



## Judicial Council of California

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# REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

*Item No.: 26-033*

For business meeting on July 17, 2026

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## **Sargent Shriver Civil Counsel Act: Selection of Shriver Projects**

### Judicial Council Report Details

**Rules, Forms, Standards, or Statutes Affected**

None

**Effective Date**

October 1, 2026

**Recommended by**

Shriver Civil Counsel Act Implementation  
Committee

Hon. Gary Slossberg, Cochair

Hon. Pahoua C. Lor, Cochair

**Date of Report**

June 25, 2026

**Contact**

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**Report Type**

Action Required

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## **Executive Summary**

The Judicial Council is asked to approve funding recommendations under the Sargent Shriver Civil Counsel Act (Assem. Bill 590; Stats. 2009, ch. 457) to support projects providing legal representation and improved court services to low-income parties on critical legal issues affecting basic human needs. These projects address housing, domestic violence, civil harassment, probate conservatorships, guardianships, elder abuse, and child custody matters. Recommendations are submitted by the Shriver Civil Counsel Act Implementation Committee for the upcoming three-year grant cycle.

## **Recommendation**

The Sargent Shriver Civil Counsel Act Implementation Committee recommends that the Judicial Council, effective October 1, 2026:

1. Approve grant funding for 15 projects under the Sargent Shriver Civil Counsel Act in an amount not to exceed \$18,000,000 per year—subject to the availability of funding—for a total of \$54,000,000 over three years, covering the period from October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2029. Funding would be awarded to qualified legal services providers and court partners for the administration of Shriver projects.
2. Authorize the committee to request revised budgets and project plans from all projects once the Judicial Council approves the allocations, as no program will receive the full amount requested.

A chart detailing all submitted proposals is included as Attachment A to this report.

### **Relevant Previous Council Action**

The Judicial Council has approved the committee’s recommendations for Sargent Shriver Civil Counsel Act projects as follows:

- Selection and funding of 7 projects for the 2011–2014 grant cycle (Apr. 29, 2011).
- Selection and funding of 7 projects for the 2014–2017 grant cycle (Aug. 21, 2014).
- Selection and funding of 8 projects for the 2017–2020 grant cycle (July 27, 2017).
- Distribution of an additional \$2.5 million of General Fund on a pro rata basis to the existing projects (Nov. 14, 2019).
- Selection and funding of 11 projects for the 2020–2023 grant cycle and deferred funding of 3 projects (May 15, 2020). One of the deferred projects was funded May 21, 2021, and approved for continuation March 11, 2022.
- Selection and funding of 14 projects for the 2023–2026 grant cycle (June 2, 2023).
- Distribution of an additional \$3.6 million of program fund reserves on a pro rata basis to the existing projects (Nov. 15, 2024).
- Distribution of an additional augmentation of \$1.4 million of program fund reserves on a pro rata basis to the existing projects (Oct. 24, 2025).

### **Analysis/Rationale**

The Sargent Shriver Civil Counsel Act (Assem. Bill 590; Stats. 2009, ch. 457) requires the Judicial Council to fund projects that provide legal representation and improved court services to low-income parties in cases involving basic human needs. Since fiscal year 2011–12, these projects have operated in three-year cycles through partnership between qualified legal services providers and courts.

The current grant cycle ends September 30, 2026. To ensure continuity of services and compliance with statutory requirements, the Shriver Civil Counsel Act Implementation Committee recommends approval of funding for the next three-year cycle. The committee roster is provided in Link A, and statutory definitions of qualified providers are included in Link B.

### **Purpose of Shriver projects**

The Shriver projects aim to improve timely and effective access to justice in civil cases, reducing the risk of erroneous decisions caused by legal complexity or disparities in representation, education, sophistication, language proficiency, and resources.

Legal services agencies funded under the program provide representation to low-income Californians (at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level) in the following areas:

- Housing-related matters;
- Domestic violence and civil harassment restraining orders;
- Elder abuse;
- Guardianship of the person;
- Probate conservatorship; and
- Child custody.

