

## **INTEGRATED CIVIL LEGAL AID TO CRIME VICTIMS PROGRAM PURPOSE AND PRINCIPAL STRATEGIES**

The Washington State Department of Commerce, Office of Crime Victims Advocacy OCVA's will make a substantial commitment of Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding to provide civil legal aid for victims of crime in Washington State. The framework guiding OCVA's commitment is the proposed Integrated Civil Legal Aid to Crime Victims Program outlined in a memo dated October 1, 2015 (attached) presented by the Office of Civil Legal Aid on behalf of the Alliance for Equal Justice. This document outlines the core purpose of the Integrated Civil Legal Aid to Crime Victims Program and the principal guidelines and expectations that will inform how this program operates.

### **I. Purpose**

The purpose of the Integrated Civil Legal Aid to Crime Victims Program is to provide effective civil legal aid services in concert with other community-based professional service providers to address emergency circumstances that arise from criminal victimization and that will help victims of crime move beyond their victimization in ways that are consistent with their individual and family safety, security and well-being.

### **II. Principal Guidelines and Expectations**

- A. VOCA funded civil legal aid services will be delivered by Alliance programs with a demonstrated history of providing services to crime victims, especially those who have experienced domestic violence or sexual assault, victims of human trafficking, child abuse and other crimes against people.
- B. VOCA funding will be invested to underwrite a full range of civil legal aid services for crime victims, consistent with applicable regulations and guidelines as they now exist or are hereafter amended.
- C. Within the limits of available funds, VOCA funded legal aid services will be offered equitably to persons throughout Washington State. Resources will be invested in a way that will ensure that members of historically marginalized populations have equitable access to culturally and linguistically responsive legal services.

- D. VOCA funded legal services will, where practicable, be made available to crime victims where they seek and receive other services arising from or related to their victimization. This may be at courthouses, domestic violence or sexual assault victim support or service centers, shelters or other appropriate locations. The objective is to minimize hardship on client victims and maximize coordination of legal services with other professional services needed by the client.
- E. Crime victims will be eligible for VOCA funded legal aid services without regard to age, income, ethnicity, citizenship or immigration status, race, sexual orientation, gender identify, religion, ability or disability or other legally protected characteristic.
- F. While VOCA funded services are not subject to income eligibility limits, limited resources and limited client service capacity require the establishment of service delivery and case acceptance priorities. Priority focus will be given to clients presenting the most emergent needs and who experience the greatest barriers to securing the legal help that they need to address the civil legal problems arising from their victimization. Case acceptance priorities will consider victims' social, cultural, racial, and language barriers, cognitive ability and/or literacy limitations. Priorities will also consider victims' and their families' vulnerability (including vulnerability due to legal status), the nature of their criminal victimization, the existence of physical and/or mental disabilities and other characteristics that effectively or disproportionately limit their ability to secure resolution of the problem(s) without legal assistance.
- G. VOCA funded legal aid providers will coordinate closely with one another to offer as seamless an array of legal services to crime victims as possible.