# PROJECT FIRST STEP

Pro Bono Attorney Training Materials

## Project First Step Overview

Project First Step provides pro bono attorneys to represent domestic violence survivors in court to obtain permanent domestic violence restraining orders.

Pro bono attorneys make a big impact when they represent a Project First Step client. Domestic violence survivors with legal representation are more successful obtaining permanent restraining orders; more likely to obtain appropriate restrictions in custody orders to provide safety for their children; and less likely to be victims of further violence. They also experience lower levels of on-going trauma and increased levels of economic well-being.

Clients may be referred to Central California Legal Services (CCLS) by one of the domestic violence crisis center partners or may contact CCLS directly. Prior to being referred to a pro bono attorney, clients will have obtained their domestic violence temporary restraining orders (DVTRO). CCLS' Family Law team identifies clients who are appropriate for referral to Project First Step. When clients are referred to Project First Step, CCLS' Pro Bono Program seeks a pro bono attorney to take the case. CCLS' Family Law advocate assigned to the case and the CCLS Pro Bono team provide support and assistance to the pro bono attorney throughout the representation.

Pro bono attorneys agree to represent their clients only for the purpose of obtaining the permanent domestic violence restraining order (DVRO). This agreement is set out in a Limited Scope Retainer Agreement and in the Notice of Limited Scope Representation (FL-950).

CCLS provides primary malpractice coverage for all pro bono services rendered through Project First Step.

Project First Step was launched in 2005 in Fresno County as a collaboration among Marjaree Mason Center, Fresno County Bar Association's Pro Bono Services Committee, Fresno County Women Lawyers, and Central California Legal Services. The Fresno County Project has expanded to include Centro La Familia Advocacy Services and California Hmong Advocacy Network – Building Our Future.

While Project First Step celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2025, Project First Step Tulare & Kings Counties is launching. The partners in the Tulare & Kings Counties Projects are the Tulare County Bar Association, Family Services of Tulare County, Central California Family Crisis Center, Kings Community Action Organization, and Central California Legal Services.