

**NEW YORK CITY  
GAY & LESBIAN  
ANTI-VIOLENCE  
PROJECT**

2022-2023

# OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

The New York City Anti-Violence Project’s (AVP) Department of Legal Services provides free holistic, direct legal services to underserved LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of violence in all five of New York City’s boroughs. The Legal Department is co-located with AVP’s existing Client Services Department, which provides direct social services. This co-location model is intentional and evidence-based, allowing our clients - who are all low-income survivors of violence - to receive the critical social services they need along with the necessary legal services. This model has also proven to increase the number of clients successfully engaging with legal services because their needs are met comprehensively in one location. Ease of comprehensive service delivery is especially important for those who are already vulnerable due to their identities, age, disability status, or income level, such as under resourced LGBTQ and HIV-affected New Yorkers.

AVP serves diverse LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities across the city of New York. Of all AVP’s clients (not just from the Legal Services Department) most survivors, 65%, reporting to AVP in 2022 who shared their race/ethnicity, identified as people of color. The most-reported race/ethnic categories were Latinx at 30% and Black/African American at 26%. Of those who shared gender identity with AVP, 36% identified as Women, 45% as Men, and 19% as transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC). Of those who shared their sexual orientation with AVP, the most reported sexual orientation was gay at 45%, followed by heterosexual at 14%, lesbian at 10%, and bisexual 9%.

Since launching the legal services program in late 2013, AVP has almost tripled the percentage of survivors reporting who identify as non-citizens, from 12% in 2013 to



**Population Served:** Low Income Populations

**Total Funding:** \$507,807

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

**Staffing Full Time Equivalent:**

- Total Staff: 6
- Lawyers: 4
- Paralegals: 1
- Other: 1

24% in 2016 and now 32% in 2021. The department has seen an increase in those identifying as undocumented from 9% in 2013 to 12% in 2016 to 13% in 2021, reflecting the needs of LGBTQ immigrants, which is anticipated to continue rising as anti-LGBTQ rhetoric and policy initiatives rise.

In response to community need, the Legal Department offers intake, advice, and representation in multiple issue areas, including:

- Family Law: orders of protection, child/spousal support, child custody, divorce
- Public Benefits: representation to those who have been denied or improperly terminated from SNAP, cash assistance or rental assistance
- Immigration: affirmative and defensive asylum, U & T Visas, VAWA self-petitions, work authorization, adjustment of status and naturalization
- Housing: eviction and HP proceedings
- Legal Name and ID Document changes: civil Court name change for transgender and gender non-conforming survivors and associated name and gender marker changes on ID documents (Social Security Card, NYS birth certificates, state identification, etc.)
- Criminal Court: representation of complaining witnesses in criminal court (AVP does not do criminal defense work)

**80**  
people  
benefitted  
from  
**80**  
legal cases  
closed

In fiscal year 2022, AVP's Legal Department worked with 167 individual clients (new and on-going clients) who had 252 separate legal cases. As a result of our legal representation, 1 person was able to avoid eviction, 12 clients were able to receive employment authorization, 11 clients gained asylum, 3 clients received a legal name change, and many more received representation, advice, counsel on a myriad of different legal issues.

# DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES: CASES

## Case #1

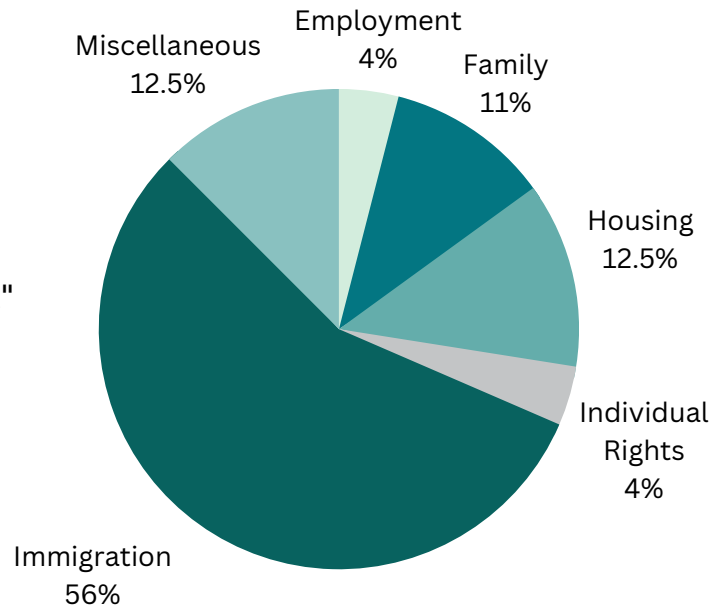
Colin is a gay man from Jamaica, who came to AVP seeking help with filing for asylum. Like so many of AVP's clients, Colin survived violence and persecution in Jamaica. Family members forced him to do hard physical labor tasks in a misguided attempt to "make him more of a man." Homophobic community members threw rocks at Colin while hurling vicious homophobic slurs at him and attacking him in a mob. In one particularly tragic incident, homophobic community members committed extreme cruelty toward Colin's dog to punish him for being gay.

