

# **FAMILY LEGAL CARE**

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**2023 – 2024  
Report**

# OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

**Number of People and Organizations Benefited:** Thanks to the IOLA Fund’s essential partnership, Family Legal Care served over 25,000 families throughout New York between April 2023 and March 2024. We continue to provide unrepresented litigants with the legal information, advice, and resources they need to self-advocate in Family Court. Highlights of the past year include:

**Family Law Information Helplines and Court-based Services:** 15,554 people received legal information through our Phone, Email, and Live-Chat Helplines. The Helplines continue to be the main entry point to Family Legal Care’s services for litigants. This year, we resumed providing in-person legal information services at NYC’s borough courthouses, a staple of our programming for over twenty years before the pandemic. We helped 1,345 people in-person.

**Legal Consultations:** Our staff attorneys completed 3,257 one-one-one consultations to provide legal advice, assistance completing Court documents, and mock trial preparation. 1,828 of these consultations were with new clients; the remaining 1,429 were follow-up consultations.

**Pro Bono Program:** Family Legal Care’s Pro Bono Program completed 498 consultations, 490 of which were completed by volunteer attorneys. This slightly exceeds last year’s record total of pro bono consultations completed, even as we took a six-week break from consultations in order to overhaul the technology used in the program (described in more detail below).

**Legal Resource Guides:** 32,417 Legal Resource Guides were distributed from courthouses or community partners. An



**Service Area:** New York State  
**Population Served:** Low-Income Populations  
**Staffing Full Time Equivalents:**  
 Total Staff: 25.68   Others: 13.2  
 Lawyers: 12.48

additional 196,945 people accessed our digital LRGs on our website.

**Family Law Education and Community Outreach:** 302 participants attended an in-person or virtual workshop or presentation. Pre-recorded legal education videos were viewed 8,491 times.

**Digital Justice Initiative:** 2,456 people received a customized report tailored to their family law situation from our Family Law Navigator tool, a 30% increase from last year. Guided Court Forms make it easy for litigants to understand and fill out complex legal forms from a mobile device. Our 9 available Guided Court Forms were completed 1,532 times.

**Tech Hubs:** At our Brooklyn, Bronx, and Queens Tech Hubs, 1,738 litigants attended their virtual court hearing or received technical assistance with their court paperwork.

**Increasing access to justice and improving Family Legal Care's capacity to deliver services:** This year, we restructured our Tech Hub Program to transition the Tech Hubs from a temporary, emergency response to the pandemic into a permanent program offering. We created a new position, the Community Engagement Manager, to oversee the program, and expanded the role of the Program Associates to provide legal information in addition to technical assistance to visitors to the Brooklyn, Queens, and Bronx Family Courthouses.

Our Tech Hub Program Associates completed the same extensive training on New York family law and Family Court procedures that our Helpline staff receive. This means that after three years, we are back in the courts providing the in-person, on-the-spot legal information that is so beneficial to our clients.

This program restructuring significantly improves our capacity to deliver services, particularly to litigants visiting the courthouses in-person. The reorganization will bring long-term stability to the project, help save on staffing costs, and ensure a consistent service experience for pro se litigants across all of our programs. Overall, this change helps us use our staff time more efficiently to reach more litigants and provide deeper services.

## DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES

**Case Example #1, Family Law:** Eva first met with a Family Legal Care staff attorney in 2021 for a child support case. Her ex-husband was refusing to pay for their daughter's college expenses in violation of the divorce agreement. The legal advice she received from Family Legal Care helped her to win her case; her ex was ordered to pay for the three years she had been supporting her daughter by herself. When he continued to withhold payment, she won a second order, and then a third. He has been ordered to pay all three orders by April 2024, and she will finally get the support she is entitled to.

Her daughter has since graduated Magna Cum Laude and is pursuing a master's degree with a 4.0 GPA. Eva said "You have touched our lives more than you could have imagined. That one hour resulted in many hours of empowerment and justice being restored."

