

**NEW YORK  
COUNTY  
LAWYERS  
ASSOCIATION**

2022-2023

# OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

We closed 1,813 direct civil legal assistance cases and benefitted 3,796 individuals from those cases during the reporting period; another approximately 400 individuals benefitted directly from our impact litigation success reported in Section D. The Pro Bono Programs of the New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) target individuals living in the five boroughs of New York City, but many of our programs serve residents of any county in New York State. Our programs work with various populations, including individuals with criminal records, individuals who have been wrongfully or unfairly investigated by the Administration for Children’s Services, individuals with disabilities who have been denied crucial government benefits, individuals with consumer debt issues, and low-income New Yorkers who have inquiries involving housing, employment, or family law.

Because of our work, low-income people have realized a number of benefits, such as:

- Stopping or reducing debt collection activity through limited scope advice and representation, in our CLARO and Volunteer Lawyer for the Day Programs;
- Avoiding or reversing findings of child neglect by child protective services agencies, through our State Central Registry Project, thereby improving access to employment and other opportunities;
- Winning remands in the Southern District of New York for individuals with disabilities who were denied Social Security benefits, through our Social Security SDNY Project;
- Removing barriers to employment, housing, and civic participation for individuals with criminal records through the Reentry Initiative, including the Certificates Project and Project Restore;
- Empowering low-income individuals to effectively resolve legal concerns relating to housing, employment, and family law through our Legal Counseling Project.
- Launching a new pro bono Civil Appeals Pilot Project in the Appellate Division – First Department.



**Population Served:** General Low Income Population

**Total Funding:** \$246,379

**Total IOLA Grant:** \$62,500

**Staffing Full Time Equivalents:**

- Total Staff: 3.6
- Paralegals: 0
- Lawyers: 2.6
- Other: 1

Following the onboarding of our new case management system LegalServer that went live in the spring of 2020, staff and volunteers have been able to use LegalServer to securely store case documents and information, record time, and track case events such as hearings. During this reporting period we expanded our use of the Online Intake Form module through LegalServer, to facilitate our access to potential clients and the process of collecting their information and documents. Currently five of our programs utilize online intake forms, including our Legal Counseling Project and Volunteer Lawyer for the Day Project, which both see the highest volume of cases. The expansion of our Pro Bono Department to include a part-time staff attorney who provides direct case services and supervision across our programs has significantly increased our capacity to engage law student interns in our work and improve our case services and program administration.

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## DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES: CASES

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### *Health*

Ms. G, born in 1969, suffers from Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and other conditions. She has chronic pain and requires a cane to walk. She last worked full-time in 2011 and then did sporadic part-time work as her brother's personal assistant. Ms. G attempted to work in other jobs but was not able to do so, and she relied on her daughters for help with daily tasks. Ms. G was denied disability benefits in 2018 and appealed the denial in 2019. The Administrative Law Judge upheld the denial of her benefits. The challenges Ms. G faced in her administrative hearing without representation and with limited English fluency meant she wasn't equipped to argue on her own behalf. A NYCLA volunteer attorney took on Ms. G's case in the United States District Court in the Southern District of New York as part of our Social Security SDNY Project. The volunteer's advocacy helped achieve a remand of Ms. G's case, which will give her a fair chance at receiving her disability benefits.

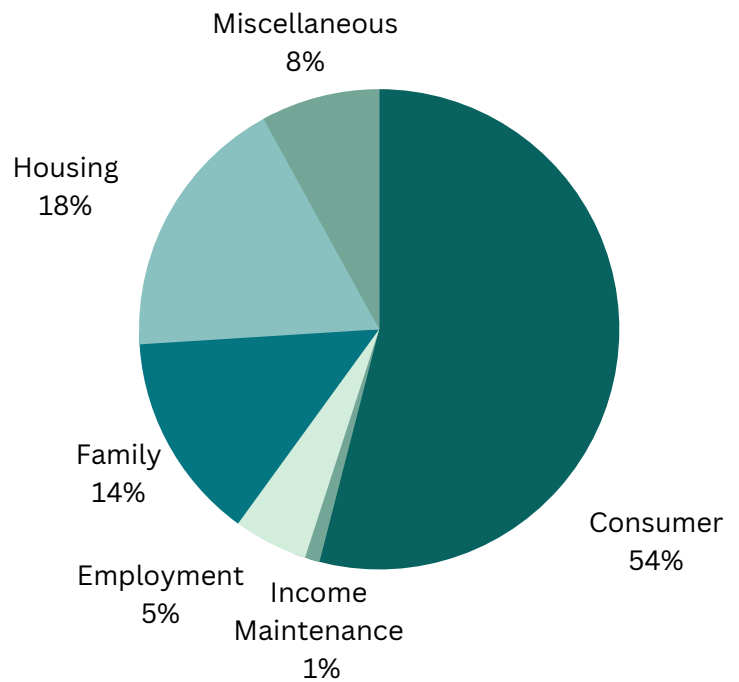
**3,796**  
people  
benefitted from  
**1,813**  
legal cases  
closed

