

**JEWISH
ASSOCIATION
FOR SERVICES
FOR THE AGED**

2023 – 2024

Report

OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

FY 2023-2024 continued to be dominated by eviction and housing foreclosure matters as affordable housing in NYC, especially for low-income older adults remained elusive, as requests for housing subsidies and rental assistance overwhelmed NYC government agencies. To address this, JASA|LSEJ worked with local community agencies, housing task forces and coalitions to provide outreach, legal information and assistance to tenants and homeowners. JASA|LSEJ provided no-cost civil legal services to older adults facing housing issues closing 720 cases and benefiting 1312 individuals. JASA|LSEJ assisted clients to stop evictions, obtain repairs, secure rental and homeowner assistance, and stop harassment by landlords and their agents. In addition to housing matters, JASA|LSEJ provided legal services throughout Queens, Brooklyn, and Nassau Counties to older adults in the areas of family violence, consumer scams, fraud and public benefits closing an additional 153 cases and benefiting 328 individuals.

During the grant period JASA|LSEJ worked with a team of individuals from Unified Court System (UCS) and Project Guardianship (PG) to complete a statewide survey, gaining insight and recommendations from statewide stakeholders on how to improve guardianship including from lay guardians (person(s) appointed as guardian for a family member or friend). In addition, through the project JASA|LSEJ helped develop a new UCS Article 81 guardianship website for those considering guardianship, those already in the guardianship process and the public at large.

JASA|LSEJ conducted outreach, workshops and trainings reaching 1614 individuals including distributing 213 homeowner brochures; represented a Queens' tenant association seeking relief against their landlords for its unlawful and harassing actions; continued to assist clients in applying for housing assistance through programs like FHEPS and SCRIE/DRIE; and obtained orders of protection through family court.



Service Area: Queens

Population Served: Low Income Queens Residents 60 and Older

Staffing Full Time Equivalents:

Total Staff: 15.38 Lawyers: 13
Paralegals: 1 Others: 1.38

DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES

Family and Foreclosure: Ms. G, 82, has been residing in her home in Queens since she purchased it in 1974. Ms. G lives with her adult daughter, who had been financially exploiting Ms. G for some time. Despite her age, Ms. G still works as a registered nurse employed on an hourly basis. Ms. G was hospitalized several times which caused her to miss work. She consequently fell behind on her property tax, water, and sewer bills. Ms. G was unable to catch up on her past due bills and fell further behind. Pursuant to the terms of her reverse mortgage, her reverse mortgage company paid the property tax and water and sewer arrears on her behalf.

However, they then initiated foreclosure proceedings against Ms. G. Ms. G sought the assistance of JASA|LSEJ with her foreclosure proceeding. JASA|LSEJ found that Ms. G's adult daughter had been spending large sums of Ms. G's money, without Ms. G's consent.

JASA|LSEJ helped Ms. G to establish a new account to protect her income from her daughter, balance her budget and represented her in the Foreclosure Settlement Conference Part to resolve her reverse mortgage default. JASA|LSEJ then assisted Ms. G to apply to DSS/HRA for a grant to pay the arrears. This allowed Ms. G to enter into a repayment agreement to cure her default and remain in her home.

