

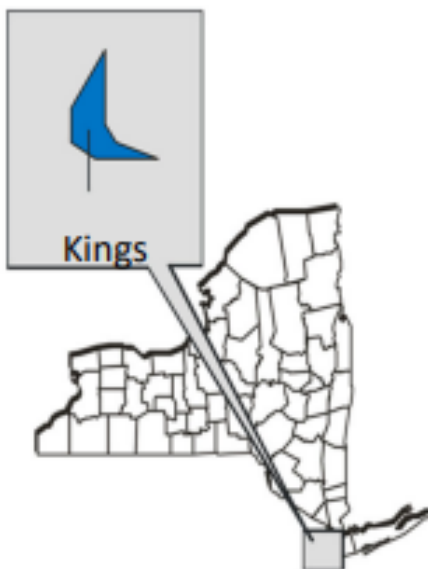
**BROOKLYN  
LEGAL SERVICES  
CORPORATION A**

2022-2023

# OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A ("Brooklyn A") advances social and economic justice and community empowerment through innovative, collaborative, neighborhood-based legal representation and advocacy. We address the myriad systemic issues facing our communities by providing a combination of legal assistance, including full legal representation, brief advice/services, and community education, to vulnerable populations—including the low-income working poor, the unemployed or underemployed, the disabled, seniors, survivors of domestic violence, families in crisis, community-based organizations ("CBOs"), and largely women, immigrant, and Black, Indigenous and People of Color ("BIPOC")-owned small businesses throughout New York City ("NYC"). Our clients live in rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods where many residents and small business owners have been displaced or are facing displacement and harassment. We focus our work in three program areas: Consumer & Economic Advocacy ("CEA"), Community & Economic Development ("CED"), and Preserving Affordable Housing ("PAH"). The efficacy of our work is enhanced through close collaborations with other CBOs, coalitions, elected officials, and advocacy groups.

The CEA Program provides vulnerable homeowners and taxpayers with legal services around consumer advocacy to protect economic equity. During the IOLA 2022-23 grant year, we assisted 194 homeowners facing foreclosure at various stages of state and federal court litigation, including appellate and federal bankruptcy court litigation. This representation resulted in the preservation of \$28,809,000 of equity and the potential for greater intergenerational wealth for largely BIPOC low- and moderate-income homeowners. The largest density of our foreclosure cases was located in Queens and Kings County.



**Population Served: Low Income Populations**

**Total Funding: \$13,109,973.39**

**Total IOLA Grant: \$100,922.11**

**Staffing Full Time Equivalents:**

- Total Staff: 84
- Paralegals: 9
- Lawyers: 46
- Other: 29

# DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES: CASES

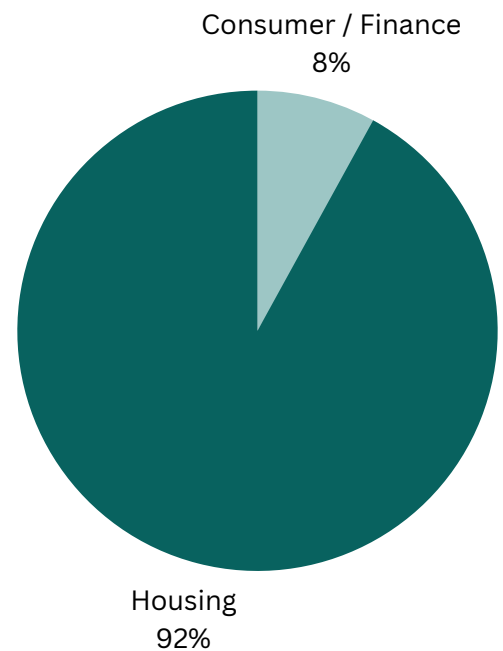
## Case #1 – Housing:

A client came to Brooklyn A after she fell behind on her mortgage payments during the pandemic and a foreclosure case commenced against her. The client resides in Queens, New York together with her adult son. Previously, the client lived with an abusive partner who controlled all the finances and did not keep the client informed of their financial situation. After the client’s partner died, the client suddenly had to take care of the family finances, including the mortgage. As a result of the onset of the pandemic, the client lost her job. The client contacted Brooklyn A when a foreclosure action was started. Brooklyn A successfully defended the foreclosure case and represented the client in settlement conferences. Brooklyn A assisted the client by applying for the NYS Homeowner’s Assistance Fund. Brooklyn A assisted the client with the reinstatement of her mortgage. In the meantime, the client found gainful employment and was able to afford her monthly mortgage payments. The client continues to reside in the home with her son without fear of becoming homeless due to foreclosure.

