

The New York LawHelp Consortium

Overview of Achievements, 2016-2017

During this reporting period, LawHelpNY completed its integration into its new institutional home at Pro Bono Net (PBN), with Consortium members providing strategic guidance and oversight in the form of an Advisory Committee. Since this transition, we have benefitted greatly from the long history of innovation in technology at PBN to establish new protocols for content development and analytics reporting as well as great cross project collaboration between LawHelpNY and PBN projects.

The LawHelpNY Program Director transitioned out of her role and Quisquella Addison became the Program Director in July 2016. During this time LawHelpNY utilized findings from the strategic planning and performed an audit of its website content. From that audit LawHelpNY began a website content redesign to enhance the user experience and ensure LawHelpNY's content is most responsive to current legal needs among low income and vulnerable New Yorkers. Throughout this process LawHelpNY elicited and welcomed feedback from our stakeholders and users including the Advisory Committee, legal services community and focus group participants to inform the changes. This work was also informed by the Legal Services Corporation which enlisted Ernest and Young LLP to perform a site wide evaluation of legal service websites including LawHelpNY which offered areas for improvement, development and simplification.

During the IOLA 2016-17 fiscal year, LawHelpNY launched three microsites in the areas of housing and immigration offering a combination of legal information, interactive forms for pro se litigants and referrals to legal services projects. These include the NYC Housing Eviction site in English and Spanish, the NYC Housing Repairs microsite (with a know your rights video created), and Tools for Immigrant New Yorkers specifically for immigrants concerned about their immigrant status after the increase immigration enforcement activities. Additionally, in collaboration with LSNYC, LawHelpNY completed a major content review and update of 50 disaster relief resources, originally developed in response to Superstorm Sandy.

As LawHelpNY transitioned to PBN, there was a shift in our methods for collecting and disseminating usage data. During this period, the LawHelpNY websites garnered over 330,000 visits, with visitors accessing Know Your Rights resources 143,732 times, and viewing 124,192 pages of referral information. 587 organization profiles were updated during this year, an increase from last year. The Hotlines list received over 10,183 views and the library of DIY interactive forms for pro se litigants received 16,045 views.

LiveHelp served over 6,300 users of the live chat service, and saw the greatest traffic in chats concerning family (19%), housing (18%) and consumer and debt issues (10%). Of those accessing LiveHelp, 39% were seeking assistance with a court case. LiveHelp relied on 141 volunteers from 18 different law schools serving more than 5,127 hours. Also during the IOLA 2016-2017 fiscal year, LiveHelp converted to the Comm100 platform which offered many new opportunities.



This Provider At a Glance

Population Served: General Low Income Population

Area Served: Statewide

Total Funding: \$346,950

Total IOLA Grant: \$235,000

Staffing - Full Time Equivalents

Total Staff: 2.15

Lawyers: 1.90

Paralegals: 0.00

Other Staff: 0.25

Types of Services Provided

Direct Civil Legal Representation

Brief Services

Extended Services

Hotlines and Other Phone-Based Services

Technology and Other Innovations

Community Legal Education

Pro Se Assistance

Collaborations With Other Service Providers

Major Cases or Other Advocacy Projects



Other Services

Technology and Other Innovations

With LawHelpNY now embedded as a program of PBN, LawHelpNY is working much more closely with PBN's national LawHelp team to inform the product road map for the LawHelp platform. This partnership has also allowed us to take advantage of additional technology expertise within PBN, for example, around cutting-edge methods of capturing and analyzing website usage data, and to explore future uses of LawHelpNY's API data through Open Referral or similar partnerships. LawHelpNY is involved in innovative online triage initiatives in Western New York and New York City focusing on consumer law matters. In June 2016, LawHelpNY transitioned from LivePerson to Comm100 as the platform for the LiveHelp program. Comm100 is a much more user-friendly interface for operators, which makes onboarding new volunteers easier and allows them to feel comfortable with the technology much quicker. LawHelpNY staff also have more local control over settings than when we operated as part of a group account of all LawHelp states. Comm100 has more robust and easier to use reporting capabilities, reducing the reporting and analysis burden on LawHelpNY staff.

LawHelpNY transitioned to a new mobile responsive site. While this initially led to a drop in LiveHelp chat usage numbers from mobile devices. We were quickly able to investigate and solve the initial issues and design several different presentations of the LiveHelp chat service. We also conducted A/B testing on various iterations of the LiveHelp widget, resulting in a 170% increase in LiveHelp usage via mobile devices in the testing period.

Legal Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation

LawHelpNY has continued to create a range of resources and portals to assist New Yorkers in finding the information they need. As we are not a direct services organization, much of our resources are legal related but not involved in casework. During the transition period and our work in the redesign process, the rate at which we created and released resources had declined. However, in the last several months we have developed a number of resources and portals to make navigating the site and accessing crucial information easier for our users.

