

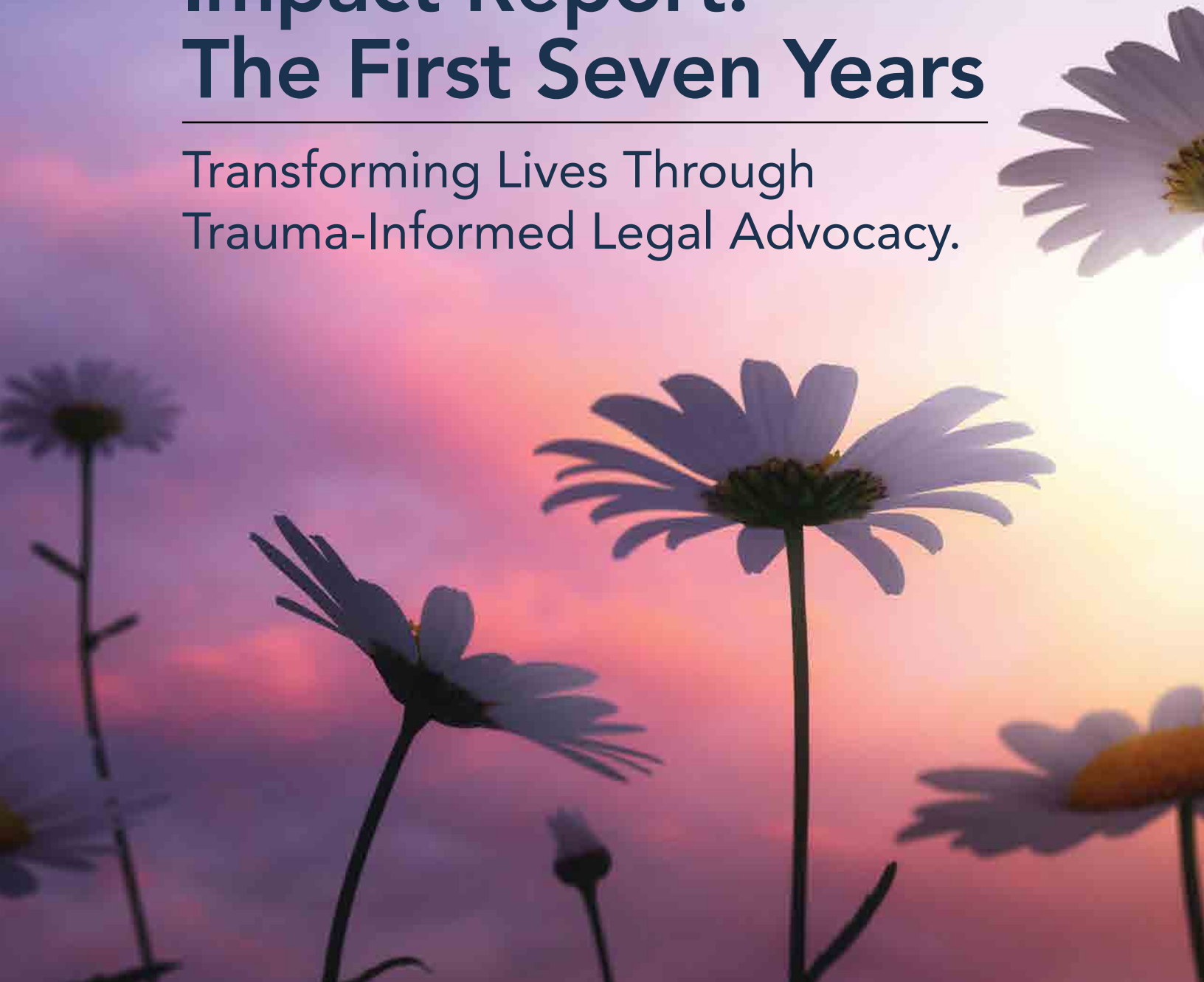


**Domestic Abuse**  
Legal Advocacy Center, PSC®

# Impact Report: The First Seven Years

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Transforming Lives Through  
Trauma-Informed Legal Advocacy.