## Case #2 – Housing:

A client came to Brooklyn A in March 2021. She was a 33-year tenant of an affordable public housing apartment (NYCHA) at risk of losing her long-term tenancy just as she hit retirement. Her husband had died 3 years prior, and he had handled all of the paperwork, lease renewals, and annual recertifications for the two of them. He died just before the building was undergoing RAD conversion (the building was being converted from NYCHA management to a NYCHA-private management hybrid funded by Section 8).

**4,402 people benefitted from 1,958 legal cases closed**



**Cases by Legal Problem Area**

When the client's husband died, she learned that he had reported their income jointly and had been the sole household member named on the lease. This meant the client needed to establish succession rights, i.e. establish her right to continue in the tenancy as a lawful member of the household. While the client had tried to go through the correct procedure for establishing succession, her paperwork was held up because the building was undergoing the RAD conversion, and it eventually got lost. The client continued to pay rent, but was paying under her husband's name because she was not sure what else to do.

By the time the COVID-19 pandemic hit NYC in March 2020, the client had been denied succession due to an issue with the paperwork and the transition to a new applicant system, but she did not know it because the decision never reached her. It became difficult to complete grievance procedures and appeals in the normal course in the first months of the COVID-19 shutdown. The client tried to decipher what was needed by NYCHA, how that differed from what was needed from Section 8, and who she needed to submit her paperwork to in order to get a hearing and resolution. Then she received the court papers: her new Section 8 landlord was evicting her as a licensee/ non-leaseholder of the apartment.

Brooklyn A argued the client's right to succession in court and to the administrators of the RAD conversion process. We helped her submit an answer and opposition to her landlord's motion to proceed with her eviction in court so that we could stall the eviction process long enough to resolve the succession issue. Eventually, after submitting a 30-page advocacy package to NYCHA seeking a waiver of her succession denial, we received retroactive NYCHA approval. The next step was submitting a complex Section 8 application to retain her same apartment on the same terms.

At that point another obstacle was encountered: during our NYCHA appeal, the client had retired and her pension kicked in, putting her income \$500 over the annual limit for Section 8. A 33-year tenant who always paid on time was at risk of losing her tenancy and the only neighborhood she knew in New York over a paperwork error; what Section 8 saw was an unqualified "new" applicant.

Brooklyn A worked with the landlord's attorney and the judge to receive four adjournments in the court case while resolving the issue, and after pleading our case, the client's circumstance was finally seen for what it is. She was offered a lease in her name, and the landlord dropped the case in court. After years of fighting, she was able to stay in her home.

# OTHER SERVICES: OVERVIEW

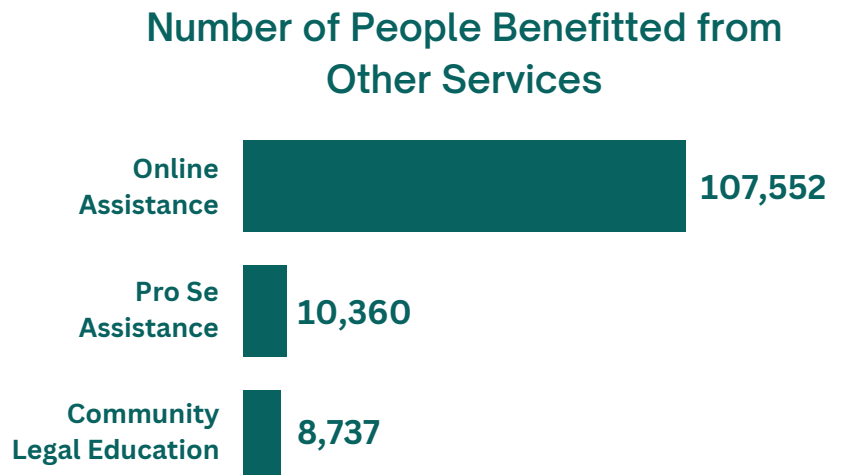
Our CEA Program not only helps consumers resolve their issues when legal action has already taken place, but also when legal action is merely looming on the horizon. For example, some homeowners suffer temporary hardships and, if they seek help immediately, their issues can be resolved before any court proceeding takes place. These temporary hardships can include issues such as unexpected medical expenses, essential home repairs, or a non-paying tenant. We also continue to help homeowners negotiate mortgage deferrals and provide educational outreach to homeowners to prevent or remove liens and levies.

