

2017 Access to Justice Grants Program Overview

The 2017 Access to Justice Grants Program are awarded to civil legal aid providers for projects that fall in one of these three categories: (1) a shared legal interpreter bank; (2) underserved areas in DC; and (3) housing-related matters. The projects described received new or continued public funding.

(1) Shared Legal Interpreter Bank

Community Legal Interpreter Bank

\$319,500

Ayuda received continued funding for its shared legal interpreter bank, which provides assistance to legal aid providers using trained community legal interpreters. The project serves as a national model for coordinated, point-of-service legal interpreter services.

(2) Underserved Areas

Generations Project

\$25,000

Children's Law Center received continued funding for its medical-legal partnership with the Children's National Medical Center's Generations program that focuses on teen parents and their children. The project provides legal representation on a wide range of issues and health outcomes for children born to teen parents.

Jenny Hatch Justice Project

\$28,000

Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities received continued funding to provide representation for District residents with disabilities who are facing or suffering overbroad or undue guardianships. The project's attorneys help those in this situation by teaching them about alternatives such as supported decision-making, powers of attorney, advance directives, and other supports and services designed to protect and increase individual independence and self-determination.

Homeless Legal Connect

\$30,000

Christian Legal Aid of the District of Columbia received continued funding to staff and manage its monthly intake center based at Central Union Mission, a men's homeless shelter and social service agency located in Ward 6. Staff attorneys and volunteer attorneys staff the clinic, providing legal assistance in various matters such as housing, public benefits, expungements, estate planning, and family law. About 50 percent of the clinic's clients are homeless, while the remainder are low-income residents of Wards 6, 7, and 8.

**New funding*

Pro Bono Asylum Program

\$32,000

Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition received continued funding for its Pro Bono Asylum Program (PBAB), which provides free legal aid to survivors of torture who reside in DC and are seeking political asylum. PBAB's attorneys help survivors prepare their applications, affidavits, and evidence for asylum, as well as represent them in their asylum interviews.

Empowerment Project

\$40,000

The Amara Legal Center received continued funding to provide free legal aid to individuals whose rights have been violated by involvement in commercial sex, regardless of reason for entry into commercial sex. The project's attorney provides legal assistance in the areas of child custody and support, civil protection orders, public benefits, crime victims' compensation, and record sealing.

Latina Outreach Project

\$40,000

First Shift Justice Project (FSJP) received continued funding for its Latina Outreach Project to prevent unlawful job loss among low-income pregnant Latina women and new Latina mothers. FSJP works with Latina women and aims to prevent job loss rather than regain employment. FSJP proactively reaches out to pregnant women to request pregnancy accommodations at work before they lose their jobs.

*Direct Legal Services in Debt Cases**

\$47,000

Tzedek DC received new funding to assist low-income DC residents in debt-related legal matters. Tzedek DC will help DC residents avoid the effects of a negative court judgment and bad credit report, such as losing their driver's license, seizure of their bank account, impossible payment plans, and the inability to obtain employment. Tzedek DC will also conduct community outreach by partnering with the United Planning Organization in Ward 7, where approximately 9,380 households are headed by a single female.

Consumer Law Court-Based Legal Services Project

\$50,000

Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia received continued funding to provide access to same-day representation in debt collection cases in an effort to protect the limited income and assets of low-income DC residents. The project places legal aid attorneys at DC Superior Court to serve pro se litigants in debt collection matters before the Small Claims Court and the civil collections calendar.

Extended Representation to Domestic Violence Victims in Custody, Child Support, and Divorce

\$50,000

DC Volunteer Lawyers Project (DCVLP) received continued funding to represent domestic violence survivors in civil protection orders, custody, child support, and divorce matters. DCVLP utilizes a network of volunteer attorneys to address the severe shortage of free legal assistance for low-income people in the District who have urgent family law needs.

Healthy Together Medical-Legal Partnership in Northeast DC

\$55,000

Children's Law Center received continued funding to for its medical-legal partnership with Unity Healthcare's Minnesota Avenue clinic in Northeast DC. Attorneys work with the clinic's doctors to identify and address each young patient's legal needs, such as substandard housing conditions, unmet educational needs, and lack of access to health care for urgent medical episodes.

