

**Press and Outreach Update: October 9, 2023**

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Upcoming Events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ October 9, 2023 In-person/Hybrid Board Meeting</li><li>▪ January 8, 2024 Virtual Board Meeting</li><li>▪ March 11, 2024 In-person/Hybrid Board Meeting</li><li>▪ May 13, 2024 In-person/Hybrid Board Meeting</li><li>▪ May 13-14, 2024 Committee Meetings, to be scheduled as needed</li><li>▪ July 8, 2024 Virtual Board Meeting</li><li>▪ September 9, 2024 In-person/Hybrid Board Meeting</li></ul>





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## Domestic violence: Navigating the legal system

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POSTED ON SEPTEMBER 14TH, 2023 | BY: [MARSHA HART](#)

*Editor's Note: This is the final installment in our four-part series on services for victims of abuse and violence in Pierce County. Previous stories include:*

- [\*One woman's story of escaping an abusive relationship\*](#)
- [\*Inside the Crystal Judson Center, a clearinghouse for helping abuse victims\*](#)
- [\*Other resources available for survivors, catering to specific communities\*](#)

*Warning: This story includes descriptions of violence and abuse.*

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Domestic abuse can encompass verbal, emotional, or physical violence. Or all three.

Engaging with the legal system as a victim of domestic abuse can be scary, and many avoid calling for help at all. But when police respond to a domestic violence incident, laws dictate what happens, depending on the timeframe.

If the crime happened within four hours of the call to law enforcement, officers are required to take the offender to jail, said Gig Harbor Police Chief Kelly Busey.

“Often it’s not even the involved parties who call,” Busey said. “We respond with at least two officers, because we’ve learned that these situations are emotionally charged at times. We separate the parties, and see what the potential for violence is, or if there has been violence. If so, we try to corroborate that with witness accounts, then determine who the primary aggressor is.”

For incidents that occurred more than four hours ago, officers can use their discretion to decide if someone should be arrested. If police make an arrest, they turn over the facts they collected to the prosecutor’s office. Prosecutors decide whether to charge them. “Booking doesn’t mean charges will be filed,” Busey noted.

### More than making an arrest

Making an arrest isn’t the only role police play in a domestic abuse call. Officers work with victims to develop a safety plan and encourage them to go somewhere the abuser won’t find them. Victims can then

access resources such as the Crystal Judson Family Justice Center in Tacoma or the other organizations that help with various needs. Victims can also file for a protection order online, Busey said.

The Gig Harbor Police Department works with a benevolent fund for crime victims that helps with the cost of temporary shelter, Busey said. In the cases of extreme risk — when a violent person may return and commit a significant act of violence — he said that officers can petition for an emergency protection order.

“We will petition on behalf of that person, wake up a judge in the middle of the night, and get the perpetrator served,” he said. “That doesn’t provide physical security, but what it does is enable us to instantly arrest for violation of that order, and we don’t have to build a second case.”



*Andrea Saunders, managing attorney of the Family Safety Project at Tacoma Pro Bono, and Communications Director Laurie Davenport discuss outreach plans in the Tacoma Pro Bono office. Photo by Marsha Hart*

Victims of felonies are assigned an advocate, he said. For misdemeanor cases, officers provide the victim with resources and steer them toward the Crystal Judson Family Justice Center.

## **Child victims**

For sexual assault victims under the age of 16 or of limited mental capacity, the Children’s Advocacy Center at Mary Bridge Hospital conducts a forensic interview. The center has a team of mental health providers, forensic interviewers, advocates, social workers and medical staff.

For victims older than 16, an officer conducts the interview. They may collect follow-up statements as the victim's memory becomes clearer, he said.

Nobody typically represents victims of felonies in court. A prosecutor, who represents the state, handles the case. Victims or survivors of domestic violence who decide to report the abuse and access the legal system may qualify for free services through nonprofits that provide limited legal guidance.

## Legal resources

For those who need legal representation, the [Northwest Justice Project](#) and [Tacoma Pro Bono](#) provide attorneys who represent clients in child custody cases involving domestic violence. They can also help victims file for protection orders and represent them in family law cases.

Though Laurie Davenport is the communications director for Tacoma Pro Bono, she began working with the organization as an attorney in 2001. At that time she was its only attorney and worked half time. Since then the organization has changed, and grown.

Tacoma Pro Bono now includes a dozen attorneys who work in housing, and the Family Safety Project, which provides outreach with legal aid volunteers and advocates. The state provides funding for the program through the civil legal aid, and the Victims of Crime Act, federal money that the Justice Department distributes to each state, Davenport said.

And despite the name, it's not just for Tacoma. The organization provides outreach to rural communities as well, including Gig Harbor and the Key Peninsula.

