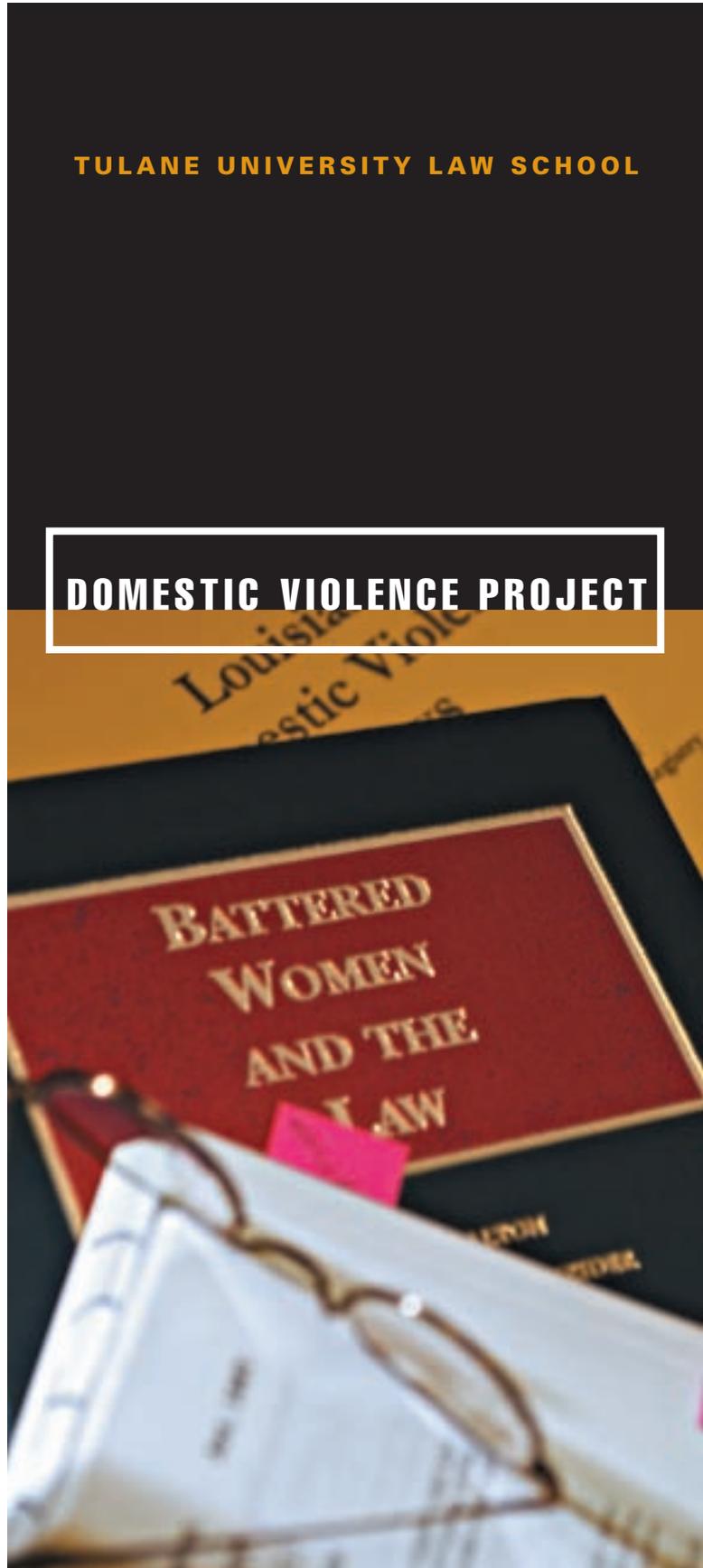


TULANE UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROJECT



Tulane University

LAW SCHOOL

Legal Education for the Global Society

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THE TULANE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROJECT
provides free legal assistance to indigent
adults who have legal needs resulting from
instances of physical, emotional, verbal,
or sexual abuse perpetrated by a current
or former spouse or dating partner, or
co-parent of a child.

