

# STATE OF NEW YORK

9120

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

## IN ASSEMBLY

September 26, 2025

Introduced by M. of A. RAJKUMAR -- read once and referred to the Committee on Governmental Operations

AN ACT to amend the executive law, in relation to providing free legal counsel to domestic violence survivors

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. The executive law is amended by adding a new section 577 to  
2 read as follows:

3 § 577. Civil legal services program for income-eligible domestic  
4 violence survivors. 1. Definitions. For the purposes of this section,  
5 the following terms shall have the following meanings:

6 (a) "Brief legal assistance" means individualized legal assistance  
7 provided in one or more single consultations by a designated organiza-  
8 tion to an income-eligible domestic violence survivor in connection with  
9 a divorce proceeding.

10 (b) "Designated organization" means a not-for-profit organization or  
11 association contracted to provide full legal representation or brief  
12 legal assistance pursuant to the program established by this section.

13 (c) "Director" means the executive director of the office for the  
14 prevention of domestic violence.

15 (d) "Divorce proceeding" means any action for divorce or special  
16 action as described in section one hundred seventy and one hundred  
17 seventy-a of the domestic relations law.

18 (e) "Full legal representation" means ongoing legal representation  
19 provided by a designated organization to an income-eligible domestic  
20 violence survivor. Such term includes all legal advice, advocacy, and  
21 assistance associated with such representation.

22 (f) "Income-eligible domestic violence survivor" means any individual  
23 who is covered by the term "victim of domestic violence" as such term is  
24 defined in section four hundred fifty-nine-a of the social services law,  
25 who is a resident of the state of New York aged 18 or older, and whose

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets  
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 annual gross household income is not in excess of two hundred fifty  
2 percent of the federal poverty guidelines as updated periodically in the  
3 Federal Register by the United States Department of Health and Human  
4 Services under the authority of 42 U.S.C. § 9902(2).

5 (g) "Program" means the civil legal services program for income-eligible  
6 domestic violence survivors established by this section.

7 2. Program. (a) Subject to appropriation, the coordinator shall imple-  
8 ment a program to provide full legal representation and brief legal  
9 assistance for income-eligible domestic violence survivors in divorce  
10 proceedings in the state.

11 (b) Any full legal representation commenced pursuant to the program  
12 shall continue until the final disposition of the divorce proceeding.

13 (c) Full legal representation or brief legal assistance performed by a  
14 designated organization pursuant to the program shall not supplant,  
15 replace, or satisfy any obligations or responsibilities of such desig-  
16 nated organization pursuant to any other program, contract, or agree-  
17 ment.

18 3. Training. The director shall work with relevant agencies to provide  
19 training and resources to designated organizations on topics related to  
20 domestic and gender-based violence, including training on economic abuse  
21 and trauma-informed engagement practices.

22 4. Outreach. The director shall create written materials that contain  
23 information about the program, any interpretation services that are  
24 available in divorce proceedings, and any other free or low-cost legal  
25 services or resources available for income-eligible domestic violence  
26 survivors in divorce proceedings. Such written materials shall be posted  
27 online and made available at relevant offices as determined by the  
28 director.

29 5. Report. No later than one year after the effective date of this  
30 section, and annually thereafter, the director shall submit to the  
31 governor, the temporary president of the senate and the speaker of the  
32 assembly a report on the program. Such report shall include, but need  
33 not be limited to, the following for the preceding year:

34 (a) the total number of income-eligible domestic violence survivors  
35 who requested to receive full legal representation or brief legal  
36 assistance through the program;

37 (b) the total number of income-eligible domestic violence survivors  
38 who requested to receive full legal representation or brief legal  
39 assistance through the program and did not receive such full legal  
40 representation or such brief legal assistance, and the reasons why;

41 (c) the total number of income-eligible domestic violence survivors  
42 who have received full legal representation through the program whose  
43 divorce proceedings have been concluded, including whether each such  
44 divorce proceeding was contested or uncontested, and the total amount of  
45 fees paid for each such full legal representation;

46 (d) the total number of income-eligible domestic violence survivors  
47 who have received full legal representation through the program whose  
48 divorce proceedings are ongoing, including whether each such divorce  
49 proceeding was contested or uncontested, and the total amount of fees  
50 paid for each such full legal representation;

51 (e) the total amount of fees paid to designated organizations;

52 (f) any challenges in implementing or operating the program; and

53 (g) the total estimated amount of funding required for the program for  
54 the upcoming year.

55 6. Private right of action. Nothing in this section or the adminis-  
56 tration or application thereof shall be construed to create a private

1 right of action on the part of any person or entity against agency,  
2 official, or employee thereof.

3 7. Exemption. The director shall have the authority to exempt any  
4 city, town or village from the provisions of this section if the direc-  
5 tor determines such city, town or village has a comparable program.

6 § 2. This act shall take effect on the one hundred eightieth day after  
7 it shall have become a law. Effective immediately, the addition, amend-  
8 ment and/or repeal of any rule or regulation necessary for the implemen-  
9 tation of this act on its effective date are authorized to be made and  
10 completed on or before such effective date.