



RESILIENCE

WHEN CONFRONTED WITH CHALLENGES

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



OUR MISSION

Legal Aid Chicago seeks justice for people living in poverty. Through litigation and advocacy, our team of full-time lawyers and staff fight to secure individual rights to affordable housing, basic healthcare, fair working conditions, protection from abuse, and economic stability.

OUR VALUES

Legal Aid Chicago was founded on the philosophy that all individuals are entitled to quality civil legal representation, regardless of their income. We work to ensure that poverty is not an impediment to justice by dismantling the legal barriers that perpetuate inequality. Legal Aid Chicago staff live our mission through our core values of **equity, excellence, inclusion, kindness, and respect.**

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DEAR FRIENDS & SUPPORTERS

If the first year of the pandemic taught us how to deal with uncertainty, fear, and isolation, the second year taught us the importance of resilience in our community. The pandemic was not just disappearing as some said it would. Instead, we had to dig in, adjust to new realities, and recognize that in coping with the longer term threat, our fates were inextricably linked to the actions and welfare of our fellow citizens. **We were in this together.**

Last year, our Legal Aid Chicago staff of 208 (which included 101 attorneys and 63 paralegals) dug in, adjusted our service-delivery mechanisms, and helped individuals, families, and communities overcome challenges of all sorts—some created by the pandemic, others by ongoing poverty and injustice.

To that end, the staff and budget of Legal Aid Chicago grew, enabling the organization to touch the lives of over 22,000 individuals, including clients and their immediate family members. We closed 9,518 cases (23% more than in 2020). In the types of cases where outcomes could be quantified economically (such as housing, employment, public benefits, and consumer), the financial impact of our work was greater than \$19 million in increased assets or income or decreased debt. In other cases, such as domestic relations, sex and worker trafficking, health care, and education, the success could not be measured in dollars but was, nonetheless, life-transforming.

- In addition, here are some ways we changed lives last year:
- We successfully advocated for the elimination of a detention room that a Cook County nursing home was using to confine residents, including residents who complained about the facility’s illegal policies;
 - In partnership with the Dentons law firm, we won a case on appeal, reversing a lower-court’s refusal to enter an order of protection for our client, because she did not leave her abuser, and ordering the emergency relief our client sought; and
 - Our expungement work expanded dramatically, enabling us to serve 793 clients in 2021.

Resilience is not only about maintaining the status quo in the face of harsh challenges. It is also about having sufficient stability in your life to take steps to improve your situation. The vast majority of our clients have incomes below 150% of the federal poverty level. Unlike most, they do not have a safety margin to withstand new threats, such as illness, an unfair eviction notice, or a consumer fraud.

It is in these circumstances that we jump in and provide the protection our clients deserve. We make a difference by solving the client’s legal problem and giving them the stability to move on—to obtain a new or better job, to arrange more appropriate housing, or to find a more secure and supportive environment. These successful individual interventions result in a collective, positive ripple effect on low-income families and their communities.

The pandemic taught us that we are in this together. Securing equal justice for all and providing a helping hand for those in need will make the greater Chicago area a better place for all.

We hope you find this report informative and inspiring. Thank you in advance for reading these pages and considering being a supporter of Legal Aid Chicago! And if you are already one, we cannot thank you enough for everything.

Sincerely,



LEFT TO RIGHT: John N. Gallo, Chief Executive Officer & Executive Director, Robert Kriss, Board of Directors, Co-Chair, and Megan Poetzel, Board of Directors, Co-Chair



STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Every day, structural racism and other forms of injustice create barriers for people of color across our community. As an organization guided by the values of equity, inclusion, kindness, and respect, Legal Aid Chicago will not be neutral or complicit in the face of these injustices. **We believe that laws and legal systems must be equally effective for all who need their protection. This belief is foundational to our mission of equal justice for all.**

In recent years, we have intentionally placed *racial-centered equity issues* at the forefront of our work. Specifically, this year, we expanded our Medical Legal Partnerships and increased our expungement work to fight the racial disparities in our health and criminal justice systems.

