

# **YOUTH REPRESENT**

2022-2023

The bottom of the page features a large, abstract graphic composed of several geometric shapes. On the left, a large teal triangle points downwards. On the right, a smaller teal triangle also points downwards. These two teal shapes meet at a point in the center, where they are joined by a grey triangular shape that points upwards, creating a central negative space. The overall effect is a modern, minimalist design.

# OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

Over the 12 months of the grant period, we closed 547 cases for 465 young people. We also partnered with community-based organizations across New York to deliver legal representation, Know Your Rights workshops, and capacity-building technical assistance.

We are deliberate in serving Black, Latiné, Indigenous, and youth of color who otherwise would not have access to legal services, while still prioritizing those with criminal legal system involvement. We have also expanded our age range from 24 and under to youth 26 and under. This is in response to growing research that shows our brains continue to develop up to age 25, and addresses the very practical reality that our partner organizations often welcome participants over the age of 24. We focus on young people living within New York City’s five boroughs and are committed to providing inclusive and gender-affirming services to all youth. All the youth we serve are low-income.

We represent clients in cases where they would not otherwise be entitled to an attorney. Traveling directly to workforce development and youth services programs across the five boroughs, we deliver our community-lawyering model where clients live. Combining direct legal representation, Know Your Rights workshops, capacity-building technical assistance for youth services organizations, as well as leadership and engagement opportunities for young people, we target underserved neighborhoods that are most harmed by over-policing. We also remedy mistreatment from institutions to which youth are particularly vulnerable, helping them navigate a maze of unfamiliar and complex legal systems that often serve to worsen existing inequities.



**Population Served:** Low Income Youth

**Total Funding:** \$1,158,034.82

**Total IOLA Grant:** \$75,000

**Staffing Full Time Equivalents:**

- Total Staff: 8.27
- Paralegals: 1.8
- Lawyers: 4.99
- Other: 1.48

# DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES: CASES

## Transit

Juan was harassed by the NYPD for being on the subway as a young man of color whose primary language is not English. While he was using his properly issued student metrocard the NYPD confiscated it, claiming that it did not belong to him and issued a ticket for \$100. Juan could not afford the fine and was worried about potential immigration consequences. Additionally, he was extremely nervous before the hearing date.

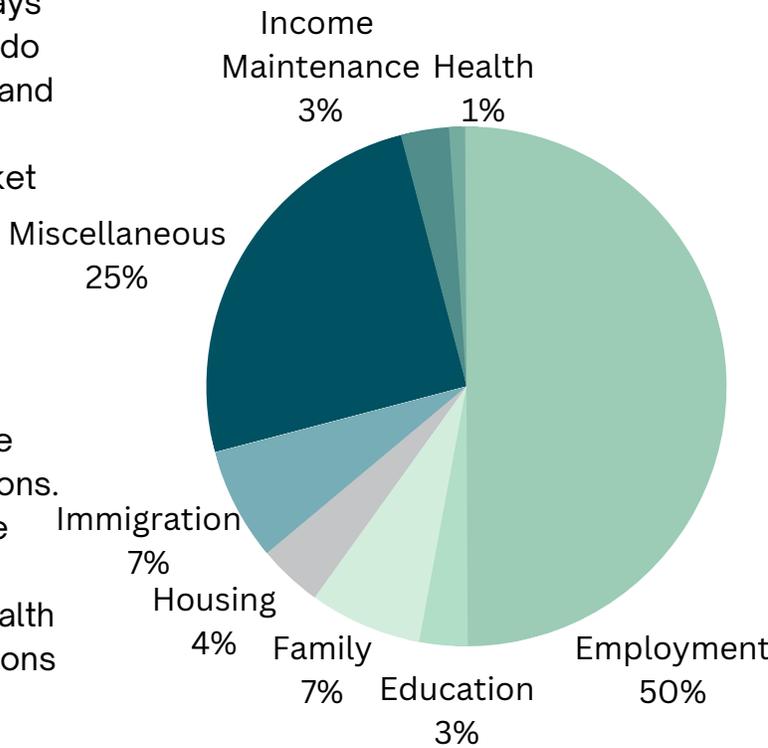
We accompanied Juan to the transit bureau, prepped him to testify about what happened and collected documentation from his school showing that he did everything correctly and was simply being harassed by the police. At the hearing, Juan testified powerfully and clearly, and held his ground. He highlighted all the ways the NYPD should have known that he did not do anything wrong. He was able to tell his story and have a team backing him. Fortunately, due to Juan's testimony and our team's work, his ticket was dismissed and he did not have to worry about the \$100 fine or any immigration consequences from this police interaction.

