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# The Have Justice—Will Travel Innovative “System of Services”

In the United States and around the world, there is an overwhelming need for abused women to receive legal services to escape their abuser and become independent survivors on their own. No nonprofit providing service for abused women in the US has been able to fully serve all the desperate women who call. For the first few years of Have Justice Will Travel’s (HJWT) existence, we had to make choices of who to serve and decided we must serve the most needy who have the least resources. All services provided for HJWT clients are free.

A major problem is that the legal system in the US does little to assist abused women who seek legal help unless they have money to pay a lawyer. Shelters and victim advocacy groups have done a wonderful job of making the public aware of the services they provide. Many in the general public, however, think that shelters and protective orders are all women need. That is not all abused women need. Without the full range of legal and financial assistance she needs to free herself, the woman has little choice but to return to her abuser or go on to another abuser. Then the public says, “What can be done? The abused will always go back to an abuser. It is hopeless and women can’t change.” YES, women can and do change. They need an extensive amount of help and resources to change. HJWT provides a way out.

Abused women who escape violence become survivors as opposed to victims when they are surrounded with a comprehensive system of legal assistance, social services, and education. When this happens not only do the women and their children benefit, but so does society. HJWT has designed such a

system and offers it to as many as can be served through private donations, and foundation and government grants.

Referrals and requests for services for abused women come to HJWT from every rung of society and from a wide range of sources: victim advocacy groups, professionals, law enforcement, the entire Vermont legal system from lawyers to courts, media pieces about HJWT, former clients, plus many abused women who call on their own wanting to be a new client.

Dissatisfied and very frustrated with being unable to work with everyone who calls HJWT (97% of HJWT clients are women or children—3% are men), our Central Vermont office staff designed an innovative system to serve everyone who calls, with several types of services provided at different levels given each caller’s need, ability, and financial situation. The HJWT staff reviewed what nonprofits, law school legal clinics, and others serving abused women do, and also looked at what is not being done, so that an all-inclusive system could be designed. With its innovative system, HJWT is able to give one of several types of free services for everyone who calls. See below both a listing of the different services, plus a diagram/flowchart of the services HJWT now provides.

The HJWT model works with clients so they find strength, determination, and resolve that lead to positive long-term changes in their lives and the lives of their children, thereby, ending the generational cycle of abuse.

*Wynona I. Ward, Esq. and E. Robin Goodrum, Legal Intern*

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## HJWT Model for Partial Client Services

### Serving Call-Ins (A Call-In Client)

Every caller referred to HJWT receives some assistance over the telephone. The HJWT paralegal/client services coordinator (PL/CSC) identifies legal issues, consults with an attorney, then either offers one time advice or referral to other legal services. The PL/CSC also identifies government and community resources that are available to help and shares this information with the client. Case then closed for HJWT.

### Consulting with Callers (A Consulting Client)

A PL/CSC or legal intern provides legal consultation over the course of several telephone calls to those clients requiring three to five hours of help with their case. The PL/CSC identifies and evaluates the person’s multiple needs, consults with an attorney, then offers advice and information about community resources available to them. Case then closed for HJWT.

## Legal Empowerment Assistance Program (A LEAP Client)

For more complex cases, when HJWT ascertains that a “consulting client” requires long-term on-going support navigating the legal system, HJWT offers its Legal Empowerment Assistance Program (LEAP), which is coordinated by Robin Goodrum out of the Central Vermont office. LEAP allows all HJWT offices to offer legal advice and direction throughout the development of the client’s case. LEAP meets the needs of many disadvantaged Vermonters for whom HJWT cannot provide full representation because of the limited number of attorneys HJWT is able to employ under current funding.

Legal and social services are provided with matters such as relief from abuse, divorce, child support, child custody, visitation, and guardianship. Both telephone and in-person assistance is provided. Case then closed for HJWT.

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# HJWT Model for Fully Represented Client Services (A Full Represented Client)

When a referral becomes a “Fully Represented Client,” then the client receives full legal representation by an attorney for case preparation, court hearings, and completion of all legal matters in Vermont Family and/or Probate Courts. The decision to provide full representation is based on the complexity of the case, whether the opposing party has an attorney, and the ability of clients to represent themselves in the courtroom. For the client who has participated in LEAP, much of the case preparation has been completed which generally allows an attorney to step-in for the final hearing only. Case then closed for HJWT.

## Have Justice Will Travel System for Client Services