In the workplace, we implemented a year-long DEI program, which helped deepen our collective understanding of implicit bias, privilege, micro-aggressions, and more. We also strengthened our 20-person DEI advisory committee, which is committed to intentional efforts that foster a diverse, inclusive, and equitable community. Additionally, in the coming year, we plan to engage our Board in specialized-DEI training (customized for Board members).

As we embark on the next phases of DEI at Legal Aid Chicago, we are committed to equitable systems that uplift the humanity of every person in our community and reflect the diversity of the people we serve. In the meantime, we will continue the fight for equal justice for all, both internally in our organization and externally in the courtrooms.

OUR PROGRAMS, OUR PEOPLE

FAMILY & SAFETY

Nothing is more important than a family's safety and security. Legal Aid Chicago supports the resilience of families across Chicagoland by applying legal remedies that help create safe, loving, and stable communities in which we all can thrive. These services include:

- **Orders of Protection and Other Protective Orders:** These orders protect clients who have been victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking, and elder abuse.
- **Divorce and Custody:** Spousal separation is never easy, especially for those who cannot afford an attorney. Legal Aid Chicago helps clients navigate these difficult situations, protecting our clients' stake in marital assets and securing custody arrangements that are in the child's best interest.
- **Child Welfare and Family Integrity:** We ensure that the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) does not take unwarranted actions that harm clients and unjustly damage their relationships with their children.
- **Disciplinary Actions and Special Education:** Our attorneys advocate on behalf of students, upholding their rights and ensuring their access to inclusive education.



Meet Sienna

DCFS wields enormous power in implementing its mandate to protect children. But what happens when DCFS misuses that power by accusing a loving parent of neglect after she becomes a victim of violence?

Hard-working mother Sienna has the answer: call Legal Aid Chicago. Years ago, Sienna split with her abusive ex-partner. Sienna only allowed him to return home after he had quit drinking, completed counseling, and maintained his sobriety for over a year. Unfortunately, he relapsed and lashed out violently when Sienna asked him to leave. Sienna immediately removed her children and called the police, doing everything she could to protect her family.

When Sienna discussed the incident at a doctor's appointment, her provider, a mandated reporter, notified DCFS. DCFS then decided to "indicate" the report, accusing Sienna of neglect and essentially blaming her for her own abuse. The results were as swift as they were unjust. Sienna lost her job as a child care worker and faced the horrifying risk of losing her children.

Legal Aid Chicago advocated for Sienna in the DCFS hearing, demonstrating the steps she took to ensure her children's safety. Sienna's former partner even attended the hearing to corroborate Sienna's story and confirm that she had removed the children from his presence. After hearing the testimony, the judge found that Sienna had not been neglectful. The report was removed from her file, and Sienna is no longer barred from the work she loves. Most importantly, she can wrap her arms around her children without the threat of separation. ■

HOUSING & HOMEOWNERSHIP

Many Chicago tenants and homeowners come to Legal Aid Chicago with cases that threaten the safety and stability of their homes, whether rented or owned. We defend their rights by:

- Preventing tenants from wrongful eviction and subsidized housing termination;
- Ensuring access to essential utility services, such as gas, electricity, and water;
- Challenging discrimination, enforcing tenant rights in subsidized housing, supporting clients with special needs, including survivors of domestic violence;
- Assisting homeowners with Transfer on Death Instruments, which allow them to bequeath their property without the cost, time, and stress of probate courts.
- Protecting homeowners against foreclosure;



Meet Jenna

Jenna was exhausted after a long day at work. She wanted nothing more than to put her feet up and enjoy some well-deserved relaxation. But when she tried turning the key to her front door, she realized the locks had been changed, and she could no longer enter her own home.

Jenna wasn't sure what to do. Though her rent payments had been occasionally delayed, she had always paid in full every month. "How did this happen?" she wondered. "Where will I go? What will happen to my things?" She called the police department, who contacted her landlord, but to Jenna's dismay, the landlord refused to acknowledge the situation. As the day came to a close, Jenna was left with no other option but to sleep in her car.

