Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas

600 East Weatherford Street, Fort Worth, Texas 76102
817-649-4740 (fax) 817-649-4759
www.lanwt.org
With offices in Abilene, Amarillo, Brownwood, Dallas, Denton, Fort Worth, Lubbock, McKinney, Midland, Odessa, Plainview, San Angelo, Waxahachie, Weatherford and Wichita Falls

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FEB - 9 2026
VANESSA JAMES, County Clerk
JACK COUNTY, TEXAS
BY_____ DEPUTY

January 29, 2026

The Honorable B.K. Umphress, County Judge
Jack County Sheriff's Office
100 N. Main St., Suite 206
Jacksboro, TX 76458

Dear Judge Umphress:

We are re-applying for a one-year grant (FY2026-27) with the Criminal Justice Division that will allow our attorneys to interview, provide advice, and legal representation to your organizations' clients who are eligible for Legal Aid's services; providing civil legal aid to eligible victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking that will include but are not limited to:

Obtaining protection orders, providing representation for divorce, custody, custody modification, and/or visitation, and obtaining child support orders. Providing representation for administrative matters such as access to benefits, housing and/or landlord-tenant matters, and for matters related to unemployment, including unemployment compensation. And, other civil legal aid that may become necessary to properly, and completely represent a victim of domestic violence, as allowed by this funding.

Enclosed you will find the Cooperative Working Agreement with Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas. **Please sign** in the indicated space **and return it by Wednesday, February 11, 2026.** You may fax a signed copy to my attention: Delois Spencer-Andrews at (817) 339-5343.

If you have any questions, please contact Sam Prince, Director of Development at (817)339-5334.

Respectfully,

Delois Spencer-Andrews
Grants Development Coordinator

Enclosures

COOPERATIVE WORKING AGREEMENT

This is to certify that the objectives of the grant application submitted to the Criminal Justice Division of the Office of the Governor have been reviewed and that it is mutually agreed to cooperate to whatever extent is necessary in carrying out the objectives described in this application.

In addition, if the outside organization has personnel assigned to the grant-funded project, that agency certifies that it is cognizant of the rules and regulations governing the operation of the grant and agrees to abide by any and all such rules or special conditions relating to the application.

Part I: Applicant Organization

Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas Applicant's Organization	Rural Safe at Home Project Project Title	
Maria Thomas-Jones, Chief Executive Officer Printed Name and Title of Applicant's Authorized Official	Maria Thomas-Jones Signature of the Applicant's Authorized Official	1/8/2026 Date

Part II: Outside Organization

Jack County Sheriff's Office Outside Organization	Rural Safe at Home Project Project Title	
Brian Keith Umphress Printed Name and Title of Outside Organization's Authorized Official Jack County Judge	Signature of the Outside Organization's Authorized Official	2/2/2026 Date

Print This Page

Agency Name: Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas
Grant/App: 1696419 **Start Date:** 10/1/2025 **End Date:** 9/30/2026

Project Title: Rural Safe At Home Project
Status: Active Grant

Narrative Information

Introduction

The purpose of this program is to provide services and assistance directly to victims of crime to speed their recovery and aid them through the criminal justice process. Services may include the following:

- responding to the emotional and physical needs of crime victims;
- assisting victims in stabilizing their lives after a victimization;
- assisting victims to understand and participate in the criminal justice system; and
- providing victims with safety and security.

Culturally Specific and Underserved Populations

Does your program have a primary focus on serving a culturally specific population? (The organization must do more than merely provide services to an underserved population as defined by 34 USC § 12291 (a)(46) or culturally specific group; rather, the organization's primary focus must be on providing culturally competent services as defined by 34 USC § 12291(a)(9) designed to meet the specific needs of the target population in order to justify a YES response in the section below.)

_ Yes
X No

Certifications

In addition to the requirements found in existing statute, regulation, and the funding announcement, this program requires applicant organizations to certify compliance with the following:

Constitutional Compliance
Applicant assures that it will not engage in any activity that violates Constitutional law including profiling based upon race.

Forensic Medical Examination Payments
Health care facilities shall conduct a forensic medical examination of a victim of an alleged sexual assault if the victim arrived at the facility within 120 hours after the assault occurred and the victim consents to the examination. The victim is not required to participate in the investigation or prosecution of an offense as a condition of receiving a forensic medical examination, nor pay for the forensic examination or the evidence collection kit. Crime Victim Compensation funds may be used to pay for the medical portion of the exam unless the victim of sexual assault is required to seek reimbursement for the examination from their insurance carrier. If a health care facility does not provide diagnosis or treatment services for sexual assault victims, the facility is required to refer the victim to a facility that provides those services.

