

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

HOTEL SHELTER

This collaboration among Northeastern University School of Law's (NUSL) Domestic Violence Institute (DVI), NuLawLab, and a hotel 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) safe, supervised shelter; (2) remote NUSL law student assistance consistent with ordinary clinic operations; (3) a novel, secure means of video-documenting client information and evidence; and (4) 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 \$105,000 to activate this plan for 30 days and an additional \$43,000 for every month thereafter. We can commence operations within five 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. At the same time, the public health restrictions being implemented to combat the spread of the virus are drastically reducing victims' access to alternative housing and legal relief as hotels shut down; interstate travel restrictions are put in place; and courthouses and legal service providers move exclusively online. Across the country, 911 calls for domestic violence are increasing, straining already overburdened systems. Our proposed rapid response addresses each of 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. And on account of the generosity of the hotel, we can provide shelter that is supervised by experienced domestic violence staffers.

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 cooperating lawyers for legal representation in more complex matters; assistance in securing institutional and financial support; and the opportunity to participate in

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collaborative research and demonstration grants. This proposal seeks to rapidly pivot the Domestic Violence Clinic into remote operations during the COVID-19 crisis through four coordinated means:

- **Safe, supervised shelter for clients who need it at the hotel**
- **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. The shelter site will be supervised by experienced domestic violence case-managers, who will provide a mix of in-person and online support, and secured by university campus police. All operations that require physical proximity between individuals will be conducted in accordance with applicable public health directives. Regular meal service at the shelter will be provided under contract with a local restaurant. Law school clinic students will be directly supervised in their work helping clients by DVI 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

| 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 |

| Hotel (30 days) | |
|---|-----------------|
| Front Desk Admin Staff: \$15/hour; 2 8-hour shifts per day | \$7,200 |
| Cleaning: \$15/hour; 1 8-hour shift per day | \$3,600 |
| Security: 24 hour coverage? \$15/hour; Overnight 10 hours per day | \$4,500 |
| On-Site Social Worker: Mix of On-Site and Virtual. \$25/hour x 12 hours per day? | \$9,000 |
| Food Service: Small business/restaurant in Dorchester. Partner with a local restaurant 2 meals per day @ \$20 each = \$1,200 per person Budgeting for 10 guests total | \$12,000 |
| Transportation | \$2,000 |
| Personal Protective Equipment | \$5,000 |
| Sub-Total | \$43,300 |

| 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 **\$105,300**

up. Additionally, \$43,000 will be allocated to secure safe and supervised housing and meals. 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.