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# National Institute of Justice

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

*Julie E. Samuels, Acting Director*

*April 2000*

## National Evaluation of the Domestic Violence Victims' Civil Legal Assistance Program

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:**

July 10, 2000

**U.S. Department of Justice**  
**Office of Justice Programs**  
810 Seventh Street N.W.  
Washington, DC 20531

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*Attorney General*

**Daniel Marcus**  
*Acting Associate Attorney General*

**Mary Lou Leary**  
*Acting Assistant Attorney General*

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*Acting Director, National Institute of Justice*

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For grant and funding information contact:  
**Department of Justice Response Center:**  
800-421-6770

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**Office of Justice Programs**  
**World Wide Web Site:**  
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov>

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

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## 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 Office (VAWO), is soliciting proposals for a national Evaluation of the Domestic Violence Victims' Civil Legal Assistance Program. ***One research project will be funded for up to \$800,000 with a grant period of up to 36 months.***

### II. Background

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs (OJP) administers 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 violence every year. That commitment has grown as additional acts of Congress have created further funding for programs to prevent the incidence of, and 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 Services\*Training\*Officers\*Prosecutors (STOP) State Formula Grant Program, the STOP Violence Against Indian Women Discretionary Grant Program, the Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies Program, the Rural Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Enforcement Grant Program, the Grants to Combat Violent Crimes Against Women on Campuses, 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. Together, these VAWO programs

provide a context to be considered in planning a national evaluation of the Civil Legal Assistance Program. They are dedicated to enhancing victim safety and ensuring offender accountability by supporting policies, protocols, and practices that call for zero tolerance of all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

Research and evaluation on some of these programs make up part of NIJ's overall Violence Against Women and Family Violence Program, undertaken in collaboration with the VAWO. Information on these can be obtained at our website:

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/vawprog>.

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 June 10, 2000. 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](mailto: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 seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the local programs funded under the Civil Legal Assistance Program. The purpose of the Domestic Violence Victims' Civil Legal Assistance Discretionary Grant Program is to strengthen direct civil legal assistance available to domestic violence victims. The types of civil legal assistance programs eligible to receive funding under the Civil Legal Assistance Program may include: nonprofit civil

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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.

This grants program is designed to strengthen civil legal assistance through innovative, collaborative strategies that reach more battered women than are currently being served. Its general purpose is to strengthen civil legal assistance to domestic violence victims to stabilize their situation so that they can build a safe healthy life apart from their batterer. Therefore, grants under this program support activities that provide legal representation and/or referrals for civil cases that are directly related to the violence, and/or civil cases related to establishing the victim's economic security. Training, mentoring, and collaborative relationships are core components of projects supported by this grant program. Lawyers and legal advocates providing services through this program are to establish respectful and mutually beneficial relationships with domestic violence victim-advocacy organizations within the communities, within the context of appropriate protocols and policies provided by VAWO in order to ensure that clients' needs for confidentiality and safety are met and that 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 VAWO grant program are required to enter into a collaborative relationship with non-profit, non-governmental domestic violence victim advocacy organizations. Such collaborative relationships are

meant to ensure that there is ongoing training and mentoring on issues related to domestic violence and to strengthen communication on domestic violence victim advocacy issues between the legal and advocacy communities.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 1998, Congress appropriated \$11 million specifically to provide civil legal assistance to victims of domestic violence. This amount was increased to \$23 million for FY 1999. This program received another increase in FY 2000 to \$28 million. The Civil Legal Assistance Program awards grants to non-profit, non-governmental 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 54 grants, 94 new grants were awarded in FY 1999, and we anticipate that up to 85-100 new and continuation grants will be funded in FY 2000. 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/vawo>.

### **III. Areas of Research Required**

This announcement solicits proposals for a National Evaluation of the Domestic Violence Victims' Civil Legal Assistance Program. A multi-method evaluation, including both quantitative and qualitative approaches, is required. Evaluating impact and capturing the voices of the victims served will be essential components. Applicants are encouraged to use charts, tables, and diagrams as visual presentations to summarize the logic model for the evaluation, the data to be used, or the various analyses to be conducted.

