

# PROTECTING CHILDREN & FAMILIES AGAINST VICTIMIZATION



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2022-2023 Domestic Violence and Sexual  
Abuse Civil Legal Services Program

**WisTAF**  
investing in justice for all

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# Protecting Children & Families against Victimization

2022-2023 Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Civil Legal Services Program

## Introduction

In 1891, a unanimous United States Supreme Court wrote, “... no State can deprive particular persons or classes of persons of equal and impartial justice under the law.” The concept is so central to our legal system that it is summarized in an inscription on the U.S. Supreme Court building – *EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER LAW*.

However, meaningful access to the court system and professional legal assistance remain barriers for Wisconsin’s most vulnerable. Add to that the isolation and stigma that so often plagues victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse, and you have a socio-economic crisis threatening a cycle of dependency on public assistance.

In State Fiscal Year 2023, the Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse (DVSA) Civil Legal Services Program was both the means for and the proof of the State of Wisconsin’s important work to halt that cycle of dependency and foster healthy, independent families.

“The opposite of poverty is not wealth; the opposite of poverty is justice.”

~ Attorney Bryan Stevenson, in *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*

## Background & Data Collection

During the two-year 2021-2023 Wisconsin state budget cycle, \$1,000,000 of TANF funding from the Department of Children and Families’ (DCF) budget was allocated to the Wisconsin Trust Account Foundation, Inc. (WisTAF) to administer and fund a program for the provision of domestic violence and sexual abuse legal services to TANF-eligible Wisconsin residents. This report covers the \$500,000 distributed for services provided from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023, which marks the eighth year of this vital program. It outlines the management processes that WisTAF used to grant the funds to legal services providers and domestic abuse shelters and provides specific data on services provided with the funds.

Pursuant to contract number 437004-G22-0001825-000-01 between the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families and the Wisconsin Trust Account Foundation, WisTAF required grantees to submit fourth quarter and annual reports following conclusion of the 2022-2023 grant cycle, which were used to compile the service and financial information contained in this report. The annual report was designed to elicit the information that

WisTAF needed to determine that grant recipients provided high-quality domestic violence and sexual abuse legal services to TANF-eligible clients in all parts of Wisconsin through the efficient and effective use of DVSA Civil Legal Services grants.

The grantees' accomplishments – what they were asked to do, and what they achieved – demonstrate the immense need for supportive legal services for survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse. The investment was valuable not only in helping the individual clients who were served with the funds, but also in encouraging Wisconsin's economic health and the preservation of families. Legal services providers were successfully able to ensure the safety and stability of vulnerable families; remove barriers to employment; retain housing for survivors of domestic and sexual abuse; and obtain child support and other economic supports for families facing uncertainty and, in some cases, imminent danger.

## Program Development and Management

### About WisTAF

The Wisconsin Trust Account Foundation, Inc. (WisTAF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation created in 1986 by the Wisconsin Supreme Court *to aid the courts and improve the administration of justice by administering funding for legal services to persons of limited means in non-criminal matters*. WisTAF brings Wisconsin's legal and financial communities together to generate funds, which are used to make grants to nonprofit organizations providing civil legal services to Wisconsin's most vulnerable residents. Since its inception, WisTAF has distributed more than \$64 million to Wisconsin civil legal services providers, to help low-income Wisconsinites obtain information, advice, and/or representation critical to ensuring families' health, safety, security, and independence. The Foundation currently manages multiple sources of income, which are used to fund seven grant programs, including the DVSA Civil Legal Services program. A nonpartisan, experienced fund administrator and grantmaker, WisTAF is the state's designated channel for the administration of low-income civil legal services funding in Wisconsin. More information about WisTAF's programs and services can be found online at [www.wistaf.org](http://www.wistaf.org).

### Program Development and Resources

Per Wis. Stats. § 49.175(1)(j)14, which provides for grants to WisTAF of \$500,000 per fiscal year to fund this program, WisTAF prepared a plan for using the funds, dated October 21, 2015, which was approved by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF). Upon plan approval, WisTAF staff developed and implemented the grant application, approval, distribution and reporting/evaluation processes used to fund eligible services from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016. Pursuant to adoption of each State of Wisconsin Biennial Budget since, WisTAF has entered into a contract with DCF specifying the conditions for use

of the funds. WisTAF's volunteer Board of Directors and paid professional staff oversee funds and administer the program.