**Family**

Ms. M started an organization to assist justice-involved youth in her community and to prevent children and youth from becoming justice-involved. However, she discovered that two indicated reports on the State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) were blocking her from pursuing her goal to help young people. One report, from 2008, was founded solely upon Ms. M’s marijuana use, which would no longer have grounds to remain on the SCR due to recent updates to the law. Ms. M’s SCR case started while the COVID-19 pandemic was at its peak, which slowed down the proceedings. Ultimately, the advocacy provided by NYCLA was strong and the Administration for Children’s Services agreed not to proceed with the hearing or provide any evidence to support Ms. M’s indicated reports. Her reports were therefore amended to “unfounded” and sealed. They will no longer interfere with her projects to benefit youth in her community.

**Consumer Debt**

NYCLA represented a client who was being sued by an original creditor on two separate matters. She was a single mother struggling to find full-time employment, as she worked in a sector that was hit brutally hard by the pandemic. Prior to NYCLA’s assistance, she had filed a motion to dismiss one of the matters, which had been fully briefed, but the Court never rendered a decision. When we met her in 2022, her matter was on for a motion for summary judgment. The VLFD successfully advocated to have the motion for summary judgment stayed. Once the motion to dismiss was granted, the VLFD successfully represented the client at a traverse hearing, resulting in a dismissal of the entire matter for a total savings of \$10,753.17. The VLFD then negotiated an affordable settlement on the remaining matter.



**Cases by  
Legal Problem  
Area**

## OTHER SERVICES: OVERVIEW

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NYCLA's Pro Bono Department provides Community Legal Education as a form of outreach for our programs and to educate the public about their legal rights. During this reporting period, we conducted 10 outreach programs which served a total of 130 individuals. A number of these programs were virtual, though during this reporting period we also returned to holding some in-person programs, and hybrid events with both virtual and in-person options. These programs included both legal clinics and educational presentations. NYCLA staff, including the Pro Bono Director and staff attorneys, have given a number of presentations to partner community organizations, including The Doe Fund and The HOPE Program, on our Certificates Project, aimed at individuals with criminal records.

**130**  
people benefitted  
from *Community  
Legal Education  
Services*

As part of our partnership with Member Resources, we also participated in a project to make videos covering basic landlord/tenant and family law information that are posted on the Independent Drivers Guild and Home Healthcare Workers of America websites, as well as Youtube and Instagram.

## OTHER SERVICES: TECHNOLOGY

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During the reporting period, we expanded our use of our case management system, LegalServer. The most significant expansion of this system is our further implementation of online intake forms to cover more of our programs, including the Legal Counseling Project and the Volunteer Lawyer for the Day Consumer Debt Program, which see the highest volume of cases. This platform has facilitated the process of tracking case data and volunteer assignments, and securely storing documents.

During this reporting period the NYCLA website was fully updated, which included the sections about our Pro Bono Programs. We updated our program descriptions and included direct access to online intake forms on the NYCLA website, so members of the public can submit forms directly in order to receive assistance from those programs. We worked to ensure that these resources would be easily accessible to members of the public during the website updating process.

## OTHER SERVICES: TRAININGS

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The New York County Lawyers Association ensures that the Board attends periodic trainings on good governance. Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler LLP and White & Case LLP serve as our non-profit outside counsel. The General Counsel provides onboarding to new Board members with an annual Board packet, which includes the review and affirmation of NYCLA's Conflict of Interest Policy.