Confidentiality and Privacy
Applicant agrees to maintain the confidentiality of client-counselor information and research data, as required by state and federal law. Personally identifying information or individual information collected in connection with services requested, utilized, or denied may not be disclosed; or, reveal individual client information without informed, written, reasonably time-limited consent of the person about whom information is sought. If release of information is compelled by statutory or court mandate, reasonable attempts to provide notice to victims affected by the disclosure of information will be made and steps necessary to protect the privacy and safety of the persons affected by the release of information will be taken.

Activities that Compromise Victim Safety and Recovery
Applicant agrees to not engage in activities that jeopardize victim safety, deter or prevent physical or emotional healing for victims, or allow offenders to escape responsibility for their actions.

Polygraph Testing Prohibition
A peace officer or attorney representing the state may not require an adult or child victim of an alleged sex offense to submit to a polygraph examination or other truth telling device as a condition for proceeding with the investigation of such an offense. In addition, the refusal of a victim to submit to a polygraph or other truth telling examination will not prevent the investigation, charging, or prosecution of an alleged sex offense or on the basis of the results of a polygraph examination.

Protection Orders
Victims applying for a protective order or their attorney may not bear the costs associated with the filing of an order of protections.

Offender Firearm Prohibition
The applicant certifies that its judicial administrative policies and practices include notification to domestic violence offenders of the requirements delineated in section 18 USC § 992(g)(8) and (g)(9).

Criminal Charges

in connection with the prosecution of any misdemeanor or felony domestic violence offense, the victim may not bear the costs associated with the filing of criminal charges against a domestic violence offender, issuance or service of a warrant, or witness subpoena.

Cybersecurity Training Requirement
Local units of governments must comply with the Cybersecurity Training requirements described in Section 772.012 and Section 2054.5191 of the Texas Government Code. Local governments determined to not be in compliance with the cybersecurity requirements required by Section 2054.5191 of the Texas Government Code are ineligible for OOG grant funds until the second anniversary of the date the local government is determined ineligible. Government entities must annually certify their compliance with the training requirements using the Cybersecurity Training Certification for State and Local Government. A copy of the Training Certification must be uploaded to your eGrants application. For more information or to access available training programs, visit the Texas Department of Information Resources Statewide Cybersecurity Awareness Training page.

Criminal History Reporting
Entities receiving funds from PSO must be located in a county that has an average of 90% or above on both adult and juvenile dispositions entered into the computerized criminal history database maintained by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) as directed in the *Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, Chapter 66*. The disposition completeness percentage is defined as the percentage of arrest charges a county reports to DPS for which a disposition has been subsequently reported and entered into the computerized criminal history system.

Counties applying for grant awards from the Office of the Governor must commit that the county will report at least 90% of convictions within five business days to the Criminal Justice Information System at the Department of Public Safety.

Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR)
Eligible applicants operating a law enforcement agency must be current on reporting complete UCR data and the Texas specific reporting mandated by 411.042 TGC, to the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) for inclusion in the annual Crime in Texas (CIT) publication. To be considered eligible for funding, applicants must have submitted a full twelve months of accurate data to DPS for the most recent calendar year by the deadline(s) established by DPS. Due to the importance of timely reporting, applicants are required to submit complete and accurate UCR data, as well as the Texas-mandated reporting, on a no less than monthly basis and respond promptly to requests from DPS related to the data submitted.

Entities That Collect Sexual Assault/Sex Offense Evidence or Investigate/Prosecute Sexual Assault or Other Sex Offenses
In accordance with Texas Government Code, Section 420.034, any facility or entity that collects evidence for sexual assault or other sex offenses or investigates or prosecutes a sexual assault or other sex offense for which evidence has been collected, must participate in the statewide electronic tracking system developed and implemented by the Texas Department of Public Safety. Visit DPS's Sexual Assault Evidence Tracking Program website for more information or to set up an account to begin participating. Additionally, per Section 420.042 "A law enforcement agency that receives evidence of a sexual assault or other sex offense...shall submit that evidence to a public accredited crime laboratory for analysis no later than the 30th day after the date on which that evidence was received." A law enforcement agency in possession of a significant number of Sexual Assault Evidence Kits (SAEK) where the 30-day window has passed may be considered noncompliant.

Immigration Legal Services
PSO prioritizes funding of projects that provide a full spectrum of counseling, crisis services, and other direct victim services. PSO will not fund projects that focus primarily on immigration legal services and do not provide a significant level of other types of victim services.

