



National Institute of Justice

S o l i c i t a t i o n

Jeremy Travis, Director

April 1999

Evaluation of the Domestic Violence Victims' Civil Legal Assistance Program

APPLICATION DEADLINE:

June 28, 1999

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
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Washington, DC 20531

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Department of Justice Response Center:
800-421-6770

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World Wide Web Site:
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov>

National Institute of Justice
World Wide Web Site:
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij>

Evaluation of the Domestic Violence Victims' Civil Legal Assistance Program

I. Introduction

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ), in collaboration with the Office of Justice Programs' Violence Against Women Grants Office (VAWO), is soliciting proposals for a national evaluation of the Civil Legal Assistance Program. *One research project will be funded for up to \$200,000 for up to 24 months. Additional funds may be made available for this evaluation in subsequent years.*

II. Background

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs (OJP) administers the various grant programs created under Title IV of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (otherwise known as the Violence Against Women Act or VAWA) through its Violence Against Women Office (VAWO). The passage of VAWA confirmed the Federal government's commitment to responding to the needs of millions of women who are the victims of domestic violence every year. That commitment has grown as additional acts of Congress have created further funding for programs to reduce the impact of domestic violence, stalking, and sexual assault on women.

As a result, OJP administers seven grant programs to address various aspects of violence against women, including: the S.T.O.P. State Formula Grant Program, the S.T.O.P. Violence Against Indian Women Grant Program, the Grants to Encourage Arrest Program, the Rural Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Grant Program, the Grant Program to Reduce Violent Crimes Against Women on Campus, and the Comprehensive Approaches to Sex Offender Management Grant Program. Rounding out these programs is the Domestic Violence Victims' Civil Legal Assistance Grant Program, created in 1998 by Congress. Other VAWA programs or provisions include: a National domestic violence

hotline that opened in February 1996 and penalties under Federal law for sex crimes.

VAWO's grant programs are dedicated to enhancing victim safety and ensuring offender accountability by supporting policies, protocols, and projects that call for zero tolerance of all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

There are a variety of programs that are a part of NIJ's overall Violence Against Women and Family Violence Program. These programs include many research and evaluation projects undertaken in collaboration with the VAWO.

NIJ is streamlining its process to accommodate the volume of proposals anticipated under this and other Crime Act solicitations. Researchers can help in a significant way by sending NIJ a nonbinding letter of intent by May 31, 1999. The Institute will use these letters to forecast the numbers of peer panels it needs and to identify conflicts of interest among potential reviewers. There are two ways to send these letters. You can reach NIJ by Internet by sending e-mail to tellnij@ncjrs.org and identifying the solicitation and section(s) for which you expect to apply. You can write a letter with the same information to: National Institute of Justice, Evaluation of the Civil Legal Assistance Program, 810 Seventh Street N.W., Washington, DC 20531. Please help us help you.

This solicitation is aimed at research to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs funded under the Civil Legal Assistance Program. The purpose of the Domestic Violence Victims' Civil Legal Assistance Discretionary Grant Program is to

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strengthen direct civil legal assistance available to domestic violence victims. The types of civil legal assistance programs eligible to receive funding under Civil Legal Assistance Program may include: nonprofit civil legal service programs and clinics with a special interest in providing services to victims of domestic violence; domestic violence victim services programs, such as shelters, providing legal services in-house or as a supplementary service to clients; law school clinical and seminar programs teaching future generations of lawyers about legal issues related to domestic violence; family court-based domestic violence intake programs; programs providing crisis line and referral services for victims of domestic violence in need of civil legal assistance; bar association programs; and other consortia of public and private agencies working collaboratively to respond to the civil legal assistance needs of victims of domestic violence.

The program is designed to strengthen civil legal assistance through innovative, collaborative strategies that reach more battered women than are currently being served. Training, mentoring, and collaborative relationships are core components of projects supported by this grant program. Lawyers and legal advocates providing services through this program must establish respectful and mutually helpful relationships with domestic violence victim advocacy organizations within the served community. In addition, legal service providers funded through this program must develop appropriate protocols and policies in order to ensure that clients' needs for confidentiality and safety are met while lawyers' work comports with locally applicable rules of professional conduct. Non-lawyers must be fully supervised by attorneys in accordance with local professional rules and laws.

