Fighting domestic violence

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By Peter Dujardin and Ashley K. Speed

William and Mary's law school said this month that it has received a $250,000 grant to expand its Domestic Violence Clinic.

The grant, from the U.S. Justice Department's "Office of Violence Against Women," will allow the clinic to represent more clients and expand efforts to train future lawyers in representing victims of domestic violence, the school said.

"This grant will allow more law students to gain first-hand experience while helping those who otherwise could be lost in the system," Darryl Cunningham, a senior attorney at the Legal Aid Society of Eastern Virginia, said in a press release. "It is a fantastic opportunity."

Cunningham serves as director of both the Domestic Violence Clinic and the school's Family Law Clinic.

The award "will enhance the ability of victims of domestic violence to live independently of their abusers through direct legal representation and outreach and education," added Patricia E. Roberts, a clinical professor of law and the law school's director of clinical programs.

"It will also aid us in training future attorneys in the complexities of direct representation to victims of domestic violence," Roberts said, saying the grant "will help provide safety and security to the most vulnerable members of local communities."

The clinic will be partnering with more organizations, including the school's Family Law Clinic, the Legal Aid Society of Eastern Virginia, and Avalon, A Center for Women and Children.

"We are excited about this opportunity to assist abuse victims in a much larger way," Cunningham said, saying the grant will help victims of domestic violence get more legal help, more emotional and physical support, and "access to a wider array of resources."

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