

**LEGAL AID
SOCIETY OF
NORTHEASTERN
NEW YORK**

2022-2023

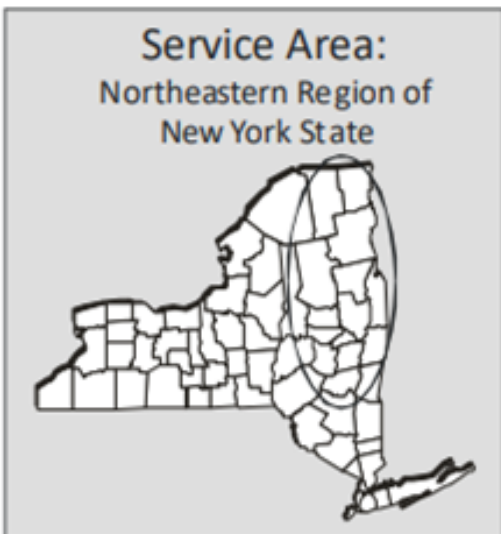
OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

During the reporting period, our staff and volunteers closed 8,542 cases benefiting 20,418 individuals, handled 12,863 cases, and had 4,320 cases pending at the end of the fiscal year. As our service communities continue to be affected by the economic aftermath of the pandemic, our calls and intakes increased. Overall, during the fiscal year LASNNY calls increased and as a result intakes increased 20% from 2021-22 to 17,331 intakes.

Not surprisingly, with the combination of pandemic-related foreclosure and eviction protections lifting, employment and wages low and/or stagnant, and inflation, housing intakes exceeded all others in this fiscal year making up 44% of all new cases. Family cases came in second with 24% of all new cases. We received significant new housing funding, including ERAP grant funding. We re-opened our Gloversville office, and now have six offices to provide better access to services for our clients.

Additionally, we continued to support and partner with legal and social services colleagues locally, statewide, and nationally. Examples of benefits realized by our clients and our growth in service follow:

- One of our DAP attorneys won a major case involving a disabled veteran who had been living off only \$300/month of SSDI for several years. The attorney brought the case to the federal court and secured a life changing \$100,000 back pay settlement from the SSA for the veteran.
- One of our attorneys helped establish a partnership with the St. Regis Mohawk Tribal Council and we now provide Legal Aid services to the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe.



Population Served: General Low Income Population

Total Funding: \$12,287,641.00

Total IOLA Grant: \$1,444,651.00

Staffing Full Time Equivalents:

- Total Staff: 58
- Paralegals: 19
- Lawyers: 18
- Other: 95

- Our PAI program has expanded its volunteer panel through targeted recruitment efforts, allowing us to place more cases for full, pro bono representation and provide more services to clients.
- In our Plattsburgh office, staff have noted our particular commitment to housing and public benefits has helped fill two needs that had been underserved by overburdened partner agencies.
- LASNNY's expansion of services to include financial assistance for housing (rent arrears, security deposits, etc.) has significantly improved our ability negotiate settlements in landlord-tenant matters, and address housing instability for our clients.
- We have hired a Managing Attorney to oversee our regional intake system with the goal of responding to and addressing client service requests faster.
- For our NOEP team, the combination of aggressive in-person outreach and expanded use of technology has allowed us to both reach and serve more people: Our NOEP program met its Main Target and Direct Contact NOEP Program Goals in just two quarters.
- LASNNY provided legal representation, information, referrals, community legal education, pro se assistance and other outreach that benefitted 165,730 low-income individuals.

DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES: CASES

Family Law:

A team member represented a grandmother who had been trying for over a year to gain custody of her son's child due to his and the mother's neglect. It took well over a year for DSS to intervene and remove all of the children.

The attorney represented the client through grandparent custody and visitation petitions, to only make nominal moves until DSS finally intervened. While still pending, the client now has custody over her grandchild and another child, who is not her grandchild.

DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES: CASES

Income Maintenance:

A team member met with a client to provide direct legal service concerning an income maintenance matter. They assisted the client with a SNAP benefit prescreen application and obtaining and submitting required supporting documentation to Fulton County Department of Social Services.