1,640

people
benefited
from

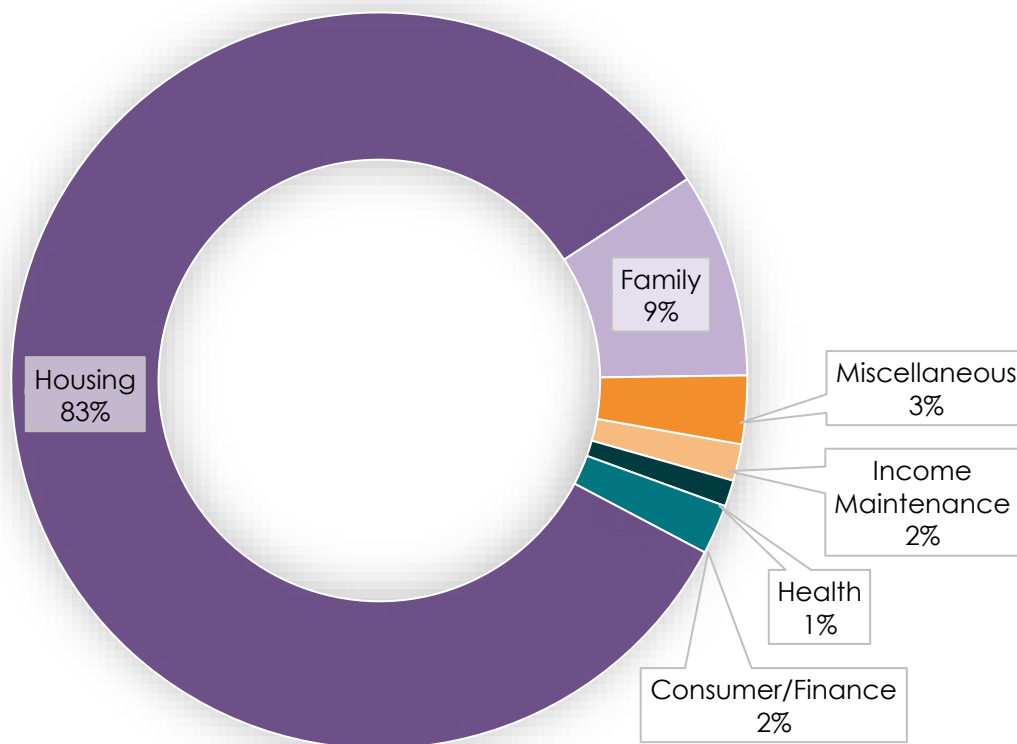
873

legal cases
closed

Landlord/Tenant Housing: Ms. H is a 74-year-old low-income Queens resident who has lived in her rent-stabilized apartment for the past 28 years. Ms. H and her life partner Mr. P lived there together until his passing in early 2022.

Almost a year to the date after Mr. P's passing, Ms. H's landlord served her with a 10-day notice to vacate, alleging that she was a "licensee" of the apartment and not entitled to remain in her long-term home.

CASES BY LEGAL PROBLEM AREA



As a life partner, Ms. H had succession rights to the apartment, but proving through documentary and other evidence the family relationship was proving to be challenging. Ms. H was undergoing medical treatment and Mr. P had been the person in their relationship who had dealt with much of the paperwork and bills. Prior to trial, JASA|LSEJ was able to negotiate with the attorneys for Ms. H's landlord to recognize Ms. H's rights to the apartment and issue a lease in her name.

JASA|LSEJ assisted Ms. H in applying to DSS/HRA for a grant to satisfy outstanding rental arrears. Ms. H arrears were resolved and she now has a lease in her name for the first time in 28 years.

OTHER LEGAL-RELATED SERVICES

Pro Se assistance and brief services were provided through JASA|LSEJ's walk-in clinic office located in the Queens Civil courthouse. In addition, JASA|LSEJ received direct referrals via emails and phone calls from judges, court attorneys, OCJ, DSS' homeless services, Aging NYC and CBOs.

JASA|LSEJ continues to be part of a Queens' RTC rotation appearing in court conference parts on specified days to offer free legal services to eligible tenants appearing for the first time in holdover and nonpayment proceedings. For those individuals who were ineligible, JASA|LSEJ provided advice and counsel, prose assistance and referrals. During the grant period JASA|LSEJ provided 266 people with prose assistance and made 153 referrals.

JASA|LSEJ also conducted workshops, outreach, and clinics, focusing on areas impacting older adults housing, family violence, and public benefits. JASA|LSEJ continued its existing collaboration with Brooklyn Corp A., the Legal Aid Society, and Neighborhood Housing Services of Jamaica, as part of the Queens Coalition and arranged with the Queens Borough President and Aging NYC to hold remote trainings and clinics. JASA|LSEJ reached 1849, which included outreach through 22 interactive online presentations.