### **Funding**

Government Code section 68651(b)(2) states child custody cases should be considered among the highest for funding, with up to 20 percent of available funds to be designated for these actions. The committee recommends funding five child custody projects for a total of \$8,309,860 or 15 percent of the available funding for the 2026–2029 grant cycle.

Each project must include a partnership between the court, a qualified legal services provider (as defined in Business and Professions Code section 6213(a)) serving as the lead agency, and other community legal services providers. Legal services agencies should also identify and make use of pro bono attorneys where practical to maximize efficiency and resources.

Government Code section 68651(b)(4) also provides funds for courts to adopt innovative practices to improve access for unrepresented parties. These may include enhanced case management, training, and procedures that promote fairness, prevent involuntary waiver of rights, and encourage voluntary dispute resolution consistent with judicial neutrality.

### **Request for proposals**

On September 30, 2025, the Judicial Council issued a formal request for proposals, inviting organizations and stakeholders to submit project ideas for funding consideration during the upcoming grant cycle. The council received a total of 20 project proposals. Collectively, these proposals requested \$98,203,822 in funding. This amount exceeds the available allocation for the three-year grant cycle by \$44,203,822, as only \$54,000,000 has been designated for distribution. Among the submissions, 13 proposals were aimed at continuing existing projects, while the remaining seven proposals represented new project initiatives. A comprehensive chart listing all submitted proposals can be found in Attachment A.

**Allocation formula**

All existing applicants sought increased funding to expand their existing projects, but available resources were limited. The committee focused on sustainability and continuity of services, ultimately recommending continued funding for 12 existing projects.

To establish an allocation baseline, the committee recommends funding at the original 2025–26 grant level (prior to the \$5 million augmentation), with an added 2 percent cost-of-living adjustment. For projects with unspent funds from the previous grant period, allocations would be reduced proportionally based on the percentage of unspent funds. The three new projects are recommended for reduced funding levels based on the remaining funds after allocations to existing projects. No program received the full amount requested.

**Criteria for selection**

The committee applied the criteria set forth in Government Code section 68651(b)(5), which include:

- Whether assisted are likely to face an opposing party represented by counsel;
- Applicants’ capacity for success, innovation, and efficiency;
- Likelihood of delivering quality representation effectively to meet community needs;
- Ability to address court needs for access to justice and calendar management;
- Extent to which the project meets unmet community needs;
- Likelihood that representation in proposed case types significantly improves outcomes for parties who might otherwise lose or suffer deprivation of basic human needs;
- Potential to reduce the risk of erroneous court decisions;
- Severity of consequences for the unrepresented parties if representation is not provided;
- Potential to reduce reliance on public social services for clients and households;
- Unmet need for legal services in the geographic area;
- Availability and effectiveness of alternate court services (e.g., self-help); and
- Program’s plan to serve all eligible clients regardless of immigration status.

Following are the qualified legal services providers, court partners, and three-year grant totals for each project recommended for approval:

California Rural Legal Assistance  
 Superior Court of San Joaquin County  
 Housing Project.....\$2,919,537

Central California Legal Services  
 Superior Court of Fresno County  
 Housing Project.....\$1,084,950

Central California Legal Services  
 Superior Court of Tulare County  
 Housing Project.....\$1,136,082

Centro Legal de la Raza Superior Court of Alameda County Housing Project.....	\$2,256,300
Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance Superior Court of Kern County Housing Project.....	\$2,745,684
Justice and Diversity Center of the Bar Association of San Francisco Superior Court of San Francisco County Child Custody Project.....	\$1,265,244
Legal Aid Foundation of Santa Barbara County Superior Court of Santa Barbara County Housing, Guardianship, Probate Conservatorship Project.....	\$4,095,804
Legal Aid Society of San Bernardino Superior Court of San Bernardino County Housing, Domestic Violence, and Child Custody Project.....	\$3,701,484
Legal Aid Society of San Diego Superior Court of San Diego County Housing Project.....	\$10,599,984
Legal Services of Northern California–Yolo County Office Superior Court of Yolo County Housing Project.....	\$1,188,189
Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice dba Survivor Justice Center Superior Court of Los Angeles County Child Custody Project.....	\$3,142,191
Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles Superior Court of Los Angeles County Housing Project.....	\$13,178,580
San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program Superior Court of San Diego County Child Custody and Domestic Violence Project .....	\$2,506,293
San Luis Obispo Legal Assistance Foundation Superior Court of San Luis Obispo County Housing, Probate, Domestic Violence, Elder Abuse, Child Custody Project.....	\$2,862,825