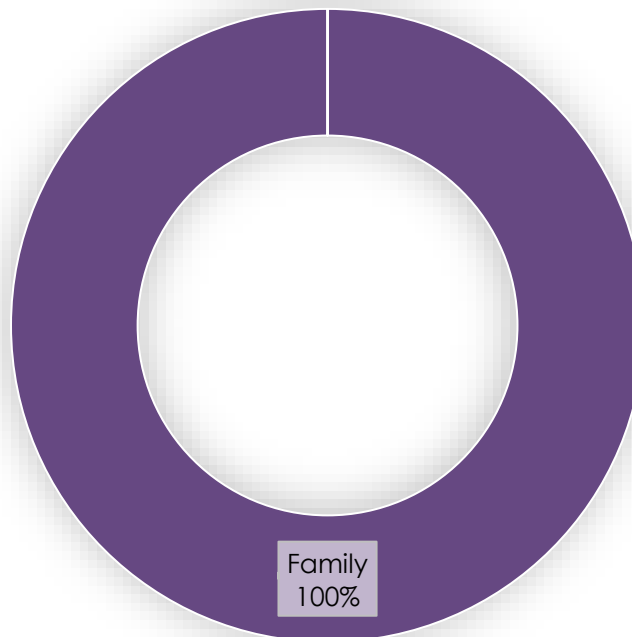
**Case Example #2, Family Law:** Kristo is an Albanian immigrant who speaks limited English. He first came to Family Legal Care's Bronx Tech Hub as a walk-in visitor, looking for help with his child support case. He is disabled and cannot work, and wanted to modify his child support case to a lower amount to avoid accruing more arrears. Because he only has access to a phone with a data plan, he was struggling to access the forms he needed for his case. Our Tech Hub Program Associate worked patiently with Kristo to overcome the language barrier and help him print the forms he needed. She also scheduled a consultation for him with one of our Staff Attorneys.

Using a translator service, our attorney helped Kristo fill out his Financial Affidavit Form, explain court procedures, and advise him on what evidence he would need to support his case. With our help, Kristo was able to overcome multiple obstacles to receive the legal advice and information he needs to continue to support his children at a rate that considers his current financial situation.

**3,755**  
people  
benefited  
from

**3,755**  
legal cases  
closed

## CASES BY LEGAL PROBLEM AREA



## OTHER LEGAL-RELATED SERVICES

**Family Law Information Helplines and Court-based Services:** The Helplines continue to be the main entry point to Family Legal Care’s services for litigants. This year, we also resumed providing in-person legal information services at NYC’s borough courthouses. This year 15,554 people received legal information through our Phone, Email, and Live-Chat Helplines, and an additional 1,345 were served in-person at our Court Help Centers.

**Digital Justice Tools: Family Law Navigator:** This powerful tool gives parents and caregivers a helpful starting point to begin addressing their family law issue. Users answer questions about their family law topic, and are given a detailed, customized report about the next steps they should take, including what forms and petitions need to be filled out. Navigator users can also request a consultation from a pro bono attorney through our Pro Bono Program. The Family Law Navigator was used 2,456 times during this contract period.

**Guided Court Forms:** Our Guided Court Forms make the complex and often inaccessible Court documents easy to find, understand, and fill out. Litigants answer a few easy-to-understand questions in plain language, and their answers are mapped onto the fields of the form without additional PDF-editing software. The forms are available on our website and linked

to in Family Law Navigator, so a user who has questions about their family law topic can go through the Navigator to get a customized report about their next steps, learn which forms and petitions they will need to file, and find a link to the Guided Court Form. Our 9 available Guided Court Forms were completed 1,532 times this contract period.

**Tech Hubs:** At our Tech Hubs, parents and caregivers can use all of the computer equipment they need to access the virtual court, even before their first hearing. Our computers, printers, and scanners are all free to use to fill out and submit important court documents. If the litigant has in-depth questions about their case, the Tech Hub can help schedule an hour-long consultation with a Family Legal Care Staff Attorney. When it is time for their virtual hearing, litigants can use our computers to attend. The space is quiet and private, and our Tech Hub staff helps each litigant log in to the virtual court room and troubleshoot any technical issues. We served 1,738 people through our Brooklyn, Queens, and Bronx Tech Hubs during the contract period.