Legal Representation in Divorce and Custody Cases
PSO limits eligibility for legal representation in divorce and custody cases to circumstances where the survivor has been directly victimized by intimate partner violence (IPV) within the last six (6) months. This may include physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, and psychological aggression (including coercive tactics) by a current or former intimate partner against the survivor or survivor's kin sharing the residence. Additionally, legal services in divorce and custody cases funded under this award are limited to emergency order assistance, safety planning, client representation in divorce or guardianship proceedings, and other family law matters directly resulting from the victimization. Through acceptance of this award, grantee agrees that reimbursement for divorce and custody-related legal services will be limited to circumstances listed above.

Discrimination
Applicant agrees not to discriminate against victims because they disagree with the State's prosecution of the criminal case.

Records
Applicant agrees to maintain daily time and attendance records specifying the time devoted to allowable victim services.

Volunteers
If awarded VOCA funds, applicant agrees to use volunteers to support either the project or other agency-wide services/activities, unless PSO determines that a compelling reason exists to waive this requirement.

Crime Victims' Compensation
Applicant agrees to assist crime victims in applying for crime victims' compensation benefits.

Community Efforts
Applicant agrees to promote community efforts to aid crime victims. Applicants should promote, within the community, coordinated public and private efforts to aid crime victims. Coordination efforts qualify an organization to receive these funds, but are not activities that can be supported with these funds.

Civil Rights Information
Applicant agrees to maintain statutorily required civil rights statistics on victims served by race, national origin, sex, age, and disability of victims served, within the timeframe established by PSO. This requirement is waived when providing services, such as telephone counseling, where soliciting the information may be inappropriate or offensive to the crime victim.

Victims of Federal Crime
Applicant agrees to provide equal services to victims of federal crime. (Note: Victim of federal crime is a victim of an offense that violates a federal criminal statute or regulation; federal crimes also include crimes that occur in an area where the federal government has jurisdiction, such as Indian reservations, some national parks, some federal buildings, and military installations.)

No Charge
Applicant agrees to provide grant-funded services at no charge to victims of crime. Applicants are also prohibited from billing Crime Victims Compensation, private insurance, Medicaid, or Medicare for services provided using VOCA funds.

Effective Services
Applicants applying for funds to provide victim services must demonstrate a record of providing effective services to crime victims. (See "Eligible Organizations" in the Funding Announcement.)
College Campus Confidential Direct Services Providers
All personnel compensated through OOG or match funds are Confidential Direct Service Providers that maintain victim's confidentiality for all case information (written or oral) and share information only at the victim's request and with the victim's informed consent, except when release of information is required by law. Confidential Direct Service Providers compensated with grant funds shall not be required to disclose client or case information to any entity, including a campus Title IX officer or coordinator, except when release of information is required by law. A victim may not be coerced or required to file a report or disclose information regarding their victimization with any entity as a condition of receiving services from a Confidential Direct Service Provider.

Failure to comply with this certification may result in PSO, at its sole discretion, withholding reimbursement on personnel line items contained in the program budget until satisfactory evidence of compliance is provided.

Compliance with State and Federal Laws, Programs and Procedures

Local Units of Government: Local units of government, including cities, counties and other general purpose political subdivisions, as appropriate, and institutions of higher education that operate a law enforcement agency, must comply with all aspects of the programs and procedures utilized by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security ("DHS") to: (1) notify DHS of all information requested by DHS related to illegal aliens in Agency's custody; and (2) detain such illegal aliens in accordance with requests by DHS. Additionally, counties and municipalities may NOT have in effect, purport to have in effect, or make themselves subject to or bound by, any law, rule, policy, or practice (written or unwritten) that would: (1) require or authorize the public disclosure of federal law enforcement information in order to conceal, harbor, or shield from detection fugitives from justice or aliens illegally in the United States; or (2) impede federal officers from exercising authority under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a), § 1226(c), § 1231(a), § 1357(a), § 1366(1), or § 1366(3). Lastly, eligible applicants must comply with all provisions, policies, and penalties found in Chapter 752, Subchapter C of the Texas Government Code.

Each local unit of government, and institution of higher education that operates a law enforcement agency, must download, complete and then upload into eGrants the CEO/Law Enforcement Certifications and Assurances Form certifying compliance with federal and state immigration enforcement requirements. This Form is required for each application submitted to PSO and is active until August 31, 2026 or the end of the grant period, whichever is later.

