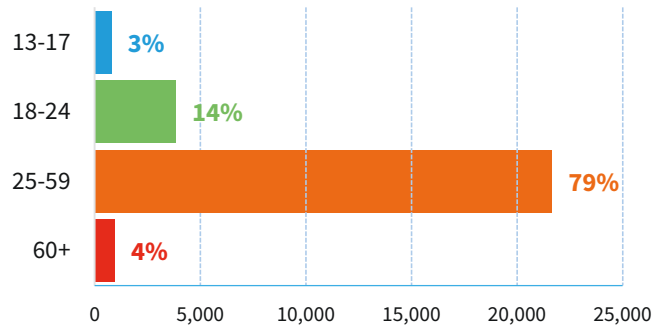
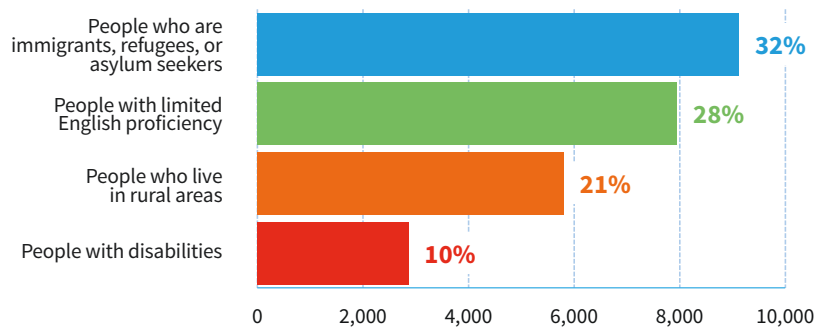


Figure 8 Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Other** (6-month average)



Legal Services

Grantees represent victims of domestic/sexual violence in a variety of legal matters, including family law (divorce, child custody, and visitation), protection orders, immigration, and housing.

- Grantees addressed an average of **40,816** legal issues during each 6-month reporting period.
- Grantees provided multiple instances of legal services to an average of **6,436** victims (23% of those receiving services).
- Grantees achieved a total of **105,162** legal outcomes.
- Grantees most frequently provided legal assistance with protection orders and divorces.

Figure 9 Victims who received assistance with legal issues addressed by LAV Program grantees, July 2015–June 2017 (6-month average)

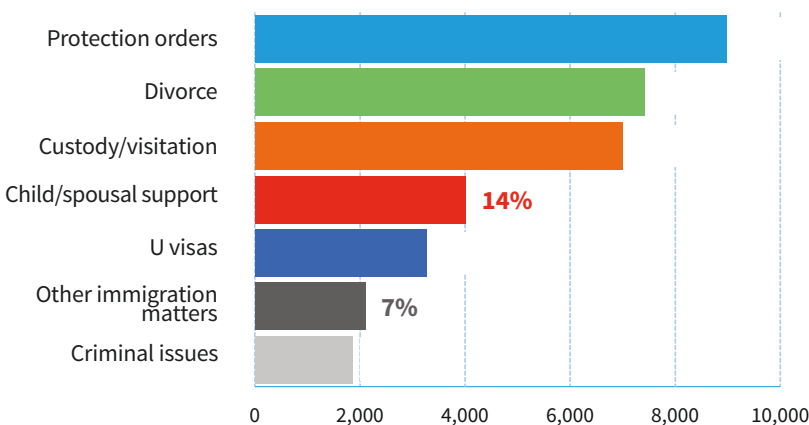


Table 3 Outcomes of legal issues addressed by LAV Program grantees, July 2015–June 2017

Legal matter	Outcomes (N=105,543)		Information/referrals/advice	Court decision	Brief services	Negotiated resolution/ filed action
	N	%				
Protection order	28,739	27%	32%	34%	12%	12%
Child custody/visitation	19,379	18%	48%	21%	13%	11%
Divorce	18,102	17%	51%	17%	14%	9%
Child/spousal support	9,793	9%	49%	22%	11%	11%

NOTE: Outcomes data represent issues disposed of, not the number of victims. Percentages for outcomes are based on the number of issues disposed of in each category; not all categories of outcomes or legal matters are included. Data presented for the most frequently reported categories only (≥5%).



TN • Grantee Perspective

Perhaps the greatest area of need that was previously unmet, and the one that LAV funding has allowed us to expand, is increased representation for victims of domestic violence in contested divorce cases. These cases are often time-consuming and very emotional, both for the attorney and their client. Legal Aid of East Tennessee (LAET) attorneys are able to assist domestic violence victims with maintaining custody of their minor children, obtaining child support and rehabilitative alimony, relieving victims of marital debt, being awarded marital homes and property, and finally, gaining their freedom from physically, financially and emotionally oppressive marriages to their abusers. LAV funds allow LAET staff to help victims with these types of financial issues, which are a direct result of the abuse they endured.

LEGAL AID OF EAST TENNESSEE



CA • Grantee Perspective

LAV funding has allowed BayLegal to expand the areas in which we provide services to DV survivors, to focus on particularly vulnerable populations, and steadily to increase the number of sexual assault and stalking survivors being served by our collaborative. In some of our counties, such as San Francisco, there is county funding for providing services to victims of domestic violence, but this funding is restricted to providing services to residents of San Francisco. DV victims who have fled the county or whose abuser has filed a case against them in SF are not eligible for services with county funds. LAV permits us to provide these services to survivors who otherwise might fall through the cracks and have to defend themselves without counsel.