## Housing:

AC is a young person who deals with extreme social anxiety and a number of health conditions. She dreads having to speak to strangers. She always wears headphones in public because she finds loud noises overstimulating. Her health issues have been exacerbated by the conditions of her NYCHA apartment (which we were working with her to address).

AC's grandmother was her primary caretaker. When AC's grandmother passed, AC was unable to access her share of the inheritance because

**1,682**  
people  
benefitted from  
**547**  
legal cases  
closed



**Cases by  
Legal Problem Area**

she didn't have the court records showing that her grandmother was her guardian and primary caretaker.

Fixing this would involve obtaining records from Manhattan family court, which, in theory, was fairly routine. But for AC, the obstacles felt insurmountable. She doesn't leave her apartment often. She doesn't like eye contact. She has trouble advocating for herself. The prospect of going to family court to stand in line for hours while navigating bureaucratic requirements felt so overwhelming that she had decided to just give up despite desperately needing the money she'd receive.

A Youth Represent staff attorney developed trust with AC over the course of representing her in the NYCHA housing matter. Eventually, she shared that she needed help with the process of obtaining records to claim her inheritance. Our staff attorney helped AC collect all the documents that she needed in order to obtain the certified records. AC was then able to claim what was rightfully hers.

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## OTHER SERVICES: OVERVIEW

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Know Your Rights (KYRs) workshops for youth and technical assistance for staff at community-based organizations are both integral components of our partnership model. Our workshops educate young people on their legal rights and responsibilities, addressing critically sensitive situations such as interacting with the police; conducting a job search with a criminal history; responding to a school suspension; or facing exclusion from public housing.

YR's technical assistance meanwhile provides partner organizations with the tools necessary to prepare clients for questions about criminal backgrounds on job applications and in interviews. We teach staff how to identify and respond to the unique needs of court-involved youth, and we explain how various convictions or

**1,339**  
people  
benefitted  
from Services  
Other Than  
Direct Legal  
Services

plea deals will appear on criminal background checks. We also highlight obstacles that can impede a young person's chance at success: e.g., licensing bars, housing evictions, family court issues, school suspensions, employment discrimination, immigration status, sexual orientation, and gender nonconformity.

Our model pairs a single attorney with a community-partner organization. Our attorney goes on site at least once a year to deliver staff trainings. When possible, we also conduct regular workshops (which are contingent on the partner's intake schedule). Our goal was to reach 1,750 participants through our workshops and staff trainings. We reached a total of 1,339 participants through these workshops.

Workshops are contingent on the requests from our partners: requests were lower than we expected, but we are seeing an increase in demand from newly established partners, especially from our new school sites.

## OTHER SERVICES: TECHNOLOGY

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We have institutionalized effective remote outreach efforts that we developed during the pandemic. This has meant an expanded use of phone calls, texts, emails, teleconferencing, our Chatbot, our RAP App, and a Legal Hotline. Clients are now able to access legal help digitally which allows for a more convenient and private point of engagement.

We also continue to leverage technologies such as Docusign to take on new clients and cases by having young people sign retainers remotely. We have continued using Mentimeter for our Know Your Rights workshops. Through this platform, we have been able to develop workshops that are no longer passive and top-down.

Caseloads of all legal staff are tracked using our customized Salesforce database. All staff record work and advice in the database, which can be accessed remotely on-site at our community-based partners and on staff's mobile phones using a secure app. In combination, our numerous technologies enabled us to reach and serve youth in need, and even continue to expand services.

