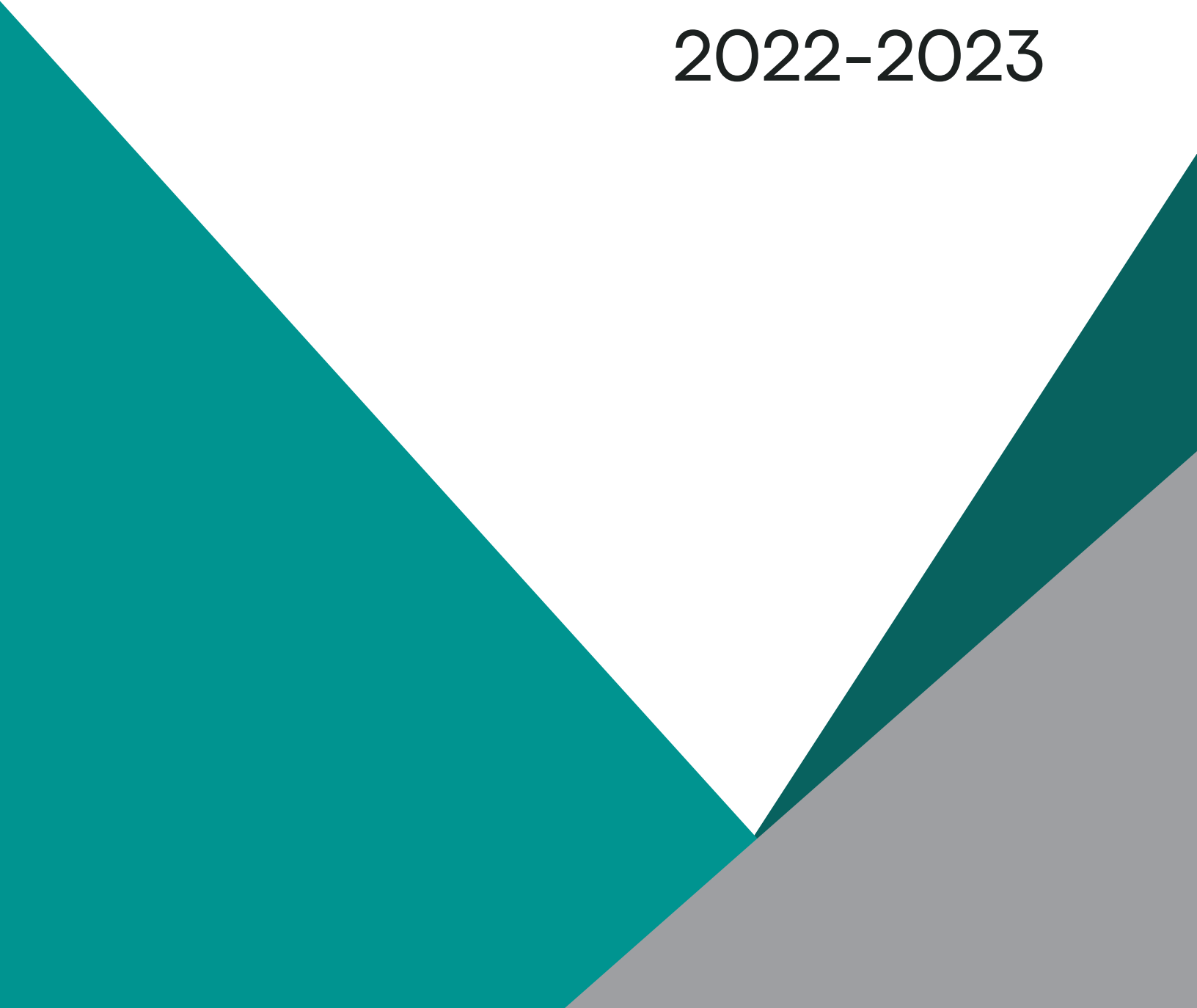


THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

2022-2023



OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

With the support of funding from the IOLA Fund of the State of New York, The Legal Aid Society (LAS) has continued to represent large numbers of individuals while working to achieve broader systemic changes for society as a whole. IOLA funding during the period of April 1, 2022 through March 31, 2023 made the following accomplishments possible in LAS' Civil Legal Services Practice:

- Direct legal assistance in approximately 32,600 closed individual client matters, which benefited nearly 68,300 low-income New Yorkers. Overall, during the reporting period, we worked on over 49,000 individual client matters, which benefited nearly 107,500 people.
- A law reform litigation docket of 35 active cases (including 6 new filings this period) and 8 closed cases on behalf of low-income New Yorkers throughout the City.
- 273 small businesses and non-profits were assisted through our Community Development Project.
- Community legal education via in-person and virtual KYR trainings were attended by nearly 5,300 individuals. KYR YouTube videos had around 14,000 unique views. The educational, client-facing materials on our website's GetHelp section and the New York Health Access (NYHA) website had around 327,000 unique views.
- Self-help materials posted on the LAS and NYHA websites were downloaded around 86,500 times.