Community Lawyering Project

\$60,000

Bread for the City received continued funding for its community lawyering work located at its site on Good Hope Road SE. The project's attorneys work directly with the community to help identify options to tackle issues affecting its residents and, when needed, provide substantial direct representation to the residents. The project focuses on affordable housing, housing conditions, and hiring practices.

Expungement Clinic

\$60,000

DC Law Students in Court received continued funding to provide legal assistance to low-income District residents who have a criminal arrest, charge, or conviction that they wish to seal. Even if they were never charged for or convicted of a crime, individuals may have a criminal record, making it more difficult to secure a job or housing, pursue education, and receive public assistance. The Expungement Clinic attorneys works closely with eligible low-income District residents to seal their record and increase their chance at securing the basic components of a prosperous life.

Direct Legal Representation & Advocacy Project

\$75,000

The School Justice Project (SJP) received continued funding to protect and advocate for the special education rights of court-involved students, ages 17 to 22, during incarceration and throughout reintegration. SJP attorneys work to increase access to appropriate special education in order to improve educational, employment, and life outcomes for this traditionally excluded student population.

Transgender Legal Service Project

\$75,000

Whitman-Walker Health received continued funding to assist DC's large transgender population on a variety of legal issues including discrimination in the workplace, at school, in housing, and in health care; public benefits; immigration; private health insurance; and obtaining accurate identity documents. The grant also increases Whitman-Walker Health's capacity to serve transgender clients seeking assistance at its name and gender change clinic, which started in June 2012.

School Discipline/Office of Administrative Hearings Extended Project

\$76,000

Advocates for Justice and Education received continued funding to address the increasing demand for legal representation and support in suspension and expulsion proceedings. The project provides on-site free legal assistance (information, advice and counsel, and/or brief

services) to parents, guardians, or students at student disciplinary hearings before the Office of Administrative Hearings.

Project Eradicating Notario Deceit (Project END)

\$85,000

Ayuda received continued funding to advise, counsel, and represent immigrant victims of fraud in potential immigration, civil, and criminal processes stemming from fraudulent acts by “representatives” purporting to serve the immigrant community. These representatives are often known as “notarios” or “immigration consultants.” The intended beneficiaries of Project END are low-income immigrants residing in the District who have been defrauded by a notario.

Brief Services Unit Project

\$94,500

Neighborhood Legal Services Program received continued funding to maintain a staff attorney in its Brief Services Unit. The attorney performs an initial diagnosis of legal problems and provides advice or brief service when such limited assistance may be sufficient to enable the individual to resolve the problem. The beneficiaries of the project are low-income DC residents living in Wards 5, 7, and 8.

Homebound Elderly Project (Project HELP)

\$100,000

Legal Counsel for the Elderly received continued funding for an attorney to assist low-income, homebound elders in need of wills, advance directives, and public benefits audits, as well as those affected by consumer scams and housing-related issues. The Project HELP attorney also draws support from a pool of pro bono attorneys and other volunteer professionals to provide increased legal aid to homebound seniors.

Domestic Violence Underserved Communities Representation Project

\$145,000

Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia received continued funding to provide focused outreach and legal aid to domestic violence survivors in poor and underserved communities in DC. The project attorneys have also established an office at the Domestic Violence Intake Center located in DC Superior Court.

DC Jail & Prison Advocacy Project

\$146,500

Disability Rights DC at University Legal Services (ULS) serves as DC’s federally mandated protection and advocacy organization charged with working for the rights of people with disabilities. ULS received continued funding to support attorneys who provide legal aid and direct advocacy for inmates in the DC Jail and other DC correctional facilities with mental disabilities. The staff attorneys work closely with the DC Department of Corrections, the DC Department of Mental Health, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons regarding DC prisoners.

Domestic Violence Community Legal Services Project

\$150,000

Bread for the City received continued funding for its Domestic Violence Community Legal Services Project, which provides legal aid, including civil protection orders, divorce, child custody, and public benefits, to low-income District residents who are experiencing violence

within the household. The project's target populations are domestic violence survivors living in Wards 5, 6, 7, and 8.

