

National Institute of Justice

Award Title: The Long-Term Effects of Civil Legal Services on Battered Women	
Award Description: <p>The goal of this three-year research study is to contribute to understanding the role of civil legal services as an intervention response to the crime of domestic violence. Project objectives include: 1) conducting a 2-year, longitudinal outcome study of women receiving civil legal services; 2) testing a conceptual model that looks at both the direct effects of civil legal services on safety, psychological well-being and economic self-sufficiency outcomes; as well as the mediating effects of the quality of the attorney client relationship on women's sense of empowerment and study outcomes; 3) examining the total costs of services in relation to the severity of abuse and outcomes; and 4) disseminating study findings to practitioners and policy makers working to reduce the incidence and impact of domestic violence on victims.</p> <p>The four primary research questions driving this study are: (1) what is the direct relationship between civil legal services and safety (re-victimization by her former or a new partner), psychological well-being, and economic self-sufficiency for battered women over time? (2) Does the quality of the attorney-client relationship mediate the relationship between civil legal services and women's sense of empowerment over time? (3) What is the indirect effect of civil legal services on the study outcomes mediated through women's sense of empowerment? (4) Are there differences in the relationship between civil legal services received and the above mentioned outcomes for women in urban versus rural communities?</p> <p>A longitudinal panel study design will be used to examine outcomes related to receiving civil legal services for battered women. The research team will recruit 300 women (150 urban and 150 rural) who self-identify as victims of domestic violence who contact Iowa Legal Aid for Civil Legal Services. Recruitment of women will occur in three waves. The team will conduct an initial assessment interview and five follow-up interviews at 6, 12, 18, and 24 months. The research team will also collect data on the type, amount, and length of civil legal services these women receive.</p> <p>Descriptive analysis, bivariate analysis and hierarchical linear modeling will be done to address the various research questions. ca/hcf</p>	
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