## OTHER SERVICES: TRAININGS

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Law school students, interns, and support staff receive mandatory training on office practices and policies that addresses ethical and compliance issues related to the NY Rules of Professional Conduct. All legal staff undergo a four-week training in all our practice areas. The training entails extensive reading, in-house sessions, and observation of public hearings and senior staff attorneys. Senior staff supervise new attorneys in court and in hearings. Our attorneys are trained in youth development and motivational interviewing principles to ensure our clients play an active role in their cases, and that goals and decisions are heard and prioritized. Non-attorney staff are trained in practices relevant to their job responsibilities.

With support from our Social Worker, we train our staff in trauma-informed legal advocacy, which addresses how we integrate a trauma-informed lens into the work we do with young people. They discuss different kinds of trauma, the effects of trauma on our brain & biology, how trauma manifests in behaviors and coping strategies, and how we can best support our clients who have experienced trauma when delivering our services.

For attorneys in their first two years out of law school, we pay for up to eight hours of CLE, which covers the difference between the CLE requirements applicable to newly admitted attorneys and those applicable to attorneys more than two years out of law. Pro bono seminars are available live and on-demand to staff members through the Practising Law Institute. Additional staff training in recent years have included shared terminology on race and gender; having courageous conversations on anti-bias; Cultural Competency and Gender & Sexuality Anti-Oppression; and training on best practices around serving LGBTQ youth.

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## IMPACT CASES

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We continue our efforts to bring closure to our larger multiyear cases. To date, Youth Represent's Strategic Litigation has secured over \$8 million in settlement funds, providing support for over 24,000 individuals wrongly discriminated against for having system involvement and giving many the opportunity for employment.

Our recent wins in litigation have included lawsuits against Family Dollar, Macy's, Madison Square Garden, Next Source, New York Life, ShiftGig, and Wonolo.

As of May 2023, a case we have been litigating pre-filing for over three years has been filed in Brooklyn Supreme Court as a class action with a proposed settlement against Uber Eats that secures organizational practice change and \$3.25 million dollars.

***Keiandre Turner, et al. v. Wonolo, Inc.:***

This case was filed against Wonolo after our clients were denied access to their digital platform to procure temporary work, contract work, or any other employment due to their criminal histories. This denial was unlawful in that it violated, among other laws, New York City's Fair Chance Act. After filing the class action case in state court and conferencing with Wonolo's counsel, we were able to negotiate a settlement for our clients, which included: (1) programmatic relief in the form of Wonolo changing its policies around hiring system-impacted individuals; (2) a \$400,000 total settlement pot for all class members; (3) a stipulation that "reversion" (unclaimed) funds will go to the nonprofit Refoundry, Inc; and (4) a \$6,000 service award for our clients, the class representatives.

***Jacqueline Ramos v. Walmart, Inc.:***

Clients of Youth Represent applied for entry-level positions at Walmart stores in Pennsylvania and New Jersey separately. Each client faced similar experiences in their application process in that Walmart tendered each client a conditional offer. After Walmart provided the clients conditional offers, Walmart conducted a background check using an outsourced company. When the background checks revealed our clients' respective histories of criminal legal system involvement, Walmart revoked their conditional offers and terminated them. This practice violated both Pennsylvania and New Jersey laws on employment discrimination based on criminal records. Youth Represent filed a class action lawsuit against Walmart on their behalf citing employment discrimination violations. Walmart disputes the allegations and the case is currently ongoing. We are in the discovery phase of the litigation with document production and depositions on the horizon.

**22,567**  
**beneficiaries**  
**were affected by**  
**3**  
**Impact Cases**

**All Impact Cases**

*Keiandre Turner, et al. v.  
 Wonolo, Inc*

*Jacqueline Ramos v.  
 Walmart, Inc., Case  
 No. 2:21-cv-13827*

*Yangel Aguilera, et al. v.  
 Uber Technologies, Inc.  
 (d/b/a UberEats), Index No.  
 pending*

# PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

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Youth Represent operates a Youth Reentry Clinic at Brooklyn Law School, which connects us with four rotating volunteer interns throughout the school year, and we hired one summer legal intern last year. Because the grant period spans three school semesters, this year we benefited from six individual student interns and one summer intern. During the grant period, these volunteers worked on 68 civil legal service matters.