## **IMAGINE:**

Imagine the fear of filing for a divorce when your abuser has told you repeatedly that if you did, you will never see your children again.

You believe him.

Imagine, after yet another violent beating, you tell your abuser you and the children are leaving. He tells you he will kill you if you do so.

You believe him.

Imagine you, the child, in perpetual terror, not knowing when the violence will start again.

Now imagine the sorrow of watching your mother get hit, choked, and beaten.

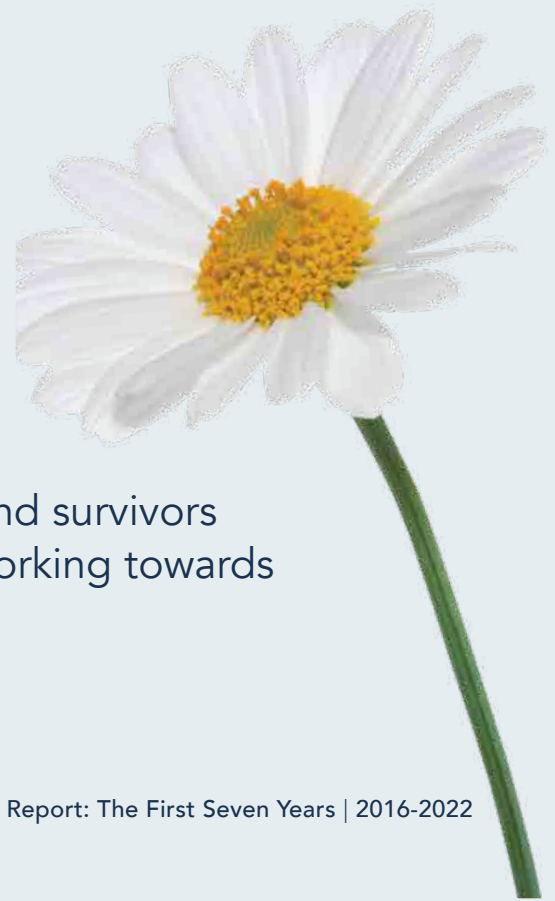
Imagine trying to intervene and receiving the abuser's fury. The frustration of not being able to stop it. The guilt that you made the situation worse.

Imagine divorcing the abuser.

The abuser uses the legal system to continue to control and harass the victim.

And often an abuser obtains custody of the children.

DALAC is committed to empowering victims and survivors of domestic abuse through legal advocacy – working towards breaking the cycle of domestic abuse.



**WHO WE ARE:**

Domestic Abuse Legal Advocacy Center, PSC (DALAC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit law firm.

Our approximately 45 volunteer attorneys provide trauma-informed pro bono legal services to victims and survivors of domestic abuse at shelters that our organization collaborates with in Minnesota.

We provide trainings and education at no cost to victims and survivors of domestic abuse, service providers, and the community with respect to legal rights, financial security, mental and physical health, and overall well-being.

**OUR MISSION:**

To stop the cycle of domestic abuse through legal advocacy.

**WHY WE CARE:**

75% of domestic violence-related homicides occur upon separation.

Studies show that victims need real, long-term alternatives to remaining in abusive relationships. In addition, only the availability of legal services in a county of shelter residence was found to reduce a victim's likelihood of abuse.