The purpose of this national evaluation is to (1) document the range of local activities and programs supported by the FY1998, FY1999, and FY2000 grants; (2) document local programs funded by other sources of assistance, the gaps these programs fill, whom they serve, and how VAWO funded programs fit into the larger funding picture in a jurisdiction; (3) examine and document grantee planning and implementation efforts; (4) evaluate

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the need for and adequacy of special conditions imposed on grantees to preserve victim safety and confidentiality, while simultaneously enhancing the professional services offered by grantees; and (5) determine the effectiveness of these programs in meeting the needs of the women they serve.

The evaluation should include both quantitative and qualitative methods, and may involve the following steps:

- # Examining how programs assess need and conduct outreach to clients;
- # Analyzing grantee implementation plans, reports, and other documents;
- # Conducting process evaluations in 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;
- # 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 grantees to assess progress, implementation, and performance issues as seen from the field;
- # Defining and collecting data on essential outcome measures that can be used to assess the immediate and long-term impact of the programs and the effectiveness of the grant program;
- # Conducting outcome/impact evaluation studies to determine the success of the Civil Legal Assistance Program in meeting the needs of the women they are meant to serve;

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

- # Was program planning appropriate to local needs and resources?
- # Were projects implemented as planned?
- # What portion of the agency's caseload is DV-related? What is the success rate for these cases? What number of DV-related cases are rejected or referred out?
- # If there was a low number of cases, what do programs attribute that to? What substantiation do they have of the reason(s) given?
- # What criteria are used to determine eligibility of the client to receive assistance, (e.g., income, police report, etc.)?
- # What is the effectiveness of Law School Clinic programs compared to that of direct victim services?
- # What was the most frequently handled type of case for DV victims, (e.g., protection order, divorce, custody/visitation, housing, employment, benefits, etc.)?
- # What problems did jurisdictions encounter? What was the source of the problem (courts, regulations, statues, etc.)? How were they addressed? How successfully were they resolved?
- # What problems did the individual organization have? How successfully were they addressed?
- # 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, was this training delivered, and how effective were these

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training programs? Who provided the training and what were their qualifications?

The evaluation of program effectiveness should include such questions as the following:

- # What was the baseline level of need in the jurisdiction; how was need determined; how much of the need was unmet before, and, after the program; and how was this determined?
- # How have victims been served and how have their lives been affected by the services provided by the program?
- # Do the programs have any information on how the criminal and civil justice systems may have 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? If so, what are they?
- # 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?
- # Has the project had an impact on the larger community? What indicators are there of this?

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.

## **Methodological Considerations.**

The Civil Legal Assistance Program encompasses a wide variety of services and providers. Applicants to

this solicitation should describe their approaches to such issues as: developing a typology of programs and program clients; developing sampling strategies within these typologies; determining which program organization, process, operation, and outcome variables to examine; determining how these variables will be measured; determining the needs of the targeted victim populations; and assessing how effectively these victim needs were met—whether by program or non-program sources of assistance.

The need for innovation, particularly on qualitative measures, culturally sensitive measures, and the need for many different levels of data, is acknowledged. The views of victims, advocates, and knowledgeable civil and criminal justice practitioners should be sought as appropriate when developing the various stages of the research and evaluation.

**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 in the budget. In addition, meetings with NIJ should be considered, as should interim grant products. Applicants should budget appropriately for such expenses for each year of the grant.*

## **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

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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.
- # Geographic areas Affected Worksheet
- # 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
- # Form 310 (Protection of Human Subjects Assurance Identification/Certification/Declaration)
- # Environmental Assessment (if required)
- # References
- # Letters of cooperation from organizations collaborating in the research project
- # Résumés
- # Appendices, if any (e.g., list of previous NIJ awards, their status, and products [in NIJ or other publications])

**Confidentiality of information and human subjects protection.** NIJ has adopted new policies and procedures regarding the confidentiality of information and human subjects protection. Please see the *Guidelines for Submitting Proposals for*

*National Institute of Justice-Sponsored Research* for details on the new requirements.

**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 40 (double-spaced pages).

**Due date.** Completed proposals **must be received** at the National Institute of Justice by the close of business on July 10, 2000. Extensions of this deadline will not be permitted.

**Award period.** The work must be completed within 36 months.

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

**Award amount.** One award of up to \$800,000 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 10 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]

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>).

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