WisTAF's 15-member Board of Directors is comprised of three judges (appointed by the chief justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court), nine attorneys and three non-attorneys (appointed by the State Bar of Wisconsin president). In addition to its other functions, the board is responsible for making all grant funding decisions. These dedicated volunteers bring a wealth of diverse legal, social services and other professional expertise to WisTAF. Upon joining the board, members are assigned to one or more of the following committees, depending on their experiences, leadership roles and preferences: Grants/Evaluation Committee, Finance Committee, and/or Executive Committee.

Currently, WisTAF employs 3.75 full time equivalent (FTE) staff members, plus a limited-term, part-time position. Grant program management is provided by the full-time program manager and executive director.

In July 2021, representatives from the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families and the Wisconsin Trust Account Foundation signed a new contract:

- Contract Number: 437004-G22-0001825-000-01
- Contract Term: July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2023
- Commodity or Service Description: Provide legal services in civil matters related to domestic abuse, sexual abuse, or restraining orders or injunctions for individuals at risk under Wis. Stat. § 813.123, for individuals eligible for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- Assistance Listing: 93.558 Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

## **Grant Notification and Application Process**

Potential applicants were notified of the availability of 2022-2023 DVSA funding by email. WisTAF staff also posted information on the WisTAF website for public access. Online grant application materials were made available to potential applicants on February 26, 2021.

WisTAF received thirteen grant applications by the application deadline, however, one was later withdrawn. (See Appendix Table 1: 2022-2023 DVSA/TANF Civil Legal Services Grant Applicants and Requests.) All applicants were required to meet the following provisions and criteria in order to receive funding consideration.

## **Grant Purpose and Funding Cycle**

Grants were to be used to provide legal services in civil matters related to domestic abuse, sexual abuse, or restraining orders or injunctions for individuals at risk under s. 813.123 (TANF-eligible clients) from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023.

## Eligible Client Populations

Grant recipients were required to verify that clients served met TANF financial and non-financial eligibility requirements. Any individual meeting Wisconsin's W2 eligibility requirements was automatically deemed eligible. Individuals concurrently enrolled in any of the following programs also were considered automatically eligible:

- Wisconsin Works (W2)
- Transform Milwaukee/Transitional Jobs
- Received Wisconsin Shares child care assistance
- Received the Wisconsin Caretaker Supplement
- Participated in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program

## Grant Applicant Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible to apply for 2022-2023 DVSA Civil Legal Services Grant funds, applicants were required to meet the following requirements:

1. The applicant had to demonstrate that it provided, planned to provide or caused to be provided domestic violence and sexual abuse legal assistance to TANF-eligible clients; and,
2. The applicant had to be a civil legal assistance organization, a domestic violence shelter or be an organization that qualified as a 501(c)(3) exempt organization; or
3. The applicant had to otherwise demonstrate the charitable purpose of the organization and project.

## Grant Application Review and Decision Process

WisTAF's eight-member Grants/Evaluations Committee was responsible for reviewing applications and making a funding recommendation for board consideration. Application materials were made available to all board members.

Following presentation and in-depth discussion of each application, the committee used a two-step process to: 1) determine whether an application merited funding, and 2) allocate the funding amount to be awarded. Factors considered included the applicant's ability to identify and serve the specified target population; current and historical financial stability and longevity; demonstrated partnerships, collaborations and community support; the programs' geographic reach/service area; and whether applicants were able to use prior cycle funds effectively and efficiently, if applicable.

As a result of this process, the committee recommended funding eleven applicant agencies. The full board discussed and unanimously approved the recommendation on June 9, 2021. (See Appendix Table 2: 2022-2023 DVSA Civil Legal Services Grant Awards.)

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## Disbursement of Funds

Grantees began submitting expense reimbursement requests to WisTAF in August 2022 for eligible services provided beginning July 1, 2022. WisTAF verified expense eligibility and supporting documentation; monitored administrative vs. direct expenditures; aggregated subrecipient requests; and submitted reimbursement requests to DCF via the SPARC online portal. WisTAF remitted expense reimbursements to subrecipients upon receipt from DCF. WisTAF included a monthly expense reimbursement request for the funds needed to administer the grant program in the monthly expense reimbursement requests submitted to DCF. This process was repeated in each subsequent month of the grant contract period.

WisTAF subrecipient grantees provided eligible services and received expense reimbursements totaling \$450,000 by the conclusion of the funding cycle.