Non-profit Organizations: Each non-profit 501(c)(3) organization must certify that it does not have, and will continue not to have any policy, procedure, or agreement (written or unwritten) that in any way encourages, induces, entices, or aids any violations of immigration laws. Additionally, the organization certifies that it does not have in effect, purport to have in effect, and is not subject to or bound by any rule, policy, or practice (written or unwritten) that would: (1) encourage the concealment, harboring, or shielding from detection of fugitives from justice or aliens who illegally came to, entered, or remained in the United States; or (2) impede federal officers from exercising authority under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a), § 1226(c), § 1231(a), § 1357(a), § 1366(1), or § 1366(3). Lastly, the organization certifies that it will not adopt, enforce, or endorse a policy which prohibits or materially limits the enforcement of immigration laws, and will not, as demonstrated by pattern or practice, prohibit or materially limit the enforcement of immigration laws.

Each non-profit organization must download, complete and then upload into eGrants the CEO/NGO Certifications and Assurances Form certifying compliance with federal and state immigration enforcement requirements.

Equal Employment Opportunity Plan (EEO Plan)

If awarded, applicant agrees to comply with the Equal Employment Opportunity Program (EEOP) requirements per 28 C.F.R. § 42 Subpart E. Agencies may use the EEO Utilization Report Builder to assist with preparing Verification Forms and, if required, Utilization Reports.

Employment of Advocates for Sexual Assault

Will this project use grant funds to support the employment of Advocates for Sexual Assault as defined by Chapter 420, section 420.051 of the Texas Government Code?

_ Yes

X No

If yes, have those advocates completed a sexual assault training program certified by the Attorney General?

_ Yes
_ No
X N/A

Civil Rights Liaison
A civil rights liaison who will serve as the grantee's civil rights point of contact and who will be responsible for ensuring that the grantee meets all applicable civil rights requirements must be designated. The designee will act as the grantee's liaison in civil rights matters with PSO and with the federal Office of Justice Programs.
Enter the Name of the Civil Rights Liaison:
Maria Thomas-Jones, Chief Executive Officer
Enter the Address for the Civil Rights Liaison:
600 E. Weatherford St., Fort Worth, TX 76102
Enter the Phone Number for the Civil Rights Liaison [(999) 999-9999 x9999]:
(817) 339-5337

Overall Certification

Each applicant agency must certify to the specific requirements detailed above as well as to comply with all requirements within the PSO Funding Announcement, the *Guide to Grants*, the *Grantee Conditions and Responsibilities*, any authorizing or applicable state and federal statutes and regulations to be eligible for this program.
X **I certify to all of the application content & requirements.**

Project Abstract :

Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas (LANWT) staff recognize and are trained to respond immediately to requests for services from survivors of abuse. In their capacity as first responders to survivors of abuse, each are aware of the very narrow window of opportunity to create or support separation from an abuser and put life-saving judicial remedies in place. Survivors of abuse, many of whom are mothers of minor children, and the abuse and neglect to children themselves demand a quick response from advocates and the justice system. LANWT offers this vital assistance and stands ready to continue this critical work. LANWT, a comprehensive civil legal aid organization with a service area equal to the size of Colorado, proposes its Safe At Home Project to increase emergency legal aid to survivors of crime, especially domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking, throughout its 114-county service area. In 2023, there were 77,563 incidents of domestic violence in the targeted 114 counties of the proposed project. While County and District Attorneys are encouraged to provide protective orders to survivors of domestic violence, the need for legal help continues to rise significantly post-pandemic. There was a significant increase in the number of survivors who actually had orders of protection recorded in the Texas Crime Information Center (TCIC) database as of December 2022 as compared to 2021. There are many times when the County and District Attorneys are prevented from providing orders of protection because of the legal maneuverings of the abuser's attorney or because of a conflict of interest. There are times when they decline to proceed with an order of protection because the survivor has an ongoing, separate family law matter. There are times when they, themselves, are unable to meet the demand for service and when they do not treat the order of protection as a priority in the overall protection of survivors. In some counties, bond conditions are incorrectly being used to manage conduct that is most appropriately addressed in an order of protection. For a multitude of reasons, non-legal aid service providers are not adequately meeting the protective order needs of survivors. LANWT generally serves people living at or below 200% of poverty. We have one staff attorney for approximately 9,000 potentially eligible clients. The shortage of legal aid attorneys is generally most critical in the large expanses of rural territory that make up 77% of the counties included in the Safe At Home Project proposal. LANWT seeks to maintain the accessibility of its legal aid services to survivors of abuse by continuing to provide not only attorneys but also social workers, paralegals, and intake specialists to help survivors. The purpose of the grant is for LANWT attorneys and social workers to