Our CED Program regularly refers matters requiring special expertise to pro bono counsel at private law firms. In the reporting period, we worked with two pro bono law firms – Simpson Thacher Bartlett and Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher on several matters. We also continue to host an externship program with Simpson Thacher & Bartlett in which corporate associates from the firm are rotated in for 4-month cycles to work full time within our CED Program.

As mentioned above, our PAH Program's model of group representation requires extensive outreach and research of new client cases and which situations might warrant representation or advocacy. In the past year, we have conducted and virtually participated in seven (7) know-your-rights workshops and 101 educational and community presentations. These presentations allow us to expand our client base and inform our communities of the services we provide.

In total, we reached 8,737 New Yorkers through 138 community legal education outreach sessions, provided more than 10,000 residents pro se assistance, and reached 107,000 people via online outreach.

**126,649 People Benefitted from Services Other Than Direct Legal Services**



## OTHER SERVICES: TECHNOLOGY

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Our use of Microsoft Teams and Zoom allows us to continue client outreach, intake, and representation efficiently and effectively, which has remained essential since some of our client interaction continues to take place virtually. We have also expanded our use of tools such as DocuSign and GoTo to ensure our programs continue running smoothly.

As mentioned above, other notable technological improvements included our launch of Robin, a software that enables staff to reserve office/workspace at our two offices; the transition of all organizational internal drives to cloud-based system via Microsoft SharePoint; the transition to a new accounting system, Fund EZ; and continued improvements to our cyber security via JustTech, our IT firm.

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## OTHER SERVICES: TRAININGS

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All Brooklyn A staff members have access to continuing legal education courses with the Practising Law Institute. All staff, including managers, are encouraged to attend professional development training courses.

In March 2022, all staff members participated in a two-part values training presented by Paul Ingram. Paul is the Kravis Professor of Business at Columbia Business School, and Faculty Director of the Advanced Management Program, Columbia's flagship residential program for senior executives. In May 2022, all staff participated in trainings pertaining to LGBTQ issue awareness and managing difficult conversations. In March 2023, all staff participated in training centered around managing difficult conversations.

Additional trainings provided to our full staff or to specific teams of staff were on combatting burnout, empowering client mental needs, persuasive writing, mediation, negotiations, closing cases, time management, succession rights (housing), intake, ejection (housing), personal bankruptcy, client communications, effective brief advice, commercial lease analysis, foreclosure and statute of limitations, defending older adults from home equity theft, representing domestic violence survivors in IRS disputes, consumer bankruptcy practice, implicit bias, and rent abatement.

All Brooklyn A new staff, volunteers, and interns received training in LegalServer, Brooklyn A's case management system.

# IMPACT CASES

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## Impact Case #1: PAH Program:

Brooklyn A is currently representing 53 clients in seven NYCHA buildings in Coney Island. The clients (and hundreds of other residents in the buildings) had been experiencing a litany of issues: no gas, exposed wiring, cracked windows, leaking sinks and pipes, and more.

Brooklyn A has been representing these residents in the courts throughout the year and is incrementally seeing the gas restored and other improvements made and will continue advocating on behalf of the clients.

## Impact Case #2: PAH Program:

During the reporting period we closed a case in which we represented a tenant association at the Red Hook Houses, Brooklyn's largest public housing complex, in a case against NYCHA regarding conditions and lack of services in the housing complex. For five years, tenants experienced regular intervals of disruptions to their gas services, with some outages lasting for months. The outages, which impacted nearly 300 families, rendered most ovens useless, impacting tenants' abilities to prepare meals for themselves and their families.

Due to Brooklyn A's work, the outages have been addressed and the impacted residents have working gas. This case began in March 2020.

**800**  
**Beneficiaries**  
**were affected**  
**by 2 Impact**  
**Cases**

## All Impact Cases:

### PAH Program:

- **We are counsel to a group of Coney Island NYCHA tenants in Coney Island, Brooklyn.**
- **We are counsel to the tenants association at the Red Hook Houses in Red Hook, Brooklyn.**

# PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

For recruitment, we send intern postings to all major law schools in the area, in addition to platforms with a national reach; thus, we receive applications from law students both locally and nationally.

Our basic training for all staff, law student interns, and volunteers is the same, depending on which kind of casework the individual will complete. Everyone receives training on our case management system, conducting client intakes, and how to complete critical forms, such as power of attorney. This training also includes guidance on how to properly handle client files that contain sensitive information and keep records of time spent on work.