WisTAF's program manager coordinated grantees' monthly expense reimbursement requests; tracked the services provided and amounts spent on direct and administrative activity; and maintained ongoing communication with grantees in the event of reporting discrepancies or to clarify and/or request information. The executive director was responsible for the financial accounting for the DVSA funds that flowed through the Foundation.

The program manager coordinated all WisTAF Grants/Evaluation Committee activities associated with the DVSA grant. The executive director coordinated all WisTAF Board of Directors activities. In the spring of 2023, Wipfli LLP conducted an independent single audit of WisTAF's financial information and management, which included the DVSA program. Wipfli submitted the audited financials to the DCF Audit team as required.

Note on discrepancy between contract expense period and state accounting period: In May 2019, DCF notified WisTAF that Wisconsin Statute 49.175(1)(j) limits Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funding to Wisconsin Trust Account Foundation, Inc. (WisTAF) to \$500,000 each fiscal year. TANF-funded expenditures in a state fiscal year (SFY) may not exceed the amounts provided under Wis. Stat. 49.175. DCF tracks compliance with TANF allocation limits provided in the statute using the state accounting system STAR, not the SPARC system that WisTAF is required to use to report expenses. Expenses in SPARC for a given month are not recorded as an expenditure in STAR until the following month, e.g. the June expenses reported in SPARC are reimbursed in July. This means June expenses are counted as July expenses in the STAR accounting system, and counted against the following year's contract amount, even though they were technically spent under the current contract. So, while Wis. Stat. 49.175 specifies allocations for the SFY (July 1 to June 30), from a practical standpoint, DCF looks at expenses entered by contractors in SPARC from June to May (paid in the financial system, STAR, from July to June) to ensure DCF is in compliance with statutory expenditure limits. Accordingly, the June 2022 expenses that were paid to

WisTAF in July 2022 counted against the SFY 2023 contract even though they were incurred/spent under the SFY 2022 contract.

While DCF has proposed language in recent state budgets that would allow the Department to count all reported expenses within the annual contract cycle to the SFY allocation, this change has not taken place. The accrual vs. cash-based accounting discrepancy will carry forward into each future contract year/grant cycle, however, DCF has verified that they are contractually obligated for those funds to WisTAF, likely to be remitted following the conclusion of the final contract governing this grant program.

## **Grant Oversight and Compliance Monitoring**

WisTAF engages in a systematic process to evaluate successful usage of WisTAF funds and monitor compliance with contract and program requirements.

### **1. Provider Risk Assessment and Performance Monitoring**

As the administrator of federal funding via the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Civil Legal Services (TANF) grant program), the Wisconsin Trust Account Foundation, Inc. (WisTAF) has an obligation to identify and assess risks associated with the usage and administration of grant funds for each of the subrecipient agencies (“providers”) receiving funding.

WisTAF has chosen to use the risk-based approach in evaluating and monitoring providers’ administration of funds. (Note: DCF does not allow WisTAF to waive federal audit requirements for any providers meeting federal criteria for needing a program audit or a single audit that would otherwise be required under the Uniform Guidance.) Per the Wisconsin Dept. of Children and Families Provider Agency Audit Guide, WisTAF will determine whether the risk factors associated with programs and providers point toward a lower or higher risk and will use the results of these individual factors to assess whether the provider’s overall risk is low, moderate or high.

WisTAF assesses risk and monitors performance using a variety of methods including: provider site or remote visits, regular provider reporting and review of additional documentation and relevant materials. Risk assessments are performed in a systematic and rational manner. WisTAF documents all results.

#### *Regular provider reporting*

WisTAF requires providers to submit quarterly reports describing activities performed by the provider using this funding; outcomes achieved; the number of TANF-eligible adults receiving services (including client demographic data); and other qualitative and/or quantitative data the provider wishes to report.

Providers also are required to submit expense reimbursement requests detailing the amount of direct and administrative expenses incurred for eligible client services. Providers also must submit applicable supporting documentation accompanying expense reimbursements. All reimbursement requests are reviewed for reasonability and mathematical accuracy by WisTAF's grant program manager and verified by the executive director prior to submission to DCF.

