Domestic Violence Shelters, Legal Service Providers Seek to Close Funding Gap

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Loss of Grant Comes During Domestic Violence Awareness Month

[Phoenix, AZ]- Last year 19 legal lay advocates and 20 attorneys, funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) in 28 cities here in Arizona provided help to nearly 1,600 victims of domestic violence with legal problems. This year those victims may not have those dedicated providers to assist them. Recently, the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education (the Foundation), who administers the grant and distributes it to domestic violence shelters and legal aid agencies across the state, was informed that they would not receive the DOJ funding of $391,000.

"We have been fortunate over the last several years to receive this federal support allowing us to leverage the state funding for the Domestic Violence Legal Services Project. While we understand the DOJ never intended to provide ongoing funding, we are painfully aware that the need hasn't stopped. Our service providers need that funding or they can not provide the legal assistance desperately needed," said Chris Groninger, Research and Policy Specialist at the Foundation.

For nearly the last ten years, the Foundation has managed the Arizona Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project, which is funded through the grant from the DOJ as well as through the Arizona Department of Economic Security, and matching funds provided through the Foundation, the grants' administrator. The entire project funds 16 domestic violence shelters and three legal aid agencies throughout Arizona, helping approximately 6,000 victims with legal issues each year. These legal issues range from housing to family law to consumer fraud.

"We have no pro bono attorney services in Payson, and many victims/survivors lack the financial resources to seek legal aid in other counties," said Gerry Bailey, Executive Director of Time Out, Inc., a shelter in Payson. "Today, we offer a broad range of lay legal advocacy services, such as court accompaniment, orders of protection, some dissolutions of marriage with or without children, injunctions against harassment, child custody, etc. Funding received through the Arizona Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project allowed Time Out to create and implement a very strong program that serves our emergency shelter and transitional housing residents and victims/survivors of domestic violence in our community."

The Foundation is working with many of their partners and supporters to ensure this gap in funding is not felt by those advocates, attorneys and their agencies. "We are calling on the community to help. This is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, so it is more than ironic that we receive the news this month, it is tragic," said Lara Slifko, Resource Development Director of the Foundation. "We have to find the partners to support these services to the state."

About the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education
The Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education provides technical and financial assistance to legal aid organizations, schools and community groups. The Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education promotes "Access to Justice for All Arizonans" by supporting law-related education and free legal services and by promoting statewide collaborative efforts.

Organizations which will be affected by funding cuts:

Domestic Violence Shelters

- Ama Doo Alchini Bighan, Inc (ADABI), Chinle, Navajo Nation
- Against Abuse, Casa Grande, Pinal County
- Catholic Community Services of Western Arizona, Yuma, Yuma County
- De Colores, Phoenix, Maricopa County
- Interagency Council of Lake Havasu, Lake Havasu, Mohave/La Paz Counties
- Page Regional Domestic Violence Services, Page, border of Navajo Nation and Coconino County
- Time Out, Payson, Gila County
- Westcare Arizona, Bullhead City, Mohave County

Legal Aid Agencies

- Community Legal Services, Mesa, Phoenix, Glendale, Scottsdale (Maricopa), Kingman(Mohave), Prescott(Yavapai), & Yuma (Yuma)
- DNA Peoples Legal Services, Window Rock & Chinle (Apache), Keams Canyon (Navajo), Tuba City & Flagstaff (Coconino)
- Southern Arizona Legal Aid, Tucson & Sells (Pima), Nogales (Santa Cruz), Bisbee (Cochise), Lakeside & Whiteriver (Navajo), Casa Grande & Sacaton (Pinal)