The client is recently widowed, elderly, living alone, and dealing with mental health issues that made gathering SNAP application supporting documentation difficult.

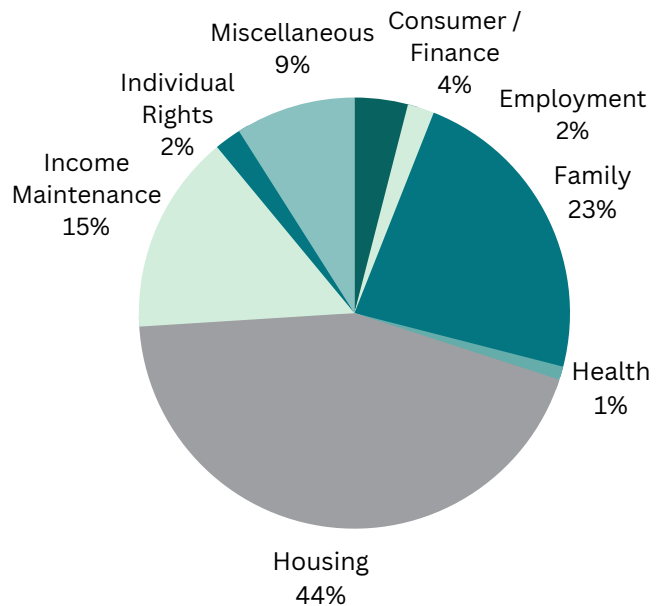
While reviewing the client’s information, the teammate discovered that the client had not completed a Social Security survivor benefit application after the recent death of their spouse, and that the client was paying a potentially unnecessary SS income tax deduction.

The teammate was able to refer the client to OFA who assisted with the SS survivor benefit application and the LASNNY LITC team, who assisted with modifying the client’s IRS SS income tax withholding.

The client’s SNAP application was approved they now receive ongoing monthly SNAP benefits.

The client’s overall financial situation is now improved as a result of NOEP assistance, referrals made to internal LASNNY programs, and community agency partnerships.

20,418
people
benefitted
from
8,542 legal
cases closed



Cases by Legal Problem Area

OTHER SERVICES: OVERVIEW

LASNNY also continued to provide other legal-related services to our target population of low-income people including referrals, pro se assistance, community legal education and outreach in order to supplement our program of direct legal services and to provide the client community with preventative legal. Our goal remains to efficiently provide as much information and education as possible to our client community and to agencies which serve them.

All our case handlers referred clients to social and other legal services providers. During the 12-month reporting period, an estimated 4,662 referrals to non-legal providers and other legal services providers, including public defenders and local courts, were made by support staff.

We had 70,036 people attend community group presentations and receive legal education, access self-help materials, or receive pro se assistance. We also sent 72,808 informational emails using Constant Contact. We had 255,207 unique views of our website and 62,028 unique views of our online Legal Lifeline and Coronavirus legal education brochures. We worked with Pro Bono Net to create a new landing page for tenants facing eviction called TenantHelpNY.Org

Additionally, LASNNY has a four person PAI Department that recruits volunteer attorneys to provide brief advice or legal information to clients who are ineligible for our programs, need legal help we do not offer, or need help outside of our capacity. PAI does this through clinics, Know Your Rights presentations, and direct case referrals. PAI provides the volunteers with technical assistance, case oversight and management, and other support. PAI also fills in when volunteers cannot finish the case on their own.

142,844 People Benefitted from Services Other Than Direct Legal Services

Number of People Benefitted from Other Services



OTHER SERVICES: TECHNOLOGY

In the past year, LASNNY has continued our successful partnerships with Just Tech, which provides Chief Information Officer services, and ABS Solutions, which offers Help Desk and Network support. Our Tech Committee has remained active, meeting monthly to discuss technology usage and hosting informative Tech Talks and Rapid-Fire Talks with staff. We are committed to maintaining strong security measures, and have implemented mandatory, annual cybersecurity training for all staff via Knowbe4 to improve user security. We continue to require Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) to access data and have secure remote access over VPN allowing us to operate a hybrid work environment.