*Review of additional documentation and relevant materials*

WisTAF also conducts a desk review of materials submitted by prospective grantees as part of the grant application process. The following materials typically are reviewed:

- Articles of Incorporation
- Bylaws or other governing documents
- Determination letter from the IRS (recognizing the subrecipient as exempt from income taxes under IRC section 501(c)(3))
- Most recent Form 990 or 990-EZ, including all supporting schedules and attachments (also Form 990-T, if applicable)
- Most recent audit report and management letter from subrecipient's independent auditor
- Most recent internally-prepared financial statements and current budget

Ongoing monitoring of providers varies based on the nature of work assigned to each and WisTAF's assessed level of risk. Ongoing monitoring activities may involve any or all of the following:

- Regular contacts with subrecipients and appropriate inquiries regarding the program.
- Reviewing programmatic and financial reports prepared and submitted by the provider and following up on areas of concern.
- Monitoring subrecipient budgets.
- Offering providers technical assistance where needed.
- Maintaining a system to track and follow up on deficiencies noted at the site or "remote" visit in order to ensure that appropriate corrective action is taken.
- Establishing and maintaining a tracking system to ensure timely submission of all reports required of the subrecipient.



## 2. Setting and Communicating Clear Expectations

Once an agency has received notification of a WisTAF grant award, a representative of that agency must sign a grant conditions contract agreement, which provides clear guidelines for the agency's use and management of the funds. Each DVSA grant recipient was required to sign such an agreement prior to receiving 2022-2023 funding. WisTAF also incorporates conversations regarding expectations into our subrecipient monitoring activity.

## 3. Long-term Relationships

With a relatively small pool of regular grantees covering the entire state, historically WisTAF has been able to stay in frequent contact with grantees on an informal basis. This helps us to learn about individual grantee agency problems before they develop into serious issues, and to direct grantee agencies to appropriate assistance as requested.

Initially, the DVSA Civil Legal Services State Appropriation grant program was atypical in that several grant recipients were not traditional legal services providers per se, but rather domestic abuse shelter agencies with which WisTAF had no prior relationship. In the initial 2015-2016 grant cycle, WisTAF offered assistance to support the development of DVSA legal services programs to all grantees. This provided a proactive opportunity to help them determine what they needed to do to be successful and meet the requirements of the grant. We have continued to maintain strong, supportive relationships with these agencies in subsequent grant cycles.

## Program Results

*"Chris," a mother of two, made the decision to leave the relationship with her abusive husband who was also an addict. After years of abuse suffered at the hands of her husband, her breaking point came when her husband began inflicting that same physical abuse on their two young children. It was more than she could bear, and it finally gave her the courage to call law enforcement and have him arrested and after that to make the decision to get out of the relationship. She came to Wisconsin Judicare for help. It wasn't easy and as with most abusers her husband was manipulative and controlling. She often struggled but felt she could get through with the support of her local domestic violence shelter and Judicare fighting to protect her legal rights. Chris' kids were the most important thing to her and protecting them by gaining custody and placement was her priority. However, amid the beginning of the divorce, the client's home burned down with all of her and her children's belongings. Judicare connected Chris to community partners that run the local food pantry, to partners that could provide temporary shelter for her and her kids while they were*

*experiencing homelessness, to other community partners that offer emergency financial assistance, and encouraged her to reach out to her domestic violence advocate for emotional support. Judicare arranges these wraparound services, because it is impossible to focus on one's legal problem when you are hungry or homeless. While our community partners assisted this client, we fought for her in court.*

*Her Judicare Legal Aid attorney was successful at getting our client primary placement and sole custody at a temporary order hearing. We were also able to secure an order for our client for property and assets during the divorce that she needed to support herself and her children. With help from her Judicare attorney, our client became stronger every day and was empowered to not back down as her abuser attempted to use the legal system to further abuse our client. When this became clear to our client's husband, he begrudgingly agreed to a settlement in which our client would maintain sole custody of the children and primary placement and where she would gain half the value of all remaining assets plus child support. Because of our services, this client had a chance to live without fear and an opportunity to set a new course for success for her and her children. After the divorce, her Judicare attorney ran into the client at a store. After paying for her items, she hugged her former attorney and thanked him for helping to change and save her life. She was able to buy a new home for herself and her children and achieve stability for them all."*

## Expenditures

The following table summarizes 2022-2023 DVSA Civil Legal Services (TANF) State Appropriation Program expenses:

### DVSA Civil Legal Services State Appropriation (TANF) Program Expenses

<b>A. Direct expense</b>	
1. Grantee direct expenses	\$408,971
<b>Direct expense subtotal:</b>	<b>\$408,971</b>
<b>B. Administrative expense</b>	
1. Grantee administrative expenses	\$41,029
2. WisTAF administrative expenses	\$50,000
<b>Administrative expense subtotal:</b>	<b>\$91,029</b>
<b>Total expenses reimbursed:</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>

