

Article 37B.

Domestic Violence Victim Assistance Act.

§ 7A-474.16. Legislative findings and purpose.

The General Assembly of North Carolina declares it to be its purpose to provide access to legal representation for domestic violence victims in certain kinds of civil matters. The General Assembly finds that such representation can best be provided in an efficient, effective, and economic manner through established legal services programs in this State. (2004-186, s. 4.1.)

§ 7A-474.17. Definitions.

The following definitions shall apply throughout this Article, unless the context otherwise requires:

- (1) "Domestic violence victim" means a resident of North Carolina that has been subjected to acts of domestic violence as defined in G.S. 50B-1. A resident is not required to seek a protective order under Chapter 50B of the General Statutes to qualify as a domestic violence victim under this Article.
- (2) "Legal assistance" means the provision of any legal services, as defined by Chapter 84 of the General Statutes, consistent with this Article. Provided, that all legal services provided hereunder shall be performed consistently with the Rules of Professional Conduct promulgated by the North Carolina State Bar. Provided, further, that no funds appropriated under this Article shall be used for lobbying to influence the passage or defeat of any legislation before any municipal, county, state, or national legislative body.
- (3) "Established legal services program" means the following not-for-profit corporations using State funds to serve the counties listed: Pisgah Legal Services, serving Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, Polk, Rutherford, and Transylvania Counties; and Legal Aid of North Carolina; or any successor entity or entities of the named organizations, or, should any of the named organizations dissolve, the entity or entities providing substantially the same services in substantially the same service area. (2004-186, s. 4.1; 2008-194, s. 3(c).)

§ 7A-474.18. Eligible activities and limitations.

(a) Eligible Activities. – Funds appropriated under this Article shall be used only for the following purposes:

- (1) To provide legal assistance to domestic violence victims.
- (2) To provide education to domestic violence victims regarding their rights and duties under the law.
- (3) To involve the private bar in the representation of domestic violence victims pursuant to this Article.

(b) Eligible Cases. – The funds shall be prioritized by each legal services program to serve the greatest number of eligible clients, with emphasis placed on representation of clients needing legal assistance with proceedings pursuant to Chapter 50B of the General Statutes. Legal assistance shall be provided to eligible clients under this Article only in the following types of cases:

- (1) Actions for protective orders issued pursuant to Chapter 50B of the General Statutes;

- (2) Child custody and visitation issues; and
 - (3) Legal services which ensure the safety of the client and the client's children.
- (c) Limitations. – No funds appropriated under this Article shall be used for any of the following purposes:
- (1) To provide legal assistance with respect to any criminal proceeding; or
 - (2) To provide legal assistance to any prisoner within the Division of Prisons of the Department of Adult Correction with regard to the terms of that person's incarceration. (2004-186, s. 4.1; 2011-145, s. 19.1(h); 2012-83, s. 16; 2017-186, s. 2(h); 2021-180, s. 19C.9(p).)

§ 7A-474.19. Funds.

Funds to provide representation pursuant to this Article shall be provided to the North Carolina State Bar for provision of direct services by and support of the established legal services programs. The North Carolina State Bar shall allocate these funds directly to each of the established legal services programs with Pisgah Legal Services receiving the allocation for Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, Polk, Rutherford, and Transylvania Counties. Funds shall be allocated to each program based on the counties served by that program using the following formula:

- (1) Twenty percent (20%) based on a fixed equal dollar amount for each county.
- (2) Eighty percent (80%) based on the rate of civil actions filed pursuant to Chapter 50B of the General Statutes in that county.

The North Carolina State Bar shall not use any of these funds for its administrative costs. (2004-186, s. 4.1; 2008-194, s. 3(d).)

§ 7A-474.20. Records and reports.

The established legal services programs shall keep appropriate records and make periodic reports, as requested, to the North Carolina State Bar. The North Carolina State Bar shall report annually to the Chairs of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety on the amount of the funds disbursed and the use of the funds by each legal services program receiving funds. The report to the Chairs of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety shall be made by January 15 of each year beginning January 15, 2006. (2004-186, s. 4.1; 2013-360, s. 18B.5.)