Colin was able to get the high-quality legal services that AVP has expertise in providing. AVP tirelessly advocated with the government for the merits of the case and won stipulations and concessions that saved the client the trauma of recounting his worst memories in court. After this convincing advocacy, the attorney for the Department of Homeland Security agreed that the case was so well documented that the Department was willing to agree on the record that Colin merited asylum and put up no objection. The fact that both sides waived appeal means that this decision is final, and Colin has the indefinite right to live and work in the United States, safe from the homophobic persecution he survived in Jamaica.

## Case #2

Katherine, a lesbian woman, came to AVP seeking help with a housing issue, specifically she was going to be evicted for non-payment of rent. AVP was able her refile an application for Emergency Rental Assistance that was previously denied due to "missing documents." Katherine had applied to HRA, but had done it without any support, so had made some mistakes in the process.

AVP's attorney jumped right in and wrote an advocacy letter, stating that Katherine had fallen behind on rent due to circumstances out of her control - health issues stemming from hate violence, multiple funeral expenses for unexpected deaths in her



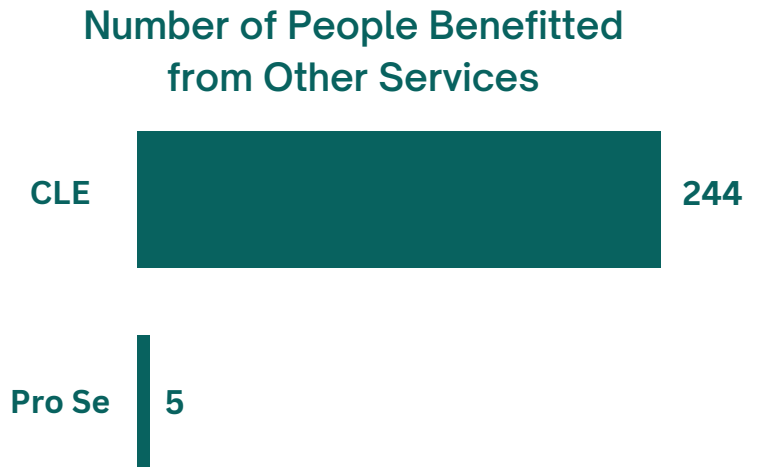
**Cases by Legal Problem Area**

family, supporting other family members during COVID. AVP’s attorney further argued that Katherine has the future ability to pay ongoing rent. In less than a few days, AVP was able to file the advocacy letter and other supporting documents. Because of the thoroughness of the advocacy package, HRA issued Katherine approximately \$13,000, without doing further investigation into the matter or making our client suffer through answering probing questions about her failure to pay. Katherine is now able to preserve her tenancy in her rent stabilized apartment in supportive housing.

## OTHER SERVICES: OVERVIEW

AVP’s legal services department conducts targeted outreach to community members on its own and in conjunction with our Community Outreach and Policy Advocacy (COPA) department. AVP offers LGBTQ-specific outreach materials to survivors in person (e.g. LGBTQ-specific health care organizations, events, venues, and gathering places) and virtually (e.g. via social media, and our expanded virtual programming developed in response to COVID-19). AVP’s Communications team engages community members via social media, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, as research shows that providing destigmatized information can engage hard-to-reach TGNC people in necessary care. Additionally, we provide information and education to the community in mainstream spaces, like in all NYC Family Justice Centers, in law enforcement precincts, court buildings, and the offices of community partners and elected officials. AVP staff is adept using the many diverse terms that LGBTQ people use to describe themselves and their relationships. This fiscal year, Legal Department staff presented trainings to both community members and other professionals on a variety of topics, including legal issue spotting, housing law, advanced directives and hate crimes.