Due to unanticipated circumstances and the nature of reimbursement-based grants, four agencies were unable to use the full amount of the funds they were awarded. As it has in past years, WisTAF took proactive steps to determine the anticipated amount of unused grant funds and put in place a fair process to reallocate funds to grantees incurring expenses that exceeded their initial grant awards. As a result, \$ 23,600.09 was reallocated to grantees who incurred eligible expenses exceeding their original grant allocations. This resulted in the best possible utilization of all funds in the areas with the greatest need.

## **Geographic Distribution of Funds**

Family law cases involving domestic violence are among the most difficult legal cases an attorney can undertake. Statewide, many private attorneys refuse to take them because of the long hours they require to complete, and the emotional circumstances that accompany family law cases, which include abuse. Even domestic and sexual abuse survivors with means have difficulty finding the legal help they need, because there are few private attorneys in their county that take domestic and sexual abuse family law cases. The odds are stacked even higher against low-income domestic and sexual abuse survivors. There is increasingly little chance that they will find the legal help they need except through programs such as the ones funded by DVSA Civil Legal Services grants.

2022-2023 grantees were geographically limited by the relatively small amount of available funding and, in too many cases, staffing shortages. Some agencies receiving funding were small and served one county. Other larger agencies served multiple counties. There was little overlap of service areas.

Due to insufficient funding, the program fell short of its goal of making civil legal services available to domestic violence and sexual abuse survivors in every county of the state. Grantees reported providing DVSA-funded services in 52 counties during this grant cycle. This compares to a reach of 54 counties during the 2021-2022 grant cycle, 49 counties during the 2020-21, 56 counties during the 2019-20 cycle, 55 counties during the 2018-2019 cycle, 56 counties during the 2017-2018 cycle and 37 counties in the 2016-2017 cycle.

A few pockets remain underserved due to the limited funds available and the geographic reach of the 2022-2023 applicant pool. We hope to continue to expand the program's coverage and address these areas of need in the future, if the State's investment in civil legal aid is increased.

## **Clients Served**

“Michelle” is a victim of domestic violence who was referred to a civil legal aid attorney through Indianhead Community Action Agency. These are her words. *I had an ongoing case with an ex-partner with whom I'd had twin daughters. He was able to financially “out do” me and string me along for years within the legal system. I was able*

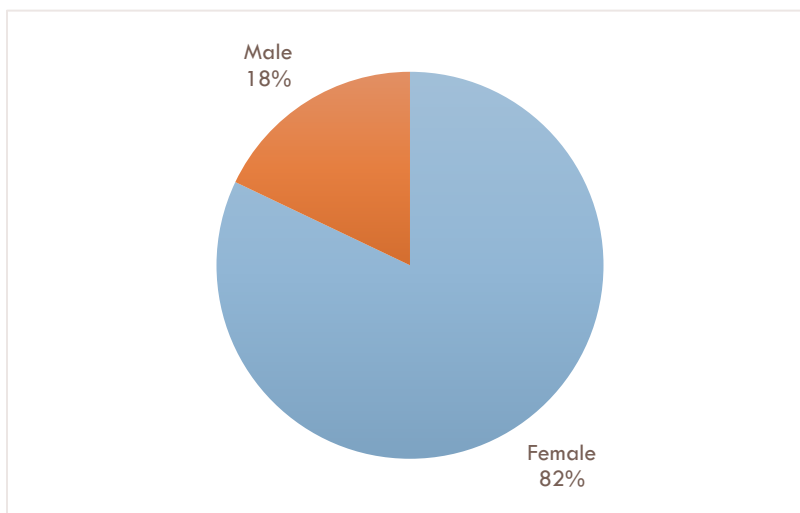
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*to keep up about the first 2 years, but rapidly depleted my savings and any access to additional funds. It was like I was in hell for the next four years – humiliated in court. I felt uncomfortable and unheard every step of the way. I was caught in an emotional hurricane and that moment when I got the call that I was approved for this program, years hit the floor and I felt like I took the first calm breath of relief I've had in a long time. My attorney was there for me and actually listened to me. I understood that this didn't mean I would get everything my way. But, it did mean that I wasn't alone anymore. That was all I needed – a voice and support. This program is, without a doubt, one of the most important programs I've ever heard of or been a part of in my life. It's a lifeline for people who are in similar situations, and I'm so thankful for what it's given to me and my family! I'm thankful for the existence of the [Indianhead] LAV program and everyone who plays a role in creating this fully functional, amazing program.*