Legal service providers seeking funding through this grant program are strongly encouraged to enter into a collaborative relationship with non-profit, non-governmental domestic violence victim advocacy organizations. Such collaborative relationships will ensure that there is ongoing training and mentoring on issues related to

domestic violence and will strengthen communication on domestic violence victim advocacy issues between the legal and advocacy communities.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 1998, Congress appropriated \$12 million specifically to provide civil legal assistance to victims of domestic violence. This amount was increased to \$23 million for FY 1999. The Civil Legal Assistance Program awards grants to non-profit organizations, either public or private, that provide legal services to victims of domestic violence or that work with victims of domestic violence who have civil legal needs. In FY 1998, VAWO awarded 57 grants, and up to 100 new grants will be awarded in FY 1999. Grants typically cover 12 to 24 months. Additional information on the Civil Legal Assistance program can be found on the Internet at:

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawgo>

III. Areas of Research Required

The purpose of a National evaluation is to provide feedback by (1) documenting the range of activities and programs supported by the FY98 and FY99 grants; (2) documenting programs funded by other sources of assistance, the gaps these programs fill, who they serve, and how VAWO funded programs fit into the larger funding picture in a jurisdiction; (3) assessing the accomplishments of grantees; (4) examining grantee planning and implementation efforts; (5) evaluating the adequacy of and need for special conditions imposed on grantees in order to preserve victim safety and confidentiality, while simultaneously enhancing the professional services offered by grantees; and (6) developing a strategy for documenting long-term effects.

A multi-method evaluation including both quantitative and qualitative approaches is required. The evaluation project may involve the following steps:

- Analyzing grantee implementation plans, reports, and other documents;

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- Conducting case studies of the jurisdiction and programs to understand the structure of the social service system and the dynamics of planning, implementation, and performance;
- Interviewing all grantees after their first year of funding to assess progress, implementation, and performance issues as seen from the field;
- Defining and collecting data on essential outcome measures that can be used in later studies to assess the long-term impact of the programs;
- Developing plans for future evaluations of the ultimate impact and effectiveness of the grant program; and
- Conducting a process evaluation of selected sites that will involve a thorough descriptive analysis of the problems being addressed and the projects being supported by the Civil Legal Assistance Program.

Questions to be addressed in assessing the Civil Legal Assistance Program may include:

- Were projects implemented as planned?
- What problems did jurisdictions encounter? How were they addressed? And how can they be resolved?
- How have project designs addressed safety considerations?
- To what extent have projects attained the goals of the program?
- Do grantees require a certain minimum amount of training in order to carry out the goals of their programs, and what types of training programs would satisfy these needs?

In developing a strategy for documenting long-term effects, the following questions may be considered:

- Has the project had an impact on the larger community? What was the baseline level of need in the jurisdiction and how much of the need was unmet?
- How have victims been served and have their lives been affected by the services provided by the program?
- Have the criminal and civil justice systems been enhanced?
- Did the project initiate or lead to improved coordination between the relevant community agencies and organizations?
- Have there been any unintended consequences resulting from the projects?
- What was the nature of the collaborative efforts between grantees and local domestic violence service programs? To what extent did local domestic violence service programs find the grantees' services to be useful for their clients?

The above examples are not exhaustive or intended to limit the applicant. Other techniques of evaluating the Civil Legal Assistance Program and developing a strategy for documenting long-term effects will be considered.

It is anticipated that funding would be made available in subsequent years to carry out the strategy for determining long term effects of the program. This funding is contingent on Congressional appropriations for the program and concurrence of the VAWO for continuation of the evaluation.

Applicants should include plans to submit to NIJ detailed annual reports on the status of the National evaluation. In anticipation of these reports, applicants are encouraged to provide

an outline of their contents along with their application.

Methodological Considerations. The need for innovation, particularly on qualitative measures, culturally sensitive measures, and the need for many different levels of data is acknowledged. Victims, advocates, and knowledgeable criminal justice practitioners should be brought into the various stages of the research and evaluation process, wherever appropriate.

