



# ALASKA LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

Providing FREE high-quality civil legal services to Alaskans since 1967

## FACT SHEET: COMMUNITY JUSTICE WORKER PROGRAM

### COMMUNITY JUSTICE WORKERS: EXPANDING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Alaska Legal Services Corporation's Community Justice Worker (CJW) Program is a new approach to solving the justice gap, by upskilling non-attorney advocates across Alaska to provide certain legal services with ALSC's training and supervision. This program is the first-of-its-kind in the nation, a true innovation that looks beyond lawyer-based solutions to achieve justice.

**"Expanding access to justice requires innovation and moving past the idea that an attorney or a courtroom is the best or only solution for Alaskans." - Alaska Court System, Justice for All Statewide Action Plan**

### THE ACCESS TO JUSTICE GAP

Rural communities across the U.S. face inequities in employment, health care, and education, leaving individuals at higher risk for civil legal issues. These regions often lack legal counsel and resources to address such challenges. According to the 2022 report *The Justice Gap: Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-Income Americans* by the Legal Services Corporation, 92% of serious legal problems for low-income Americans went unresolved or under-addressed last year. In Alaska, the situation is worse: just 1.13 attorneys are available per 10,000 Alaskans in poverty. Many areas are "legal deserts," where residents face issues like domestic violence, housing loss, and debt collection without any legal aid.

### JUSTICE IN ACTION: HOW THE CJW PROGRAM WORKS

The CJW Program bridges the justice gap by recruiting and training qualified non-lawyer advocates—including paralegals, tribal advocates and employees, village health aides, social service workers, undergraduate and law school students—to serve Alaskans who cannot afford or otherwise access civil legal help. CJWs supplement existing ALSC staff and pro bono attorney efforts to help Alaskans in their community with:



Accessing  
Unemployment  
Benefits



Debt Collection  
Defense



Domestic Violence  
Protective Order  
Advocacy



Estate Planning



Indian Child  
Welfare Act  
Matters



Public Assistance  
Delays + Denials

### KEY MILESTONES

**2022:** Alaska Supreme Court approves landmark waiver permitting CJWs trained and supervised by ALSC to provide limited scope legal help in certain situations, creating a pathway for a new non-lawyer community-based workforce.

**2023–Present:** ALSC launches the Community Justice Worker Resource Center (CJWRC), developing resources, curriculum, and certification. Through National Sciences Foundation Civic Innovation Grant and LSC Disaster Grant funding, ALSC has hired key CJWRC staff, including a CJW Support Director and 5 staff CJWs in disaster impacted areas.





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## PROVEN IMPACT

Since its inception in 2019, the CJW Program has achieved extraordinarily positive outcomes in completed cases, providing vital assistance to Alaskans who otherwise would have gone without legal help. The program delivers three essential benefits:



### **Workforce Development**

Skilled legal advocates offering expertise and growth opportunities.



### **Access to Justice**

Legal help in communities with no attorneys.



### **Stronger Communities**

Culturally informed support through trusted local advocates.

## PARTNERSHIPS AND RESEARCH

In partnership with Alaska Pacific University and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, ALSC launched the CJW Program. Local partners include the Association of Village Council Presidents and Kodiak Area Native Association.

The program's success has attracted national attention as a potential solution to the nation's growing civil justice crisis. Harvard's Access to Justice Lab is studying it, while an American Bar Foundation team is helping ALSC design evidence-based training to expand CJW skills and scale the program.

## PROGRAM RECOGNITION

- The program received a \$1 million 2022 CIVIC Innovation Grant from the National Science Foundation to expand further, recognizing its success in community engagement and creating scalable impact.
- During the 2024 US Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on "Closing the Justice Gap" LSC President Ron Flagg recognized the CJW Alaska Model as a promising and innovative legal service delivery solution.
- The American Academy of Arts & Sciences publication "Achieving Civil Justice" describes the Alaska Model as a proven and effective approach to closing the civil justice gap.
- Texas, Arizona, and other states across the nation are examining or in the process of replicating the CJW Alaska Model.

## CJW PROGRAM NEXT STEPS

Over the next year, the program will work with the American Bar Foundation affiliated research team to continue designing evidence-based training programs including the areas of eviction defense, disaster response, and probate. The CJWRC, with LSC Disaster Relief Grant funding, is developing resources and training to support CJWs in 12 natural disaster areas in American Indian and Alaska Native communities served by ALSC, Montana Legal Services, Oklahoma Indian Legal Services, Anishinabe Legal Services, and DNA People's Legal Services.

