

2017 Opportunity Grant Recipients

Advocating Opportunity (OH) \$20,000

This grant supported the development and deployment of additional resources to increase direct legal services to victims of human trafficking and to support the development and implementation of a statewide training series based on a legal framework on human trafficking. This series will inform legal practitioners and service providers on the various laws and victim-related issues surrounding human trafficking.

Alaska State Association for Guardianship and Advocacy (AK) \$35,000

This grant supported the implementation of new programs to reach guardians of vulnerable adults in rural Alaska and assist those where English is a second language or technology is not widely used. ASAGA is the only organization in Alaska that offers support, guidance, navigation or education to families and non-professional guardians for vulnerable adults. This program will enable ASAGA to bring these services to remote areas, provide consultations and training in other languages, and translate education materials to better meet the range of cultural and lifestyle needs of Alaskans.

Atlanta Legal Aid Society (GA) \$20,000

This grant supported the expansion and enhancement of services provided by the Georgia Senior Legal Hotline, to better address the specific and growing needs of senior U.S. military veterans. As well as providing advice and brief legal assistance to veteran callers, this project included outreach to veterans and veteran service agencies. It expanded the free legal services available to veterans in Georgia and served as a model for providing holistic legal services to veteran clients through all Atlanta Legal Aid programs.

Charleston Legal Access (SC) \$10,000

This grant supported a one-year program to address the immediate and critical need for appropriate interpreter and translator services in South Carolina courts. DOJ requires courts to provide “meaningful access” to language services in court and requires states to pay for and provide effective interpreters for limited English proficient parties at all stages of proceedings. However, the majority of interpreters working in South Carolina are not certified, and the courts often do not pay for or arrange interpreters. This program aims to rectify these issues using research, education, and advocacy.

ABA Commission on Hispanic Rights and Responsibilities (National) \$20,000

This grant supported the creation, dissemination, and implementation of an accurate and accessible Spanish translation of the Miranda warning. After 50 years, there is no culturally and substantively accurate Spanish version of the Miranda warning, even though estimates show it’s needed nearly 900,000 times a year. Inaccurate translations violate individual rights and undermine law enforcement efforts, as courts subsequently exclude the resulting statements. An accurate Miranda warning translation for use in local, state, and federal law enforcement will be a daily reminder of the importance of access to justice.

ABA Division for Public Education (National) \$20,000

This grant supported a pilot research project that delivered a series of one-day law-related professional development programs to Chicago-area high school teachers of U. S. history, government, law, and civics. The project focused on the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. It supported comprehensive data collection and evaluation for the programs to be able to assess the efficacy and impact of exploring constitutional questions in high school classrooms on teacher and student achievement.

Georgia Bar Foundation (GA) \$20,000

This grant supported the development and launch of a Senior Attorney Pro Bono Pilot Program to address the unmet legal needs of vulnerable older adults in Georgia. The program increased pro bono activity and access to justice in civil cases, while also providing opportunities for experienced and late-career lawyers who wish to continue actively practicing law to provide greater community service.

Girls Embracing Mothers (TX) \$20,000

This grant supported the expansion of GEM's Pearl Program, which aims to reduce the trauma suffered by girls in grades K-12 as a result of their mothers' incarceration. During monthly group visits, GEM facilitated open and honest discussions between mothers and daughters, to address critical life issues while also building the mother-daughter bond. The grant enabled GEM to reach more girls, partner with more prisons, and deliver services that help stem the tide of recidivism and stop girls from entering prison by producing law-abiding, successful women of society.

Illinois Legal Aid Online (IL) \$10,000

This grant supported building greater awareness for legal self-help centers (LSHCs) in Illinois and eliminated confusion about the services offered at each location. Some users expect to get legal advice; others want to print, copy, and file their legal forms. Although some LSHCs offer these services, most currently do not. Listing the specific services available at each center on the IllinoisLegalAid.org website will set accurate user expectations. A marketing campaign was developed to promote awareness by the public. Additional training for LSHC staff helped ensure the effective use of services.

Legal Aid of Bluegrass (KY) \$50,000

This grant supported the launch of a traveling "justice bus," staffed with lawyers, paralegals, and outreach personnel, to provide legal services to residents of 10 underserved rural counties in Kentucky. LABG recruited private attorneys to travel on the bus and offer their services pro bono. The grant was used to purchase the vehicle and to outfit it with the technology to function as a "pop-up" legal office, including satellite phone and internet connectivity for areas where there's no cell coverage, mobile computer equipment, videoconferencing equipment in LABG's four offices as well as on the bus.

Lone Star Legal Aid (TX) \$49,612

This grant provided seed month to create the Early Housing Intervention Project and add a tenant's rights paralegal in the Housing Unit of LSLA's Houston headquarters. The hired paralegal's focus was to help low-income clients facing the loss of their homes through eviction and to address legal issues related to public/subsidized housing, such as termination notices, utility cut-offs, and lock-outs.

Mitchell Hamline School of Law (MN)**\$14,203**

This grant supported a year-long program to identify the legal needs of low-income patients at a Federally Qualified Health Center in St. Paul, through Mitchell Hamline's medical-legal partnership with United Family Medicine. A community legal needs assessment was conducted utilizing a patient survey and three listening sessions with patient and neighborhood residents. After identifying the issues, Hamline held educational forums to provide a basic understanding of the relevant law and tools to help attendees address those legal challenges.

Pace Women's Justice Center (NY) \$20,000

This grant supported the first-year operations of "Gail's House," a walk-in legal clinic and resource center for victims of domestic violence and elder abuse, in White Plains, NY run by a team of trained pro bono attorneys. Specifically, the grant was used to hire a bilingual paralegal to help facilitate intake, provide English/Spanish translation, and conduct outreach in the community. The only program of its kind in Westchester County, Gail's House will provide in-depth information, guidance, legal counsel from attorneys, and referrals for other services as necessary.

ABA Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants (National)**\$15,000**

This grant supported a qualitative study of three exemplary public defense programs so that other systems might replicate them. Despite the difficulties of providing public defense, several systems have developed exceptional and innovative programs, including rigorous defender training curricula, caseload management and time-tracking systems, caseload limitation strategies, and holistic public defense. The study had three phases: 1) selection of programs, 2) fieldwork and data gathering, and 3) recognition and publishing. The final report provides a roadmap for replicating the highlighted programs.

Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services (TN)**\$20,000**

This grant supported the development of a web-based Legal Wellness Checkup platform that empowers families and individuals to identify and manage their legal risks. The platform will replicate the current paper-based process and questionnaire that's administered by an attorney. Bringing TALS' Legal Wellness Checkup online using an interactive web-based and mobile-friendly platform will improve access for all users in Tennessee, especially low-income families. It's intended to serve as a model for automated legal health checks that other organizations can replicate.

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