DEDICATED

EMPATHETIC

TRAUMA-INFORMED

VICTIM AND SURVIVOR FOCUSED

CULTURALLY AWARE

NON-JUDGMENTAL

SAFETY-CONSCIOUS

VALIDATING

AFFIRMING

TRUSTING

EMPOWERING

COMPASSIONATE

SENSITIVE

ACCEPTING

# OUR COMMITMENT TO TRAUMA-INFORMED SERVICES

**Minimize**  
**retraumatizing** clients  
and their children

Stay abreast of the  
**science of trauma**

Set policies and  
procedures that  
**follows research** on  
the effects of trauma

Focus resources on  
limiting the **effects of**  
**secondary or vicarious**  
**trauma** on our  
volunteer attorneys and  
shelter advocates

## HOW WE DO THIS WORK:

DALAC is Centered on the Needs of Clients, Volunteer Attorneys and Shelter Advocates:

- We prohibit children from being present during meetings between the resident and the volunteer attorney. This policy is based on research showing the impact of trauma on a child's development.
- We are dedicated to ensuring the mental well-being of our volunteer attorneys and the shelters' advocates. It is not uncommon for those of us who work in this area to be impacted by the trauma, known as secondary or vicarious trauma, of those we serve.





## Aamiina's Case Expenses:

\$ 4,434.72	Interpretation and Translations Services
125.00	Investigative Services
75.00	Service of Process
300.00	Witness Fees
2,277.00	Transcripts
77.97	Medical Records
<hr/>	
<b>\$ 7,289.69</b>	<b>Total Expenses</b>

## Aamiina's Story

*Name and facts have been altered for confidentiality.*

Aamiina, her husband, and their two children fled their home country in fear of persecution. They settled in an apartment in Minneapolis. The new home didn't banish some of the old behaviors, as Aamiina's husband continued to physically abuse her and began abusing the children. After a particularly violent night, Aamiina and the kids found respite in a shelter.

A DALAC volunteer attorney was assigned to Aamiina to represent her in her Petition for an Ex Parte Order for Protection (OFP). Due to the nature of the allegations against the children's father, the court appointed a guardian ad litem to represent the best interests of the children. And, on an emergency basis, Aamiina was awarded temporary sole custody and the husband was prevented from having any contact with his children who did not want to see their father because they were afraid of him.

The husband denied physically harming anyone and said Aamiina was a liar who was merely upset with him because of the family's lack of money. The court ordered the husband removed from the family's apartment. Aamiina and her children moved back to their apartment, which was in a secure building where the children had friends.

Aamiina's husband violated the OFP 12 times. She called the police each time. Six times the police showed up. Each time, the husband fled before the police arrived, and they said they could do nothing for her.

After a trial, a judge granted Aamiina's OFP. However, instead of issuing the decision for the typical 24 months from the date the trial ended, the judge issued it from the date Aamiina requested her OFP. Therefore, in six months, Aamiina will need legal services again to request an extension of the OFP.

Her first case may have ended, but her family's fear has not.

**We cannot do this work without your support.  
Donate today.**

### YEAR ONE

- MONTH 1 — Ex Parte OFP granted.
- MONTH 2 — Guardian ad litem appointed.
- MONTH 3
- MONTH 4
- MONTH 5
- MONTH 6
- MONTH 7
- MONTH 8
- MONTH 9 — First day of trial for 2 year OFP request.
- MONTH 10
- MONTH 11 — Second day of trial for 2 year OFP request.
- MONTH 12

### YEAR TWO

- MONTH 1 — Third day of trial for 2 year OFP request.
- MONTH 2
- MONTH 3 — Fourth day of trial for 2 year OFP request.
- MONTH 4
- MONTH 5
- MONTH 6 — Aamiina's OFP granted for six additional months.
- MONTH 7
- MONTH 8
- MONTH 9
- MONTH 10
- MONTH 11 — Request to extend OFP must be filed.
- MONTH 12 — Without extension of OFP granted, OFP will expire.

