



DC VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROJECT

WE BELIEVE THAT A LIFE FREE OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IS A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT.

DCVLP was **ESTABLISHED in 2008** to create and support a network of volunteer lawyers that provides **pro bono legal services** to indigent residents in the DC metro area who are experiencing domestic violence, gender-based violence, abuse, and neglect.

OUR MISSION

TO ADVOCATE for domestic violence victims, at-risk children, and other vulnerable individuals through comprehensive pro bono legal services

TO EMPOWER victims with knowledge, resources, and on-going support

TO BROADEN OUR IMPACT by engaging, training, and supporting a strong and diverse network of volunteer lawyers and community volunteers.

SAFE HOMES BUILD SAFE COMMUNITIES

Domestic violence is known to have wide-ranging and profound impacts on the physical health, emotional well-being, and economic stability of victims. In addition, the effects of children witnessing domestic violence are devastating and long-lasting. With a lawyer to navigate the legal process, a victim gains an effective tool in protecting their rights. Studies consistently show that legal services help to increase positive outcomes in favor of survivors, decrease violence, significantly relieve psychological stressors and their accompanying physical symptoms, and increase economic self-sufficiency.

Here is how the legal services we offer at DCVLP made homes and communities safer in 2023:

LEGAL CLINICS

1,096

DC & MD RESIDENTS RECEIVED FREE LEGAL ADVICE AT DCVLP'S TEN WEEKLY CLINICS

HAVING THE ADVICE OF A LAWYER ON CIVIL PROTECTION ORDERS, FAMILY LAW, AND IMMIGRATION RELIEF HELPS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS KNOW THEIR RIGHTS AND EMPOWERS THEM TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS.

PROTECTION ORDERS

537

DV SURVIVORS IN DC & MD HAD ACCESS TO AN ATTORNEY FOR THEIR PROTECTION ORDER CASE

OBTAINING A PROTECTION ORDER IS OFTEN THE FIRST STEP A SURVIVOR TAKES IN ESCAPING AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP. OVER 75% OF SURVIVORS SEEKING PROTECTION ORDERS IN DC & MD DON'T HAVE AN ATTORNEY.

FAMILY LAW

342

DV SURVIVORS IN DC & MD AND THEIR CHILDREN WERE HELPED IN CUSTODY AND DIVORCE CASES

THE MAJORITY OF DV SURVIVORS SEEKING DIVORCE, CUSTODY, AND/OR CHILD SUPPORT ARE UNREPRESENTED IN COURT. IN THIS WAY, DCVLP HELPS SURVIVORS AND THEIR CHILDREN FIND LONG-TERM SAFETY AND STABILITY THROUGH FAMILY LAW CASES.

CHILD ADVOCACY

111

CHILDREN LIVING WITH ABUSE AND NEGLECT HAD AN ADVOCATE AND A VOICE IN COURT

THE CHILD CLIENTS REPRESENTED BY OUR GUARDIANS AD LITEM ARE AT RISK OF FALLING THROUGH THE CRACKS OF A CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM THAT DOES NOT PROTECT THEM AND A DANGEROUS HOME LIFE FILLED WITH VIOLENCE, ABUSE, AND TRAUMA.

IMMIGRATION

190

CASES WERE STAFFED BY OUR ATTORNEYS TO HELP SURVIVORS OBTAIN IMMIGRATION RELIEF

THE SHORTAGE OF AFFORDABLE LEGAL ASSISTANCE IN DC MEANS THAT MANY IMMIGRANT VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ASSAULT, AND OTHER FORMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR RELIEF OFTEN DO NOT RECEIVE REPRESENTATION.



*The numbers above do not reflect a complete list of the services provided by DCVLP in 2023.



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NEW PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES AT DCVLP

PROTECTING SURVIVORS FROM GUN VIOLENCE

Firearms contribute significantly to domestic violence in DC. Victims are **five times more likely to be murdered** when an abuser has access to a gun.

DCVLP now represents DV survivors in **Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO)** cases, an underutilized "red flag" measure that asks the courts to remove firearms from people who pose a danger to themselves or others.

EXPANDING SERVICES IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

In 2023, DCVLP joined the Family Justice Center as an on-site partner to expand our legal services to DV survivors in Montgomery County, Maryland.

In the first year of operations, DCVLP helped **190 low-income survivors** of domestic violence with brief legal advice and full representation in protection order and family law cases. We look forward to bringing volunteers to MD in 2024.

DOLLARS AT WORK: WE MAKE YOUR DONATION COUNT

EVERY \$1 DONATED



BECOMES \$6 IN LEGAL SERVICES

Since 2008, we have leveraged our modest budget into thousands of hours in pro bono legal services. Every dollar donated allows us to recruit, train, and engage volunteers who, in turn, make justice accessible for DC & MD residents that need it most.

Our 2023 budget came from a variety of sources including the District's Office of Victim Services & Justice Grants, the DC Bar Foundation, the Mayor's Office, private foundations, 35+ law firms, and individual contributions.

IN 2023, **600**
VOLUNTEERS DONATED
48,000
HOURS
WORTH **\$18 MILLION**
IN FREE LEGAL SERVICES

OUR VOLUNTEERS ARE TIRELESS ADVOCATES



In 2023, DCVLP helped more than **2,500 clients**. The number of victims in need of legal services and the severity of their respective needs remains high, making our volunteer attorneys more critical than ever.