

My name is Ana Bolanos, and I was in a very bad situation when I found Legal Aid. My husband and I had both immigrated to the United States, but he became a legal resident and did not help me do the same. He abused me physically and mentally but I was too afraid to call the police. I should have, but I was afraid of being deported.

He went back to our country to live with another woman and left me and our two minor children with nothing. He had cashed out his 401k and kept all of the money for himself. I was not able to work legally and had no way to support my family.

One day I was so upset because I had no food at home and no way to pay the bills. I didn't know what to do so I went for a walk. I passed a store, went in, and saw a Spanish newspaper that mentioned legal aid. I called the 1-800 number – thank God I still had a phone at home at that point – and I was able to get an appointment with New Haven Legal Assistance. Since I live in Derby, they asked if I would like an appointment at the Umbrella, a domestic violence agency in Ansonia. I told them I will walk there no matter how long it takes.

That's how I met my legal aid attorney, Shelia Hayre. After talking to her, I told myself "I have to get out". She is the angel who opened the door for me, I don't even have the words to thank her. Sheila put together all of the proof immigration needed, and was able to get me working papers. Once I could work legally, I got a job and can now support my two children. In December, I divorced my husband. Thanks to legal aid I have been able to move forward. I hope this program will continue to be there for the people who need help.

Ana Bolanos
Derby, Connecticut