

Legal Services for Families

By Texas RioGrande Legal Aid



Mission: To promote the dignity, self-sufficiency, safety, and stability of low-income Texans by providing high quality civil legal assistance and related services.

Critical Need in our Community and Population to Be Served by the Project:

In 2024, the City of San Antonio's Violence Prevention Strategic Plan designated domestic violence as one of four priority areas, emphasizing the need for crucial improvements in policies, services, and legal access. The plan cited both civil legal aid among their essential mitigation strategies. The Collaborative Commission on Domestic Violence (CCDV) reported over 22,000 family violence incidents in Bexar County in 2023. That same year, TRLA and partner agencies provided 3,500 legal services, a disparity in service to incidents that shows a clear lack in access to justice in Bexar County. Bexar County also faces high poverty rates, where 17.7% of residents live below 125% of the federal poverty level. 74.4% of these households are families with children. The systemic challenges of poverty compound the risk for survivors, impeding their ability to seek safety, escape their abusers, and access legal assistance. Legal aid is critical to protect survivors and their children. Legal representation helps secure and maintain safe custody arrangements, keeping children out of abusive environments. Without help, survivors face complex legal systems alone, hindering their access to necessary protection. Protective orders, custody arrangements, and housing protections are often inaccessible without legal assistance. Expanding TRLA's capacity to provide support to survivors of domestic violence is essential to help more survivors access safety and begin rebuilding their lives.

TRLA serves low-income individuals with civil legal assistance, including veterans, the elderly, survivors of domestic violence, foster youth, the homeless, individuals with disabilities and more. 62% of clients identify as Hispanic/Latino, 18.5% as White, and 12.8% as African American. Women make up about 72% of the client base. In 2024, we closed 18,850 cases in our 68-county service region, with 6,520 cases closed in ISA's service area. Our work in 2024 impacted a total of 50,045 people, 17,215 within ISA's service area. Our family law team closed 1,376 cases within ISA's service area, with 1,229 clients identifying as a woman, 142 as a man, and 6 as other. Most clients in ISA's service area are between 30-49 years old. 1,206 of the 1,376 cases involved family violence. To qualify for services, an applicant generally must have a household income at or below 125% of federal poverty guidelines. With funding from ISA, we can serve an additional 200 clients within ISA's service area.

Description of Project and Proposed Use of Impact SA Funds:

Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA) is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to promoting justice for low-income Texans by providing high-quality civil legal assistance and related services. TRLA operates across 68 counties in Southwest Texas, serving over 16,000 clients annually. Our Domestic Violence and Family Law Group provides civil legal assistance, including divorces and protective orders, to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Our team collaborates with domestic violence programs to provide trauma-informed holistic services to survivors with the goals of safety and self-sufficiency for them and their children. Since 2022, TRLA has used federal ARPA funds to conduct this work in Bexar County, representing in protective orders, divorce, safety planning, and more. This funding will end in 2026 and securing funding to continue is essential. Funding provided by ISA will support our work in Bexar County and the surrounding service area.

TRLA will utilize the funds requested from Impact SA to provide an estimated 200 additional clients with domestic violence and family law legal services.

Goals: Promote the safety and stability of survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking in Bexar, Atascosa, Bandera, Comal, Guadalupe, Kendall, Medina, and Wilson Counties. Connect survivors to TRLA's services and resources. TRLA attorneys support survivors with concurrent legal issues such as housing, credit, employment, and financial abuse, and refer to shelters, crisis centers, and other partners.

Objective 1.1: Provide civil legal assistance in protective orders, divorces, custody, child support, and more to increase family safety and stability.

Objective 1.2: Support survivors through safety planning.

Objective 1.3: Connect survivors with support services.

Impact on People to Be Served - Measurable Outcomes (Described in "S.M.A.R.T." terms):

Specific: TRLA will provide full legal representation to 200 additional survivors of domestic violence in Bexar County in protective orders, custody, divorce, and housing cases.

Measurable: Outcomes will be measured by the number of clients served and cases closed. Additional outcome data will be assessed to determine the number of cases that closed with favorable outcomes. Data will be tracked in our client management system, LegalServer, and reviewed to assess progress and adjust services as needed.

Achievable: TRLA's family law team has a strong track record of delivering high-quality legal services to survivors in Bexar County. In 2024, we closed 1,206 cases involving family violence in ISA's service area. With additional funding, we can extend our service capacity to serve 200 additional clients. This project will stretch our impact by expanding our legal service capacity, but it is still fully achievable with our existing staff.

Relevant: Accomplishing these outcomes directly supports TRLA's mission to enhance access to justice and protect the rights and safety of vulnerable individuals. Resolving urgent civil legal issues for survivors of domestic violence disrupts cycles of abuse and promotes long-term stability and safety for families, aligning with our goal to advance justice for those who cannot afford it.

Time-Bound: We expect to achieve these outcomes throughout the grant year, as each case progresses. Timelines for cases vary as each case is unique. Case intakes resulting in basic counsel and advice can be resolved in a few hours or days, while more complex cases involving extended representation or negotiations can take several weeks or months to resolve. The client's sense of safety and empowerment often begins improving early in the casework and continues beyond their resolution.

Project Budget:

Funding Source	Amount	Narrative
Government (Fed/State/Local)	\$1,967,840.00	Funding provided by Texas Access to Justice Foundation and Legal Services Corporation.
Other	\$33,923.00	Funding provided by an anonymous contribution.
Total Other Revenue	\$2,001,763.00	

Expense Category	ISA Exp	ISA Narrative	Other Exp	Other Exp Narrative
Indirect Costs	\$10,000.00	N/A	N/A	N/A
Agency Personnel (Salaries, Wages, Benefits)	\$90,000.00	Total salary, wages, benefits cost for a combined FTE total of 0.82, comprised of .64 attorney FTE, .10 paralegal FTE, and .08 legal assistant FTE. These FTE's included cover percentages of time for 13 attorneys contributing anywhere from 2% - 9% of their time toward this project. It also includes 2 paralegals contributing 5% of their time each to this project. Additionally, we have 2 legal assistants on staff for this project, each contributing 4% of their time.	\$2,001,763.00	Funding provided by Texas Access to Justice Foundation and Legal Services Corporation, and an anonymous contribution.
Total Expenses	\$100,000.00	The budget presented to Impact San Antonio is	\$2,001,763.00	

		approximately 5% of the current budget for our Domestic Violence and Family Law team.		