Population Served: General Low Income Population

Total Funding: \$96,312,300.00

Total IOLA Grant: \$5,040,000.00

Staffing Full Time Equivalent:

- Total Staff: 550.9
- Paralegals: 143
- Lawyers: 335.9
- Other: 72

DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES: CASES

Consumer/Finance:

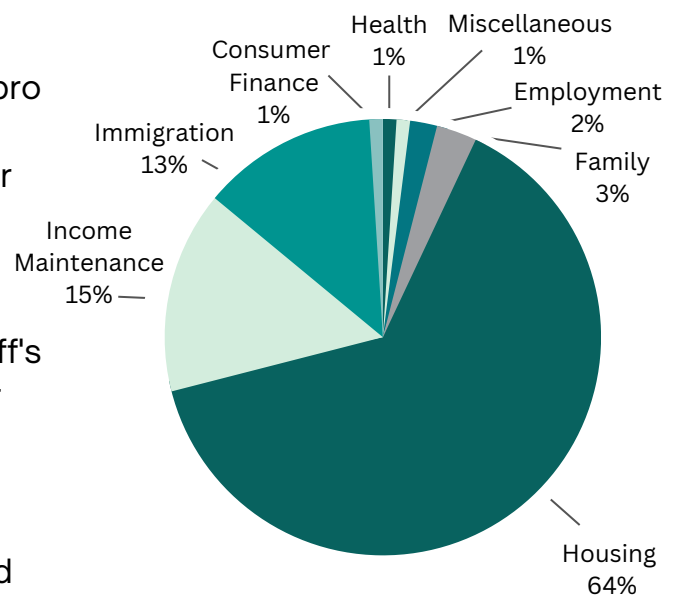
Ms. C is a 72-year-old homeowner who lives with her husband in a condo that they own in the Bronx. The condo management sued Ms. C for \$12,000 despite the fact that she had paid all charges and fees over the past ten years. The condo management had repeatedly failed to provide an accurate bill and used incorrect billing statements to start multiple lawsuits against her.

Although Ms. C initially had private counsel, she and her husband both subsist solely on Social Security and ran out of money for attorneys’ fees before the private counsel was able to resolve the matter.

Staff from LAS’s Consumer Law Unit and Foreclosure Prevention and Home Equity Preservation Project collaborated to prepare pro se papers for Ms. C and assisted with negotiations, successfully resolving the matter in just four months.

Since the judge had refused to credit Ms. C’s evidence, LAS drafted an Opposition to Plaintiff’s Motion for Summary Judgment and helped our client organize the evidence and explain the case in court. After seeing the strength of the evidence and legal arguments presented, the Plaintiff’s counsel agreed to drop the case and finally provided a corrected bill at no cost to our client.

68,274
people
benefitted
from
32,633 legal
cases
closed



Cases by Legal Problem Area

Other (Education):

Ms. W is a 15-year-old student diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder and Oppositional Defiant Disorder. After her application for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) was denied, her mother requested our help with an appeal in May 2019. During intake, we learned that despite Ms. W's diagnoses, hospitalizations, and chronic absenteeism, she was not receiving any special education services at her NYC public school, and as a result she was not making academic progress.

We represented Ms. W in both her SSI hearing and her special education matters. Her SSI case was so strong that we received a favorable decision in late 2022 without having to proceed to a full hearing. Ms. W began receiving ongoing benefits and desperately needed retroactive benefits dating back to 2017.

LAS also worked to get Ms. W the help that she needed at school. Her special education impartial hearing was delayed long beyond the 75-day deadline. While working on her individual case, we obtained the consent of Ms. W and her mother and shared their case information with the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)—a fellow legal services provider and IOLA grantee—as possible plaintiffs in a lawsuit challenging extreme delays in the special education impartial hearing process. Ms. W and her mother are named plaintiffs in the federal class action lawsuit *JSM v. NYC Department of Education*, filed in 2020.