Max Robinson Center Legal Services

\$175,000

Whitman-Walker Health (WWH) received continued funding to provide legal representation, counseling, and outreach to people living with HIV/AIDS and other low-income residents in Wards 7 and 8 through lawyers based at its Max Robinson Center in Southeast DC. WWH offers its free legal aid to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals in DC, regardless of HIV status, and to health care patients at WWH regardless of sexual orientation, HIV status, and gender identity.

Healthy Together Medical-Legal Partnership in Southeast DC

\$200,000

Children's Law Center received continued funding for its Healthy Together Project in Southeast DC. In this medical-legal collaboration, the lawyers provide services through the two Southeast clinics of the Children's National Medical Center (CNMC). The lawyers work with families of CNMC patients to identify and resolve non-medical solutions to children's health issues.

Polk Street Office – Ward 7

\$250,000

Neighborhood Legal Services Program (NLSP) received continued funding to provide neighborhood-based legal aid in the areas of housing, family law, and public benefits. Staff attorneys are physically located at NLSP's office on Polk Street NE to provide low-income residents of this underserved community with free and accessible legal assistance.

Child Support Community Legal Services Project

\$284,000

Bread for the City and Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia received continued funding for their Child Support Community Legal Services Project. The project's partners maintain a court-based legal services office at the Paternity & Support Branch of the DC Superior Court. The public funding supports staff attorney positions to improve individual outcomes for custodial and noncustodial parents in their child support cases, enhance the fairness of the court process, and increase the efficiency of the Paternity & Support Branch.

*Employment Justice Project**

\$325,000

The Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs (WLC) received new funding to expand its Employment Justice Project. Attorneys will assist DC low-income workers recover stolen wages, fight discrimination, and ensure they receive their lawful wages by hosting clinics, conducting outreach, providing rights training, and representing clients.

Southeast Neighborhood Access Project

\$385,000

Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia received continued public funding to support lawyers who work with clients from offices co-located with other legal and non-legal service organizations in Wards 7 and 8. Lawyers work out of two neighborhood offices located in Southeast and provide a range of civil legal assistance.

(3) Housing-related Matters

Housing and Community Development Project

\$30,000

The Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center (APALRC) is the region's legal advocate for the legal and civil rights of Asian Americans in the Washington metropolitan area. Through the Housing and Community Development Project, APALRC received continued funding to provide legal assistance to the District's low-income Asian immigrants with limited-English proficiency regarding evictions, threats, illegal rent increase, and bad housing conditions, as well as illegal relocation, denial of access to housing applications, and lack of language access in Section 8 housing developments.

*Housing Justice Project**

\$60,000

Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs (WLC) received new funding to support its Fair Housing Project. Attorneys will provide legal assistance to low-income tenants in an effort to preserve affordable housing in the District.

Attorney-of-the Day

\$85,000

DC Law Students in Court (DCLSIC) received continued public funding to support attorneys to work at the DC Superior Court's Landlord and Tenant Branch in collaboration with the Landlord-Tenant Court-Based Legal Services Project, run by Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia and Bread for the City. DCLSIC provides low-income tenants with free same-day representation on housing matters.

Housing Right to Counsel Pilot Project

\$389,500

The Housing Right to Counsel Pilot Project received continued funding and is a joint project between Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia, Bread for the City, and Legal Counsel for the Elderly. The project grows out of the DC Right to Housing Initiative, which is a collaborative effort among legal aid providers, the DC Bar Pro Bono Program, and the DC Access to Justice Commission and addresses the lack of safe, affordable, accessible, and stable housing for DC's low-income residents. The project's goal is to reduce eviction by significantly expanding representation for tenants facing eviction who live in subsidized housing.

Landlord-Tenant Court-Based Legal Services Project

\$585,000

Bread for the City and Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia received continued funding to maintain attorneys in the Landlord-Tenant Court-Based Legal Services Project to provide legal aid to low-income tenants in DC through an "attorney-of-the-day" project. Tenants receive same-day representation in matters they have in court and long-term help on housing matters. By increasing representation of low-income tenants, attorneys help keep families in housing, address code violations, and keep housing affordable.