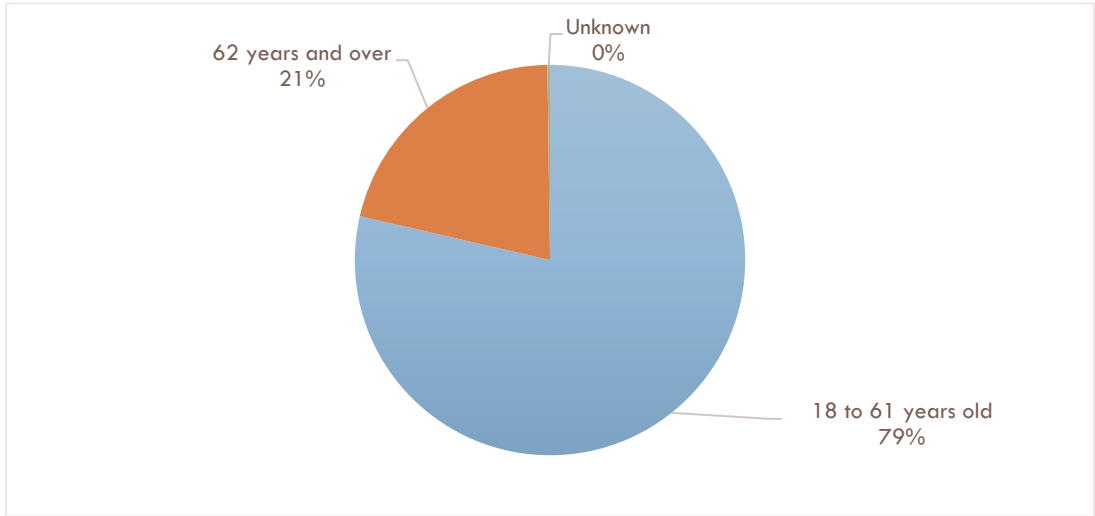
The lack of attorneys willing and able to take domestic violence and sexual abuse cases is not the only factor that prevents clients from being able to get the legal help they need. Lack of money is a huge obstacle faced by domestic and sexual abuse survivors, who may be cut off from financial resources by their abusers. Other factors such as disability or lack of transportation can also affect a survivor's ability to find an attorney.

In 2022-2023, DVSA grants were used to help at least 954 TANF-eligible individuals and their families, providing 1,288 services ranging from limited advice to full representation in civil litigation. The following charts provide demographic information about the clients assisted through this program.