During the IOLA fiscal year, our simultaneous livechat service LiveHelp underwent significant changes that we believe will continue to improve the quality of our service. A bilingual attorney supervises the pro bono law students that staff LiveHelp. The service is available weekdays 9am -9pm. The LiveHelp Coordinator has significantly enhanced the training component of LiveHelp and now offers on demand webinar trainings in housing in the areas of eviction, repairs and foreclosure, family law and immigration. These trainings were created due to the expansion onto CourtHelp in the foreclosure section in December of 2015, and the creation of new resources, mini

portals in the areas of housing repairs, eviction and immigration.

Collaborations With Other Service Providers

LawHelpNY has maintained the collaboration of the original Consortium, now as an Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee has offered significant feedback on the content redesign plans. LawHelpNY continues to work with members on specific projects including with Legal Services NYC for tenants in New York City facing poor housing conditions. There are ongoing projects with Legal Assistance of Western New York, Inc. where the Organizational Listings Coordinator is located.

LawHelpNY partnered closely with colleagues at the NYS Access to Justice Program in offering and expanding the LiveHelp service on the CourtHelp website and offering a website training on the NYC Non-Payment Eviction website and new resources for pro se litigants. The most recent expansion of LiveHelp onto the Families and Children section of CourtHelp involved collaboration with the New York Courts Access to Justice Program on various fronts, including testing and installing new code on the CourtHelp site, identifying training needs for volunteers, and creating new canned responses for LiveHelp operators serving CourtHelp users.

LawHelpNY continued its collaboration with Legal Information for Families Today (LIFT), hosting and managing the platform for their live chat service and referring LawHelpNY chat visitors to LIFT operators when they have specific family court questions. LIFT supported our training of LiveHelp operators in anticipation of the expansion onto the Families and Children pages of CourtHelp.

LawHelpNY collaborates closely with NYC-area law schools in recruiting and training law student volunteers to staff LiveHelp, primarily Columbia, Pace and Touro law schools. We also coordinate with other law schools in New York State to promote the volunteer opportunity and encourage geographic diversity. This year, Albany Law School, led by Professor Ray Brescia held a focus group with community members in the Capitol region to explore how people interact with LawHelpNY and to test the user experience on specific new resource content models. LawHelpNY continued collaboration with LegalHand through website trainings for LegalHand volunteers. We

Number of People Benefited by Legal Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation...

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|--|-----------------------|
| Total: | 337,220 People |
| Community Legal Education and Pro Se Assistance: | 7,220 People |
| Web Usage: | 330,000 People |

Other Services, *continued*

offered trainings on LawHelpNY websites and new content. Additionally we worked with LegalHand to set up focus groups to inform our content redesign strategy. We held focus group sessions at the Crown Heights and Jamaica offices. The participants were volunteers and community members and offered us valuable feedback on how to improve the user experience on the LawHelpNY websites.

Backup or Support Services

As an organization, LawHelpNY hosts content from multiple sources, including nonprofit and legal aid organizations and the courts, throughout the state of New York. By providing a single location for multiple resources in a myriad of subject areas, LawHelpNY supports the outreach and accessibility of the resources from our partners. We also work collaboratively with these partners to develop content for their clients and users.

LawHelpNY's LiveHelp program is available on more than just LawHelpNY sites. In 2016, LiveHelp was expanded to the CourtHelp website, and LawHelpNY is hosting and managing the platform the Legal Information for Families Today (LIFT) livechat service.

Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

The LiveHelp program relies on volunteers to staff the live chat service 12 hours a day, 5 days a week. These volunteers are typically law students or law graduates seeking to complete their 50 hour pro bono requirement. Occasionally barred attorneys from other states also volunteer, in order to complete their pro bono

requirement. We have a few volunteers who are barred NY attorneys who live outside the U.S. and want to keep a hand in NY legal services, and a couple who are stay-at-home parents who want to stay connected to legal services. As a volunteer opportunity that can be performed entirely remotely, there is much interest in the program.

In Fiscal Year 2016-17, LiveHelp counted on 141 volunteers from 18 different law schools who served more than 5,127 hours. LawHelpNY also relied on several volunteers to assist in responding to requests for assistance received via email and social media. The LiveHelp Coordinator supervises volunteers through the review of transcripts and regular communications to volunteers sharing best practices and providing feedback on issues seen in the transcripts. We have developed a number of follow-up webinar trainings in the past year, which serve as an opportunity to educate operators on substantive areas of law, raise examples of areas for improvement in past chats, and test volunteers' understanding through online polls and google quizzes.

This past year, LawHelpNY, in partnership with LawNY, hosted an Americorps VISTA volunteer. Starting in July 2016, the VISTA volunteer, located at LawNY's Geneva office, has been able to support administration of the LiveHelp program and development of the Western New York Consumer Triage Initiative. She has also contributed to maintenance of the newly released Tools for Immigrant New Yorkers webpage.

Additionally, in April and May 2016 a former LiveHelp volunteer provided her technical expertise to assist in the labor-intensive transition from the LivePerson chat software to the Comm100 live chat platform.

Sources of Funding

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| Total | \$346,950 |
| IOLA Grant | \$235,000 |
| Foundations | \$93,750 |
| Other Federal Programs | \$9,000 |
| Other | \$9,200 |