Dissemination of Results. NIJ is interested in expeditious and innovative methods to disseminate the results from all projects supported under the solicitation. Methods that would supplement the more traditional forms of dissemination are encouraged. Results of projects are expected to be reported to NIJ as they become available, and at a minimum, through semi-annual progress reports. Applicants should provide a discussion of the types of reports or products that would become available over the course of the project.

An annual NIJ grantee meeting in Washington, D.C., should be anticipated. Applicants should budget travel expenses for each year of the grant to participate in these grantee meetings.

IV. How to Apply

Those interested in submitting proposals in response to this solicitation must complete the required application forms and submit related required documents. (See below for how to obtain application forms and guides for completing proposals.) Applicants must include the following information/forms to qualify for consideration:

- Standard Form (SF) 424—application for Federal assistance. **The budget amount for the entire length of the project must be placed in box 15 of the SF 424.**
- Assurances
- Certifications Regarding Lobbying, Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters; and Drug-Free Workplace Requirements (one form)

- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
- Budget Detail Worksheet
- Budget Narrative (*the project funding requested on the SF 424 should reflect the costs of the entire project*)
- Negotiated indirect rate agreement (if appropriate)
- Names and affiliations of all key persons from applicant and subcontractor(s), advisors, consultants, and advisory board members. Include name of principal investigator, title, organizational affiliation (if any), department (if institution of higher education), address, phone, and fax
- Proposal abstract
- Table of contents
- Program narrative or technical proposal
- Privacy certificate
- References
- Letters of cooperation from organizations collaborating in the research project
- Résumés
- Appendixes, if any (e.g., list of previous NIJ awards, their status, and products [in NIJ or other publications])

Proposal abstract. The proposal abstract, when read separately from the rest of the application, is meant to serve as a succinct and accurate description of the proposed work. Applicants must concisely describe the research goals and objectives, research design, and methods for achieving the goals and objectives. Summaries of past accomplishments are to be avoided, and proprietary/confidential information is not to be included. Length is not to exceed 400 words. Use the following two headers:

Project Goals and Objectives:

Proposed Research Design and Methodology:

Page limit. The number of pages in the “Program Narrative” part of the proposal must not exceed 30 (double-spaced pages).

Due date. Completed proposals **must be received** at the National Institute of Justice by the close of business on June 28, 1999. Extensions of this deadline will not be permitted.

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Award period. In general, NIJ limits its grants and cooperative agreements to a maximum period of 12 to 24 months. However, longer budget periods may be considered.

Number of awards. NIJ anticipates supporting one grant under this solicitation.

Award amount. One award of up to \$200,000 will be made available for this NIJ solicitation.

Applying. Two packets need to be obtained: (1) application forms (including a sample budget worksheet) and (2) guidelines for submitting proposals (including requirements for proposal writers and requirements for grant recipients). To receive them, applicants can:

- Access the Justice Information Center on the web:

<http://www.ncjrs.org/fedgrant.htm#NIJ>

or the NIJ web site:

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/NIJ/funding.htm>

These web sites offer the NIJ application forms and guidelines as electronic files that may be downloaded to a personal computer.

- Request hard copies of the forms and guidelines by mail from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at 800-851-3420 or from the Department of Justice Response Center at 800-421-6770 (in the Washington, D.C., area, at 202-307-1480).
- Request copies by fax. Call 800-851-3420 and select option 1, then option 1 again for NIJ. Code is 1023.

Guidance and information. Applicants who wish to receive additional guidance and information may contact the U.S. Department of Justice Response Center at 800-421-6770. Center staff can provide assistance or refer applicants to an appropriate NIJ professional. Applicants may, for example, wish to discuss their prospective research topics with the NIJ professional staff.

Send 3 copies (one with original signature) of completed forms to:

Evaluation of the Civil Legal Assistance Program
National Institute of Justice
810 Seventh Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20531
[overnight courier ZIP code 20001]

SL 000355

To find out more information about the National Institute of Justice, please contact:

National Criminal Justice Reference Service

Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849-6000
800-851-3420
e-mail: askncjrs@ncjrs.org

To obtain an electronic version of this document, access
the NIJ web site (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij>).

If you have any questions, call or e-mail NCJRS.