

**LEGAL  
ASSISTANCE  
OF WESTERN  
NEW YORK  
(LawNY)**

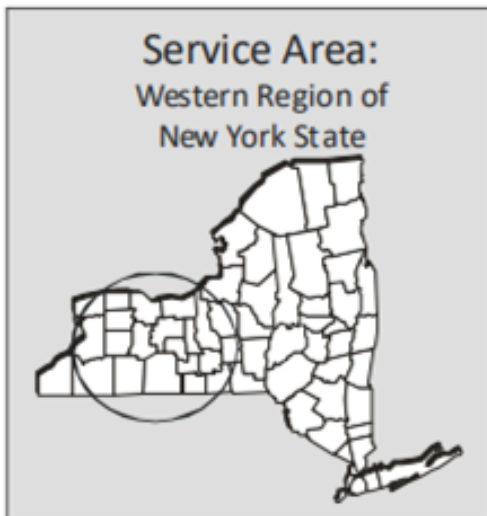
2022-2023

# OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

Including cases funded by us but staffed by our subcontractor, Legal Assistance of Western New York, Inc. (LawNY) closed a total of 7,591 cases during the period from 4/1/22 – 3/31/23, benefitting a total of 17,618 people. LawNY clients obtained at least \$215,956 in ongoing monthly benefits and other payments and \$1,454,215 in one-time payments, for a total payout over 12 months of at least \$4,045,687. Our target population is low-income people living across all of the IOLA CLS Unit 6 area, comprising 14 counties and nearly 10,000 square miles.

In addition to payments made directly to our clients, we also achieved dollar savings to clients in the avoidance of ongoing monthly payments in the sum of \$101,883, in fee waivers totaling \$28,113 and in lump sum avoidances of \$8,321,734 for an annualized total of \$8,451,730. We achieved taxpayer savings in the sum of at least \$859,587.

Improvements specific to our service delivery system include: the addition of a second office location in Bath, New York and a new office space in Geneseo, New York to house additional eviction defense staff; a construction project in our Ithaca office to redesign our reception and waiting area which will increase our capacity serve walk in clients, particularly those experiencing homelessness and community members who lack phone and internet service; the continued implementation of our technology replacement plan to facilitate remote work plans and work in community locations; the addition of a joint Development Officer who works with four legal service providers, including LawNY, in the Monroe County area to expand our collaborative fundraising efforts; additional hiring of attorney and paralegal staff throughout the organization to expand our eviction defense services; and the expanded collaborative eviction defense services in conjunction with the Telesca Center Partners in Monroe County, Cornell Law School in the Ithaca service area and Western New York Law Center in the Southern Tier.



**Population Served: General Low Income Population**

**Total Funding: \$15,487,264.00**

**Total IOLA Grant: \$1,200,000.00**

**Staffing Full Time Equivalents:**

- Total Staff: 186.04
- Lawyers: 87.50
- Paralegals: 67.24
- Other: 31.30

# DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES: CASES

## Housing:

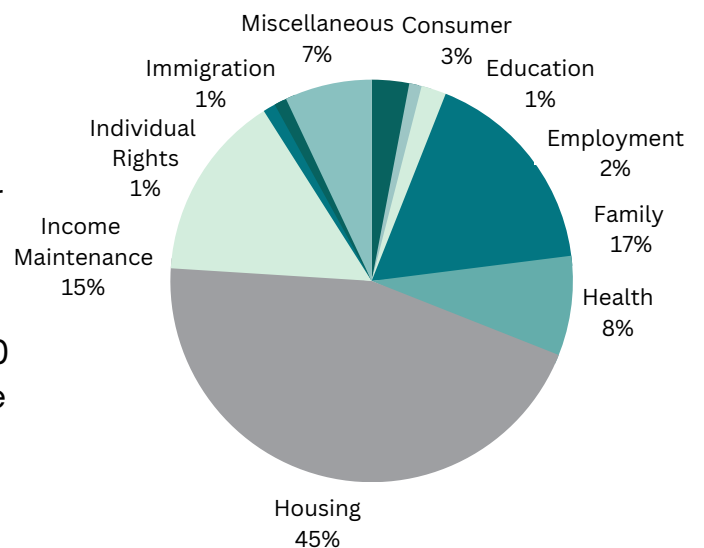
LawNY provided services to an 85 year old community member related to a pending mortgage foreclosure. Over twenty years ago, he obtained a high interest predatory mortgage from a well known banking institution to buy a mobile home located on three acres of land in a rural community. He lived in the home with his wife who was ill. The mortgage was transferred to a multi-million-dollar national trust which bundled together high interest mobile home mortgages and sold shares to investors. Our client, whose only income was Social Security benefits, struggled with the high interest payments, and ultimately fell behind on the mortgage.

