

# Vermont Bar Foundation

## Hon. John A. Dooley Competitive Grants Program & IOLTA Grants Program FY 2023-2024 Grant Recipients

The Vermont Bar Foundation plays a vital role in supporting civil legal aid organizations across the state to ensure meaningful access to the legal system for thousands of individuals in need.

This year, we proudly approved 10 grants through the Hon. John A. Dooley Competitive Grants Program and an additional four via the IOLTA Grants Program. Please note that the IOLTA Grants Program is exclusively open to organizations invited by the VBF to complete an application.

These two grant programs support local and statewide projects, providing civil legal services to disadvantaged Vermonters, and promoting public education about the courts and legal matters.

In 2023, our two grant programs collectively awarded nearly \$1 million to deserving nonprofit organizations.

Name of Organization/Project	Amount Awarded	Overview and Other Information
1. Association of Africans Living in Vermont Pro-Bono Immigration Legal Services	\$15,000	AALV provides pro-bono immigration legal services, including representation of asylum seekers and victims of trafficking, domestic violence, and other crimes in their applications for immigration relief; assistance to disadvantaged clients and their attorneys on the immigration consequences of criminal convictions; and assistance to and/or representation of clients with a wide range of immigration applications.
2. Circle Legal Representation	\$6,000	Circle is dedicated to ending domestic violence and sexual violence in Washington County. Circle provides advocacy, support services, and shelter to help victims/survivors to build on strengths to shape fulfilling lives for themselves and their children. The funds awarded by the VBF will allow Circle to provide legal representation on a reduced fee basis for eligible low-income victims/survivors of domestic violence.
3. Community Asylum Seekers Project Direct Legal Services to Asylum Seekers	\$7,500	Vermont Asylum Seekers Project (VAAP) is a new collaboration that leverages Vermont's legal resources to provide access to justice for asylum seekers in Vermont by offering pro bono legal services and promoting the rights of the State's immigrant communities. The VBF funding will help VAAP offer direct legal services to asylum seeker, in partnership with a panel of volunteer mentors, pro bono attorneys, and technical assistance provided by the Vermont Immigrant Assistance project (VIA); and to build and expand a clearinghouse of asylum legal resources for attorneys and advocates in Vermont.
4. The Community Restorative Justice Center The Legal Program & Free Legal Clinic	\$7,862	Funds awarded by the VBF will help The Community Restorative Justice Center support the Legal Program, including the Free Legal Clinic serving the residents of Caledonia and Essex counties. The funds from this grant ensure that the Free Legal Clinic can successfully continue as it has for the past 20+ years. The Legal Program also includes a Volunteer Supported Mediation Program. This program supports the mission and vision of TCRJC in that they use Restorative Practices for resolving conflict.

5. NewStory Center Legal Assistance Project	\$5,000	For over 40 years, NewStory Center has been the single agency supporting survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and human trafficking in Rutland County. These supports include emergency housing, a 24/7 crisis hotline, supportive case management, legal/systems and medical advocacy, referrals to area resources, as well as training and technical assistance. Funding will support consultation by local attorneys, on a reduced-fee basis on issues such as divorce and child custody.
6. Orleans County Restorative Justice Center Pro Bono Legal Clinics	\$6,000	OCRJC provides pre-charge restorative justice panels for youth and adults, community engagement and conversation projects, victim services and extensive services to re-entering offenders. This funding supports the continuation of the monthly pro bono legal clinics. This model provides 30 minutes of pro bono expert advice for family legal needs, cases of housing conflict, and employment issues. Also, OCRJC hold a walk-in expungement day for civil convictions.
7. Steps to End Domestic Violence Legal Clinics	\$10,648	Steps to End Domestic Violence will use the VBF grant to sustain existing legal clinics with the increase request to represent cost of living increases for staff. Their legal clinics meet the needs of low-income survivors of intimate partner violence in Chittenden County. The goal of the legal clinics is to provide resources for survivors to increase their knowledge of the legal system and become fully informed of their rights and options.
8. Vermont Bar Association Low Bono County Projects	\$60,000	This grant is for continuation of the VBA's statewide county low bono project. Members of the private bar will continue to provide legal services to low-income Vermonter litigants who have targeted cases pending in Vermont state courts. Participating attorneys will represent eligible clients in landlord/tenant, collections defense, support contempt defense, adult involuntary guardianships and post adoption contact agreement (PACA) negotiations.
9. Vermont Immigrant Assistance Direct Legal Assistance	\$10,000	The purpose of the funding is to help increase VIA's capacity to provide direct legal assistance in the form of information, consults, and full representation, with a focus of effort at their new Burlington office, given the concentration of non-citizens in Chittenden County. Ultimately these services improve outcomes for immigrants related to economic wellbeing. The funding would be targeted to partially fund a non-attorney support position who could perform work that does not require a licensed attorney, including client intake, educational outreach, case coordination and other administrative support.
10. WomenSafe Legal Representation	\$11,000	WomenSafe serves survivors across the gender spectrum of domestic, dating, sexual violence, and stalking. As part of this service, WomenSafe provides legal advocacy and is seeking funding for legal services for survivors. This funding will allow low-income residents of Addison County who have or who are experiencing domestic violence, dating, sexual violence and stalking to access legal representation. The grant also provides funding for interpretation services.
11. Have Justice Will Travel Legal Empowerment Assistance Program	\$20,000	HJWT will utilize the IOLTA Grants Program funding to sustain and enhance the delivery and evaluation of the Legal Empowerment Assistance Program. LEAP is an integral part of the HJWT model and the organizations' effort to end generational cycles of abuse in rural families and assure that disadvantaged Vermonters have meaningful and beneficial access to the legal system. LEAP allows HJWT to offer long term, on-going direct legal services to <i>pro se</i> litigants in Vermont Family and Probate Courts who call looking for legal assistance, specific legal advice, and legal education throughout the development of their case.

12. Vermont Bar Association Statewide Legal Access Coordinator	\$22,000	VBA will utilize the IOLTA Grants Program funding to support just under half of the salary and benefits for their Statewide Legal Access Coordinator, a part-time position. The coordinator runs four VBA low bono projects statewide which provides civil legal services to the disadvantaged. The coordinator identifies and unifies pro bono and low bono efforts, publicizes and promotes the work of pro bono attorneys, recruits and provides training for pro bono and low bono attorneys in areas of need, and coordinates with existing legal access programs.
12. Vermont Law & Graduate School Vermont Immigrant Assistance & Children First!	\$55,000	VLGS will utilize the IOLTA Grants Program funding to support two of its free legal service clinical programs: Children First! (CF!) Legal Advocacy Project, and Vermont Immigrant Assistance (VIA). CF! gives a voice to children caught up in difficult family law cases and helps the courts protect the best interests of vulnerable children. VIA provides legal assistance to non-citizens facing complex immigration issues, as well as other related legal problems. Funding will support direct legal services including consultations and full representation, as well as a public education component to provide critical legal information to social service providers and educate Vermont residents about their rights and responsibilities under the law.
14. Vermont Legal Aid Statewide Legal Services Delivery System	\$705,000	VLA will utilize the IOLTA Grants Program funding to maintain and operate a statewide legal services delivery system. Demand for VLA services continues to grow. In 2022, their general telephone and website intake system handled 26,081 requests for assistance.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$944,010</b>	