



## ▶ OUR WORK IS ESSENTIAL

The Texas Access to Justice Foundation (TAJF) works to ensure that ALL Texans have equitable access to justice. By funding civil legal aid organizations across the state, TAJF supports the civil legal needs of Texans most at risk—which has become even more essential during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## MORE FUNDING IS NEEDED

Due to unexpected interest rate cuts in March 2020, the Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) program—which helps fund TAJF's access to justice efforts—saw a 50% reduction in just 13 days and is losing approximately \$700,000 each month. Future indicators predict this staggering loss could continue until 2024.



## WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE LEGAL NEEDS OF TEXANS?

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly 5.2 million Texans qualified for civil legal aid. This number is increasing as we continue to see the devastating financial and economic fallout, unemployment, and uncertainty caused by COVID-19.

*Continued*

## WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE LEGAL NEEDS OF TEXANS?



### ▶ **Victims of Domestic Abuse or Sexual Assault**

Due to stay-at-home orders put in place during the pandemic, domestic violence calls have risen across Texas. In the aftermath of domestic violence, a host of legal issues can arise—safety and financial concerns at home, child-custody issues, Crime Victims' Compensation claims, and access to health insurance—the list is long.



### ▶ **Children and Families**

Unemployment, the threat of eviction and/or utility shutoff, and the potential of increased medical needs have put additional strain on the resources of low-income families, especially as childcare needs have increased during the pandemic.

## ▶ HOW HAS TEXAS LEGAL AID RESPONDED TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

### **Legal aid providers are stepping up to cast every possible lifeline to those impacted by COVID-19.**

To coordinate advocacy efforts to maximize resources, legal aid providers supported by TAJF formed a statewide collaborative team called **Texas Legal Aid Partners COVID Response**.

The legal aid community is participating in the **Texas Eviction Diversion Program (TDEP)** pilot project to help Texas tenants stay in their homes and provide landlords an alternative to eviction. A web portal, **StopTXEviction.org**, is designed to provide information and resources.

Thirteen TAJF grantees formed the **Texas Veterans Legal Aid Coalition** and pivoted from coordinating in-person veteran legal aid clinics to virtual clinics across the state, along with creating a series of videos about benefits available for veterans.

Additionally, resources and support have been made readily available virtually by grantees on social media channels and through **TexasLawHelp.org** while in-person clinics are not possible.

## WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE LEGAL NEEDS OF TEXANS?

### How Can YOU Help?

If you'd like to help make sure Texans in need of civil legal aid aren't left behind in the economic fallout of COVID-19, there are several ways you can positively impact the lives of those who TAJF and our grantees serve:

- Donate to the Emergency Legal Aid Fund for Texans impacted by COVID-19
- Name the Foundation as a *cy pres* recipient in your next class action case
- Sponsor an Equal Justice Works Fellowship
- Donate excess officeholder funds to the TAJF Legacy Fund
- Volunteer at your local legal aid program
- Bank at a Texas IOLTA Prime Partner to help increase IOLTA funding
- Purchase an "And Justice for All" license plate to demonstrate your support

[www.tajf.org](http://www.tajf.org)

## THANK YOU TO THE SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS

for its continued support of civil legal aid and to legal aid groups across the state working tirelessly on behalf of our most vulnerable Texans. There is always more to be done to ensure that the civil legal needs of those who qualify are met—especially during a global pandemic.



### ▶ Elderly and Persons With Disabilities

Aging residents have been more isolated due to coronavirus fears and are at an increased risk of exploitation. Many Texans with disabilities worry about medical costs and denial of benefits, exacerbated by COVID-19. Legal assistance for issues such as special education, accessibility, and housing is needed.



### ▶ Veterans

Veterans face many challenges reintegrating into civilian life, made more difficult by the pandemic. Legal issues—including eviction and the inability to access benefits—must be handled in order to keep Texas veterans from falling through the cracks during COVID-19.



"We appreciate the tireless work our legal aid partners, the generous Texas legal community, and the Texas Legislature put in to uphold the accessibility of justice for all, especially during this challenging year."

—Hon. Deborah G. Hankinson, TAJF Board Chair

## About the Texas Access to Justice Foundation

The Texas Access to Justice Foundation ([www.tajf.org](http://www.tajf.org)), created by the Supreme Court of Texas in 1984, is the leading state-based funding source for the provision of civil legal aid in Texas. The organization is committed to the vision that all Texans will have equal access to justice, regardless of their income.

With the Foundation's funding, legal aid organizations provide free legal assistance in civil matters to more than 140,000 disadvantaged Texas families each year. These services include helping victims of domestic violence secure their safety and leave their abusers, protecting families from foreclosure and homelessness, securing benefits for our veterans, and protecting workers from abusive employers.

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### I want to help disadvantaged Texans have access to justice!

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