We have successfully transitioned our toll-free regional Legal Line phone number to now serve as the one phone number to access all of our branches. We also offer online intake for our regional offices (Amsterdam, Canton, Gloversville, Plattsburgh, and Saratoga), and plan to expand the language options in our online intake to include Spanish and potentially Chinese (Mandarin) and Arabic. We also use video chat and interactive interviews to assist our rural clients to generate pro se pleadings via our Closing the Gap program. Our internal and court communications continue to be focused on Microsoft Teams. The LASNNY website, our Facebook page, and Instagram accounts are regularly updated.

OTHER SERVICES: TRAININGS

During the reporting period, LASNNY sent 2 lawyers to the New York State Bar Association Annual meeting, 45 staff to other training within New York State and 39 staff to national training events such as the 2022 HJN National Conference and Training, 2023 LITC Annual Conference, 2022 Empire Justice Conference, and 2022 NCLS Mortgage Conference. 32 staff also attended webinars in various subject matters such as Fair Housing Law and Practice and Mat Law's Spring Seminar. Through PLI, NYSBA, and the ABA, we were able to offer substantial training opportunities to attorneys. We also offered white privilege and race equity training to the entire staff. We also offer trainings to our Board about our programs presented by program managers, as well as presentations by our Executive Management Team about their departments.

Staff reported the following training as their most significant training opportunities: NYSBA Partnership Conference; NLADA/ABA Equal Justice Conference; Race Equity and Inclusion Council (REIC) trainings; Domestic violence training/ In Her Shoes; Empire Justice Center trainings; DAP; NCLC Mortgage Foreclosures; and Trial Academy.

IMPACT CASES

Each impact case benefits one person at time of close, but the ramifications of the case decision has the potential to impact large numbers of people going forward and/or have been incorporated as arguments for other cases. For example:

One of our local DSS districts systemically fails to budget restaurant allowances for recipients who are placed in shelters without adequate cooking facilities. They also were not advising applicants and recipients of the availability of this allowance or providing the required booklets necessary for A/Rs to determine this allowance existed. The motel the client resided at houses 10 - 20 individuals and families placed there by DSS at any given time, according to the motel. None of the motel rooms contain adequate cooking facilities. Many of these individuals and families are required to contribute income towards the cost of shelter, which is expensive, while also having to contribute more of their income towards expensive "convenience" foods due to lack of ability to cook in their rooms.

The decision in this case granted systemic relief by requiring that DSS district to investigate the adequacy of cooking facilities in all of their shelter placements and provide retroactive restaurant allowances to all A/Rs that are currently placed. To date, the county has not complied with any aspect of the decision, and we are working on compliance, but we expect this will impact up to several dozen recipients and will hopefully correct the issue going forward.

8 Impact Cases were worked on during this past year

All Impact Cases:

- *Victoria Bauer (20-1071210)*
- *Annette Boyd (22-1100453)*
- *Shoemaker v. Kijakazi 1:22-cv-00061-BKS-ML*
- *Haynes v. Kijakazi 1:22-cv-00081-GTS-ATB*
- *Rivers v. Kijakazi, 1:23-cv-00012-GLS-DJS*
- *Fallen v. Kijakazi, 1:23-cv-00045-GLS-TWD*
- *Gilmore v. Kijakazi, 1:21-cv-00526-GTS*
- *Carrillo, fair hearing decision 8495656L*

PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

LASNNY has a robust and very productive pro bono/PAI program. We recruit from the private bar associations, our board members, our board members' law firms, at fundraisers and other events where attorneys are expected to attend. PAI opened 230 new cases and closed 347 cases.

Our volunteers continue to expand available services by taking on a broad range of civil cases: bankruptcies, wills, certain divorces, real estate matters, name changes, and tax issues. Our volunteers continued to run pro se divorce clinics virtually and in person and staff Attorney-for-the-Day programs at city courts. We continue to support our volunteers in a variety of ways, and they provided at least 3,897 hours of service. They are joined by LASNNY's part-time, pro bono General Counsel who provided about 600 hours of pro bono service.