"We started going out to communities during the pandemic," Davenport said. "We went out with the rental assistance people, and it stuck, because some areas have a poor transportation system, and poor Internet. It's important to meet people where they are. Sometimes they feel they can come talk, and it may be the first time that they talk about their situation."

## Complex needs

Often, the needs of domestic violence victims overlap, making the job of representing them complex, she said.

"One thing we know about domestic violence work is that it really requires a team to serve the clients," said Andrea Saunders, managing attorney for the Family Safety Project team at Tacoma Pro Bono.

Saunders said the Family Safety Project team began last year in an effort to address the increased need for consistent legal representation. The team includes one managing attorney, a paralegal, two staff attorneys, and one limited license legal technician, licensed to provide limited services. Previously, volunteers provided many of those functions. They still play an important role, she said.

"If we represent someone in a protection order, it is a collaborative relationship with the client, and our goal is to support them. But at the end of the day the decisions are theirs," she said.

Tacoma Pro Bono partners with the Crystal Judson Family Justice Center for direct referrals, Saunders said.

# Trauma and the legal system

Navigating the legal system can be overwhelming for anyone. For someone who has experienced a trauma, those feelings can be amplified. That's why Saunders said it is important for anyone ready to engage with the system to gather their support group.

"Who are the people around you who can help support you? Faith leaders, family members, friends, community advocates. Because you're going to need them," she said.

Davenport said the Family Safety Project sees thousands of clients each year. Many more need services, but the team triages cases to try to determine which ones they will take. The need far outweighs the human ability to help everyone who doesn't have the means to hire an attorney.

"People assume everyone has access to legal representation, but they don't. People end up forced back into a situation with the abuser, because they don't have access to money, or they have kids, and all of that can be resolved in court, if you can get into court to get temporary orders (for child support, or spousal maintenance) and divorce is a year and half thing," Davenport said. "Sixty percent of what we do is family law, and a large part of that is domestic violence."

## Empowering people

The cycle of abuse is complex, and Saunders said it takes a real emotional toll.

"To Pierce County's credit, they know that the work that all of these agencies is doing is really important, and that the need and services available is difficult to quantify," Saunders said. "So, the county has contracted with the [Battered Women's Justice Project](#) (a national resource) to study and synthesize what is and isn't available in Pierce County."

For those who can, they said the best thing to do is start researching online, and the best place for that is the library.

"It's good for people to learn how to do some of it for themselves," Davenport said. "It's empowering for people. Figure out your local library, where you can print, and scan."

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*If you or someone you know has been the victim of domestic violence, contact the Crystal Judson Family Justice Center at 253-798-4166, or [familyjusticecenter.us](http://familyjusticecenter.us).*

## Lame-duck legal tech profession is in demand

Two years after Supreme Court quashes profession, those still in field experience surge in clients

Erica Bullock September 28th, 2023



“The people who we’re helping were never getting helped by attorneys ... they couldn’t afford it.”

**Lesli Ashley**  
Empower Family Law  
Legal Technician

A niche legal profession is shrinking in Washington state due to a state Supreme Court ruling that eliminated the certification of nonlawyer professionals to become limited license legal technicians. The decision to end the program two years ago has resulted in expanded demand for those already working in the profession.

Lesli Ashley, owner of Empower Family Law Legal Technician, says the need for family law legal assistance has continued to grow in the three years since she started her business. The Spokane area is recovering from a backlog in the family courts that’s creating opportunities to expand services for the self-employed LLLTs.

There are 94 active LLLTs in the state of Washington and only nine in Spokane County currently, according to figures from the Washington state Bar Association.

“I’m hopeful they’ll revive that (program) because I think that was a short-sighted decision,” says Ashley.

Washington was the first state in the U.S. to authorize LLLTs to deliver legal services in January 2013, according to the Washington state Bar Association website. The program lasted only seven years before the state Supreme Court decided to end the LLLT program in June 2020.

Eliminating the certification program for LLLTs came as a shock to Ashley. She says, “It was a complete surprise to everybody.”

Before the state Supreme Court’s decision to sunset the LLLT program was announced, the Washington state Bar Association submitted an annual report to the courts in April 2020 outlining how to expand LLLT assistance to include two new practice areas: administrative law and evictions and debt collection.

The expanded areas of practice could have helped the LLLT program attract people to the profession and to become financially self-sustaining through a modified fee structure and other avenues to raise revenue, the report states.

However, two months after the report was given to the courts, the decision to close the program was announced—attributed to declining interest in the profession and growing costs associated with sustaining the program, according to a response from the state Supreme Court issued in June 2020.

Ashley says the decision to end the LLLT program also was influenced by some attorneys who view LLLTs as competitors for family law clients.