After learning about Jenna's situation, Legal Aid Chicago immediately filed a complaint on her behalf and represented her at an emergency hearing. Only the sheriff may change the locks to an apartment, after an Eviction Court judge enters an eviction order. The landlord ignored the Eviction Act entirely and engaged in an illegal lockout. The judge read the complaint and ordered the landlord to restore Jenna's possession of her unit by 5:00 PM. Thankfully, the landlord complied with the judge's order without contention.

Although Jenna was able to return to her home, many people in Cook County continue to face illegal lockouts. Fortunately, Legal Aid Chicago's dedicated attorneys have the skills and expertise needed to restore victims' access to stable housing—the most fundamental cornerstone of personal safety and resilience. ■



Meet Mona

Sometimes the smallest error can yield enormous consequences. Our client Mona discovered this fact first-hand when she called the city to ask about a wrongly-addressed water bill. To her surprise, the department employee she spoke with claimed that Mona was no longer the owner of her home. Apparently, the employee explained, Mona's West Side townhome had been sold to a private management company.

Justifiably alarmed, Mona called Legal Aid Chicago. One of our paralegals researched Mona's property title and discovered that her home's PIN (Property Identification Number) had been erroneously swapped with a neighboring unit's, which had been sold for delinquent property taxes. For her part, Mona had always diligently paid her taxes.

It turned out that the PIN error had already been addressed in Tax Deed Court. However, the water department did not receive a copy of the corrected deed. Our paralegal contacted the city and helped Mona fax over the corrected document. It took several weeks of advocacy and several calls, but the issue was eventually corrected. The water department finally corrected the PIN and unit numbers between Mona's property and the other property. Mona now receives normal water bills in her name each month and has no fear of losing her home, thanks to Legal Aid Chicago's assistance and intervention. ■

MONEY & DEBT

The road to financial security may seem straightforward, save money and pay down debt, but countless obstacles often stand in the way. Our attorneys work with clients to protect their income and assets from unfair collection and consumer fraud and assist clients with:

- Bankruptcy, fraud, payday loans, car titles, student loans, and debt collection;
- Driver's license restoration for debt-related suspension;
- Financial exploitation of older adults;
- Power of attorney for financial/property;
- IRS disputes, including innocent spouse relief, identity theft, collections, and more.



IMMIGRANTS & WORKERS' RIGHTS

It is vital to support vulnerable workers and immigrants, whose contributions make our communities stronger and more resilient. To this end, Legal Aid Chicago works to reduce barriers to employment and protect immigrants through a variety of services, including:

- Challenging all forms of discrimination and illegal retaliation in employment;
- Securing unemployment insurance benefits and wage claims;
- Seeking redress for wage theft under state and federal statutes;
- Protecting an employee's right under the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Family Medical Leave Act, and the Victims' Economic Security and Safety Act;
- Protecting the legal rights of migrant agricultural workers throughout Illinois;
- Obtaining immigration status for victims of crime, domestic abuse, and trafficking, and representing immigrants who have fled persecution;
- Providing comprehensive legal services for victims of human trafficking.

Meet Jose & Catalina

A few years ago, Legal Aid Chicago attorneys traveled to an Illinois shelter to meet a group of newly-freed labor trafficking survivors who had been held in the basement of their trafficker. Weary and disoriented, the survivors needed help understanding their rights and recovering from their traumatic experience.

There they met Jose and his daughter, Catalina. Although they had each other, the rest of their family still lived in Guatemala. After they were freed, Catalina called her mother every day, and Jose worried constantly about his wife and his two- and twelve-year-old sons. When their trafficker was criminally charged, they helped Jose and his daughter navigate court dates and testimony, but no amount of legal intervention could heal their loss, short of reuniting the family.

With this goal in mind, Legal Aid Chicago worked tirelessly to secure legal residency for Jose, Catalina, and their family by obtaining T-Visas. One of our paralegals advocated for early interviews with the U.S. Embassy and managed dozens of calls, emails, and document requests. Eventually, their T- Visas were approved, clearing a path to reunification.