The mortgage servicer for the trust filed a mortgage foreclosure proceeding in Supreme Court. LawNY represented the elderly couple in settlement conferences, in order to find an alternative to foreclosure. The mortgage servicer argued that the mobile home trust agreement did not allow for any type of mortgage modification and the only option for our client was to move out and sign over his home.

Upon review of the trust document, nearly 100 pages in length, LawNY determined in fact the trust did allow for modifications. LawNY negotiated a modification for our client at a reduced interest rate.

LawNY also assisted the client in connecting with the Mortgage Enforcement Unit of the NYS Attorney’s General’s Office. They helped the client obtain a grant under the Home Ownership Assistance Program (HAF) to pay off the mortgage in full. As a result, our client saved his home, free and clear of mortgage debt.

**17,618**  
people  
benefitted  
from  
**7,591** legal  
cases  
closed



**Cases by Legal Problem Area**

**Employment:**

LawNY provided services to a community member whose past criminal record was creating a barrier to employment opportunities. The client was denied a Certified Nursing Assistant position at a health care facility for seniors and disabled people due to unresolved criminal charges that appeared on her background check.

LawNY assisted the client obtain certificates of disposition in those matters which had both been adjourned in contemplation of dismissal, or dismissed. After doing so, LawNY was able to negotiate with the New York State Department of Health to approve her for work. She subsequently obtained the employment she was seeking as a Certified Nursing Assistant.

## **OTHER SERVICES: OVERVIEW**

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LawNY provides community legal education to client groups to: 1) provide information about legal issues to help people recognize legal problems; 2) understand their legal rights and responsibilities; 3) take steps on their own to resolve problems; and 4) know when to seek assistance.

We also provide community legal education to human service providers from local agencies with the goal of giving them information that they can use to help their clients avoid problems and also know when they should contact us for assistance.

We continue to provide other legal-related services that maximize the impact of our work and aim to prevent the need for further legal intervention. In order to achieve these goals, we engage in community legal education activities to particularly vulnerable populations and census tracts.

For each of our programs, we offer a variety of advice and brief service assistance by telephone.