**16,102**

people  
benefited  
from  
**Pro Se  
Assistance**

**43,757**

people  
benefited  
from  
**Community  
Legal  
Education**

**198,477**

people  
benefited  
from  
**Web-Based  
Assistance**

# TECHNOLOGY

This year we worked with Galvin Technology to build out our Salesforce database's functionality and replace the outdated platform used in our Pro Bono Program. We created a number of portals in a Salesforce Experience Cloud customized to the needs of various Pro Bono Program stakeholders, including pro bono volunteer attorneys; clients; pro bono coordinators, the liaison at each pro bono partner organization who schedules consultations; and our intake volunteers, who collect information from clients before their consultation so attorneys can spend their time giving legal advice. Video consultations now take place on Microsoft Teams, which is the platform also used by the Family Courts. This helps our clients who have never used Teams before or are not technologically savvy to get practice using the system, which may help build their confidence and reduce technical errors and delays when using Teams for their hearings. As large, international technology companies, Microsoft and Salesforce provide more reliable service, and if an outage were to occur, it can be fixed faster than our previous, smaller provider could accomplish.

These changes have streamlined operations for our staff, eliminating the need to enter the same data and upload case documents into multiple locations, enabling more automation, and creating a more user-friendly interface for clients and volunteers alike. We have also been able to automate multiple steps in the process to save more staff time. For example, when a client's consultation is scheduled, an instructional email is automatically sent to the client, and the Limited Engagement Agreement is automatically sent to both the client and attorney. When the LEA is completed, it is automatically added to client's records.

## IOLA TECHNOLOGY GRANT

Family Legal Care is grateful to the IOLA Fund for the \$10,000 discretionary grant for technology infrastructure improvements. We spent the grant on the annual subscription costs for our Salesforce database. This helped make it possible for us to implement the extensive changes to the database that are detailed in other sections of this report, enabling us to replace the outdated legal consultation platform previously used in our Pro Bono Program. This will ultimately mean a better service experience for clients and volunteers alike and more efficient program operations for our Pro Bono Program team.

# PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

Family Legal Care's Pro Bono Team has established partnerships with almost 20 major law firms and corporate legal departments in NYC. We provide detailed training to volunteer attorneys in family law and Family Court procedures. Family Legal Care is certified as a Continuing Legal Education (CLE) provider, so Pro Bono Program training provides CLE credits to lawyers who complete it. Each pro bono partner commits to completing a set number of consultations per month, and Family Legal Care connects them to a client who needs help on their family court case. We receive client referrals from our network of community-based nonprofit service providers, as well as callers to our Family Law Helplines or users of the Family Law Navigator tool on our website. We also have three intake volunteers who assist with pro bono client intakes to ensure we obtain client and case information efficiently.

The Pro Bono Program is uniquely supportive for volunteers, who receive training in family law, a briefing on the client's case before the consultation, support with a Family Legal Care attorney via live-chat during the consultation, as well as follow-up support. If another consultation is needed as the case progresses, we prioritize pairing the client with the same attorney so there is continuity on the case.

This contract period, we completed 498 pro bono consultations and began referral partnerships with Legal Hand Westchester, Touro Law Center's William Randolph Hearst Public Advocacy Center (PAC), and the Nassau County Office of Crime Victim Advocate. We also hired another Pro Bono Staff Attorney to increase the number of people we can serve, and overhauled the

**157**attorneys volunteered **753** hours**6**law students volunteered **1,600** hours**15**other volunteers volunteered **370** hours



technology used by our Pro Bono Program (described in more detail in the Overview of Accomplishments and Technology sections of this report.)

In Spring 2024 Family Legal Care hosted a Pro Bono Scholar, a third-year law student at Cardozo Law School. They have been assisting in the Pro Bono Program and with the Digital Justice Initiative.

## SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

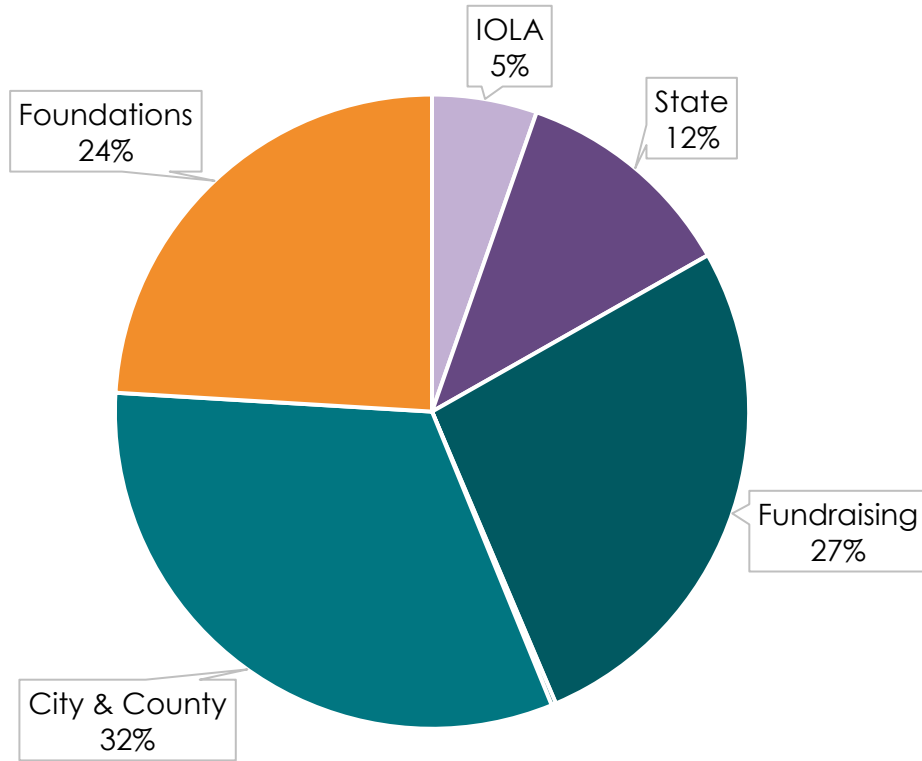
**Family Court and Other Legal Providers:** Family Legal Care has a close relationship with the Family Court, and we conduct mutual referrals with our partners in the legal services community, including the City Bar Justice Center, Advocates for Children, Housing Court Answers, and Her Justice. We refer clients who need support on domestic violence matters to Safe Horizon and local Family Justice Centers. We have relationships with organizations who provide a wide range of other services, including settlement houses, job training providers, mental and physical health clinics, substance use treatment centers, and re-entry service providers for people returning from incarceration.

**Legal Hand Jamaica:** An important partner for our Tech Hub program is Legal Hand Jamaica, which houses our Queens Tech Hub. Additionally, our Community Outreach program partners with established wrap-around service providers to present legal education workshops and clinics to their clients who would be a good fit for Family Legal Care's services.

**Law Firms and Corporate Legal Departments:** We also partner with the following law firms and corporate legal departments through our Pro Bono Program: A&E Networks; AIG; Alston & Bird; Blackstone; Bloomberg; BNY Mellon; Capital One; Davis Polk; Dechert; Fried Frank; Goodstein Law Firm; JPMorgan Chase & Co.; Members of Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York; Milbank; Proskauer; Shearman & Sterling; Skadden; Sullivan & Cromwell LLP; Travelers; Troutman Pepper Hamilton Sanders LLP; and Verizon. Our Pro Bono Program service partners include: Center for Elder Law & Justice; Community Legal Help Project; Community Service Society; Family Service League; The Fortune Society; Legal Assistance of Western New York; Legal Hand Call-In Centers serving Nassau and Suffolk counties, Westchester, and the Bronx; Schenectady and Albany counties, and Westchester; The Legal Project; Long Island Advocacy Center; Nassau County Office of Crime Victim Advocate; Nassau Suffolk Legal Services; Pediatric Health Associates at Mount Sinai Hospital; Rural Law Center of New York; and Touro Law Center's William Randolph Hearst Public Advocacy Center (PAC).

# CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FUNDING

## \$ 3,690,176



<b>IOLA Funding</b>	<b>\$ 197,500</b>
<b>City &amp; County Funding</b>	<b>\$ 1,184,996</b>
<b>State Funding</b>	<b>\$ 422,183</b>
<b>Foundations</b>	<b>\$ 887,500</b>
<b>Fundraising</b>	<b>\$ 989,597</b>
<b>Other Funding</b>	<b>\$ 8,400</b>