**7 Law Students volunteered 1,188 hours**

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# SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

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We have contracted fee-for-service partnerships with the following 14 nonprofits, schools, and agencies to deliver workshops and staff trainings, and provide legal representation and advice to participants: Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services, Covenant House, the Department of Probation, Getting Out and Staying Out, the Global Learning Collaborative, Humanities Preparatory Academy, Innovation Diploma Plus High School, Mt. Sinai Adolescent Health Center, Marsha's House, Streetworks, Per Scholas, Queens Community House, Westhab, Year Up, and Youth Justice Network.

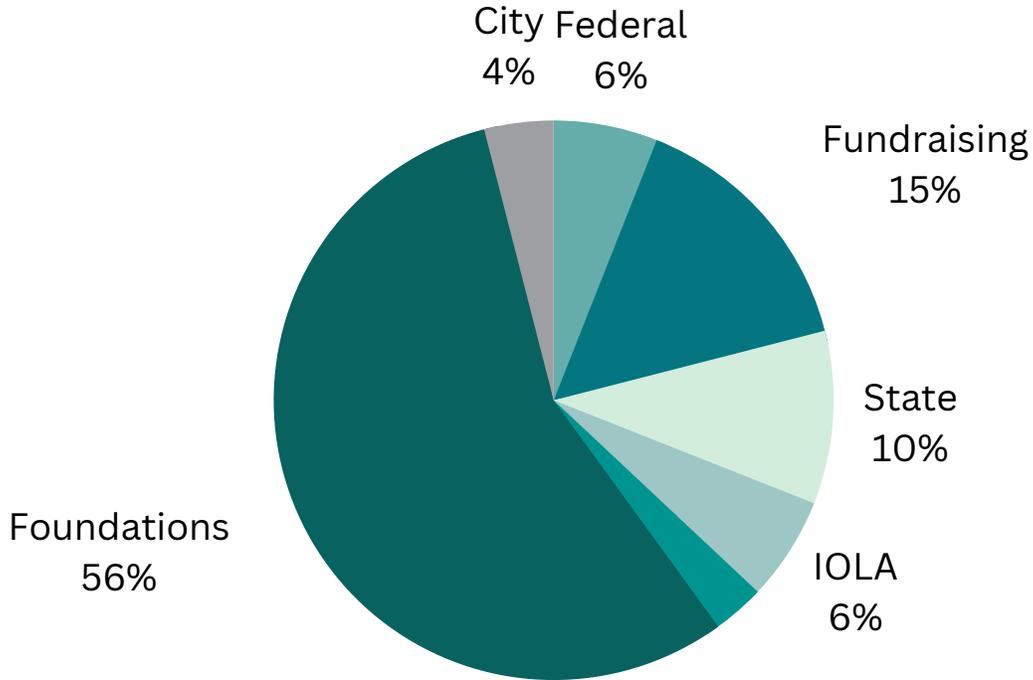
In addition to these relationships, we have seven partners that City Council and State funding help us to maintain, including: Brownsville Community Justice Center, Midtown Community Court, Center for Community Alternatives (CCA), Exodus, NeON Works Brownsville, Henry Street Settlement House, and Stanley Isaacs Neighborhood Center.

We also receive referrals from many other nonprofits to represent clients on an informal basis, and partner with a number of other agencies and organizations on our policy reform work, which is often conducted through coalitions.

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# SOURCES OF FUNDING

Youth Represent received  
**\$1,158,035**  
 in total funding this past year



Foundations	\$650,720
IOLA Grant	\$75,000
City and County Funding	\$41,961
Fundraising	\$173,903
State Funding	\$117,023
Other	\$35,447
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,158,035</b>