Once Ms. W's hearing finally commenced, we successfully argued for funding for a private educational evaluation that formed the basis for her eligibility for special education services and directly supported her SSI case. We secured a recommendation for a residential program specializing in students with severe depression and school avoidance, which both met her educational needs and alleviated her oppositional behavior at home. Working with Ms. W for over four years,

LAS also assisted her family with housing and family law issues. Through our holistic approach, close collaboration between multiple LAS practices, and the invaluable assistance of our social worker, we worked to ensure that Ms. W has the best chance to achieve stability, success in school, and independence when she reaches adulthood.

OTHER SERVICES: OVERVIEW

Community Legal Education: Each Civil Practice unit offers trainings to low-income New Yorkers and community advocates. During the reporting period, LAS delivered 126 webinars and in-person trainings attended by nearly 5,300 clients and advocates on a wide range of civil legal topics.

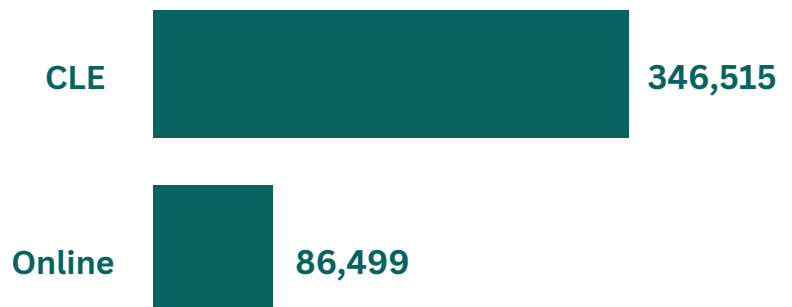
LAS created ten (10) new informational videos targeting college students as part of the Robin Hood Benefits Access “Five Things You Need to Know” series, covering Social Security Overpayments; Custody and Visitation; Security Deposits; Living with Roommates in New York City; and Right to Counsel in Housing Court. Our online self-help materials have been vital sources of advice and assistance to clients during the pandemic.

During the reporting period, we updated and expanded client-facing content for our website, including KYR materials on a range of topics. The most viewed articles during the reporting period were: “What You Need to Know About Repair and Service Rights” in housing law with over 17,500 views; “What You Need to Know About Medicaid Expansion in NYS in 2023” in government benefits law with over 17,000 views; and “What You Need to Know About Cash Assistance from HRA” in government benefits law with nearly 16,300 views. Our “Legal Aid Academy,” established in partnership with CUNY student leadership, offers an online library of relevant rights-related resources for students.

Web-Based Assistance: This includes downloads from the “Get Help” section of our website (over 3,200 during the reporting period) and from the NYHA website (nearly 83,300), our collaboration with NYLAG and Empire Justice Center to educate clients and advocates on healthcare access.

433,014 People Benefitted from Services Other Than Direct Legal Services

Number of People Benefitted from Other Services



OTHER SERVICES: TECHNOLOGY

Helpline Upgrades: As described in Section B(2), Remote Service Delivery, LAS's telephone helplines, including A2B and the HJH, continue to serve as important resources for our clients even following the resumption of in-person services. LAS's Intake and Helplines unit and Chief Information Officer worked with our call service provider, Spectrum VoIP, to enhance the capacity of the helpline, improve reporting, and develop customized training for helpline operators. As mentioned in Section C, LAS also developed the capability to send informational materials to callers via text message.

LawManager Mobile: During the reporting period, LAS's Juvenile Rights Project worked with our Information Technology team to begin developing mobile capabilities for our proprietary case management system, LawManager. We expect that the Civil Practice will be next in this process. In preparation, senior staff from the Civil Practice team joined initial consultations during this period.

Migration to Cloud-Based System: LAS also made progress on our move from a server platform to cloud-based digital assets (SharePoint) during the reporting period. In February 2023, all LAS staff were assigned new M365 licenses with Microsoft Intune and LAS moved our Microsoft Office governance infrastructure to the cloud.

OTHER SERVICES: TRAININGS

During the reporting period, LAS held a total of 56 Continuing Legal Education (CLE) events, attended by nearly 2,750 Civil Practice advocates and attorneys. LAS operates a robust training and professional development program aimed at developing the advocacy skills of our paralegals, attorneys, and supervisors and mainstreaming best practices. With courts now scheduling more in-person appearances and a high number of cases being set for trial, the Training Team has prioritized trainings on legal strategy, trials, and evidence with more opportunities to workshop hypothetical case scenarios. Trainings offered also included navigating challenging interactions, discharging student loan debt in bankruptcy, source of income discrimination, depositions, FHEPS cash assistance eligibility, and the end of COVID Medicaid protections in 2023, among other topics.