Senior Advocacy Network  
Superior Court of Stanislaus County  
Housing, Elder Abuse, Guardianship, Probate Project .....\$1,316,853

2026–2029 Total: \$54,000,000<sup>1</sup>

Government Code section 68651 is included at Link C, Sargent Shriver Civil Counsel Act.

**Policy implications**

The work performed by the projects helps to implement Goal I, Access, Fairness, Diversity, and Inclusion, of the judicial branch’s strategic plan by expanding representation and court services for low-income individuals, regardless of immigration status, in diverse geographic areas of California. Projects also include case assessments that address language access, disability accommodations, and literacy needs to ensure equitable participation.

**Comments**

The Shriver Civil Counsel Act Implementation Committee made the project selection recommendations in accordance with Government Code section 68651(b)(5). Public comments were not solicited in this proposal because the recommendations are within the Judicial Council’s purview to approve without circulation.

Committee staff hosted a videoconference for interested applicants on October 9, 2025. Applicants submitted questions during the videoconference and via the committee’s public email. Responses to all applicant questions were posted on the committee’s webpage on the California Courts website on October 21, 2025.

**Alternatives considered**

The recommendation of the selection of the projects has been made by the Shriver Civil Counsel Act Implementation Committee as provided by Government Code section 68651(1)(5). The committee met on April 28, 2026, to make recommendations on funding to the Judicial Council at its July 17, 2026, meeting. Of the 20 proposals received, 15 met the statutory criteria and fit with available funding.

**Fiscal and Operational Impacts**

Participating courts must collaborate with local legal services providers and deliver court services as outlined in the approved grant proposals. Courts will receive funding for the services through intrabranh agreements with the Judicial Council.

Judicial Council staff will administer project funding to ensure compliance with statutory data collection requirements and prepare the required report for the Legislature. Staff will provide oversight and technical assistance to ensure funds are used as intended. Staff will also provide support to the Shriver Civil Counsel Act Implementation Committee. Costs for staff support and

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<sup>1</sup> The committee’s recommended award in fiscal year 2026–27 is \$18 million.

program evaluation are covered by the provision for administrative costs in the Budget Act appropriation.

### **Attachments and Links**

1. Attachment A: Project Applications for Sargent Shriver Civil Counsel Act Grants 2026–2029
2. Link A: [Shriver Civil Counsel Act Implementation Committee roster](#)
3. Link B: [Bus. & Prof. Code, § 6213](#)
4. Link C: Sargent Shriver Civil Counsel Act, as amended by [Assem. Bill 2193](#)

