

2024 IOLTA Grants

The Rhode Island Bar Foundation 2024 Interest on Lawyers' Trust Account (IOLTA) Grants totaling \$1,000,000

This year's recipients are:

Rhode Island Center for Justice

The Rhode Island Center for Justice provides representation to low-income utility consumers in litigation in Superior Court to protect consumers from utility terminations in administrative proceedings before the Division of Public Utilities and Carriers and the Public Utilities Commission, and in Administrative Procedures Act appeals to the Superior Court, through their successful Lifeline Project.

The Center for Justice Lifeline Project is the only legal services program in Rhode Island dedicated to providing free legal advocacy and representation to medically vulnerable, low-income households who have experienced or are at risk of termination of electric and gas utility service and to opposing unaffordable rate increases in PUC rate-setting dockets.

Center for Mediation & Collaboration Rhode Island (CMCRI)

CMCRI provides mediation and dispute resolution services to community residents and organizations regardless of their ability to pay. CMCRI staff and volunteers assist in disputes, both in the community and Small Claims Courts, assist with family and parent-teen conflicts, court-involved juveniles, neighbor-to-neighbor, organizational and workplace disputes, landlord-tenant, human rights cases, and small claims matters.

Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence (RICADV)

RICADV coordinates statewide court advocacy and community education services. The RICADV is comprised of ten member agencies and its purpose is to end domestic violence in Rhode Island. RICADV operates a court-based, statewide advocacy program for victims seeking civil and criminal (either or both) relief from domestic violence.

RICADV effectively assists its member organizations by (1) developing services for victims of domestic violence, (2) supporting the consistent enactment of domestic violence legislation, (3) creating an attitude of intolerance towards the perpetration of domestic violence, (4) developing and coordinating a statewide court-based advocacy program for victims of domestic violence, and (5) developing a statewide strategic plan for prevention and intervention to accomplish their mission of ending domestic violence..

Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness

A few of the objectives of the RI Coalition to End Homelessness are: (1) to provide training, information, and support to volunteer attorneys, (2) to provide coordinated efforts to meet the needs of homeless clients through conjoint work with the Volunteer Lawyer Program, Rhode Island Legal Services, the Rhode Island Community Mediation Center, the Rhode Island Office of the Public Defender, and other appropriate sources of assistance, (3) to continue to operate periodic expungement clinics since criminal records are a major barrier to subsidized housing and employment, (4) to educate homeless persons and service providers about specific laws including those that pertain to fair housing, tenant's rights and responsibilities, child welfare, and other relevant issues, and (5) to prevent homelessness through the reduction of evictions.

Day One

Day One focuses on promoting knowledge and awareness of the law by educating victims of sexual assault about the criminal justice system – what their legal options are, what they can expect as they navigate the process, how to prepare for judicial proceedings, and how to pursue victim compensation.

Day One advocates provide information, referrals, and support to victims around giving their statement to police, completing a sexual assault forensic exam, and pursuing their case legally. The program offers information on what victims can expect as they navigate the criminal justice system. Day One staff will (1) be present at the time of a victim's statement to police, (2) accompany victims to judicial proceedings, (3) refer victims to counseling or other services as needed, and (4) hold in-person or telephone meetings to furnish victims with information about the criminal justice system and provide continued emotional support.

Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island

Dorcas' Immigration Law Project provides free and low-cost comprehensive legal services, education, advocacy, and outreach on immigration issues to thousands of immigrants and refugees in the state, as well as the surrounding communities.

The objective of the direct legal immigration service component of the Immigration Law Project is to help immigrants and refugees become citizens, reunify families, and process other necessary immigration paperwork to ensure legal status is both obtained and maintained. Dorcas provides high quality, professional immigration advice and legal services that clients would not otherwise be able to afford.

The objective of the education, advocacy, and outreach component of this project is to promote greater knowledge about timely issues of immigration law on a broad level among immigrants, refugees, social service providers, healthcare providers, teachers,

students, law enforcement, and faith-based organizations, and to work toward creating a positive immigrant environment in Rhode Island.

The objective of the immigration consultations component of the project is to continue to offer pro bono legal consulting services to clients, at a rate that meets the rise in service demand. Dorcas offers free on-the-spot mini consultations services (answering questions on individual status and immigration law).

Justice Assistance

Justice Assistance's court-based programs, Project Restitution and Project Victim Services, serve over 1,200 defendants and victims of crime annually in collaboration with Rhode Island District Courts. The primary objectives of Project Restitution and Project Victim Services are: (1) to assist individuals to successfully exit the justice system by facilitating a prompt and complete satisfaction of the court order, (2) to assist victims and help navigate all phases of the justice system, facilitating a positive outcome, and (3) to provide research and development for community related program improvements.

Rhode Island Legal Education Foundation (RILEF)

RILEF is committed to offering the hundreds of Rhode Island students who participate in mock trial all of the benefits of an in-person competition where the students present their arguments before sitting members of the Rhode Island Judiciary. RILEF is also committed to inviting schools from all over Rhode Island to participate in these competitions.

The goal is to help the students find their voices and gain a sense of self-confidence and empowerment while learning about the American system of laws and justice. Students learn skills through mock trial participation, such as problem solving, collaborative teamwork, critical thinking, and public speaking. RILEF's hope is that every student develops a sense of pride and an inspired commitment to civil engagement.

Rhode Island Bar Association Legal Information and Referral Service for the Elderly

The goals of this program encompass providing legal services that parallel the economic and social needs of senior citizens, many of whom face financial crises brought on by catastrophic illnesses, family abandonment, forced retirements, and physical and emotional abuse by family members and/or caretakers.

Volunteer attorneys continue to pursue the rights of senior citizens, providing representation in the areas of landlord/tenant, guardianship, probate, health and income maintenance, consumer finance, civil, criminal, real estate, family law, and foreclosure.

For low to moderate income elderly in this harsh economic climate, this program is the main referral and placement resource for pro bono and low fee legal assistance.

Rhode Island Bar Association Pro Bono Project

The primary objective of the Pro Bono Project is to provide critically needed legal assistance to indigent clients in priority areas of civil law. The largest percentage of VLP requests from the public are in the areas of family law, housing, bankruptcy/collections.

The Pro Bono Project also incorporates the US Armed Forces Legal Services Project (USAF) for legal assistance for our military. This program was initiated to address the civil needs of low to moderate income service personnel. The majority of requests through USAF are family law matters, probate and consumer.

Rhode Island Legal Services (RILS)

RILS ensures equal access to the civil justice system for low-income Rhode Islanders who would otherwise be unable to afford an attorney. It is the major provider of civil legal aid to low-income individuals and families, the elderly victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking and those affected by the foreclosure crisis. RILS is the only legal service provider in the state that is a full-service law firm for low-income Rhode Islanders.

Volunteer Lawyer Program (VLP) is divided equally in support of the program priorities, as accomplished through (1) the Financial Stability Center, (2) the Family Law Center, (3) the Housing Law Center, and (4) the VLP.

1. The Financial Stability Center is focused on the implementation of a variety of initiatives that tend to promote financial stability and reduction of consumer debt: the Responsible Parent Project, Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic, Public Benefits Group, Employment Education Group, Racial Justice Project, and the new Veterans Program.

2. The Family Law Center's programs are: Family Preservation Project, Safe Family Project, and the Elder Protection Project.

3. The Housing Law Center provides housing representation to low income, elderly, and underserved populations. Its focus is the Housing Stability Project and the Foreclosure Prevention Project.

4. The VLP provides pro bono legal assistance to those who cannot obtain representation on their own or through other existing agencies and increases attorney involvement in the delivery of legal assistance to the poor.