Our Immigration and Housing practice areas offer additional targeted practice-specific training programs. Tailored training modules for supervisors cover effective delegation, constructive feedback, teambuilding, leadership, and professional development planning. for Guardians, Court Evaluators, and Attorneys (December 2022; 1 staff).

IMPACT CASES

Combatting Housing Voucher Discrimination:

In April 2022, LAS secured significant policy changes to combat housing voucher discrimination as Compass, one of the nation's largest real estate firms, agreed to settle the lawsuit filed by LAS and Handley Farah & Anderson PLLC on behalf of the non-profit organization Housing Rights Initiative (HRI) in March 2021.

We commenced suit against 88 landlords and brokers, including Compass, following [HRI's year-long investigation](#), which found widespread and systemic discrimination against tenants with housing vouchers. Source-of-income (SOI) discrimination—refusing to rent to tenants seeking to pay for housing with housing assistance vouchers or other forms of public assistance—is illegal under the Human Rights Laws of NYC and NYS.

SOI discrimination dramatically impedes the effectiveness of rental assistance vouchers, thus constraining access to safe, affordable, and quality units in areas of opportunity in NYC. Compass agreed to incentivize NYC agents to rent to voucher holders with a higher commission; train their agents on voucher programs; and recommit to their existing anti-discrimination policies, setting an important precedent for the real estate industry.

Securing Medically Necessary Dental Coverage for Medicaid Recipients:

LAS's federal class action suit, *Ciaramella v. Zucker*, is a landmark case against the NYS Department of Health to secure medically necessary dental coverage for Medicaid recipients. Previously, Medicaid's archaic rules strictly limited dental implants, replacement dentures, root canals, and crowns. This results in tooth decay and loss, gum degeneration, mouth lesions, infections, and more. Such problems are tied to heart disease, diabetes, respiratory ailments, Alzheimer's, pregnancy complications, depression, and other issues. The settlement was [covered in The New York Times](#) in May 2023. At least 5.5 million adults statewide have Medicaid.

3,049,373
Beneficiaries
were
affected by
43 Impact
Cases

PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

In contrast to the traditional “referral panel” model, LAS integrates volunteers into our delivery of civil legal services. Volunteers serve “of counsel” to LAS, which remains the attorney of record. LAS screens matters, conducts CLE trainings, and mentors each case. Many firms also act as co-counsel on affirmative litigation matters. In collaboration with Fried Frank, the Immigration Law Unit hosts long-term pro bono clinics for naturalization (8-10 attorneys) and DACA (3 attorneys). We also have retired attorneys who volunteer on a long-term basis in various programs, as part of the Attorney Emeritus Program. Examples of our cooperation with volunteers during the reporting period include:

Collaboration to Expand A2B Intake: Beginning in November 2022, A2B developed a partnership with the law firm Sherman & Sterling, to provide volunteer opportunities for their legal staff and increase A2B’s capacity. LAS trained volunteers to conduct A2B intakes remotely. This partnership allowed us to increase A2B’s intake capacity and thus service availability for our clients. This partnership's success can serve as a model for bringing on additional pro bono partners and further expanding the reach of A2B.

Providing Immigration Expertise to Assist Ukrainians Seeking Safety in the U.S.:

LAS’s Immigration Law Unit (ILU) provided information and technical assistance to assist Ukrainians seeking safety in the U.S. On April 22, 2022, LAS conducted a live webinar for pro bono attorneys interested in assisting with Ukrainian TPS, hosted by Kirkland & Ellis LLP, which had lined up 2,200 pro bono volunteer attorneys. 1,108 pro bono attorneys attended the training live, and the remainder were expected to watch the recorded session. LAS also provided support to Kirkland & Ellis’ Ukrainian TPS pro bono project, responding to over 300 requests for immigration technical assistance.

New Wills Clinic: In December 2022, the Trusts & Estates Practice at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP began conducting a monthly wills clinic for LAS clients, assisting with the preparation of a life planning documents such as wills, living wills, powers of attorney, and health care proxies.