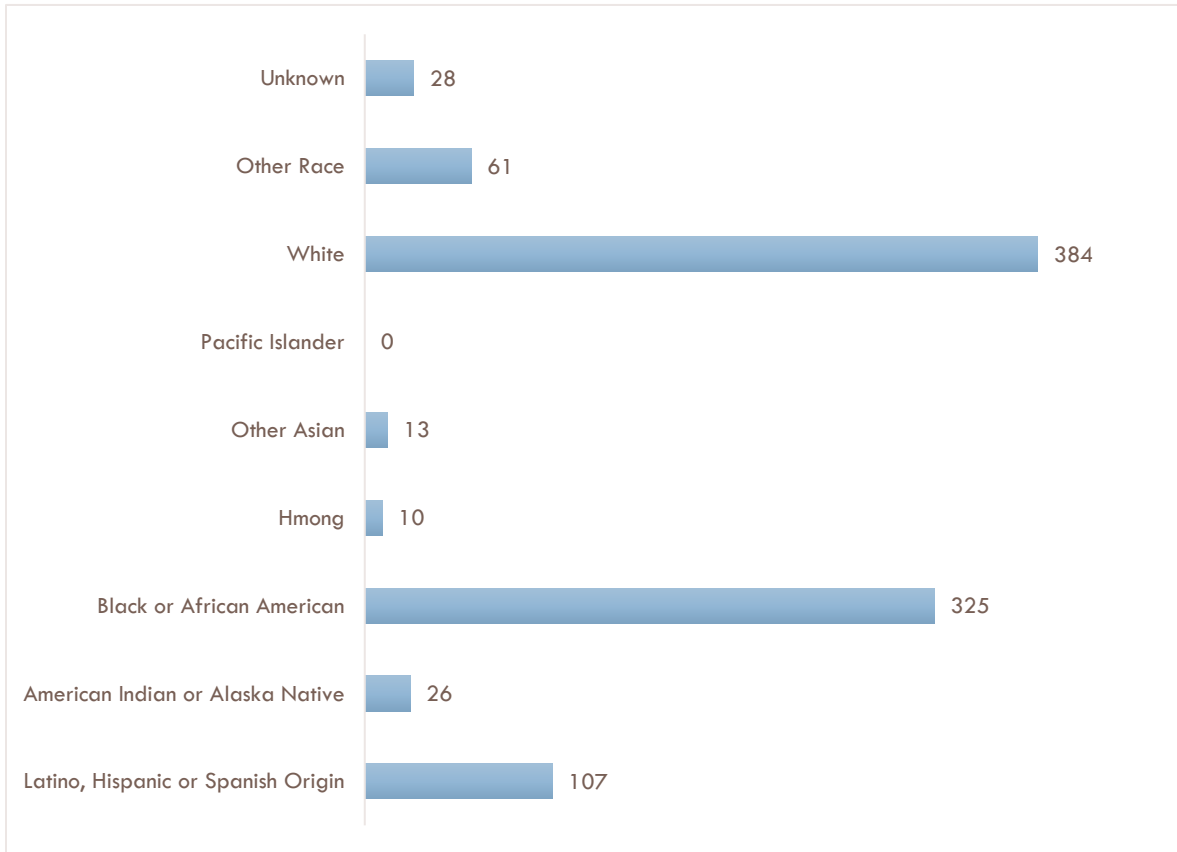
**Chart 1: 2022-2023 DVSA Civil Legal Services Clients Served by Gender**



**Chart 2: 2022-2023 DVSA Civil Legal Services Clients Served by Age**



**Chart 3: 2022-2023 DVSA Civil Legal Services Clients Served by Ethnicity/Race**



In order to provide the most accurate information about services, WisTAF asks grantees to track only the individuals directly served during the grant period. The easiest way for grantees to do so is to report only cases closed during the period. This means that any reporting is necessarily conservative, since there are always open cases carried from one reporting period to the next. Our 2022-2023 DVSA grantees reported that was the case in this funding cycle. Most had opened cases for TANF-eligible individuals with DVSA funds but had not been able to bring some cases to their conclusion within the grant cycle, given the complex nature of cases and the limitations on court access and scheduling.

## Services & Outcomes

*“Brittany\* found her way to Centro Legal through our partnership with Sojourner Family Peace Center. She had put on a brave face during her long-term marriage to Maxwell, and theirs seemed like a perfect family from the outside. Behind closed doors, however, Maxwell was extremely abusive and manipulative to Brittany and their four children. Brittany made several attempts to leave her marriage, including an initial attempt to file for divorce. Unfortunately, the legal system and the web of manipulation Maxwell had built were too complex and intimidating for her to escape. When she finally was able to break free, Brittany was in dire financial straits. She found herself unable to hire a private attorney to file her case and recognized that she would not be able to maneuver through the divorce process on her own. When Sojourner Family Peace Center connected Brittany with Centro Legal, we took her case free of charge, and she was able to breathe a sigh of relief. Maxwell refused to cooperate with the divorce process and attempted to thwart Brittany and her attorney at every possible moment. Because she had an experienced, capable attorney, however, Brittany's divorce was finalized in the spring of 2022 and she received extremely favorable court orders. She kept her house, received a child support order, and, most importantly, was granted sole custody and primary placement of her children. Thanks to Centro Legal and with this solid new foundation beneath her feet, Brittany is now able to build a healthy, safe new life for herself and her family.*

The outcomes of each case not only affect the individuals receiving legal help, they affect the Wisconsin court system, which runs more effectively and efficiently when legal professionals are available to expedite cases.

They affect local resources such as homeless shelters and police and rescue personnel, by removing people from dangerous situations and providing the legal help they need to become independent. They affect local economies, allowing employees who had previously

missed work days due to abuse to keep regular work schedules, benefiting the employer as well as the employee.

Many private attorneys don't have the resources to undertake domestic and sexual abuse cases that include complicating factors such as housing, employment and public safety. In addition, many poverty law legal cases – including those that involve domestic or sexual abuse – are complex, sometimes simply because what may have begun as a common and easily resolved legal problem is rarely addressed in a timely fashion, and continues to grow in size due to a lack of funds available to pay a private attorney.

