

Center for Community Alternatives

2023 – 2024

Report

OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

CCA Reentry Advocacy Services provided legal assistance to 165 people benefitted during this reporting period, for 165 total cases (services).

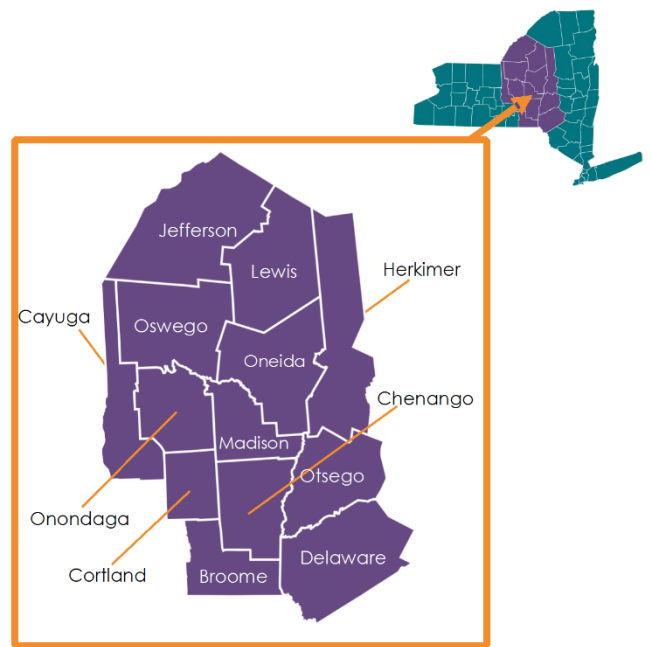
The primary target population of Reentry Advocacy is people who have been impacted by a criminal record; this means people who have been arrested and fingerprinted, whether or not they were convicted or incarcerated as a result. Our services provide them with the information they need to accurately report a conviction history, information and advice about their rights when seeking employment or housing, and assistance seeking available relief (sealing, certificates of rehabilitation, record correction) where appropriate.

One of the fundamental services we provide is assistance with making corrections to the DCJS record. In the last year, we helped 46 clients make corrections.

Many of our clients have obtained employment or housing or improved their material situation while or after working with us. Most of the good our clients experience from our work with them will be apparent only after we have ended the relationship.

Over the last year, our staff expanded to include a full-time reentry attorney. We also recently obtained LegalServer and expect that our ability to track services and benefits obtained will dramatically increase.

Our goal is to help as many people as capacity allows in the community to understand their rights and responsibilities when seeking employment, housing, and education with a criminal record to become their own best advocates; while we use our expertise and legal background to ensure they are in the best position to advocate for themselves as needed.



Service Area: Mid New York

Population Served: Re-entry population

Staffing Full Time Equivalents:
 Total Staff: 4.49 Lawyers: 1.16
 Paralegals: 1.01 Others: 2.32

DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES

This year, we have revised our intake process. Now, once we have received a referral, we determine whether we could accept that person as a client, and if so, our staff reach out to collect basic information and to schedule a call with the attorney, who reviews our retainer for basic services (record review, determine eligibility, brief advice). Once accepted as a client, the client comes in for fingerprinting and to complete our intake process. Once we have reviewed the records, we determine whether there are other legal services we could offer to the client (advice on a particular employment issue, application for sealing, application for certificate of rehabilitation, advocacy with a state agency regarding clearance or licensure). For the majority of our clients, we do not intake people presenting with a clearly defined legal issue beyond the existence of a record.



Example 1: We helped a client obtain, review, and seek correction to their NYS and FBI rap sheets. We provided advice to the client on what they must disclose to potential employers about their criminal record, and what would constitute unlawful discrimination on the part of a private employer. The client was eligible for Certificates of Relief from Disabilities from the sentencing court, so we applied for and obtained certificates for the client.

Example 2: We helped a client obtain and review their NYS and FBI rap sheets. We assisted the client with compiling advocacy materials in anticipation of seeking clearance to work in a nursing home and sent evidence of rehabilitation and good conduct to the Department of Health when the client was issued a denial of clearance; the client was cleared and is now working as an aide in a nursing home.

