

Sandra¹ is a 28-year old mother and a survivor of domestic violence. Her husband, Tim, abused her physically and emotionally for years. Last year, Sandra fled from Louisiana to Indiana with her 2-1/2 year old son, Mark, and went to live temporarily in a battered women's shelter. Tim filed for divorce in Louisiana and got sole custody of Mark even though Sandra never knew about the case. Then he hired a private investigator to track Sandra down and scared her into giving Mark up. For now, Mark lives with his abusive father, who has cut off all contact with Sandra.

**NO ONE SHOULD HAVE TO
CHOOSE BETWEEN LIVING FREE
FROM ABUSE AND LIVING WITH
HER CHILDREN**

Tragically, domestic violence survivors like Sandra often are forced to choose between fleeing from their abusers and keeping their children. In some cases, it's because judges don't understand the impact of domestic violence on children. In others, it's because abused women can't find attorneys to represent them. And in still others, it's because the attorneys don't know about new laws that protect survivors.

The **Legal Resource Center on Violence Against Women (LRC)** is working to change this. Through training attorneys and law students to improve legal representation in custody cases, the LRC is helping survivors across the country to achieve safety and justice.

¹ Sandra is a real person, and the events described here actually occurred. Only the names of the people and the states involved have been changed to preserve privacy.

Volunteer

The LRC has opportunities for people who live in the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area to get involved with the organization. If you are interested in internships, law fellowships, or other volunteer opportunities, please contact our office.

Become A Supporter

The LRC relies on generous contributions from supporters to pursue our mission of improving legal representation for domestic violence survivors. All donations are tax deductible. Checks can be made out to the Legal Resource Center on Violence Against Women and mailed to the address below.

THE LEGAL RESOURCE CENTER ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

6930 Carroll Avenue
Suite 400-S
Takoma Park, MD 20912
Phone: 301-270-1550
Survivors Call: 1-800-556-4053
Fax: 301-270-7272
Website: www.lrcvaw.org
Email: lrc@lrcvaw.org

The Legal Resource Center on Violence Against Women



**Working with
Attorneys to Achieve
Justice and Safety for
Domestic Violence
Survivors in Interstate
Custody Cases**

Activities

Many survivors of domestic violence flee across state or tribal lines to escape abuse. Unfortunately, then many are punished in interstate custody cases for having left the original state or tribe with their children. Attorneys and advocates who understand new federal and state laws can help survivors relocate safely without sacrificing custody of their children. Many survivors, however, cannot find attorneys who understand these laws and the impact of domestic violence to represent them.

The LRC is working to increase and improve the legal representation available to survivors as follows:

- ◆ By developing a network of highly qualified attorneys who will represent survivors
- ◆ By offering training, support, and Internet-based resources to practitioners
- ◆ By encouraging the next generation of attorneys to take these cases through developing curricular materials for law schools
- ◆ By working with law firms and the private bar to increase the availability of free or low cost representation for survivors around the country

Toll-Free Number

The LRC operates a national toll-free telephone number through which attorneys, advocates, and others can request assistance with custody cases involving more than one state. Electronic assistance is available through the LRC website. LRC staff help attorneys develop legal strategies, prepare pleadings, conduct legal research, and provide advocates with referrals for resources in other jurisdictions.

Training Programs

The LRC teaches attorneys and others about interstate custody and domestic violence laws throughout the country, both in-person and telephonically. The LRC offers continuing legal education accreditation to attorneys participating in the training programs.

Attorney Network

The LRC maintains an ever-increasing database of contact information for attorneys qualified to handle complex interstate cases. The database enables staff to identify potential attorneys (and programs) when an advocate, attorney, or survivor calls and needs an attorney referral in a particular location.

Internet-Based Resources

The LRC maintains a free, publicly accessible electronic database of the relevant state and federal laws. The database, available on the LRC's website at www.lrcvaw.org, includes child custody jurisdiction, relocation and personal jurisdiction (long-arm) statutes. The LRC also provides links to databases containing protection order and custody laws.

Law Students

The LRC is developing a one-hour curriculum for law school orientation programs and a legal research and writing course unit to spark students' interest in domestic violence and interstate custody cases. These materials will address a complex interstate case involving domestic violence and teach students the appropriate legal responses to it.

Pro Bono Representation

State and local bar associations and law firms remain an untapped resource for finding attorneys to represent survivors in interstate cases on a *pro bono* or reduced fee basis. The LRC conducts pilot programs with law firms to recruit and train attorneys for such cases.