All Brooklyn A programs worked with a talented group of law student interns and volunteers during the reporting period. Under the supervision of our staff attorneys and program directors, these interns and volunteers worked on matters including preparing discovery demands in bankruptcy cases, drafting motions, and representing clients in nonpayment and holdover cases. This work is extremely helpful to our attorneys. Notable schools from which our interns came include Cardozo Law, Baruch College, Fordham University, Georgetown University Law Center, the Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University, Pace University and Washington University in St. Louis.



**5 Attorneys volunteered 1,050 hours**

**20 Law Students volunteered 4,200 hours**

**3 Other Volunteers volunteered 413 hours**

Each  icon is equal to 2.8 volunteers.

Attorneys are represented through the Green Figure.

Law Students and Other Volunteers are represented through the Grey Figure.



# SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

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Our CEA program continues to work closely with NHS Brooklyn, a CBO that provides various services to homeowners and tenants in NYC, including helping homeowners save their properties. We and NHS Brooklyn have partnered at various virtual community education and outreach events. We've also increased our homeowner outreach in Queens, where we provide anti-displacement workshops in a coalition that includes the Center for New York City Neighborhoods, NHS Queens, NHS Jamaica, and JASA.

We and NHS Brooklyn also have a referral partnership. NHS Brooklyn refers many clients to us who need assistance with filing bankruptcy and saving their homes through loss mitigation procedure in the bankruptcy courts. We have helped many NYC residents save their homes in bankruptcy proceedings, and many of them were referred by NHS Brooklyn. During the grant period, we also continued referral relationships with the New York City Bar Association, the Brooklyn Bar Association, Grow Brooklyn, Communities Resist, MHANY, City Bar Justice Center, and Queens Legal Services. Our Domestic Violence Program works closely with – and receives referrals from – the Brooklyn Family Justice Center.

Our CED Program has expanded its small business work, with support from the New York Community Trust. Beyond the direct benefits to our clients, local communities benefit as these businesses are essential providers of goods and services and are an important part of the social, cultural, and economic infrastructure of our NYC's neighborhoods. Brooklyn A works with a large number of CBOs, BIDs, and other partners to assist with outreach to small businesses and to make them aware of the legal services we provide. Amongst those partners in the reporting period were the Arcturus Community Endeavors (ACE), Accompany Capital, CHHAYA, Cooper Square Development Committee, Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce, the Staten Island Urban Center, Washington Heights Inwood Development Corporation, and the Yemeni American Merchants Association (YAMA), each of whom works closely with BIPOC business owners in their communities and refers potential clients to Brooklyn A.

Our PAH Program team continues to actively participate in the Right to Counsel Coalition. One deputy director works on the attorney pipeline initiative, which works with law schools to encourage students to go into tenant advocacy work. We also collaborated with Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, St. Nicks Alliance, the Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, and the Human Rights Administration. We have been working side by side with these and other community partners for decades as thought partners and, in many cases, helping them navigate through the complex legal aspects of their work in empowering communities.

Brooklyn A is also a member of LEAP, a membership coalition comprised of direct civil legal services providers serving the low-income communities of New York City. The LEAP member organizations – consisting of the Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defenders, Brooklyn A, CAMBA, Catholic Migration Services, Goddard Riverside, Housing Conservation Coordinators, JASA, Make the Road NY, Mobilization for Justice, Neighborhood Defenders Harlem, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, TakeRoot Justice, The Door, the Urban Justice Center, and Volunteers of Legal Services (VOLS) – work to increase the availability of quality civil legal services for low-income New Yorkers. LEAP supports diversity and innovation in organizational models, delivery systems and methodology and specifically recognizes the need to maintain community-based service delivery. In the grant period, LEAP continued its robust training series for its members' staff attorneys – several of these trainings were taught by Brooklyn A staff.

## SOURCES OF FUNDING

**Brooklyn A received \$13,109,973 in total funding this past year**

<b>City and County Funding</b>	<b>\$11,137,370</b>
<b>State Funding</b>	<b>\$1,008,444</b>
<b>Fundraising</b>	<b>\$195,056</b>
<b>IOLA Grant</b>	<b>\$100,922</b>
<b>Foundations</b>	<b>\$96,032</b>
<b>Federal Funding</b>	<b>\$82,777</b>
<b>Other Funding</b>	<b>489,372</b>