LASNNY offers a wide range of law student opportunities in most of our projects. We recruited and trained 21 law students who volunteered 1,909 hours.



91 Attorneys volunteered 1,403 hours

21 Law Students volunteered 1,909 hours

6 Other Volunteers volunteered 1,185 hours

Each  icon is equal to 11.8 volunteers.

Attorneys are represented through the Green Figure.

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

SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

Under our Department of Health AIDS Institute grant, the HALC program works in collaboration with The Justice Center at Albany Law School and the Albany Damien Center to provide legal and support services to People Living with HIV (PLWH) and their families.

We have referral relationships with Social Services, and case management and health care providers throughout our service area, including the Alliance for Positive Health, Albany Damien Center, Albany Medical Center, Ellis Hospital, Whitney M. Young Health Center, and Hudson Headwaters Health Network. We work closely with staff from these organizations to coordinate client services in appropriate situations and where the client has provided written permission to do so.

Our Senior Legal Services programs serve 8 counties and the St. Regis Mohawk reservation. Our Enhanced Multi-Disciplinary Team (E-MDT) serves 7 counties in the Mohawk Region and 5 Capital District counties to provide coordinated legal, social, and medical services to victims of elder abuse.

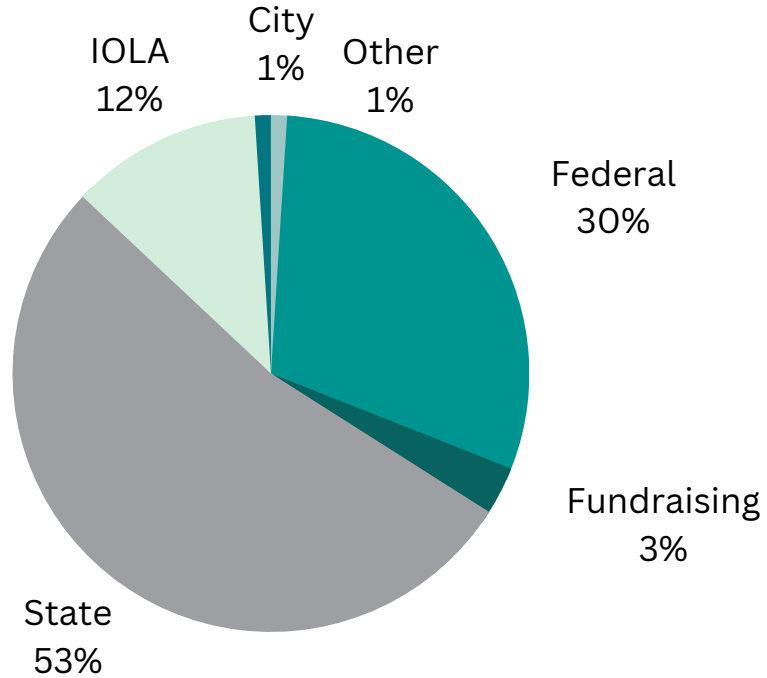
Our Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP) maintains collaborations with social services and government agencies, health care navigators, local school districts, food pantries and others serving those facing food insecurity.

Our foreclosure prevention project continues to serve homeowners facing foreclosure, collaborating with housing counselors and others in serving clients and on funding including the Affordable Housing Partnership, Albany County Rural Housing Alliance, United Tenants of Albany, NeighborWorks Homeownership Center, Better Neighborhoods, Inc. and others.

Our Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic (LITC) lawyers participate in the New York-area LITC practitioner group. Working with our upstate legislators and legal services colleagues, the new state funding designated for upstate direct legal services providers was secured for another year, and Right to Counsel funding for LSC-funded providers was reauthorized.

SOURCES OF FUNDING

The Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York received **\$12,287,641** in funding this past year



State Funding	\$6,473,300
Federal Funding	\$3,663,941
IOLA Grant	\$1,444,651
Fundraising	\$328,525
City and County Funding	\$161,833
Other Funding	\$137,845
Foundations	\$77,546