

2025 IOLTA Grants

The Rhode Island Bar Foundation 2025 Interest on Lawyers' Trust Account (IOLTA) Grants totaling \$1,400,000

Rhode Island Center for Justice

The Rhode Island Center Lifeline Project supports direct legal assistance to low-income utility consumers in Rhode Island, with a particular focus on consumers who have disabilities or are medically vulnerable, and to prevent the termination of utility service or to restore service. This involves advocacy before the DPUC, the PUC, and litigation in Superior Court. The Lifeline Project is the only Rhode Island source of comprehensive and free legal services to low-income households facing utility termination and utility unaffordability.

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. RICADV operates a court-based, statewide advocacy program for victims seeking civil and criminal (either or both) relief from domestic violence.

RICADV effectively assists 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

Lawer 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.

Disability Rights RI (DRRI)

DRRI has created the "DRRI Center for Supported-Decision Making," which provides accurate, up-to-date, legally compliant, and user-friendly resources to individuals, families, and all ancillary professionals in one comprehensive virtual location.

Supported Decision-Making (SDM) is an alternative to guardianship so that people with disabilities can preserve their legal rights while still having the assistance they may need to make decisions about important issues in their lives, such as health care decisions, employment, where to live, etc. Utilizing an SDM agreement that is individually tailored, a person with a disability identifies people they wish to help them with decisions and the areas with which the person would like assistance, and under what circumstances.

Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island

Dorcas 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 direct legal immigration service helps 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 education, advocacy, and outreach program promotes 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 immigration consultations continues 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.

Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)

KIND improves access to justice, putting unaccompanied immigrant children on a path to safety and legal status while also providing immediate relief and fulfillment of basic needs.

Despite having immediate and critical needs for legal assistance, housing, healthcare, and education, unaccompanied immigrant children have limited access to legal representation or coordinated social services. This is especially true of Rhode Island, where KIND is the only legal service provider focused solely on the needs of unaccompanied immigrant children.

KIND's legal and social services staff work together closely to make sure each child's needs are met and that they have safety and stability as they work with KIND attorneys to achieve legal status. In Rhode Island, KIND's core programs include in-house legal services, pro bono partner legal services and training, and psychosocial services.

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 Legal Information and Referral Service for the Elderly provides legal services to 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.

They also offer the senior community, including Veterans organizations, a choice of legal assistance forums, such as Health Care Power of Attorney clinics and the popular Ask A Lawyer talks in areas of the law requested by senior organizations based on their members' concerns.

Phoenix Odyssey

Phoenix Odyssey is a post-release service to follow up with those released from prison, identify unmet needs, and ensure they have access to resources and support to navigate legal systems which would face as a barrier to successful reintegration, such as housing issues, employment, healthcare/snap, and more. The most used services are for civil legal matters such as assistance addressing court fines, restitution payments, driver's license issues, and expungements.

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.

The 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.

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 Parent Information Network (RIPIN)

RIPIN offers legal support through their call center to clients in Medicaid appeal hearings, insurance company appeals, Medicare administrative law judge hearings, and negotiated resolutions.

Sojourner House

Sojourner House offers supportive services, such as emergency shelter, housing programs, free counseling for adults and children, youth programming, support groups, and special services targeted to victims of human trafficking and domestic violence.

Sojourner House's "Legal Services for Victims of Abuse Program" (1) enables undocumented and under-documented victims of abuse to seek services, and (2) assists unaccompanied minors who have suffered domestic violence, sexual assault and/or human trafficking.