## THE NUMBERS:

Community members reached:

**12,000+**

Provided legal services to:

**496 clients**

Value of donated services by our volunteer attorneys:

**\$751,315**

Support from donations (corporate & individual) and grants:

**\$262,233**



## WHAT OUR PARTNERS SAY:

*"The legal system can be daunting—and at times overwhelming. Access to an [DALAC] attorney who understands the dynamics of domestic abuse and is trained in trauma-informed care, one who walks beside a victim and guides them through the court process, gives women the courage to secure the safety and justice they may be too frightened or intimidated to pursue on their own."*

– Home Free, Collaborating Shelter

*"DALAC's service to our clientele and its expectations of the volunteer attorneys is simply unmatched. I have worked for over twenty years with individuals and organizations attempting to support survivors of domestic abuse. Nowhere have I encountered the kind of excellent holistic model of service provision that DALAC implements. Through its trauma-informed approach, DALAC inspires and then directly enables its attorneys to develop the characteristics that equips us to bring our best selves to the practice of law, which simultaneously transforms us into better attorneys."*

– Heather Turner Morgan, Volunteer Attorney

## OUR SUCCESSES:

An evaluation of our services shows that legal advocacy provided by DALAC is both attainable by those in need and effective in helping victims and survivors of domestic abuse safely exit abusive relationships and situations.

Our process for representing clients in OFPs has resulted in a 100%<sup>1</sup> win rate for cases that went to trial.

<sup>1</sup> One case where the abuser filed a counter-OFP concluded with the court denying both OFPs after a trial. This is considered a win by us because the abuser was prevented from obtaining an OFP on our client.





## OUR SERVICES:



### For Our Clients\* – Trauma-informed pro bono legal services:

- Monthly legal advice clinics at corroborating shelters;
- In-Court representation on Order for Protections and Eviction Expungements; and
- Emergency Legal Advice.



### For Corroborating Shelter Staff:

Training on legal issues that affect victims and survivors of domestic abuse and on legal best practices from a trauma-informed perspective.



### For Our Volunteer Attorneys:

Advocacy skills training and mentorship.



### For Our Volunteer Attorneys & Corroborating Shelter Advocates:

Trainings on ethics, bias, trauma, mental illness awareness, and cultural humility in domestic abuse legal advocacy.



### For the Community:

Presentations on issues affecting domestic abuse victims and survivors.

*Legal advocacy empowers victims to reclaim their lives and break the cycle of domestic abuse.*

# Empower

## Future Expanded Services to Our Clients through the Empower Campaign:

The goal of the Empower Campaign is to raise \$500,000 to hire a team of attorneys to provide in-court representation for Harassment Restraining Orders, legal separation, divorce, child custody, child support, and spousal maintenance that extends past the client's residencies at the shelter.

Legal advocacy empowers victims to reclaim their lives and break the cycle of domestic abuse.

Learn more about the Empower Campaign at [domesticabuselegaladvocacycenter.org](https://domesticabuselegaladvocacycenter.org)

**We cannot do this work without your support.  
Donate today.**

\* Our clients are limited to the residents of the shelters that we collaborate with here in Minnesota. As a result, we do not accept any referrals from any individual or organization, nor do we provide services to the general public.

## Thank You!

**A huge thank you to our clients** for sharing their stories and allowing us to walk besides them. We are honored and privileged that you have trusted us and applaud your courage and strength.

**A huge thank you to our donors and corroborating shelters** for believing each woman's story and knowing the value that quality legal services has on victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

**A huge thank you to our volunteer attorneys** for your dedication, passion, and commitment. For understanding that every day, people enduring domestic abuse face impossible choices and as attorneys we are humbled to have the trust of our clients.

## We cannot do this work without you.

### Volunteer:

Are you a Minnesota licensed attorney in good standing?  
Our clients need you.

Request a volunteer attorney application at:  
[evon@domesticabuselegaladvocacycenter.org](mailto:evon@domesticabuselegaladvocacycenter.org)

*Malpractice insurance is provided by DALAC.*

### Donate:

Support our Empower Campaign fundraiser on Facebook  
or mail a check to 962 St. Clair Ave., St. Paul, MN 55105

*Note: Facebook does not charge processing fees for your donation.*



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962 St. Clair Ave., St. Paul, MN 55105  
(651) 776-2900 | [evon@domesticabuselegaladvocacycenter.org](mailto:evon@domesticabuselegaladvocacycenter.org)

[domesticabuselegaladvocacycenter.org](http://domesticabuselegaladvocacycenter.org)