## PROJECT APPLICATIONS FOR SARGENT SHRIVER CIVIL COUNSEL ACT GRANTS 2026–2029

No.	Lead Agency Applicants	Court Partner	Partner Organization	New or Existing Project	Case Types	Types of Services	Year 1 Total Requests	Year 2 Total Requests	Year 3 Total Requests
1	Bet Tzedek	Los Angeles	N/A	New	Guardianship, Probate	Full scope representation and unbundled legal services	\$ 945,472	\$ 956,569	\$ 992,019
2	California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.	San Joaquin	El Concilio California	Existing	Housing	Extensive and limited legal services, self-help services, counsel and advise, ancillary services	1,554,057	1,598,833	1,644,913
3	Central California Legal Services Inc.	Fresno	N/A	Existing	Housing, Domestic Violence	Full and limited scope representation	1,110,590	1,152,111	1,194,959
4	Central California Legal Services, Inc.	Tulare	N/A	New	Housing, Domestic Violence	Full and limited scope representation	757,388	791,494	827,154
5	Centro Legal de la Raza	Alameda	1. Eviction Defense Center 2. Legal Access Alameda 3. East Bay Community	Existing	Housing	Full or limited-scope representation, advice and counsel	1,308,765	1,362,033	1,416,169
6	Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance, Inc.	Kern	N/A	Existing	Housing	Full and limited scope representation, Early Dispute Resolution, Pro Se Services	1,695,227	1,749,769	1,806,132
7	Justice & Diversity Center of the Bar Association of San Francisco	San Francisco	N/A	Existing	Child Custody	Legal representation, brief advice & referral, legal information and document prep	522,303	540,079	558,567
8	Law Foundation of Silicon Valley	Santa Clara	1. Asian Law Alliance 2. Bay Area Legal Aid	New	Housing, Domestic Violence, Child Custody, Civil Harassment	Direct representation, counsel & advice (form assistance), clinics, mandatory settlement conferences, document mediation	1,669,282	1,715,003	1,774,101
9	Legal Access Alameda	Alameda	N/A	Existing	Child Custody	Limited scope representation during Request for Order (RFO) hearings	120,096	126,858	133,943
10	Legal Aid Foundation of Santa Barbara County	Santa Barbara	N/A	Existing	Housing, Domestic Violence, Civil Harassment, Guardianship, Probate	Full and limited-scope representation, mandatory settlement conferences, court-facilitator self-help assistance, housing settlement master	2,048,429	2,109,525	2,171,960
11	Legal Aid of Marin	Marin	N/A	New	Housing	Full and limited scope representation	693,839	719,149	747,559
12	Legal Aid of Sonoma County	Sonoma	N/A	New	Housing, Guardianship	Full and limited scope representation	712,033	732,845	755,483
13	Legal Aid Society of San Bernardino	San Bernardino	N/A	New	Housing, Domestic Violence, Child Custody	Limited scope representation, counsel & advice (brief services), clinics, mobile outreach	1,645,104	1,961,042	1,961,042
14	Legal Aid Society of San Diego	San Diego	N/A	Existing	Housing	Full scope representation	6,138,026	6,375,653	6,680,316
15	Legal Services of Northern California	Yolo	Yolo County Office	Existing	Housing	Full or limited-scope representation, self help services, mediation services, housing inspections	501,166	514,003	527,650
16	Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice dba Survivor Justice Center	Los Angeles	Levitt & Quinn Family Law Center	Existing	Child Custody	Limited scope representation, advice & counsel, unbundled services	1,260,602	1,294,928	1,330,287

No.	Lead Agency Applicants	Court Partner	Partner Organization	New or Existing Project	Case Types	Types of Services	Year 1 Total Requests	Year 2 Total Requests	Year 3 Total Requests
17	Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County	Los Angeles	1. Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles 2. Inner City Law Center 3. Public Counsel 4. Inner City Law Center	Existing	Housing	Full and limited-scope representation & attorney consultations, workshops & referral, document prep, filing assistance, case manager support service assistance	5,918,418	5,920,036	5,935,494
18	San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program	San Diego	N/A	Existing	Domestic Violence, Child Custody	Direct representation, Self-Represented Litigant Clinic	885,883	951,536	968,227
19	San Luis Obispo Legal Assistance Foundation	San Luis Obispo	N/A	Existing	Housing, Domestic Violence, Elder Abuse, Guardianship, Probate, Child Custody	Full and limited scope representation, self-help, mandatory settlement conference, mediation	1,703,360	1,762,690	1,824,269
20	Senior Advocacy Network	Stanislaus	N/A	New	Housing, Domestic Violence, Elder Abuse, Probate, Civil Harassment	Full and limited scope representation, mediation, self help services	459,113	476,076	494,195

<b>Total Application Requests Per Year:</b>	<b>\$ 31,649,152</b>	<b>\$ 32,810,231</b>	<b>\$ 33,744,438</b>
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<b>Three-Year Application Request Total:</b>	<b>\$ 98,203,822</b>
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