**189,279 People Benefitted from  
Services Other Than Direct Legal  
Services**

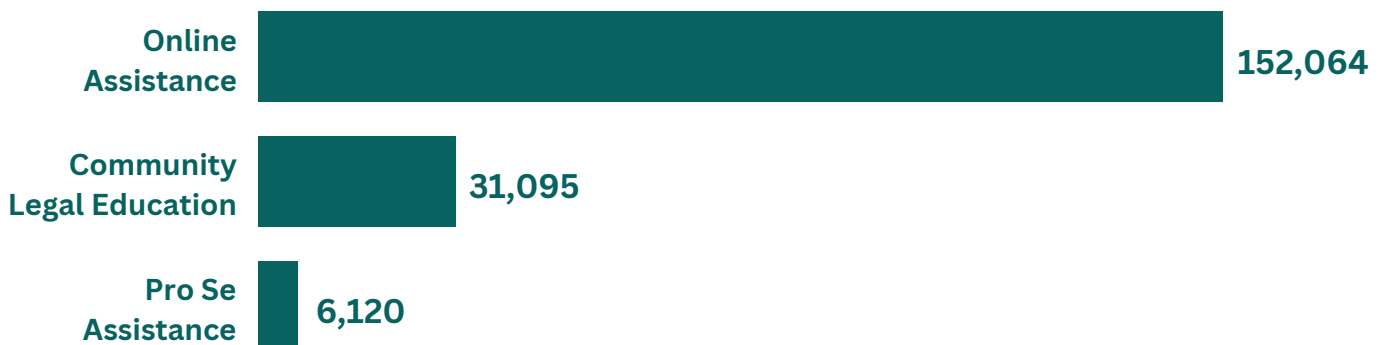
During the reporting period, we intaked 6,168 households without meeting the clients in person. In addition to our subcontractor’s 1,347 hotlines, LawNY’s hotline services included: 1,100 housing, 569 consumer, 363 health, 316 family, 307 income maintenance, 71 education, 51 individual rights, 37 employment, 2 juvenile and 114 miscellaneous. Hotlines are the provision of legal information, form assistance and general answers to procedural questions. It does not include tailored legal advice or assistance. This assistance supports an individual’s ability to represent or advocate for themselves.

Our website, www.LawNY.org, currently has over 95 English and 57 Spanish self-help pages, community legal education articles and videos. During the period from 4/1/22 – 3/31/23, www.LawNY.org had 684,253 users, 818,398 sessions and 983,274 page views. Our self-help materials were accessed 733,042 times. We estimate that these materials were downloaded 149,598 times. Our social media presence has continued to grow, with 1,372 followers on Facebook, 348 followers on Instagram, 660 followers on LinkedIn, and 1,001 followers on Twitter.

For individuals who we cannot help, we try to make referrals to other service providers in the community who can help. During the reporting period we referred 1,371 applicants for services to other legal services programs, 828 to the private bar and 401 to non-legal human service agencies.

In addition, 1,030 persons were referred to other sources of assistance, including code enforcement offices, the public defenders’ offices and LawHelpNY. From April 1, 2022 - March 31, 2023, LawNY reached 25,444 people with more than 603 presentations to community groups. We also distributed 30,336 brochures.

### Number of People Benefitted from Other Services



## OTHER SERVICES: TECHNOLOGY

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LawNY launched a new web based panic alarm button called Little Green Button to help keep our staff and clients safe in case of an emergency. In addition to physical buttons, it is installed on each of our workstations. When an alert is set off, all staff within that office are notified of the emergency so that they can respond in a quick and appropriate manner. We began implementing a project that included replacing the firewall routers at each of our seven main offices which offers increased security capabilities to help keep our IT systems and data safe. We hired a Data Systems Coordinator to help oversee our LegalServer case management system.

In December 2022, our website, LawNY.org, was updated to the DLAW9 platform with the assistance of Urban Insight and Kansas Legal Services. We continue to implement a formal social media policy which includes the creation of internal guidelines for accessible content; our online application form received 331 applications which proceeded to full fledged intakes; our website was heavily utilized; and we had at least 14,907 downloads of our Paths to Foreclosure interactive form which was developed in partnership with the Unified Court System and Legal Services NYC.

## OTHER SERVICES: TRAININGS

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LawNY fosters professional development in a multitude of ways. Bar membership, internal leadership opportunities in LawNY substantive law workgroups and committees as well as community networks and initiatives in addition to statewide task forces are all encouraged. LawNY is a certified CLE accredited provider. During the reporting period we provided or sponsored at least eight trainings for our staff and pro bono attorneys which qualified for CLE at which there were 393 attendees. In addition, 53 persons viewed on-demand training. LawNY staff have access to Practising Law Institute. LawNY's Training and Leadership Development workgroup provides a forum for staff to share and learn about training and professional development opportunities.

