

Missouri Legal Services

Legal aid programs providing free legal help to the low-income and disadvantaged in Missouri



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Domestic Violence and Civil Legal Services During the Coronavirus Pandemic

On May 11, The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) held a second briefing exploring how legal services providers are helping domestic violence survivors in the face of COVID-19. Representatives Susan Brooks (IN-5), Debbie Dingell (MI-12), Gwen Moore (WI-4) and David Price (NC-4) joined Supreme Court of North Carolina Chief Justice Cheri Beasley to deliver remarks.

The briefing began with an update from LSC Board Chair John Levi who explained that the sharp increase in domestic violence is one of the many challenges that our grantees are facing during this pandemic. Rep. Dingell praised the work of legal aid attorneys in helping individuals and families affected by domestic violence: “You all play a critical role and that is helping so many who think they don’t have options.”

The briefing also featured a panel discussion with LSC grantees from California, Georgia, North Carolina and Wisconsin and a magistrate judge moderated by LSC President Ron Flagg. The speakers included Kate Aldrich, Staff Attorney, Legal Action of Wisconsin; Chief Judge Wanda L. Dallas, Magistrate Court of Clayton County, Georgia; Julianna Lee, Supporting Families Supervising Attorney, Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles; TeAndra Miller, Project Director/Managing Attorney, Statewide Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Project, Legal Aid of North Carolina; and Sarah M. White, Director, Clayton Family Advocacy Office, Atlanta Legal Aid Society.

Lee described the pandemic as the perfect storm for surges in domestic violence: many people are stuck at home with their abusers during a time of heightened stress and uncertainty, but leaving during a pandemic also presents risks and finding a safe place to shelter is a challenge.

Her words echoed Rep. Moore, who noted: “Safer at home is an oxymoron to some extent. You are not safer at home when domestic violence is present.” Following the panel, LSC Leaders Council Co-Chair Harriet Miers, a Partner with Locke Lord LLP and former White House Counsel, provided closing remarks.

Watch the Briefing

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