

# NEWS RELEASE

Arizona Supreme Court  
Administrative Office of the Courts



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June 4, 2020

## **Court Authorizes Expanded Services to Domestic Violence Victims**

PHOENIX – The Arizona Supreme Court issued Administrative Orders authorizing the expansion of free services to victims of domestic violence. The two pilot programs were recommended in the 2019 report from the Court’s Task Force on the Delivery of Legal Services, chaired by Vice Chief Justice Ann A. Scott Timmer. Chief Justice Robert Brutinel authorized the pilot programs, one that pairs domestic violence survivors with individuals who can provide legal advice, and another that allows domestic violence shelters to prepare legal documents in domestic violence-related situations.

The Licensed Legal Advocate Program was authorized by Administrative Order 2020-84 ([www.azcourts.gov/Portals/22/admorder/Orders20/2020-84.pdf](http://www.azcourts.gov/Portals/22/admorder/Orders20/2020-84.pdf)) and creates a new tier of legal professionals who are not licensed attorneys but who will be authorized to provide legal advice to domestic violence survivors within the unauthorized practice of law exceptions. Advice from a Licensed Legal Advocate (LLA) will be limited to legal issues related to the urgent and high-risk needs of survivors, including the need for a protective order and in family law matters.

LLAs will have a bachelor’s degree, at least 2,000 hours of work experience as a domestic violence advocate, and will complete a specialized training program at the University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law to obtain their certification from Arizona’s Administrative Office of the Courts. LLAs will be subject to a code of ethics and have access to mentor attorneys, but will not need to be supervised by a licensed attorney. They will be allowed to attend court with their clients and to provide advice and consultation, among other tasks. The pilot is limited to employees and clients of the Emerge! Center Against Domestic Abuse, located in Tucson.

Innovation 4 Justice at the University of Arizona, James E. Rogers College of Law Director, Stacy Butler said, “The research generated by the Licensed Legal Advocates pilot has the potential to significantly improve the delivery of civil legal services for low-income populations nationwide. Creating a new and sustainable tier of civil legal service provider could be a huge boost for non-profit, civil legal aid and social service communities.” Ms. Butler was appointed Director of the pilot program in the Administrative Order.

The Domestic Violence Legal Document Preparer Program (DVLDP) was proposed by the Arizona Bar Foundation and was authorized by Administrative Order 2020-25 ([www.azcourts.gov/Portals/22/admorder/Orders20/2020-25.pdf](http://www.azcourts.gov/Portals/22/admorder/Orders20/2020-25.pdf)). In addition to the minimum training for lay legal advocates, these individuals will be authorized through Arizona’s Administrative Office of the Courts’ Certified Document Preparer program to provide limited legal document preparation for domestic violence survivors. Before getting certified, candidates must work under the supervision of a legal aid attorney and pass an exam. Individuals who prepare documents under this program will have continuing education requirements each year.

DVLDP certificate holders will be able to provide legal information during the completion of forms, but will not give legal advice. They may accompany a domestic violence survivor to court, sit with them in the courtroom, and take notes to discuss with their client later. If asked direct factual questions by a judicial officer or court personnel, DVLDP certificate holders may respond, but otherwise they are limited to providing a support role during hearings and conferences.

Arizona Bar Foundation Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director, Dr. Kevin Ruegg said, “The DVLDP offers us the opportunity to expand services to domestic violence victims. With the expertise of the lay legal advocates and the legal aid attorneys, the scope of services being offered through this initiative will increase the safety and security for the victims and their family.” Dr. Ruegg was appointed Director of the pilot program in the Administrative Order.

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