provide a full range of legal representation and related services for crime victims, including screening, interviewing applicants, providing advice and counsel, obtaining temporary and final orders of protection, child custody, visitation, and child support orders, orders for favorable property and debt awards for survivors, immigration relief, advocacy, safety planning, assistance in obtaining Crime Victim Compensation awards, accessing public benefits, and accessing community resources. Where possible, LANWT provides a holistic approach to addressing the needs of victims. The types of survivors this project targets are survivors of sexual assault, intimate partner abuse, child abuse, and elder abuse. Survivors of other crimes are also encouraged to apply for help. Eligible activities include, but are not limited to: Crime Victims: Temporary orders, protective orders, eligibility screening, applicant intake, advise clients of rights, safety planning, EMERGENCY custody orders and writs to take possession of children, child support, applications and appeals of denials of Crime Victim's Compensation, final custody, visitation, child support, property and debt orders, name changes, and cases related to lease terminations. Survivor Restoration: In our communities, survivors are restored by being able to access available services that address immediate needs and by having available services that will ensure that they can remain away from abuse long-term. Immediate services would include law enforcement intervention, crisis shelters, advocacy and legal action, and medical care. Long-term services would be counseling, job training or placement, housing assistance, removing barriers to employment by sealing eligible criminal records, and restoring a survivor's ability to hold a driver's license or other professional license. Many times, survivors are denied access to these resources for inappropriate reasons. LANWT lawyers and social workers are trained to identify, pursue, and resolve these legal issues to obtain or restore these resources to LANWT clients.

Problem Statement :

The low-income population of Texas face enormous challenges when trying to recover from being victimized by domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. Numerous civil legal issues can, and often do, stand in the way of their ability to move forward and recover from their victimization. Unfortunately, the only way an individual's legal rights are adequately raised and protected is by retaining counsel experienced in handling the legal matters that survivors face. Many survivors lack the financial resources to hire an attorney in ordinary times, let alone in times of trauma and severe economic stress. In addressing the client's civil legal needs, care must be taken by experienced advocates to address numerous legal issues arising to ensure the victim recovers as fully, completely, and quickly as possible.

Supporting Data :

In Texas, domestic violence incidents have risen significantly in recent years. In 2023, 205 Texans were victims of intimate partner or stalking homicide, marking one of the highest numbers in the past decade. This increase aligns with findings that domestic violence incidents escalated by approximately 8% following pandemic-related lockdown orders. Factors such as heightened stress, unemployment, and financial hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic have contributed to this surge. In 2022, the number of active protective orders in the Texas Department of Public Safety - Texas Crime Information Center database increased exponentially in the proposed project's 114-county target area, as follows: The number of active protective orders reported increased by more than 400% between 2021 and 2022, from 59,114 to 258,918. There is still a critical need for survivors of domestic violence to have access to attorneys who can provide them with emergency legal aid. According to the Texas Department of Public Safety, the incidents of family violence protective order statistics for 2024 will not be available until May. Legal Aid lawyers will focus their efforts on providing free legal aid to residents of our 114-county service area with incomes of less than 200% of poverty. Branch Office # of # of PO's # of DV PO's as a % Counties Active in Incidents of Victims TCIC in 2022 in Dec. 2023 Abilene/ 19 10,159 3,139 323.64% Brownwood Amarillo 20 15,592 4,291 363.37% Dallas 1 80,236 25,175 318.71% Denton 5 14,733 4,455 330.71% Ft. Worth/ 7 71,268 17,631 404.22% Weatherford Lubbock 13 6,696 5,452 122.82% McKinney 5 26,499 6,466 409.82% Midland 6 7,144 3,022 236.40% Odessa 6 8,562 2,384 359.14% Plainview 10 1,371 437 313.73% San Angelo 8 3,783 1,729 218.80% Waxahachie 2 5,606 1,972 284.28% Wichita Falls 12 7,269 1,410 515.53% TOTAL 114 258,918 77,563 333.82% Family Violence Incidents from 2023 Crime in Texas, The Texas Crime Report. Protective Order information provided by Texas DPS. Protective Orders statistics reported are cumulative for the year as of December 31, 2022, but only includes those entered in the TCIC database . *For comparison purposes only: the protective orders do not necessarily correlate to the reported family violence incidents.

Project Approach & Activities:

Violence is an extreme form of aggression and includes assault, rape, or murder. For example, family violence is an epidemic affecting individuals in every community, regardless of age, economic status, race, religion, nationality, or education, and one of the most chronically under-reported crimes. One in four women will experience family violence in her lifetime, and while the incidence of male victimization is smaller, many males experience this type of victimization as well. Victims often feel powerless to help themselves and their children escape from their abusers. Many do not have the money necessary to escape, let alone to hire an attorney. Research indicates that access to civil legal aid is a crucial factor in reducing domestic violence rates. A study conducted by two economists found that providing legal assistance to victims significantly decreased the incidence of intimate partner violence. Their research suggests that legal aid is instrumental in offering long-term solutions for survivors, enhancing their safety and stability. This underscores the importance of ensuring that victims have access to legal resources to protect themselves and break the cycle of abuse. The safety and stability of survivors of family violence are our highest priorities. Each client survivor receives safety planning as a precursor to legal services. When a civil legal issue is identified that prevents the survivor from moving forward, those issues are addressed. Such issues might include custody, child support, landlord tenant issues (such as breaking a lease to escape the abuser or preventing the landlord from evicting the survivor), expunction of cases that prevent the survivor from securing employment or housing, or employment matters such as preventing an employer from terminating the employment of a survivor simply because that person has been victimized by the abuser. Client survivors apply for legal aid services in person, by phone, or online. All applicants identified as survivors are screened for eligibility. Once eligible for services, they are then referred to an attorney who is experienced in representing other survivor clients. LANWT then provides trauma-informed legal assistance to survivors of domestic violence. As part of LANWT's delivery system, the client works with the social work team and is provided safety planning and referred to other government or social service agencies capable of helping with emergency housing, clothing, counseling, training, childcare, health care, food and nutrition, financial education and advice, and employment. The level of service provided varies based on the needs of the survivor and staff availability. LANWT strives to provide some level of service to every eligible applicant. The provision of limited legal services could include legal advice and/or a brief service that could include a letter, a phone call, drafting pleadings for the survivor to use, providing instructions, and check lists for hearings when full representation is unavailable. In addition, the provision of extended legal service could include providing representation in court to secure court orders relevant to the client's victimization and safety, as appropriate. This could include protective orders or representation in other civil legal matters directly related to their victimization. In addition, other services LANWT provides include making applications for and appealing denials of crime victim's compensation benefits; assistance with landlords or employers threatening to adversely affect the survivors because of their victimization; and assistance in correcting or removing records that adversely impact the survivor's ability to secure a home or employment. Our Social Work team will provide clients with safety planning, crisis intervention, emotional support, court accompaniment, referrals to resources available to client survivors, and assisting clients in making applications for and navigating systems that are often difficult and confusing to navigate without an advocate. The support of the Social Work Team allows our attorneys to more efficiently represent clients while providing the clients with the most holistic and comprehensive service available.

Capacity & Capabilities:

LANWT has provided legal services to the low-income community for more than 73 years. To best respond to the survivor community, our entire staff has received training on being trauma-informed and communicating and practicing trauma-informed techniques. Every LANWT branch office has at least one dedicated, experienced family law attorney who focuses on representing survivors of crime and abuse. Most offices have multiple experienced family law/domestic violence/sexual assault attorneys. These attorneys are trained to deal with survivors as a special population, and they have experience and knowledge of the cycle of violence in intimate relationships. Some offices also have attorneys trained to identify and represent survivors of human trafficking. LANWT has a robust network comprised of community partner agencies, domestic violence shelters, and rape crisis centers in our service area who assist us in identifying survivors, providing emergency orders of protection, and supporting our work in finalizing their legal matters so survivors can finally escape their abusers. LANWT appreciates that while obtaining an emergency order of protection is a significant first step in escaping the cycle of violence, it is only the first step of many steps to providing a safe environment for survivors. Establishing physical, psychological, financial, and legal independence from the abuser is required for the survivor to achieve freedom and find safety, both for themselves and their children. LANWT uses a web-based electronic case management system for case management and reporting. LANWT partners with other victims' service providers to leverage the maximum result without duplication of efforts.

LANWT provides co-counseling and training opportunities as needed for staff and volunteers to deal with contested and particularly complex cases. LANWT regularly provides ongoing development training to advocates and attorneys practicing in these areas. LANWT attorneys are also presenters on topics related to the provision of civil legal services to victims of violent crime, reaching both legal aid attorneys and victims' service providers. LANWT uses all available methods of intake screening (in-person, telephone, zoom, online, paper, and electronic referrals from partners) to identify survivors and interview them as quickly as possible. Attorneys funded under this grant participate and present in local and state-wide training opportunities, participate in local and state-wide task forces, and provide education and outreach to client communities and service providers. Internally, LANWT has a Family Law/Domestic Violence Practice Team that meets monthly and communicates daily through a dedicated messaging system. The Family Law/Domestic Violence Practice Team shares information on options for various legal and practical issues involved in the representation of survivors. This has been a tremendous and effective resource for attorneys and staff throughout all LANWT offices, as the team consists of many attorneys with years of experience in handling family violence, sexual assault, and related cases. LANWT also has a separate LASSA Office (Legal Aid for Survivors of Sexual Assault) and large family/domestic violence units in Dallas and in Fort Worth offices. The family/DV and LASSA offices are dedicated to the representation of survivors.