BAY AREA LEGAL AID, CALIFORNIA



MA • Grantee Perspective

Courts in a busy urban area such as Greater Boston are under-resourced and overburdened. In Greater Boston, Family Court is the division of the Trial Court with the highest percentage of unrepresented litigants; over 85% of litigants in Family Court are unrepresented. Civil legal services providers remain understaffed and unable to meet the demand for their services. For immigrant survivors of domestic and sexual violence, the challenges of navigating the legal system alone are compounded by linguistic and cultural barriers, in addition to safety concerns and fear. Therefore, full representation in family law and immigration matters remains a significant area of need for survivors of abuse.

CASA MYRNA VAZQUEZ, MASSACHUSETTS



MN • Grantee Perspective

Victims also need more non-legal help. Mental health support from trauma-informed therapists is a critical need. In particular, there continues to be a need for additional free and low-cost mental health providers who are culturally and linguistically appropriate for non-English speaking clients. In the Willmar area, which has a large immigrant population, mental health services are only available through an interpreter.

MID-MINNESOTA LEGAL ASSISTANCE



MD • Grantee Perspective

Access to high-quality, culturally-competent legal assistance continues to present challenges for survivors in need given limited availability of service providers and continued demand for services in our region. Need among our target population is driven not only by the disproportionately high incidence of domestic violence and sexual assault among the general target population, but also by a variety of special barriers to services for immigrant women, including limited English proficiency, cultural barriers, lack of understanding of legal options, and low income, and by an exceptional dearth of legal services which are culturally and linguistically appropriate for immigrant survivors.

TAHIRIH JUSTICE CENTER, MARYLAND

Remaining Areas of Need

Though grantees have made significant inroads in serving low-income victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, they frequently cited the need for **more attorneys, victim advocates, and paralegals** to serve a greater number of victims and to provide more comprehensive services for their clients. In particular, grantees mentioned the need for:

- Family law attorneys able to represent clients in custody and divorce cases;
- Attorneys capable of working on complex immigration cases; and
- Legal services related to the collateral consequences of domestic violence, including housing, personal property, consumer protection, and child support.

Grantees reported numerous **difficulties meeting the needs of immigrant victims and victims with limited English proficiency**. These needs included:

- A need for more qualified interpreters;
- A shortage of bilingual advocates and attorneys;
- Better translation of court documents and informational materials;
- Culturally-informed and linguistically-appropriate mental health services;
- Greater availability of immigration legal services;
- Cooperation with law enforcement in pursuing U visa applications;
- Addressing the backlog of U visa applications; and
- Combatting fears of deportation in order to encourage reporting.

Grantees noted that low-income victims **face significant financial burdens**, which can jeopardize their safety. These include:

- Access to housing, transportation, food, and child care;
- Difficulty securing stable employment with a living wage;
- Consumer credit issues stemming from victimization; and
- Costs associated with litigation, such as mediation, guardian ad litem fees, and expert testimony.

Additionally, grantees pointed to the need for **low-cost mental health services for victims and families, especially those with limited English proficiency**.

Grantees emphasized the need to **improve outreach and services to chronically underserved populations**, especially:

- Immigrants, refugees, and victims with limited English proficiency;
- Victims in remote rural areas;
- LGBTQ populations; and
- Young victims, including high school and college students.

Grantees also cited a need for **better training of judges, court personnel, and law enforcement**, especially around issues of:

- Trauma-informed practice;
- Immigration and U visa applications;
- Proper investigation and identification of primary aggressor; and
- Child custody.



CA • Grantee Perspective

A new area that has not been prioritized by legal services in the past is providing legal representation to student victims of sexual assault both in their civil cases and the administrative processes with the school. In many universities students feel unsupported and are hesitant to report the sexual assault to the administration. Sexual assault on college campuses is severely underreported. With outreach, education, and legal representation students can feel empowered to seek remedies both within their university and through the civil court process with the filing of a civil restraining order. Students need legal services because they often do not have the resources to obtain counsel. Attorneys can help the students get the protective orders they need, protect their rights as victims under California's Victims' Bill of Rights, and represent them in the administrative process when the school determines what will be the proper discipline for a student who has sexually assaulted another student.

NEIGHBORHOOD LEGAL SERVICES OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA



IL • Grantee Perspective

Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation sees the continued lack of education of the legal system on issues of sexual assault, victim behavior, and the neurobiology of sexual trauma as the most significant area of remaining need. This need is most palpable when we represent survivors of sexual violence under the Civil No Contact Order (CNCO) Act in the Domestic Violence courthouse in Chicago. Judges continue to disbelieve survivors and question their behavior when it seems "counter-intuitive" to them, even when the behavior has been a documented response of trauma survivors. Additionally, as these judges more routinely adjudicate cases of physical and verbal domestic violence, they seem confused by and unprepared for the specific legal and evidentiary requirements of the CNCO Act and the issue of sexual assault in general.

CHICAGO ALLIANCE AGAINST SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, ILLINOIS