1,211 Attorneys volunteered 45,695 hours

91 Law Students volunteered 19,825 hours

424 Other Volunteers volunteered 3,027 hours

SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

Through partnerships with CBOs, coalitions, and other organizations, LAS is able to provide comprehensive support to individual clients as well as advocate for change at a societal level. Some examples of our collaborations during the reporting period include:

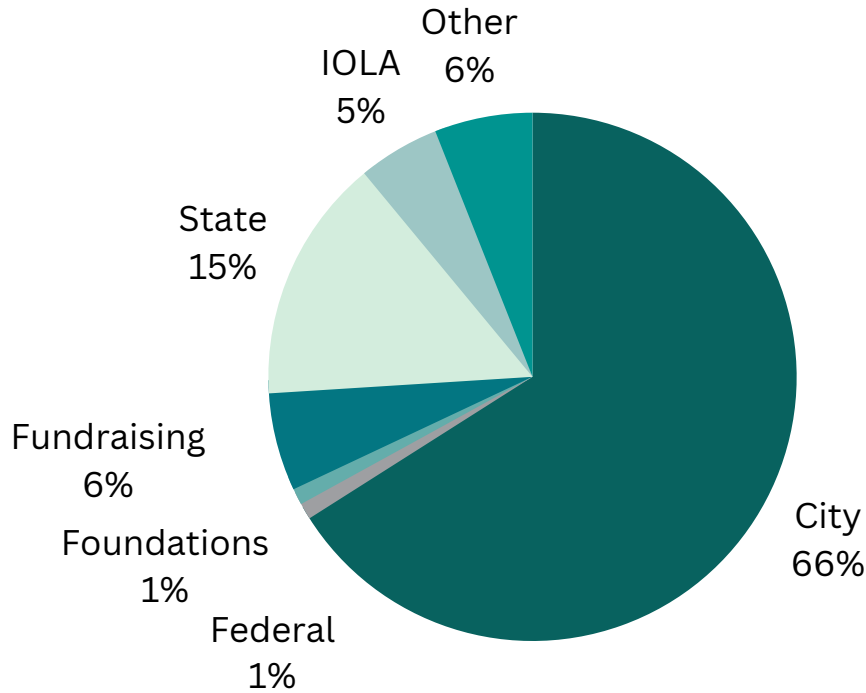
CityFHEPS Reform and Expansion Coalition: LAS's Law Reform Unit led advocacy efforts at the city and state levels to reduce homelessness and promote housing stability through reform and expansion of the CityFHEPS rental subsidy and creation of a new state subsidy, the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP). Working with the Community Service Society of New York (CSS), Neighbors Together, Community Voices Heard, Make the Road New York, VOCAL-NY, and other allies, LAS has coordinated a multi-pronged campaign of legislative advocacy, community mobilization, and education to achieve policy change. During the reporting period, we have seen numerous signs of progress, including Mayor Adams's proposed CityFHEPS reforms, several promising City Council bills, and support from both houses of the state legislature for HAVP.

Collaboration with Victim Services Providers: LAS's Family Law and Domestic Violence (Family/DV) Practice collaborates with social service providers and CBOs with victim service programs, as well as dedicated victim service providers (including Garden of Hope, Sakhi for South Asian Women, and the Safe Homes Project). These organizations provide an array of services, including crisis intervention, safety planning, and short- and long-term counseling, which contribute to clients' stability, autonomy, and economic self-sufficiency in a safe environment. Through these partnerships, LAS is able to provide joint comprehensive legal and social services to underserved DV survivors.

Protecting New Yorkers from Predatory Medicaid and Benefit Overpayment Collections Practices: During the reporting period, LAS's Health Law Unit worked to mitigate the impact of the declared end of the Public Health Emergency on May 11, 2023, continuing to provide direct legal assistance for clients while working closely with stakeholders to develop broader policy solutions to these challenges and avoidable widespread and abrupt loss of Medicaid coverage, especially for immigrants, limited English proficiency (LEP) individuals, and people who lack digital literacy or access to technology. LAS chairs a working group with HRA and other advocates to strategize on issues for Medicaid recipients and applicants during the pandemic and post-pandemic. We are also actively engaged in advocacy with the NYS Department of Health to prepare for the end of the declared public health emergency and minimize coverage loss among low-income New Yorkers.

SOURCES OF FUNDING

The Legal Aid Society's Civil Legal Services Practice received **\$96,312,300** in total funding this past year



City and County Funding	\$63,979,260
State Funding	\$13,981,360
Other Funding	\$5,904,225
Fundraising	\$5,803,900
IOLA Funding	\$5,040,000
Foundations	\$1,057,000
Federal	\$546,555