Performance Management :

Goal: The Rural Safe At Home Project will improve the lives of survivors of crime, especially survivors of domestic violence, abuse, sexual assault, and human trafficking, in LANWT's 114-county project service area by providing access to the legal remedies and protections available to them. LANWT provides experienced legal staff, including attorneys who serve survivors of domestic violence, in its entire 114-county service area of the Texas Panhandle, North Central, and West Texas. This project will supplement those efforts throughout our entire service area by providing emergency and non-emergency legal aid, including advice, limited services, extended service representation, and access to various benefit programs. Objectives: To provide services to 750 survivors by September 30, 2026; To assist 325 survivors through the legal process by September 30, 2026; To help survivors secure 58 temporary protective orders requested by September 30, 2026; To help 50 survivors secure final protective orders by September 30, 2026; To provide crisis intervention services by social workers and other staff to people in 60 households by September 30, 2026. Measures: Our primary measurement tool, the Measurable Outcomes Listing Codes & Case Status Listings, was created by the Texas Access to Justice Foundation, which implemented its use among legal aid programs in Texas. It is a part of LANWT's comprehensive case management system and is used by our attorneys for case management. This system is also used by our staff to keep contemporaneous time records, provide a complete summary of the outcomes we were able to achieve, store electronic copies of case-related documents, and manage due dates and deadlines for case work. This same system generates reports that capture various data points, including the number of people who have received services under this project and what services they received. The case management system will be used to generate data reports on a quarterly basis to track program performance. Each client has an electronic file that collects a number of data points, including the types of legal issues addressed, the types of legal services provided, and the types of results obtained. The file also includes demographic, racial, and ethnic information, income and asset data, living situation data, including numbers in the household, type of housing, and a number of other data points. Every attorney, social worker, or legal advocate providing services to clients enters data into this system. Their time, funding sources, and types of activities are tracked for billing purposes. Attorneys and paralegals are required to keep their time contemporaneously. The case management system is our source to report the actions and activities of our staff for all funding sources. Data Management: Managing Attorneys will review all client-centered activity on a quarterly basis, along with weekly case staffing reviews of new cases. Client case files will be reviewed, and staff attorneys will report results on all cases opened, serviced, and closed during that period. LANWT's managing attorneys are trained to help staff attorneys continually improve their ability to provide the highest quality legal services to our clients. Results are examined and discussed so that staff attorneys remain sensitive to client needs. Open cases are also reviewed for the ongoing, timely progress of the attorney on individual case work plans.

Target Group :

In 2023 (the most recent year for which the Texas DPS has statistics), there were 77,563 incidents of domestic violence in LANWT's 114-county service area. According to past experience and anecdotal evidence from a number of District attorneys, women account for 90 to 95% of all adult

survivors of sexual assault, domestic abuse, and elder abuse. The primary target audience of this project is survivors of sexual assault, domestic abuse (including assault, stalking, and threats of physical violence), child abuse, and elder abuse. Survivors of other crimes are also eligible and encouraged to apply. LANWT recognizes the challenges faced by survivors are daunting and frequently include a variety of several civil legal issues best addressed with the help of an experienced attorney. One of the first challenges survivors face is leaving the abuser. With this challenge comes dealing with issues of physical, emotional, psychological, and financial separation from their abusive partner. To assist survivors with these challenges, LANWT staff will move quickly in filing for relief with the courts, obtaining orders for the protection of survivors and their children, and obtaining orders for financial support. After the entry of immediate orders, there are other civil legal issues that can arise. Addressing these other civil legal needs is critical to building a reality for survivors to become and remain self-sufficient. Economic stability and housing stability are critical to moving survivors away from abusers. Examples include housing issues when landlords seek to evict survivors simply because they were victimized, or employers seeking to terminate employment of the survivor because they were victimized. Survivors may also struggle with the prospect of attempting to secure employment with a criminal record. Such records can be, and are often, expunged, leaving the survivor with a clean criminal record and employers more willing to hire them. Survivors also face challenges associated with accessing various benefit programs for which they are eligible. LANWT attorneys represent clients every day, facing many of the aforementioned issues. In so doing, we offer compassionate staff who have decades of experience addressing these problems and helping survivors. When additional social or health services are needed, LANWT staff have long-standing working relationships with agencies and organizations that are capable and willing to help our clients.