We have two part-time staff attorneys in addition to the Pro Bono Director, one of whom focuses on consumer debt, and one of whom is a generalist. The consumer debt staff attorney attends regular CLE programs to stay up to date on the latest developments. The generalist took all of our available pro bono program trainings and received individualized training and resources from the Pro Bono Director and Pro Bono Programs Coordinator. As we expand and add additional attorneys, we tailor professional development programs to their needs. The Pro Bono Director attends periodic training programs on current issues in the law: unique substantive legal trainings this year included "Improving Outcomes for Children and Families with Structured Coparenting" and "Restorative Justice". We are in the process of fully updating our online trainings for our Legal Counseling Project volunteers, and we regularly coordinate with NYCLA's CLE Department to provide relevant programs to volunteers.

NYCLA has also folded mediation skills into its Pro Bono Department. NYCLA's Pro Bono Director is trained in basic mediation through the Institute on Mediation and Conflict Resolution and teaches courses on Workplace Conflict Resolution and Divorce Mediation. In addition, NYCLA's newest staff attorney is trained in housing and family law mediation.

For our Pro Bono Programs Coordinator, our co-employer provides online professional development tools and classes. The Pro Bono Director also directly mentors the Pro Bono Programs Coordinator. The Pro Bono Coordinator also oversees basic training for volunteers and staff with regards to administrative systems, especially using our case management system LegalServer, and has created training materials to help with this.

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## IMPACT CASES

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### *NYCLA v. State, No. 156916/2021, 2022 WL 2916783*

New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA), in collaboration with other Bar Leaders filed a lawsuit in June 2021 against New York State and New York City to improve the compensation provided to attorneys who serve the indigent as assigned counsel pursuant to Article 18-B of the County Law. The lawsuit highlights the pay inequities for assigned counsel in New York State and calls for an end to the violation of the constitutional rights of children and indigent adults to meaningful and effective legal

representation by the 18B and AFC panels in family and criminal court proceedings. On July 25, 2022, Supreme Court Justice Headley granted NYCLA’s motion for a preliminary injunction to raise assigned counsel pay in the five boroughs of New York City to \$158/hour, retroactive to February 2, 2022, the first wage increase for assigned counsel in nearly 20 years. The court found “that severe and irreparable harm to children and indigent adult litigants would occur without an injunction” and said protecting their constitutional rights is of “paramount importance.” At this time, NYCLA conservatively estimates 400 direct beneficiaries of this lawsuit, however the ripple effects on the lives of children and indigent adults will be in the thousands. New York City appealed the retroactivity of the rate increase to February 2, 2022; NYCLA is currently responding to this appeal in the Appellate Division – First Department.

**400**  
 beneficiaries  
 were affected by  
**1**  
 Impact Case

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## PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

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Our recruitment, training, and deployment of pro bono attorneys, law students, and other volunteers is tailored to each of our programs and is an essential function of NYCLA’s Pro Bono Programs. We use our #NYCLAMission Newsletter to highlight the work of our volunteers in the various programs we run, and as a general recruitment tool. This year we have also implemented a more formal practice of onboarding law student interns; this past Spring semester was NYCLA’s first as a host organization for


the Pro Bono Scholars Program, hosting three full-time law students, and hosting a part-time law student from George Washington University School of Law as part of its GW in NY Program.

The Social Security SDNY Project has a recorded webinar training available on our website to any interested volunteer. This program is pitched to law firms or other attorneys seeking experience in federal litigation, particularly in the Southern District of New York. The State Central Registry Project has a recorded webinar training available to any interested volunteer. We have success assigning cases to a variety of attorney volunteers, from big law firms to solo practitioners. We also use this program for our recent law graduates who are interested in earning their 50 hours of pro bono, since the time commitment is less burdensome than traditional litigation. The Legal Counseling Program has recorded webinar trainings in the areas of Housing, Family, and Employment Law available to any interested volunteer. These trainings are in the process of being updated to be more accurate and accessible in the online format. During the reporting period, the Family Law training was completely updated, and the Housing and Employment Law training updates are in progress. This program is a good fit for solo/small firm practitioners or AEP attorneys. Our Reentry Initiative programs offer opportunities for new volunteers to review training materials and receive training from the Pro Bono Director and the staff attorney who supervises the program. New volunteers are able to observe and assist experienced volunteers in consultations with clients before moving on to conduct consultations themselves.



**119 Attorneys volunteered 2,988 hours**

**9 Law Students volunteered 891 hours**

Each  icon is equal to 12.8 volunteers.  
Attorneys are represented through the Green Figure.  
Law Students are represented through the Grey Figure.



# SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

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In our Reentry Initiative, we work closely with a number of community organizations that serve individuals with criminal records. These organizations refer individuals to our programs and partner with us to hold virtual, hybrid, and in-person events to provide services to their constituents. We held five virtual legal clinics during the reporting period with The Doe Fund and The HOPE Program, and a hybrid legal clinic with the Center for Appellate Litigation. Additionally we gave educational presentations to these organizations during the reporting period as well. For our programs that provide full representation, we work closely with a number of law firms whose attorneys regularly take on these cases.

We have a collaboration between our Legal Counseling Project and Member Resources, which connects labor organizations with legal services. Our most active partnership through Member Resources is with the Independent Drivers Guild, which represents Uber and Lyft drivers, in order to provide legal services for housing and family law concerns for their members. We have also helped develop educational materials for Member Resources and their clients.

Our Social Security SDNY Project has a longstanding and successful partnership with the Office of Pro Se Litigation at the SDNY, which includes our program flyer with the materials it provides to pro se litigants when they initiate an appeal in the SDNY. The law firm Lansner & Kubitschek conducts intake and screens cases as part of this program, and provides substantive assistance to volunteer lawyers who take on cases.

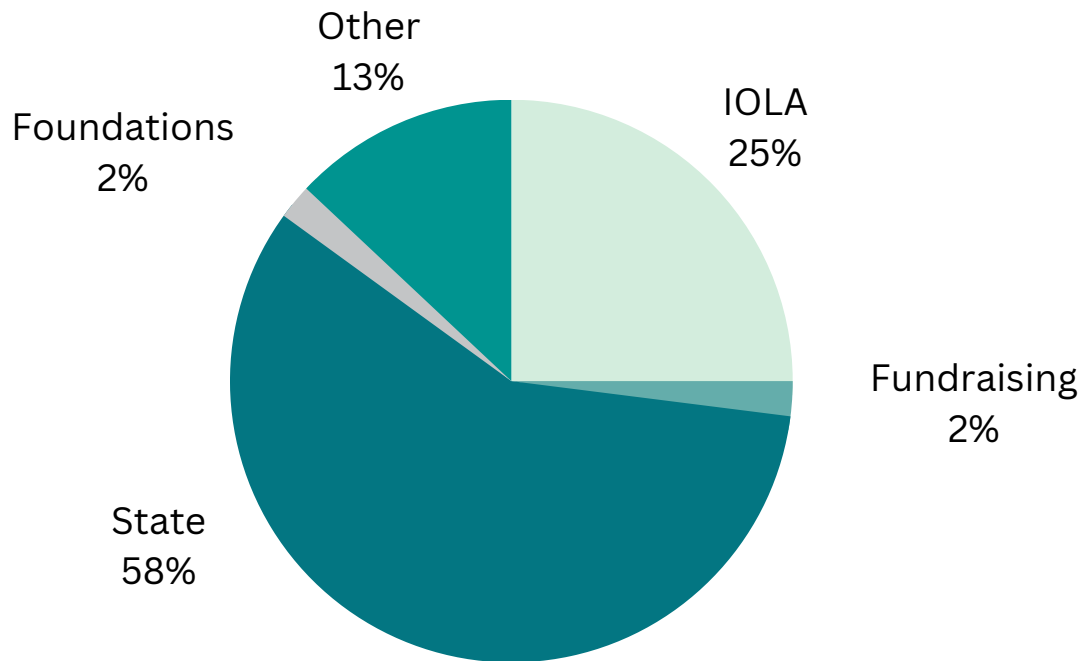
Our main partner for the State Central Registry Project is Bronx Legal Services, which collects intake information and provides us with case information, including client documents and narrative descriptions, in order to match clients with volunteer attorneys to represent their case. Bronx Legal Services attorneys are available to assist with trainings and substantive help to volunteer attorneys throughout their cases.

During this reporting period we started collaborating with a new partner, US Pathway, a program started by Westchester Community College students to serve immigrants in the College and in the surrounding community. This partnership includes participating in events to provide direct legal services and giving educational presentations about legal rights.

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# SOURCES OF FUNDING

New York County Lawyers Association received **\$246,379** in total funding this past year



IOLA Grant	\$62,500
Foundations	\$5,000
Fundraising	\$5,000
State Funding	\$143,037
Other	\$30,842
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$246,379</b>