Introduction

The Tulane Domestic Violence Project was established in 2002. The DV Project is inter- and intra-disciplinary, combining both legal and social work services to address the needs of each client in a wholistic manner. The DV Project provides direct legal representation and social work assistance to approximately 30 families per year, as well as advice to several victims' advocacy organizations and participation as a member of the City of New Orleans Domestic Violence Advisory Committee.

As an inter-disciplinary program, the DV Project works collaboratively with members of various professions who are vital to aiding victims and survivors of abuse. Each client served by the DV Project receives direct legal representation in family law matters, including protection from domestic abuse, divorce, child custody, and child and spousal support. Student attorneys also advocate for clients who have difficulties concerning employment, housing, credit records, and other issues as a result of domestic abuse. Graduate social work interns from Tulane's School of Social Work assist each client with non-legal needs, such as brief counseling, safety planning, and public benefits. Social work interns also provide general case management services designed to improve clients' access to various community and public resources. In addition, medical students from the Tulane School of Medicine provide valuable consultations regarding medical records, physical injuries, and medical procedures.

The Community We Serve

The DV Project represents clients with domestic relations matters, including petitions for protection from abuse, that may be heard in Orleans Parish Civil District Court. (Orleans Parish encompasses New Orleans, Louisiana.) During the 1990's, the domestic violence homicide rate in New Orleans was higher than the national average. Domestic violence continues to be a pervasive problem in the city, accounting for a significant percent of total homicides. In addition, New Orleans is an urban area with problems typical of cities its size, such as relatively high unemployment and poverty rates and a population in need of free legal services.

The DV Project serves as an additional source of assistance for victims of abuse in a community where there is a scarcity of such resources. The DV Project is able to assist women who, because of conflicts of interest, organizations' caseloads, or the client's income, cannot obtain legal assistance elsewhere. Also, because we offer comprehensive legal representation and the assistance of social work interns, our clients are not faced with a frustrating string of referrals to other service providers. This encourages clients to continue their pursuit of independence from their batterers.

Student Practice

Each year, the DV Project trains 12 third-year law students to litigate and advocate on behalf of victims and survivors of domestic violence. Student practice rules adopted by the Louisiana Supreme Court and local federal courts allow third-year law students to represent indigent clients under the supervision of a licensed attorney. Student attorneys participating in the DV Project maintain primary responsibility for every aspect of each case to which they are assigned. In this way, student attorneys gain practical experience in representing clients. They also gain a unique understanding of the pervasive impact of domestic violence on the families involved and the community at large.

Through the DV Project, which is one of several litigation clinics in the Tulane Law Clinic, student attorneys gain practical skills that can be applied in any legal practice. The DV Project program includes training in client counseling, case planning and management, fact investigation, litigation, and professionalism. Student attorneys can also expect to improve their skills in written and oral advocacy, time management, and legal analysis and reasoning.

*Professor Tania Tetlow, Director of the DV Project,
with 3rd year student Chanel Glover.*

