

**Washington State Judicial Branch
2025-27 Biennial Budget
Office of Civil Legal Aid
Reentry Legal Assistance Program**

Agency: Office of Civil Legal Aid

Decision Package Code/Title: 1F – Reentry Legal Assistance Program

Agency Recommendation Summary Text:

Funding is requested to continue the Reentry Legal Assistance Program (RLAP), established under Section 115(12), Chapter 357, Laws of 2020. As the sole dedicated funding source for reentry legal services, RLAP is essential for removing barriers faced by individuals with prior criminal justice involvement, facilitating their successful reentry into society. This funding enables the removal of Legal Financial Obligations, sealing of criminal records, re-licensure, and more through mass assistance community events, direct representation, legal advice, systemic advocacy, and appeals. A vendor rate increase is requested to ensure continuation of the same level of service despite rising costs.

Fiscal Summary

	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial	FY 2028	FY 2029	Biennial
Staffing						
FTEs	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001-1	\$51,000	\$105,000	\$156,000	\$161,000	\$220,000	\$381,000
Total Expenditures						
	\$51,000	\$105,000	\$156,000	\$161,000	\$220,000	\$381,000

Package Description:

In 2020, the legislature recognized the critical need to support individuals reentering society after incarceration by appropriating funds for dedicated reentry legal services. The Reentry Legal Assistance Program (RLAP) was consequently established under Section 115(12), Chapter 357, Laws of 2020, and the Office of Civil Legal Aid (OCLA) was directed to oversee the program. Services provided under the program are essential for addressing significant barriers to reintegration, such as securing housing, obtaining employment, and accessing public benefits.

Since its inception, RLAP-funded civil legal aid providers have delivered comprehensive legal information, advice, assistance, outreach, and representation to individuals reentering society. In FY 2024, RLAP assisted in over 1,350 cases. These services are crucial for helping individuals overcome legal barriers that impede their successful reintegration, thereby reducing recidivism and promoting public safety. While these efforts are significant, they represent only a small portion of the total population in need, with approximately 28,000 people currently incarcerated in Washington State and 98,000 cycling through local jails annually.

Between 2022 and 2024, cumulative inflation reached 7.3%, based on the Consumer Price Index. This inflation has led to measurable and unavoidable increases in both personnel and overhead costs for the legal service providers contracted by OCLA to administer this program. To ensure that the program can continue to operate effectively and meet its intended goals, a 5% vendor rate adjustment is necessary.

Fully describe and quantify expected impacts on state residents.

Since its inception, RLAP-funded civil legal aid providers have delivered comprehensive legal information, advice, assistance, outreach, and representation to individuals reentering society. In FY 2024, RLAP assisted in over 1,350 cases. These services are crucial for helping individuals overcome legal barriers that impede their successful reintegration, thereby reducing recidivism and promoting public safety. While these efforts are significant, they represent only a small portion of the total population in need, with approximately 28,000 people currently incarcerated in Washington State and 98,000 cycling through local jails annually.

Explain what alternatives were explored by the agency and why this was the best option chosen.

The Legislature has consistently recognized the importance of reentry legal assistance. No alternatives exist within OCLA to support this program. Continuation and expansion of RLAP is the best option to ensure consistent, high-quality legal assistance is available statewide.

What are the consequences of not funding this request?

Without this increase in funding, our contracts will not be able to cover the actual cost of services, and the non-profit contractors will bear the burden of increased costs due to inflation.

Is this an expansion or alteration of a current program or service?

No, this decision package ensures the continuation of the existing RLAP services, which support individuals reentering society after incarceration.

Decision Package expenditure, FTE and revenue assumptions:

Use Standard Costs? No

No

If No, Explain Additional Costs	Round to Nearest \$1,000				Description/Assumptions
	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	
Contracts	\$51,000	\$105,000	\$161,000	\$220,000	The contractor (vendor) rate adjustment is calculated as 5% of total contract amount.

How does the package relate to the Judicial Branch principal policy objectives?

Fair and Effective Administration of Justice

RLAP ensures individuals reentering society receive the legal support needed to overcome barriers, promoting fair and equitable treatment.

Accessibility

The RLAP program enhances access to justice by providing legal resources and representation to all individuals reentering society, regardless of their conviction status.

Access to Necessary Representation

RLAP provides targeted professional legal advocacy for individuals with prior criminal contracts, helping them navigate complex legal challenges.

Commitment to Effective Court Management

N/A

Sufficient Staffing and Support

N/A

How does the package impact equity in the state?

Address any target populations or communities that will benefit from this proposal.

This package addresses equity by providing legal aid to individuals who have been disproportionately affected by the criminal justice system. Many of these individuals are from marginalized and low-income communities. African Americans in Washington are incarcerated at a rate 5.7 times higher than white individuals, further emphasizing the critical need for continued and expanded support through RLAP. By offering targeted legal assistance, RLAP helps correct systemic inequities and provides these individuals with the tools to secure their rights and successfully reintegrate into society.

Describe whether and, if so, how the agency received community input and engagement.

OCLA contracts with Civil Survival to provide community-directed, trauma-informed reentry legal services due to Civil Survival being chosen for receipt of funding by the statewide reentry council. Staff at Civil Survival include individuals affected by the criminal justice system, and their input helps ensure services are responsive to the needs of the community.

Which target populations or communities would be disproportionately harmed by this proposal. Explain why and how these negative equity impacts will be mitigated.

No target populations or communities would be disproportionately harmed by this proposal. Instead, the proposal aims to mitigate existing inequities by providing necessary legal assistance to individuals who have been adversely impacted by unconstitutional convictions. The package includes measures to ensure that all affected individuals, particularly those from marginalized communities, have access to the resources they need to obtain justice and financial restitution.

Are there impacts to other governmental entities?

No

Stakeholder response:

There is no opposition to this request. The proposal has broad support.

Are there legal or administrative mandates that require this package to be funded?

No

Does current law need to be changed to successfully implement this package?

No

Are there impacts to state facilities?

No

Are there other supporting materials that strengthen the case for this request?

No

Are there information technology impacts?

No

Office of Civil Legal Aid
Policy Level – 1F – Reentry Legal Assistance Program

Agency Contacts:

Sara Robbins, Director
360-485- 1544

sara.robbsins@ocla.wa.gov

Philippe Knab, Eviction Defense/Reentry Programs Manager
360-485-1533

Philippe.knab@ocla.wa.gov