Example #1: JASA hosted its Annual NYC Elder Justice Virtual Summit, "Older and Wiser: Shaping the Future of Elder Justice." Conference, partners include New York City elder justice programs, Aging NYC, HRA, Safe Horizon, Weinberg Center for Elder Justice, and Lifespan of Greater Rochester. Over 120 people attended the virtual conference and summit workshops. This year's focus was to take a step back and examine the trauma our clients and staff experienced since 2020 and assess through small breakout workshops how housing, immigration, domestic violence, equity and inclusion, and mental health inform elder justice. Each area was led by 2 professionals who

266

people
benefited from
**Pro Se
Assistance**

1,849

people
benefited from
**Community
Legal
Education**

facilitated the discussion. The information from the participants is being used to develop this year's conference and establish new approaches to elder justice.

Example #2: As part of outreach, JASA|LSEJ participated in a career day event at PS 120Q in Queens. JASA|LSEJ presented to 82 students ranging in age from 5 to 12 years old. JASA|LSEJ staff went to the different classrooms and did a presentation to each class on elder justice with an emphasis on grandparent scams and other scams that target older New Yorkers. The topic was well received and timely as many children lived in multigenerational families and assisted with and/or were cared for by the older adults in their lives. The younger students found it gratifying to be the ones to share information with their parents and grandparents about scams. Many students also found it fun to come up with code words to tell their family members to use to ensure that their family members would not be tricked by someone trying to impersonate the student.

IMPACT CASES

Aviles, et al. v. Zara Realty Holding Corp. et al Index No.: 703854/2018 (Queens Supreme Court): During this grant year, JASA|LSEJ continued our representation of a group of low-income tenants against Zara Realty with the Pro Bono firm of Milbank LLC and Take Root Justice.

JASA|LSEJ and its co-counsel met with opposing counsel on a number of occasions to negotiate having illegal fees removed from tenants' rent ledgers, discuss the implementation of drafted settlement terms and determining the effect that this settlement may have on any benefits that may become available through the pending NYS Attorney General's case against ZARA.

As previously mentioned, in addition to monetary damages, the landlord is agreeing to broader rent regulation policy and practices. This should impact all the tenants in the 100 unit building and other Zara tenants facing similar issues throughout Queens.



TECHNOLOGY

During the past year JASA implemented several new systems and capabilities across the organization in order to improve efficiencies, reporting, and cybersecurity enhancements including for JASA|LSEJ:

- JASA implemented enhanced security controls for its GSuite account in order to provide better hardening of its cyber environment;
- JASA upgraded surveillance systems and door access systems at a number of locations to provide better physical security;
- With the assistance of a technology grant, JASA shut down JASA|LSEJ's Lotus Notes server for legal services and migrated the archival data to an internal web application for faster retrieval and ongoing support;
- JASA implemented version two of its data-warehouse allowing for faster, more accurate, and more flexible reporting across many JASA programs;
- JASA implemented an internal penetration testing system to validate its cyber security footprint and ensure all systems are working as expected.

IOLA TECHNOLOGY GRANT

JASA|LSEJ received 2 awards during the fiscal year for upgrading its technology, one from IOLA and one from the Attorney General's Office. As a result, JASA|LSEJ only needed to use a part of the IOLA grant to complete its technology upgrade. The most important work was associated with transferring a large amount of data from the obsolete database system (lotus notes) to the current database system Legalserver. This work was essential to maintaining client online files and information especially as JASA transferred to a paperless file system.

The IOLA grant was also used to upgrade Bates Printing; licensing and support to facilitate the software transfer to workstations; and laptop purchases to replace obsolete equipment. The two tech grants JASA|LSEJ was awarded this year were essential to JASA|LSEJ's being able to improve its day-to-day operation and workplace security.

PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

JASA|LSEJ collaborates with the NYS Bar Association Emeritus Program through Fordham Law School to serve as a placement for retired attorneys and is placement for law school students and graduates to complete their 50-hour pro bono service. This year JASA|LSEJ has one Emeritus Attorney to work with our intake attorney 1 day a week. In addition, JASA|LSEJ continued to be a placement for one law student from Brooklyn Law School's Help Clinic. The student worked hybrid with our attorneys 3 days a week during the semester and was able to attend court proceedings.