Staff also routinely attend external training in their substantive practice areas. Trainings of note attended by staff this year include the New York State Bar Association's Partnership Conference (38 attendees from LawNY); a nonprofit management series with Corning Community College and ProAction of Steuben and Yates; American College of Medicine 63rd Annual Conference; Yale 2023 Medical-Legal Partnership Conference; a 15-hour, 3-week long training through the Shriver Center on the Foundations of Racial Justice; National Fair Housing Alliance 2022 National Conference.

# IMPACT CASES

## Case 1:

Our client, an older adult, was served a 30-day notice for nonpayment of rent. The notice provided that in order to cure the non-payment amount, the tenant (who owns her manufactured home in a park with 154 manufactured homes) was required to pay an additional \$100 legal fee. LawNY contacted the manager of the manufactured home park and advised the park owner that our client - who is an older adult - was prepared to pay the unpaid rent but that the additional \$100 was an unlawful add-on. After negotiation, the Park agreed to drop the fee.

**MILESTONE:** Successful negotiation resulted in the removal of an unlawful fee.

**IMPACT:** Households in 154 manufactured homes will not be charged an unlawful fee. In addition, our client was then one of a half dozen manufactured home tenants from western and central New York who were part of a "listening session" organized by the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau who wanted to hear about the challenges faced by tenants in manufactured home parks.

## Case 2:

Two low-income mobile home owners, who live in a mobile home park with 39 mobile homes, contacted LawNY regarding a notice from the park increasing their lot rent from \$235 to \$400 per month effective January 1, 2023. This was a 70% rent increase. Moving their mobile homes, their only assets of any real value, was too expensive for these low-income clients to afford. LawNY wrote to the management of the mobile park regarding how their rent increase violated the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019, which limits rent increase in manufactured home parks, in most cases, to 3% per year.

**MILESTONE:** After reviewing our letter, the mobile home park management canceled its 70% rent increase and reduced the rent increase to 3%.

**IMPACT:** This reduction was effective for all 39 units in the park. As a result, the lot rent for our clients and the other park residents has remained affordable.

**5,130**  
**Beneficiaries**  
**were**  
**affected by**  
**19 Impact**  
**Cases**



# PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

During the reporting period, LawNY was assisted by 40 pro bono attorneys, 56 law students and graduates and 10 other volunteers. Together, these individuals donated an estimated 4,913.43 hours of service to LawNY. In addition, JustCause closed an estimated 887 cases utilizing LawNY's subcontracted LSC and private foundation funds which are not included in this report, as well as 665 cases utilizing LawNY's subcontracted IOLA funds which are included in this report. With IOLA subcontracted funds, 550 JustCause volunteers donated 982 hours to cases and activities.

LawNY conducted virtual training sessions for ten 2022 summer interns. We hosted five Pro Bono Scholars. We were a host site for alternative law school spring breaks with Roger Williams University and UC Hastings law students. We also virtually presented information about our remote pro bono opportunities to law students at Rutgers University and UC Hastings, and attended in-person events at Cornell University and University of Buffalo. Our pro bono team joined with the Feerick Center at Fordham Law School to present a CLE entitled "Remote Pro Bono Estate Planning: Wills and Powers of Attorney" to 291 unique viewers. Our Director of Pro Bono Affairs also served as convener of the statewide NYSBA's Pro Bono Coordinators Network (PBCN), and is a member of the NYSBA Committee on Legal Aid. Our attorney pro bono coordinator is a board member of both the Finger Lakes Women's Bar Association and the Tompkins County Bar Association, and our paralegal pro bono coordinator is a member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals.



**137 Attorneys volunteered 745 hours**

**78 Law Students volunteered 2,962 hours**

**26 Other Volunteers volunteered 742 hours**

Each  icon is equal to 24.1 volunteers.

Attorneys are represented through the Green Figure.