In order to determine the number, type and financial impact of services provided by DVSA grantees, WisTAF used an outcome-based reporting system based on similar systems used to report civil legal services to the federal Legal Services Corporation. WisTAF organized the reported services into 17 civil legal services categories, each of which measured multiple types of case outcomes for services provided and funds successfully received or recovered for clients. Grantees reported 1,288 client services provided with 2022-2023 DVSA funding. Most cases addressed multiple legal issues, resulting in multiple services per case.

As in past years, the most common areas of law where civil legal services were provided in this program are **family law, guardianship, public benefits, and health.**

**“Without access to quality representation, there is no justice.”**

~ U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia

### **Financial Impact: Funds Received or Recovered**

Many survivors of domestic and sexual abuse are unable to access jointly held funds to which they are entitled because the abuser controls the family's finances. This means that people continue to remain in an unsafe environment, since they don't have access to money for food, rent, and clothing. This is an even larger problem when children are involved. Without legal help, survivors are left with the choice to stay with the abuser and continue to expose their children to abuse, potentially perpetuating the cycle, or to leave the abuser and try to establish their own financial support not knowing if they will have access to safe housing, employment, or other necessities.

In 2022-2023, DVSA grantees reported that they helped their clients receive or recover more than \$2.2 million as a result of the legal services provided through this program. Without those financial outcomes, these families may have continued to live and raise children in the kind of environment that tears families apart, increases public costs, and destabilizes communities.

## Conclusion

WisTAF is pleased to report continued successful management and implementation of the Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Civil Legal Services program to help TANF-eligible clients with much needed DVSA legal services. We are confident those services enhanced the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families' efforts to stabilize Wisconsin families and help them to be safe, secure and self-sustaining.

We offer sincerest thanks to the domestic abuse shelter agency and legal services provider staff and attorneys who work tirelessly to help clients gain the outcomes needed to achieve long-term health and self-sufficiency. We thank DCF and all who have been instrumental in securing continued DVSA civil legal services funding. We look forward to continuing our role in the efforts to help vulnerable families become thriving members of Wisconsin's great communities.

Respectfully submitted by:

Rebecca L. Murray, WisTAF Executive Director and WisTAF Program Manager Jeff Brown



## Appendix Table 1: 2022-2023 DVSA/TANF Civil Legal Services Grant Applicants and Requests

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PRIMARY APPLICANT	GEOGRAPHIC AREA SERVED	REQUEST
Center Against Sexual & Domestic Abuse (CASDA)	Superior, Douglas, Bayfield, and Ashland Counties in northwestern Wisconsin	\$43,130
Centro Legal	Primarily the greater Milwaukee area	\$60,000
End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin (RISE)	Statewide	\$50,000
Golden House	Brown County	\$37,500
HAVEN, Inc.	Lincoln County	\$25,000
Indianhead Community Action Agency	Primarily Burnett, Washburn, Sawyer, Rusk, Taylor, and Clark Counties	\$50,000
Kids Matter Inc.	Legal representation in Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties; Statewide legal information and county specific procedural information	\$40,000
Legal Action of Wisconsin	39 counties of southern Wisconsin	\$75,000
Rainbow House Domestic Abuse Services, Inc.	Marinette and Oconto Counties	\$22,500
The Women's Center	Southeastern Wisconsin	\$20,000
Wisconsin Judicare, Inc.	33 counties of northern Wisconsin	\$75,000
Women and Children's Horizons	Kenosha County and surrounding area	\$20,000

## Appendix Table 2: 2022-2023 DVSA/TANF Civil Legal Services Grant Awards

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GRANTEE AGENCY	2022-2023 DVSA GRANT AWARD AMOUNT
Center Against Sexual & Domestic Abuse (CASDA)	\$43,966
Centro Legal	\$58,621
End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin (RISE)	\$23,448
Golden House	\$37,500
HAVEN, Inc.	\$23,448
Indianhead Community Action Agency	\$50,000
Kids Matter Inc.	\$41,034
Legal Action of Wisconsin	\$67,414
Rainbow House Domestic Abuse Services, Inc.	\$22,500
The Women's Center	\$17,586
Wisconsin Judicare, Inc.	\$64,483
Women's and Children's Horizons	\$0
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$ 450,000</b>