“People made an assumption that legal technicians were somehow offering a lower level of justice to people than attorneys,” she says. “The people who we’re helping were never getting helped by attorneys anyway because they couldn’t afford it.”

She adds, however, “Not all attorneys feel like that.”

Attorney Scott Streed, owner of Northwest Legal Resolution Center, says working with LLLTs has been beneficial for both his clients and for his practice.

Streed operates a law office located at 620 N. Argonne, in Spokane Valley, in a shared space that also holds three independent LLLTs, one of which is Ashley's company, Empower Family Law, he says.

"We all have our own separate business entities, but we office share," Ashley explains.

The working arrangement allows Streed and the LLLTs to coordinate on shared cases and split office expenses, resulting in lower legal expenses for Streed's clients.

"There's a greater ability to rely on the work they do," he says. "The advantage to me is I have competent people that I can work with that I could depend on to get the job done properly."

Northwest Legal Resolution Center contracts with the three LLLTs in the shared co-working space where the legal technicians help draft documents, contact clients, and schedule and confirm hearings for the attorney.

Working with an LLLT provides clients with considerable savings compared to hiring an attorney to represent a family law legal matter, as LLLT rates are typically half of attorney's rates, Ashley asserts.

Streed adds, "The client saves money by me contracting with the LLLTs to get the case done. The client wins because they're paying for quality legal services at a decreased hourly rate."

Streed says he works with LLLTs as part of his law firm's business model. Standard attorney retainers for family law cases in Washington state can cost between \$3,000 to \$5,000, Streed says.

"A lot of people can't afford that, but they may have \$1,000 or \$1,500 that they can spend to get help ... and that's where the LLLT (comes in)," says Streed. "It's a niche that's necessary. LLLT-qualified people fill that void and fit right into the business model."

Empower Family Law's hourly rate is \$150 an hour. Ashley says she also uses a sliding fee scale for mediation services.

A six-hour deposit is required upfront for mediation, according to Empower Family Law's website.

Although LLLT rates are lower than an attorney's rates for similar services, Ashley says she wants potential clients to know the advanced training and credentialing of an LLLT means their work is more advanced than advice given by a paralegal.

For Ashley, the end of the licensure program for legal technicians didn't mean her career was over.

While working to grow her business, Ashley attends extended learning sessions and is awaiting confirmation by the Washington state Supreme Court for the position of board chair of the Washington state Courts Practice of Law Board.

"I feel like it's a good opportunity for me to advance my agenda of access to justice," she says. "I believe that we're creating legal deserts for marginalized communities, and I don't know what the answer is, but I do think alternative legal professionals are a good alternative."

LLLTs in Washington state had until July 2023 to complete their credential requirements. While no further certifications will move forward here, there are other states that followed Washington's lead to provide some form of limited licensure for alternative legal professionals, including Arizona, Minnesota, Oregon, and Utah, according to the American Bar Association.

Additionally, Utah and Arizona will consider expanding services outside of family law, an ABA report states.

While current parameters for LLLTs here limit Ashley's capacity to help with legal matters outside of family law, she's ready to expand Empower Family Law's mediation services to North Idaho and also is considering a partnership to work with Spokane area tribal courts, she says.

"A big part of my goal is to expand justice," says Ashley. "Expanding into Idaho would grow a big part of my business. ... They don't have many mediators. It's really important to me to get out in the community, especially to rural and marginalized communities."

LLLTs are licensed and credentialed by the Washington state Supreme Court to assist people facing family law actions such as divorce or custody matters.

They are credentialed to consult and advise clients, complete and file court documents, schedule court hearings, mediate, and provide legal system guidance. They are limited in that legal technicians are not permitted to represent clients in court.

LLLTs can't go to trial or give an argument in court on a client's behalf, she says.

"You can develop a script together and talk about what we're going to say and how we're going to say it, but you're going to be the one who actually has to say it," explains Ashley. "An attorney will speak for you in court."

She operates Empower Family Law under the business entity Ashley Legal Tech LLC.

She declines to disclose Empower Family Law's annual revenue, however Ashley says business is good and growing annually.



**Erica Bullock** [✉ e-mail](#)

Reporter Erica Bullock has worked at the Journal since 2019 and covers real estate and construction. She is a craft beer enthusiast, who loves to garden and go camping with friends.

**[Read More](#)**

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**FY 2023 Committee Assignments**

**1. Committees**

LLLT Family Law Practice Area Committee: The Committee reviews the APR and the scope of the Family Law Practice Area. It suggests changes to scope or curriculum based on developments in the practice of family law. It considers enhancements to the Family Law Practice Area and develops any continuing legal education requirements and changes to practice area education necessary because of those enhancements. This committee is responsible for maintaining the bank of forms approved by the LLLT Board, including drafting and recommending new forms as needed.