**249**  
 people benefitted  
 from Services Other  
 Than Direct Legal  
 Services



## OTHER SERVICES: TECHNOLOGY

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Currently, AVP Legal uses TIME Case Management System, developed and supported through the Western NY Law Center. Only Legal staff have passwords and access to this system, to ensure a solid firewall between the departments. The Legal Director has access to TIME Maintenance, which allows her to add additional Legal staff or legal interns as users with access to information. However, TIME is an older software that is no longer supported or updated. Therefore, the Legal department was hoping to be finished updating its database to Salesforce this past fiscal year. However, there have been delays in the process. The same firewalls between departments, confidentiality of client information, case notes, and court documents will be in place. Salesforce will allow the Legal department to modernize and streamline its case management capabilities and will allow all of the departments to collaborate, while maintaining the same firewalls between departments regarding the confidentiality of client information.

## OTHER SERVICES: TRAININGS

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AVP prioritizes consistent, high-quality training and supervision as an organizational value. Each supervisor meets weekly with their supervisees, and more frequently as necessary. Supervision, technical support, and case review are key elements of our supervision and training model. In addition to weekly meetings with their assigned supervisor, paralegals, law students and other non-attorneys involved in legal services delivery have access to all the skilled staff in the department for immediate support, including the Director and Deputy, who work collaboratively to ensure coverage and availability to directly provide supervision and technical support to non-attorney staff, as needed.

Legal team members frequently attend legal subject matter training sessions like continuing legal education sessions (CLEs). Legal department staff attended approximately 30 trainings in total, including training from well-respected subject matter experts like Empire Justice Center, NYS Department of Health Legal Action Center, HER Justice, and Lamda Legal.

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# PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS


AVP partners with corporate law firms whose attorneys provide pro bono representation to our clients with immigration matters, legal name changes, and more. Client’s cases have been placed with Proskauer, Cravath, Bloomberg, and Cooley. Additionally, we partner with firms to assist in providing trainings, as well as sponsoring legal clinics for LGBTQ survivors of violence. AVP Legal is in the process of planning our next legal clinic, which will be an “on demand” style name change clinic, in partnership with Bloomberg and Cadwalader. AVP’s Legal Department currently is engaged with 10 corporate law firms, with 21 individual attorney volunteers. The Director of Legal Services is ramping up pro bono recruitment this coming fiscal year.

AVP has hosted law student interns consistently since its inception in 2013. For example, since 2015, NYU Law School’s LGBT Rights Externship places a law student for the Spring semester with AVP. Additionally, each summer and fall 1-2 summer law school interns are hired. The law students draft legal memos and court documents, complete extensive research, complete legal intakes, and shadow the attorneys in court proceedings. AVP has also consistently hosted Pro Bono Scholars. The most recent Pro Bono Scholar was hosted this Winter semester and hails from Fordham Law School. This program allows those who have excelled in law school and have an interest in practicing non-profit law to work with a non-profit organization in their last semester of law school, after sitting for the February NYS bar exam. These Scholars work closely with the attorneys to learn all aspects of practicing non-profit law. They draft court pleadings, conduct legal research, interview clients, and prepare cases under strict supervision.



**21 Attorneys volunteered 518 hours**

**2 Law Students volunteered 960 hours**

Each  icon is equal to 2.3 volunteers.  
 Attorneys are represented through the Green Figure.  
 Law Students and Other Volunteers are represented through the Grey Figure.

# SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

AVP has historically worked in collaboration with social and legal service providers, bar organizations, law firms, and other community groups. AVP’s Legal Services Department continues this tradition and has expanded the number of partner organizations. For example, AVP and Sanctuary for Families (SFF) has been partnering on sharing trainings and technical assistance. SFF presented several family law trainings to AVP legal department staff this past fiscal year. As a result of this close collaboration, AVP’s legal department receives many referrals from SFF for LGBTQ people who need culturally specific legal services.

The Director of Legal Services also partnered on the LGBTQ Endorsement Pilot Program through the New York Office of Domestic Violence (OPDV). And with the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office on the TGNCNB Working Group. Both initiatives resulted in published reports relying heavily on AVP Legal Department’s unique expertise.

AVP's Legal Department also understands the importance of working with students and law schools to help shape the next generation of lawyers. AVP most recently hosted law students from NYU School of Law, Fordham Law School, and Columbia School of Law, among others.

# SOURCES OF FUNDING

New York City Gay & Lesbian Anti-Violence Project received **\$507,807** in total funding this past year

<b>IOLA Grant</b>	<b>\$75,000</b>
<b>City and County</b>	<b>\$252,965</b>
<b>Federal</b>	<b>\$54,838</b>
<b>State Funding</b>	<b>\$125,004</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$507,807</b>

