

FUND OCLA'S SUPPLEMENTAL REQUEST OF \$555,000

The Problem

Due to unanticipated health care premium increases and non-personnel costs, the Northwest Justice Project (NJP) - the Office of Civil Legal Aid's contractor - reports a \$555,000 operating shortfall for its basic client service operations for FY 2017. An unexpected increase of nearly 24% in health care costs resulted in a \$435,000 expense. The unanticipated non-personnel costs are mostly attributable to increased telecommunications costs as a result of upgrading the statewide legal aid hotline (aka CLEAR) and NJP's communications infrastructure.

Impact If Not Funded

OCLA's supplemental request is designed to address NJP's budget shortfall. If not funded, NJP will need to cover this deficit by reducing personnel - 4 to 5 FTE - which will negatively affect service delivery. A reduction in staff will likely result in a loss of legal aid attorneys (and potentially office closures) in several rural communities (including Walla Walla, Aberdeen, and Colville) and the CLEAR hotline. Our state's legal aid system is overwhelmed by the large and growing demand and unmet need for critical legal services, and has suffered a loss of funding of nearly 20 percent since 2009. We cannot afford a further reduction.

The Solution

By funding the Office of Civil Legal Aid's supplemental request of \$555,000, we will protect the existing civil legal aid services available to low-income Washingtonians.

NJP is the core of Washington's civil legal aid system, which provides coordinated, effective, and technologically efficient legal services to eligible clients statewide. NJP delivers services through a statewide hotline (CLEAR), WashingtonLawHelp.Org, and 17 regional offices, providing legal advice, assistance, and representation for the most challenging legal problems faced by low-income families and individuals.