



EXPANDING LEGAL ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS



OVERVIEW

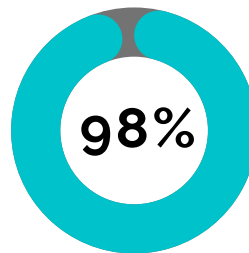
98% of domestic violence (DV) survivors will experience a civil legal issue such as the need for a protective order, a divorce, or custody of their children. The ability to successfully navigate these court-involved issues is critical to breaking the cycle of violence. 88% of survivors will not receive help from a lawyer. At DV service organizations, lay legal advocates are trained to provide survivors with information about the civil legal system. However, participants' legal needs are not fully met through lay advocate services because unauthorized practice of law (UPL) restrictions prevent lay legal advocates from providing legal advice.

The **Domestic Violence Legal Advocate Initiative** is a partnership between i4J, the Arizona Supreme Court, and Arizona Administrative Office of the Courts that **trains and certifies DV advocates at community-based organizations** to provide trauma-informed, limited-scope legal advice to DV survivors as Domestic Violence Legal Advocates (**DVLAs**). The Initiative removes the barrier imposed by UPL restrictions through Arizona Supreme Court Administrative Order 2024-35.

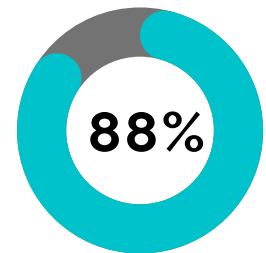


Project Problem Statement:

How might we leverage unauthorized practice of law reform to advance access to justice for survivors of domestic violence?



of low-income survivors experienced at least one civil legal problem in the past year.



of legal problems experienced by survivors received inadequate or no legal help.



WHAT DVLAS CAN DO:

1

Give legal info and advice during initial intake

2

Give legal advice during completion of forms and filings

3

Give legal advice about court and case preparation

4

Have a seat at the table to advise at court hearings



OUR PROCESS FOR RESEARCH INTO ACTION

01

Interviews in the Community

The research team worked with 50+ community members to understand the barriers survivors experience when faced with civil legal issues. This included: attorneys, judges, lay legal advocates, social service providers, government representatives, DV survivors, and others

02

Journey & System Mapping

The research team mapped the survivor journey through the civil legal system, as well as the barriers imposed by unauthorized practice of law restrictions and the ripple effects of those barriers across the system.

03

Ideation & Pilot Design

The research team identified intervention opportunities that would empower lay legal advocates to more effectively assist survivors, then focused on four service areas that had broad community support and the highest potential for impact.

04

Prototype & Test

The research team then prototyped and tested the components of the DVLA model, including the scope of service, training / curriculum, education for the bench and bar, and licensing / regulation with community members, and revised the pilot design based on community feedback.



LAUNCH AND CURRENT OPERATIONS

OPERATIONS

The DVLA (formerly "Licensed Legal Advocate") Initiative received initial funding to launch at Emerge! Center Against Domestic Abuse in late 2019, but launch was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Two DVLA's at Emerge! began training in 2021 and have been providing services since late Spring 2021. In 2023, the Arizona Supreme Court authorized the DVLA Initiative for statewide expansion via AO 2021-23. The Order was amended to further expand the reach of the Initiative in **Feb. 2024 (AO 2024-35)**, and as of Spring 2024 the DVLA Initiative includes **11 participating advocates at 6 organizations** statewide.

EVALUATION

The DVLA research team is collecting data regarding adjudicatory outcomes, time to disposition, participants' perceptions of procedural fairness, advocates' perceptions of effectiveness, and other empirical data relevant to demonstrating the promise and impact of community legal advocacy. To date, i4J is proud to report that DVLA's have not received a single complaint or claim of consumer harm, and initial evaluation demonstrates overwhelmingly positive feedback from the community.

IMPACT

The DVLA Initiative was the first project in the U.S. to empower community-based advocates to provide trauma-informed, limited-scope legal advice to DV survivors. The project has been widely cited as a model for legal empowerment, including in the Biden Administration's U.S. National Plan To End Gender-Based Violence: Strategies For Action. The DVLA Initiative was the only US award winner in the 2022 World Justice Challenge and has been cited by the American Bar Association Journal, Democracy Journal, NPR, Bloomberg Law, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System and Arizona Attorney magazine.

For more information about i4J's Domestic Violence Legal Advocate Initiative, visit www.innovation4justice.org/dvla