- CHAIR: 1. Jennifer Ortega  
2. Nancy Ivarinen  
3. Christy Carpenter  
4. Jen Bull  
5. Deanna George  
6. Crystal Lambert-Schroeder

LLLT Discipline Committee: The Committee is governed by and performs the functions described in the Rules for Enforcement of Limited License Legal Technician Conduct (ELLTTC) and those delegated by the LLLT Board Chair. The Committee is 3-5 members appointed by the LLLT Board Chair, who does not serve on the Committee. Non-board members may be appointed by the Court. \*\*\*

- CHAIR: 1. Nancy Ivarinen  
2. Jen Bull  
3. John Darling  
4. Crystal Lambert  
5.

LLLT RPC Committee: The Committee reviews the LLLT RPC and drafts any needed changes to the LLLT RPC. The Committee also reviews the multiple choice questions for the LLLT Professional Responsibility Exam selected by a third party exam writing company, Ergometrics. After the exam, the Committee reviews any exam questions that were especially problematic. The Committee drafts new questions for the exam as needed.

- CHAIR: 1. Jen Bull  
2. Nancy Ivarinen  
3. Deanna George  
4.

LLLT Nominations Committee: The Committee reviews applications for LLLT Board positions. As necessary, the Committee recruits applicants for Board positions and drafts any needed changes to rules regarding Board composition.

- CHAIR: 1. Amy Riedel  
2. Nancy Ivarinen  
3.  
4.  
5.

## 2. NEW COMMITTEES

LLLT TAXICAB Committee: This Committee will review the proposals by the TAXICAB task force relating to the WSBA's duties and authority to Supreme Court created boards, including the LLLT Board under GR 12.3.

- CHAIR: 1.  
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6.

LLLT CLE Committee: This is a new committee that will assist in ensuring that there are CLE programs for LLLTs. The Committee will endeavor to create CLEs that apply to LLLTs and lawyers.

- CHAIR: 1.  
2. Nancy Ivarinen  
3. Phyllis Lykken  
4.

LLLT Sunseting Committee: This Committee will deal with issues and implications relating to the Supreme Court's order to sunset the LLLT Program.

- CHAIR: 1. Jen Bull  
2. Nancy Ivarinen  
3. Christy Carpenter  
4. Phyllis Lykken

Survey Committee: This committee will brainstorm on a method of obtaining data and other information about the practice of LLLTs in Washington and an appropriate means to effectuate the process of collecting data.

- CHAIR: 1. Christy Carpenter  
2. Nancy Ivarinen  
3.  
4.



<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Term Expiration</b>
Stephen Crossland	Chair	Chair 10/01/2023-9/30/2024  1st term (full) Member 10/01/2022-09/30/2025
Nancy Ivarinen	Vice Chair	Vice Chair 10/01/2023-09/30/2024  1st term (full) Member 10/01/2022-09/30/2025
Athanasios Papailiou	Member	1st term (full) 10/01/2021- 09/30/2024
Nicole Searing	Member	1st term (full) 10/01/2021- 09/30/2024
Deanna George	Public	1st term (partial) 02/02/2021-09/30/2024
John Darling	Public	1st term (full) 10/01/2021- 09/30/2024
Sarah Bové	Member	2nd term (full) 10/01/2023- 09/30/2026
Jennifer Ortega	Member	2nd term (full) 10/01/2022-09/30/2025
Christy Carpenter	Member	2nd term (full) 10/01/2021- 09/30/2024
Crystal Lambert	Member	2nd term (full) 10/01/2023-09/30/2026
Margaret Bridewell	Member	2nd term (full) 10/01/2023-09/30/2026
Amy Riedel	Public	2nd term (full) 10/01/2021- 09/30/2024
Phyllis Lykken	Public	1st term (full) 10/01/2022- 09/30/2025
	Member	Vacant
	Member	Vacant
<b>Ex Officio</b>		
	SBCTC Representative	Not Active
<b>BOG Liaison</b>		
Kristina Larry		
<b>ATJ Board Liaison</b>		
<b>WSBA Staff Liaison</b>		
Cathy Biestek	Managing Regulatory Counsel	



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**Superior Court of Washington, County of \_\_\_\_\_**

In re:  
Petitioner:

And Respondent:

**No.**

**Acknowledgement of Payment in  
Full of Property Equalization  
Payment**

The undersigned Petitioner acknowledges receipt and payment in full of the property equalization payment due to the Petitioner, **NAME**, from the Respondent, **NAME**, in the amount of **sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000)** as set forth in the Final Divorce Order, **Exhibit A(24) {wherever in document it's referenced}**, entered in this matter on **June 24, 2022 {date of decree or other document requiring PE payment}**.

DATED: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME  
Petitioner