Evidence-Based Practices:

Having served the low-income community for more than 73 years, LANWT has determined that a rapid response to a survivor's request for legal assistance is vital to long-term success in ending the cycle of violence. Obtaining orders of protection in cases of domestic violence is a key first step to helping survivors embark on their road to recovery. Whether as a stand-alone protective order or as a temporary restraining order or injunction as a part of a more comprehensive representation, that initial success provides a client with "breathing room" and an opportunity to feel safe. LANWT understands that survivors return to their abusers many times before finally leaving for good. All too often, they return because they feel they have no other option. When the abuser refuses to support the children of the relationship or uses other economic means to pressure the survivor, the survivor feels helpless again. Not only that, but when the legal system fails to address their core needs beyond protection, they fall into the same familiar patterns of victimization. To address this, LANWT has always endeavored to provide extended services to survivors of domestic violence. Obtaining favorable child support, spousal support, and property divisions is key in obtaining economic stability and independence. Keeping safe housing or employment is also critical to the survivor's ability to escape violence and provide a safe home for themselves and their children. For survivors of sexual assault and human trafficking, ensuring access to services and benefits available can be the most important step. Before that access is granted, basic documentation, such as birth certificates and driver's licenses, is necessary, and the lack of such documentation can be a significant obstacle. Those documents are often left behind and in the possession of the abuser. Often, solutions can be easily obtained through the courts. Once these obstacles are met, accessing services and benefits can still be insurmountable for someone who is untrained in the processes and procedures of appealing denials. LANWT staff work in these areas every day and know the most expedient routes to securing vital benefits and services. When rebuilding a survivor's life, access to everything from housing to employment to food and health care can become extremely difficult, if not impossible. LANWT attorneys have a long history of successfully protecting clients' rights to safety, housing, employment and healthcare in addition to accessing crime victim's compensation. In 2024, LANWT served more than 4,800 survivors of domestic violence program-wide. Extended services cases included representation in court and services provided by social workers, as well as other representation in administrative proceedings as required. The demand for our services continues to outstrip our ability to provide extended services to every eligible survivor. Due to this, prioritizing becomes critical to meeting the most urgent needs. LANWT uses its case management system to track both cases and outreach efforts and to identify patterns or trends, including geographic trends, racial or ethnic trends, or particular economic issues. LANWT continues to collect "needs assessment" data, which has identified family law and domestic violence as the two most pressing needs in our service area. LANWT will continue to dedicate resources to addressing this issue systematically, providing extended services to survivors when and where possible. Looking beyond the immediate critical need for emergency orders of protection to a more holistic approach, LANWT will continue to provide services to survivors in accessing safe housing, meaningful employment, and the economic support necessary to support a family.

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Agency Name: Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas
Grant/App: 1696419 **Start Date:** 10/1/2025 **End Date:** 9/30/2026

Project Title: Rural Safe At Home Project
Status: Active Grant

Project Activities Information

Introduction

This section contains questions about your project. It is very important for applicants to review their funding announcement for guidance on how to fill out this section. Unless otherwise specified, answers should be about the EXPECTED activities to occur during the project period.

Selected Project Activities:

ACTIVITY	PERCENTAGE:	DESCRIPTION
Crisis Services	10.00	Services provided by social workers to help victims. Services include hotline, crisis counseling, phone and in-person information and/or referrals, accompaniment, advocacy for all necessary crisis procedures (medical, law enforcement, legal, shelter, etc.), crime victim compensation filing, assistance with other administrative forms and filings as appropriate.
Legal Advocacy	70.00	Legal Assistance: Provide victims with legal advice and/or brief services, including letters, phone calls, and other contacts when necessary. Representation in court to secure emergency orders of protection as appropriate to this grant. Assistance in making applications for and appealing denials of crime victim's compensation benefits.
Protective Order Assistance	20.00	Represent clients in court requesting Protective Orders. Legal Aid staff will draft court pleadings and orders, counsel clients, represent clients before the court, and follow through to ensure orders are properly filed and enforced.

CJD Purpose Areas

PERCENT DEDICATED	PURPOSE AREA	PURPOSE AREA DESCRIPTION

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Measures Information

Objective Output Measures

OUTPUT MEASURE	TARGET LEVEL
Number of final protective orders granted / obtained.	50
Number of final protective orders requested.	70
Number of survivors assisted through the legal process.	325
Number of survivors receiving crisis counseling.	60
Number of temporary protective orders granted / obtained.	58
Number of temporary protective orders requested.	70
Number of times survivors are accompanied to court.	6
Number of victims / survivors seeking services who were served.	750
Number of victims seeking services who were not served.	300

Objective Outcome Measures

OUTCOME MEASURE	TARGET LEVEL

Custom Output Measures

CUSTOM OUTPUT MEASURE	TARGET LEVEL

Custom Outcome Measures

CUSTOM OUTCOME MEASURE	TARGET LEVEL

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