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



# SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

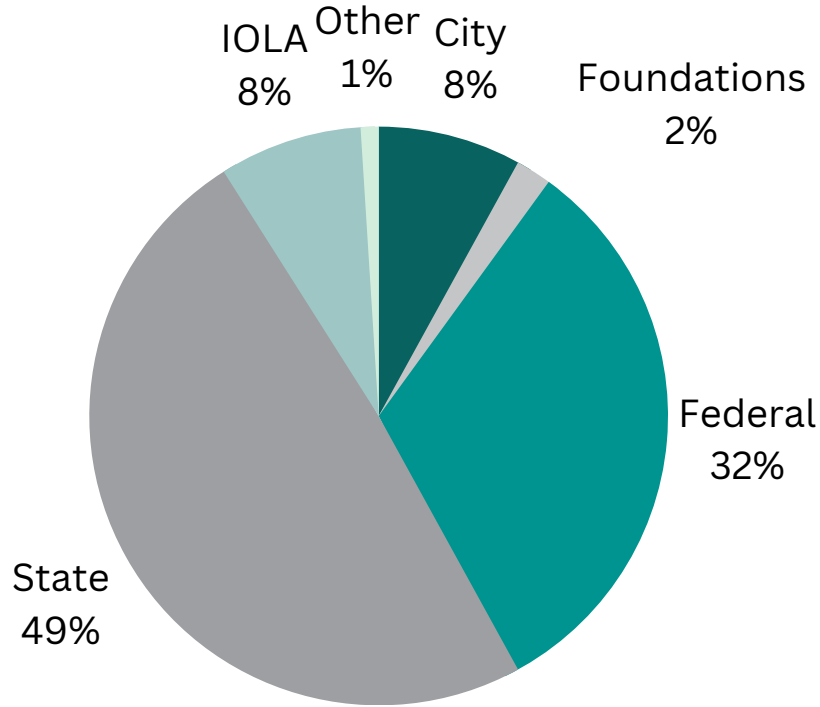
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A summary of our most significant collaborations during the reporting period is as follows:

- Participation in Justice for All, a Permanent Commission pilot project in Monroe County, with LawNY playing a leadership role on many of the initiatives related to Town and Village Courts and Prevention;
- Continuing to lead both a Legal Assistance for Victims grant collaboration in partnership with the domestic violence and sexual assault providers in 13 counties and the Steuben County Domestic Abuse Response Team (DART) which includes domestic violence and sexual assault programs, a counseling agency, the Sheriff's, Probation, Social Services and Mental Health departments and the New York State Police;
- Operating a pilot program called the Consumer Debt Assistance Program which is a collaboration between our office, the other legal aid organizations in Rochester, and the Rochester City Court to provide representation to defendants being sued in debt collection lawsuits;
- The Tenant Defense Project (TDP), a collaborative effort between civil legal service providers in Monroe County to expand assistance to tenants facing evictions in Monroe County (from 10/1/2020 until 12/31/2022 there were 19,359 inbound calls to the collaborative hotlines, 4,397 client intakes completed in the courthouse by partners);
- A partnership with Western New York Law Center to ensure representation for low income tenants facing eviction in the southern tier;
- A partnership with the Housing Practicum at Cornell Law School that includes a tenant hotline and referrals to LawNY;
- A growing collaboration with Cornell ILR School related to reentry and employment advocacy to support individuals in need of sealing and filing Certificates of Relief from Disabilities and Certificates of Good Conduct;
- A continued collaboration with Catholic Charities to provide financial assistance and case management service to help homeless and at risk of homeless individuals and families;
- Continued collaboration with Lifespan and enhanced multidisciplinary teams throughout our services area to coordinate services to the most vulnerable older adults, and particularly those impacted by elder abuse and financial exploitation;
- A capacity building initiative with the civil legal service providers located in the Telesca Center for Justice to support and expand our fundraising efforts in Monroe County.

# SOURCES OF FUNDING

LawNY received **\$15,487,264** in total funding this past year



<b>State Funding</b>	<b>\$7,582,681</b>
<b>Federal Funding</b>	<b>\$4,905,837</b>
<b>City and County Funding</b>	<b>\$1,245,880</b>
<b>IOLA Grant</b>	<b>\$1,200,000</b>
<b>Foundations</b>	<b>\$309,692</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>\$243,174</b>