

Supporting Northeastern's Domestic Violence Institute During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CLINIC

This collaboration among Northeastern University and the School of Law's (NUSL) Domestic Violence Institute (DVI) and NuLawLab seeks to rapidly activate our Domestic Violence Clinic in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Our goal is to provide current victims of intimate partner abuse in Dorchester, Massachusetts with: (1) remote NUSL law student assistance consistent with ordinary clinic operations; (2) a novel, secure means of video-documenting client information and evidence; and (3) digitally-automated court form generation and filing. Our efforts are already deeply coordinated with the Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission's COVID-19 Rapid Response Task Force and Suffolk Law LIT Lab's digital document assembly line. We need a total of \$62,000 to activate this plan. We can commence operations within days of securing sufficient pledges.

Around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic is substantially exacerbating the conditions for intimate partner abuse. Stay-at-home orders like the one in place in Massachusetts have trapped victims under the same roof as their abusers as the psychological and economic strain of confinement and isolation mounts. Across the country, 911 calls for domestic violence are increasing, straining already overburdened systems. Our proposed rapid response addresses these challenges. We can operate Northeastern's Domestic Violence Clinic, which is currently running with six students, for a relatively modest investment in mobile digital technology. Through the hard work of the Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission's COVID-19 Rapid Response Task Force and Suffolk Law LIT Lab's digital document assembly line, clinic students and clients will soon be



able to generate, assemble, and file the court forms needed to commence and litigate abuse prevention restraining orders.

Integral to the Domestic Violence Institute's mission is a commitment to empowering clients and client communities so that they can articulate and advance their own legal strategies and resolutions—both in their individual cases and in advocating for changes in the legal system that will benefit all victims. The Institute does this by making its faculty, staff, and students available to support clients in a wide range of community-based advocacy groups and institutions—offering basic abuse prevention representation to individual clients; expedited referrals of community group members to coop-



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erating lawyers for legal representation in more complex matters; assistance in securing institutional and financial support; and the opportunity to participate in collaborative research and demonstration grants. This proposal seeks to rapidly pivot the Domestic Violence Clinic into remote operations during the COVID-19 crisis through three coordinated means:

- **A simple, custom-designed, one-page informational intake website that provides potential clients with an easy, safe, and secure way to seek DVI's services**
- **Deployment of the remote video recording app Jotto to safely and securely transmit client information and evidence to law clinic students without leaving a trace on clients' smartphones**
- **Activation of the new online emergency order court forms being rapidly developed under the leadership of the MA A2J Commission's COVID-19 Rapid Response Task Force and Suffolk Law School's LIT Lab that allow clients and law students to—for the first time—complete and file all the necessary court forms through a mobile app**

Undertaking this initiative is not without risk. We have planned the operations and budget to anticipate the dominant concerns. Law school clinic students will be directly supervised in their work helping clients by DVI



LINE ITEM	AMOUNT
NUSL D.V. Clinic (Spring & Summer 2020)	
Margo Lindauer Course Buy-Out 1 Class @ Bouvé (Academic Year 2021)	\$15,000
Morgan Wilson Salary Off-Set/Stipend	\$15,000
Supplemental Student/Staff Misc. Expenses	\$1,000
Personal Protective Equipment	\$1,000
Sub-Total	\$32,000

Technology (1 year)	
Jotto License Fee	\$20,000
Informational/Intake Website Hosting/ Site Design	\$3,000
Court Form Assembly Line Expenses Suffolk Law School, GBLS, MLRI	\$7,000
Sub-Total	\$30,000

PROJECT TOTAL \$62,000

director Margo Lindauer and DVI legal Fellow Morgan Wilson. Our technology partners are top of the line: The online Domestic Violence Clinic intake page is being built by Every Coast; Jotto is being licensed to us by leading civic tech firm Quadrant 2; and the automated court forms are being built by a national rapid response team assembled by Suffolk Law's LIT Lab under the direction of the Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission. We anticipate that the digital innovations we are deploying in crisis will continue when the clinic returns to regular operations and have plans to address forthcoming challenges.

Our lean budget, shown above, prioritizes safety and speed. With \$32,000 dedicated to DVI clinic operations, supervisory time among faculty and staff can be freed up. And only \$30,000 secures the cutting-edge technology needed to implement.

This is a crisis that none of us have seen in our lifetimes. It is taking a particularly dangerous toll on people trapped at home with their abuser. With your support, Northeastern's premier domestic violence clinic can respond, building a solution that enhances access to justice during the current crisis and beyond.