

\$8 Million to Help Wisconsinites Access Civil Legal Services

Written by GOV Press Wisconsin
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Grant will fund civil legal aid organizations statewide and build a Wisconsin Law Help website.

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers announced Monday an \$8 million grant to support Wisconsinites who need legal assistance to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The grant will be made to the [Wisconsin Trust Account Foundation Inc. \(WisTAF\)](#) to fund civil legal aid organizations statewide and to build a Wisconsin Law Help website, a user-friendly online legal assistance portal that will help Wisconsinites access accurate legal information.



“As we recover from the pandemic, it is critical that we create a strong and resilient Wisconsin that works for everyone,” said Gov. Evers. “COVID-19 posed challenges to all of us, but especially underserved and disadvantaged Wisconsinites and the organizations they rely upon, so this support for WisTAF will help reduce barriers to legal assistance for many Wisconsinites seeking to rebuild their lives and livelihoods and get back on their feet.”

Established in 1986 by the Wisconsin Supreme Court, the nonprofit WisTAF is the leading

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state-based funder of legal aid in Wisconsin. It works with and provides funds to civil legal aid organizations so Wisconsinites with low incomes can access legal services.

The grant announced today will allow WisTAF and its partner organizations to furnish civil legal aid interventions to Wisconsinites who face foreclosure, eviction, and other housing-related problems due to COVID-19; need legal assistance to access unemployment benefits, workforce opportunities, or health coverage; or still struggle with other economic hardships related to the pandemic.

Wisconsin Law Help began as a collaborative effort between the Wisconsin Access to Justice Commission, the State Bar of Wisconsin's Legal Assistance Committee, and the Wisconsin State Law Library and is supported by a steering committee that includes organizations from across the state, including LIFTWisconsin, Centro Legal, Northcentral Technical College, University of Wisconsin Law School, Milwaukee Justice Center, Wisconsin Judicare, and others.

Development of Wisconsin Law Help is also a recommendation from the Governor's Interagency Council on Homelessness in their ["Welcoming Wisconsin Home"](#) statewide action plan.

"Everyone needs opportunities for safety and self-sufficiency," said Rebecca L. Murray, executive director of WisTAF. "But when someone faces a legal problem without professional assistance, these opportunities can evaporate, and COVID only increased the danger. Today's investment is not only in WisTAF and our statewide grantee network, but in a civil legal system that offers a fair shot at stability to people in Wisconsin—ultimately paying dividends to us all."

The WisTAF grant will be administered by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) and is funded through the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

"It is imperative that no family is left behind as we continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic," said DCF Secretary Emilie Amundson. "Supporting community partners like WisTAF means that folks who have been especially hard hit these last few years now have opportunities to improve their lives and bounce back stronger."

Wisconsinites who still face housing challenges stemming from the pandemic, including overdue bills like mortgage payments, property taxes, and utilities, are also encouraged to explore the [Help for Homeowners program](#). Through this program, eligible homeowners can apply for assistance with mortgage payments, local property taxes, and utilities, including internet, as well as housing counseling and legal services. For renters, help is still available through the [Wisconsin Emergency Rental Assistance program](#) for overdue rent and utility payments.

Wisconsinites can visit BadgerBounceback.wi.gov to view pandemic-related assistance information for families, farmers, businesses, organizations, and communities, as well as the latest data and success stories about how COVID-relief investments are making a difference

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across the state. For updates on other recovery-related grant opportunities, sign up for the [Badger Bounceback update list](#)

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