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Case Selection

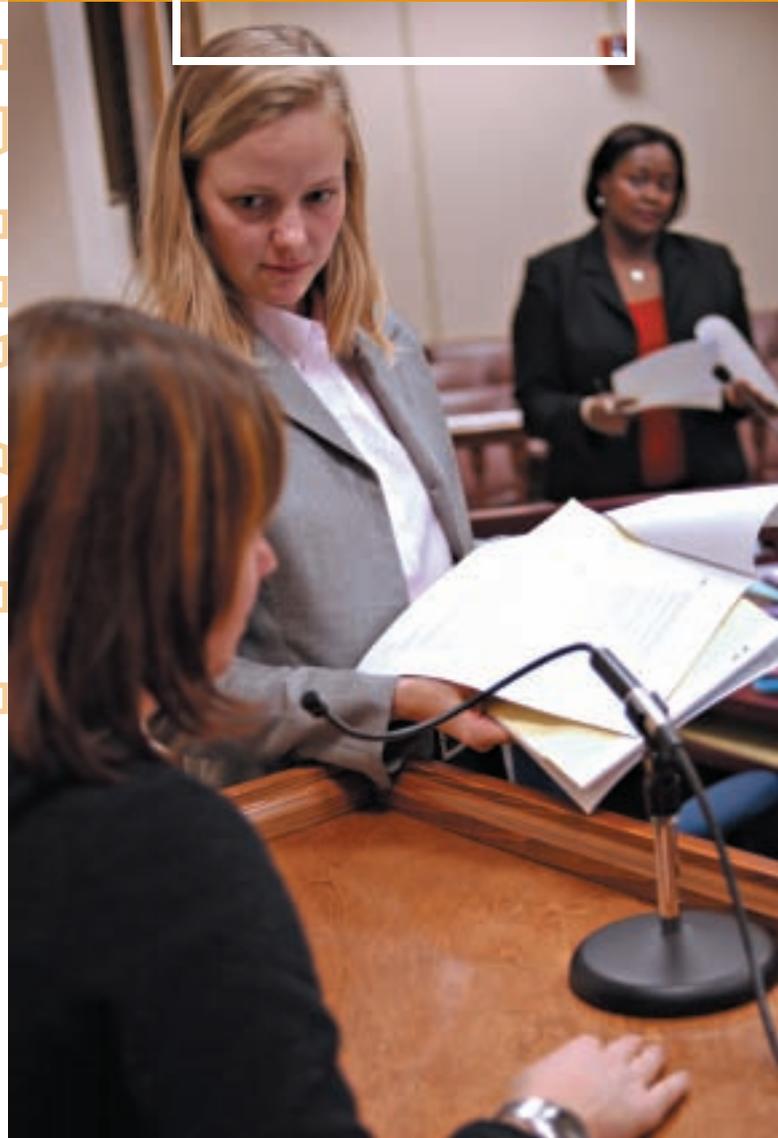
The DV Project has collaborative relationships with several community organizations. Several of these agencies serve as the DV Project's community partners. Most of the DV Project's clients are referred by its community partners, which screen cases to ensure that the cases meet the DV Project's basic case acceptance criteria.

Beyond the Courtroom

The DV Project provides legal services beyond the courtroom in the legislative and administrative arenas. The DV Project works collaboratively with The Public Law Center (TPLC)—a joint venture of Tulane and Loyola Law Schools—to address the legislative and agency rulemaking needs in the domestic violence arena. TPLC staff meets early in the academic year with DV Project personnel to identify legislative and administrative issues. Second and third year law students in the Center's clinics research and draft proposed legislation and agency regulations to produce instruments responsive to clients' needs. Working closely with the DV Project and clients, during the spring semester TPLC personnel provide technical assistance through the legislative enactment and rule promulgation processes. The DV Project also works with the Tulane School of Public Health to conduct epidemiological research on the rates of DV in the city and state. Through these activities, the DV Project provides a broad range of representation by fostering a more favorable legislative and regulatory landscape for professionals from law, social work, and medicine, as well as for the client community we serve.

The DV Clinic provides legal services beyond the courtroom in the legislative and administrative arenas.

Client and student attorney in court





DV Project student attorneys in court

The Tulane Law Clinic's approach to clinical legal education through the DV Project and associated programs is quite unique. Its direct representation is both inter-disciplinary and intra-disciplinary. The DV Project provides both direct representation and advocacy in the public policy arena. The program has become a valued resource in the surrounding community. The Tulane Law Clinic has successfully implemented a program to educate law and other graduate students while providing services for families in crisis, increasing community awareness about domestic violence, and helping break the cycle of abuse in affected families.

For more information:
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COMMUNITY

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representation and advocacy
in the public policy arena.**