OTHER LEGAL-RELATED SERVICES

CCA's reentry advocacy program provides community legal education in the form of presentations to impacted people, generally centered on their rights and responsibilities when seeking work or housing with a criminal record. We also provide educational presentations to human service providers whose participants may be impacted by a barrier created by a criminal record. Those presentations center on how to help their participants navigate these barriers, and how to seek assistance. Finally, we provide in-house presentations to CCA participants in other programs to understand how a criminal record may create barriers for them, and the universe of relevant relief. In the last year, we provided these forms of community legal education to 155 individuals at a variety of events ranging from public events at a library or other community space, tabling, and workshops hosted by other providers.

Example #1: We routinely provide presentations to CCA's in house Makin' it Work class, a soft skills employment readiness class, that is hosted by CCA's community workforce program. These presentations include information on rights and responsibilities when seeking employment or housing with a criminal record, as well as the services we offer and how to obtain services.

155
people benefited
from
**Community Legal
Education**

Example #2: Our advocate in Rochester presented to participants in group counseling who are also on parole, for an outside agency. This presentation included information on rights and responsibilities when seeking employment or housing with a criminal record, as well as the services we offer and how to obtain services.

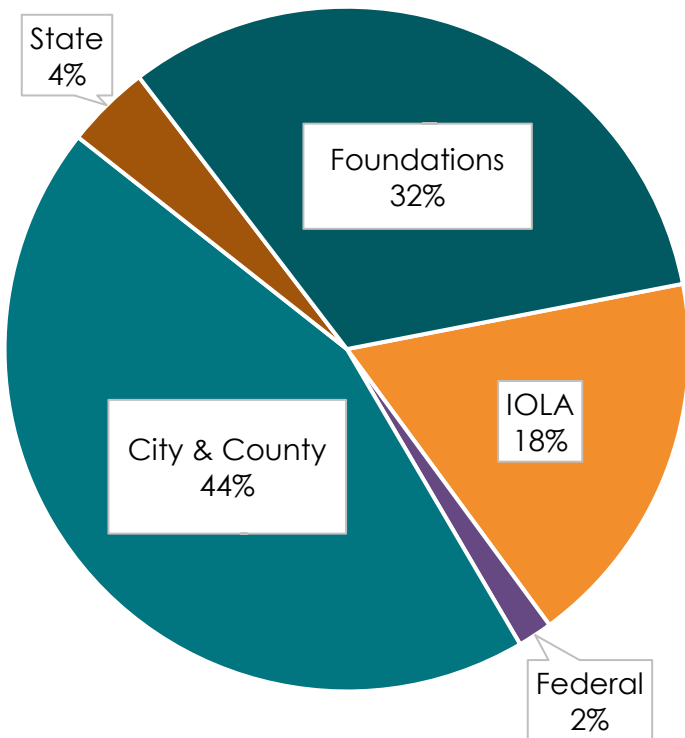
TECHNOLOGY

Our program made a transition to maintaining complete digital client files in addition to paper records and adopted a more streamlined system for attorney review of non-attorney staff work. We are in the process of onboarding with LegalServer, which should increase our ability to gather, track, and categorize significantly more information about clients, case outcomes, and needs communicated by people calling and seeking assistance. The 2023 IOLA Technology grant supported many items in this area.

SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

Our two most significant collaborative efforts are our program’s relationship with non-legal CCA programs and our relationship with other providers of related services. For CCA’s other programs, we are a resource for participants encountering (or who can expect to encounter) a barrier created by a criminal record. With our outside partners, we meet on at least a bi-monthly basis with three groups. We meet with the service providers in Rochester who have all partnered to engage in community presentations, routine meetings to discuss local issues and best practices, and inter-agency referrals. We also meet with a larger statewide group, the Coalition of Reentry Advocates, to stay up to date on changes in practice throughout the state, and in a smaller subcommittee for “upstate” providers of Reentry Advocacy services.

CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FUNDING



\$ 305,975	
IOLA Funding	\$54,995.81
City & County Funding	\$134,855.00
State Funding	\$12,205.00
Federal Funding	\$5,000.00
Foundations	\$98,919.00