JASA|LSEJ continued to partner with private law firms to assist low-income older adults and is currently working with Milbank LLP and Take Root Justice in representing the tenant association in an action against Zara Realty.

JASA requires that all staff, including volunteers and law students receive appropriate orientation training on JASA policies and procedures. In addition to regular supervision, all staff, fellows, students, and volunteers attend on-going legal education and training. Information on changes in the laws affecting populations served are distributed to staff and reviewed at weekly staff meetings. All staff have access to advocacy on-line services such as probono.net and lawhelp.org. Volunteers and students attend webinars and participate on advocacy listservs where information can be distributed, questions presented, and ideas exchanged

1attorney volunteered **294** hours**13**law students volunteered **1,359** hours**2**other volunteers volunteered **432** hours

SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

Elder Justice Innovation Award: The US Dept. of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living awarded New York State Unified Court System (UCS), along with the Guardianship Project (TGP) and JASA|LSEJ, an Elder Justice Innovation Award. This award is to improve outcomes for every New Yorker who is the subject of a guardianship case; to increase access to court services for all New Yorkers and to modernize guardianship case operations. JASA|LSEJ continues to chair the Statewide Stakeholders' Assessment subcommittee which wrote its final report containing the results of the guardianship needs' assessments that were conducted and made recommendations to UCS for improving the NYS guardianship process.

The final report is currently being reviewed and will be published and made available to the public. In addition, a new UCS court website on Article 81 guardianship was launched complete with videos, resources, and information on the guardianship process.

Cardoza Law School's Bet Tzedek Clinic: JASA|LSEJ partnered with Cardoza Law School's Bet Tzedek Clinic working with 4 students and 2 law professors on discrimination cases. One case involved the right of an 82-year-old blind coop owner to continue operating his amateur radio which required an antenna on the building's roof top. Amateur radio was his primary means of communication and socialization and he had been licensed and operating amateur radio since the 1960s. The coop sought the removal of the antenna and his eviction. The other matter involved a landlord seeking the eviction against a tenant who was experiencing family violence by her adult daughter. The landlord sought the senior's removal despite knowing that the mother had an order of protection excluding the daughter from the building and having taken steps to protect her safety. The landlord sought to evict the rent regulated tenant for the sole acts of the daughter in violation of discrimination laws.

In both matters the Cardoza clinic and JASA|LSEJ were about to file affirmative federal litigation when the landlord agreed to favorably settle the matters if Cardoza and JASA|LSEJ would hold off on filing the affirmative cases. Without the assistance of the Bet Tzedek clinic both cases likely would have gone to trial in Queens Housing court.

Queens Coalition: JASA|LSEJ continues to join forces with Brooklyn Corp A., the Legal Aid Society, and Neighborhood Housing Services of Jamaica, forming what we are known in the community as the "Queens Coalition." The coalition was formed because the organizations recognized a need in the community to address a variety of issues during presentations.

Recognizing that each agency had different expertise, it was decided that we would collaborate and address the holistic needs of the community. During the past year the Queens Coalition has reached over 150 people informing them of the homeowner resources that are available to them as well as informing homeowners and tenants of their rights. Additionally, we were able to meet with several community members who were having issues with their homeowner and/or personal taxes.

The Nassau County Bar Association & Family and Children’s Association: The Nassau County Bar Association, Family and Children’s Association and JASA|LSEJ collaborated to train professionals and community members on Elder Abuse—Navigating & Advocating for Survivors through the Criminal Justice System. This was an interactive and informative presentation, giving the audience the necessary tools to traverse through the red tape of the criminal justice system.

We guided over 75 people through recognizing elder abuse, reporting elder abuse, empowering the survivor to contact the police, assisting through reporting process, and the court process. We also were able to discuss referrals and services for the abuser.

CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FUNDING

\$ 2,359,012.00

City and County	\$ 1,258,435.00
IOLA	\$ 115,000.00
State	\$ 985,577.00

