

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED],

I am writing on the behalf on the [REDACTED] to respectfully request permission to submit a \$[REDACTED] operating support proposal to the Foundation for [REDACTED]'s domestic violence programs.

Leaving an abuser is hard enough without the added stress of legal problems. Yet, for many women, navigating the legal system and dealing with child custody battles becomes just one more way for the abuser to terrorize a woman and increase the chances she will return to him. Financially dependent on their abuser, legal assistance is often unaffordable for many women. Although shelter volunteers can offer assistance in completing Order of Protection applications, few have the legal background necessary to advise on child custody, securing spousal support and divorce proceedings. Free or reduced cost one-time legal consultations are effective for some, but cannot begin to address the myriad of legal and financial concerns of women who need to secure custody, financial support, citizenship, divorce and orders of protection.

Founded in 1990, [REDACTED] offers free legal assistance to those who need it the most. [REDACTED] specializes in helping clients who have multiple legal issues and although above the poverty line, cannot afford legal consultation or representation. Largely privately funded, [REDACTED] is not restricted from helping domestic violence survivors

*Mrs. B, a 50-year-old woman, was married for 26 years. During their marriage, Mr. B refused to provide financial assistance for household expenses, and hid his money in a variety of accounts. Mrs. B worked outside the home, but was unable to make ends meet, particularly with the added health expenses of a mentally disabled child to care for. At the time of her divorce, Mrs. B discovered that her low-paying job also disqualified her for free legal assistance from other legal aid programs in New York City, because of their strict guidelines for income levels. [REDACTED] represented Mrs. B, and successfully negotiated a settlement that allowed her to keep her home (thus providing a stable environment for her mentally disabled 18-year old son), and receive a financial settlement that covered most of her outstanding debts, which were incurred during the years of her marriage.*

*Mrs. M is a 42-year-old undocumented woman from Belize with four young children. She is undergoing treatment for breast cancer at Bellevue Hospital, and came to ██████ seeking help with legal issues. She needed help obtaining medical benefits and wanted to find out how to legalize her status without being deported. ██████ is applying for “cancellation of removal” under immigration law because she has lived in the U.S. for more than 10 years, and her deportation could cause a hardship for her children, two of whom were born in the United States. Since the application with the INS has been filed, Mrs. M is considered PRUCOL (a person residing under color of law) and therefore eligible for Medicaid.*

██████ offers two domestic violence programs within its Matrimonial/ Family Law Unit. The Domestic Violence Clinical Center provides second and third-year law students with extensive training and year-long externships representing domestic violence survivors in family court. Strictly supervised by the unit’s managing attorney, students handle domestic violence cases from start to finish including an entrance interview, filing appropriate legal documents and court hearings.

The Courtroom Advocates Project offers first-year law students and volunteers the opportunity to assist survivors with securing orders of protection and advocating on the behalf of survivors in family court. ██████’s research shows that the Advocates project has been especially effective in increasing the number of survivors who return to family court to prosecute abuse cases and secure spousal and child support.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to assisting the survivors with desperately needed legal assistance and representation, these programs also provide valuable first-hand experience to young and upcoming attorneys. Given the opportunity to work with domestic violence survivors and make a difference, volunteers are more likely to continue working in the domestic violence field or to advocate for survivors in their personal lives.

If encouraged to apply to the Foundation, ██████ would respectfully request a grant of \$ ██████ to support the attorneys involved with the DVCC and CAP program and recruit additional volunteers.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> In 2001, approximately 7,700 family offense cases were filed in Brooklyn Family Court. Roughly half of the petitioners failed to return to court to prosecute their family offense cases. However, out of a test group of 20 petitioners assigned a court advocate, 16 of the 20 petitioners returned to court. With the assignment of a court advocate, there is an increase from 50 percent to 80 percent in the return rate for family court petitioners.