On a rainy summer day, Legal Aid Chicago staff accompanied Jose and Catalina to O'Hare International Airport and waited for their family's arrival. As she stepped into view, Catalina finally saw the mother she had missed every day for the last three years. They fell into each other's arms, tearful and full of joy, as Jose held his now 5-year-old baby and hugged his tall and gangly 15-year-old son. The family is now together, strengthened by each other's love, with no fear of separation, thanks to the hard work of Legal Aid Chicago's team. ■

CLIENT
STORY

CLIENT
STORY

Meet Angelica & Bella

Legal Aid Chicago opens thousands of public benefits cases each year, and although each case presents unique challenges, trends often emerge. For example, Angelica (age 44) began receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability benefits in her mid-twenties, when she was diagnosed with schizophrenia. Recently, the Social Security Administration (SSA) claimed, without evidence, that her medical condition had improved and moved to suspend her SSI benefits. Legal Aid Chicago represented Angelica in federal court, arguing that the SSA made its decision, as it often does, without considering the previous finding of disability. The SSA agreed to a pause for further review and pay Angelica her monthly \$1,255 benefit.

A similar case involved 12-year-old Bella, who began receiving SSI when she was two, due to disabilities incurred at birth. When SSA claimed she was no longer disabled, a Legal Aid Chicago attorney filed an appeal in federal court, arguing that SSA failed to demonstrate medical improvement. Notably, Bella continues to experience hearing loss to this day. Again, after the briefing, SSA agreed to remand for further review and promised to pay Bella \$794 in monthly benefits, along with an additional \$24,500 in missing payments. ■

HEALTH, DISABILITY, AND BASIC NEEDS

Legal Aid Chicago focuses on accessing and protecting benefits for basic human needs, by providing holistic legal advocacy and assisting clients in obtaining:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits
- Medical Assistance (Medicaid, Medicare)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security
- Veterans Benefits
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Crime Victims Compensation from the State of Illinois



LONG-TERM CARE

The Legal Aid Chicago Long-Term Care Practice Group advocates for residents of assisted living facilities, skilled nursing facilities, and other long-term care facilities. Our staff assist long-term care residents, including senior citizens and people with disabilities, across a wide variety of legal challenges, including care issues, involuntary discharges, and Medicaid issues. We also investigate reports of elder abuse in long-term care facilities and work to educate residents, family members, facility staff, and the public about residents' rights.

Meet Beverly

Supportive Living Facilities allow elderly Illinois residents, especially those with disabilities and/or limited income, to live with dignity, privacy, and support. Beverly is a fiercely independent woman who lived in a supportive living facility until April 2021, when she was hospitalized. Following her recovery, her facility refused to allow her back home. This is an all-too-too common practice referred to colloquially as “hospital dumping” or “patient dumping.”

Legal Aid Chicago met Beverly after her involuntarily discharge, helped her appeal the decision, and convinced the facility to keep Beverly’s belongings safe while the hearing was pending. Meanwhile, Beverly was forced to stay in a nursing facility. There, staff repeatedly sent Beverly to the hospital in retaliation when she asserted her rights, especially when people disturbed her belongings. This was particularly traumatic for Beverly. Her sole desire was to resume an independent life in her own home.

Given Beverly’s primary motivation, to obtain new housing, our staff immediately set to work assembling documents for housing applications, helping Beverly enroll in online banking, and assisting her in applying for Social Security benefits. As soon as Beverly’s housing was approved, she left the nursing facility, walked into her new home, and never looked back. ■



“As soon as Beverly’s housing was approved, she left the nursing facility, walked into her new home, and never looked back.”

OUR IMPACT

2021 ORGANIZATIONAL STATISTICS

12,900+

Individual legal matters handled (includes brief advice only as well as extended representation).

115,000+

Hours of direct case activity logged on individual client cases.

22,000+

Total number of individuals impacted (including clients and their families).

\$19,000,000

Total financial impact in increased assets, increased income, and decreased debt.

\$13,000

Average financial impact per client.

65

Virtual clinics hosted in 2021, serving more than 430 clients.

1,100+

Individuals whose health was improved by accessing health and nutrition benefits, including Medicaid, SNAP, etc.

3,900+

Criminal records expunged or sealed (including both juveniles and adults).

1,300+

People who avoided homelessness by avoiding eviction/foreclosure or obtaining/retaining subsidized housing.

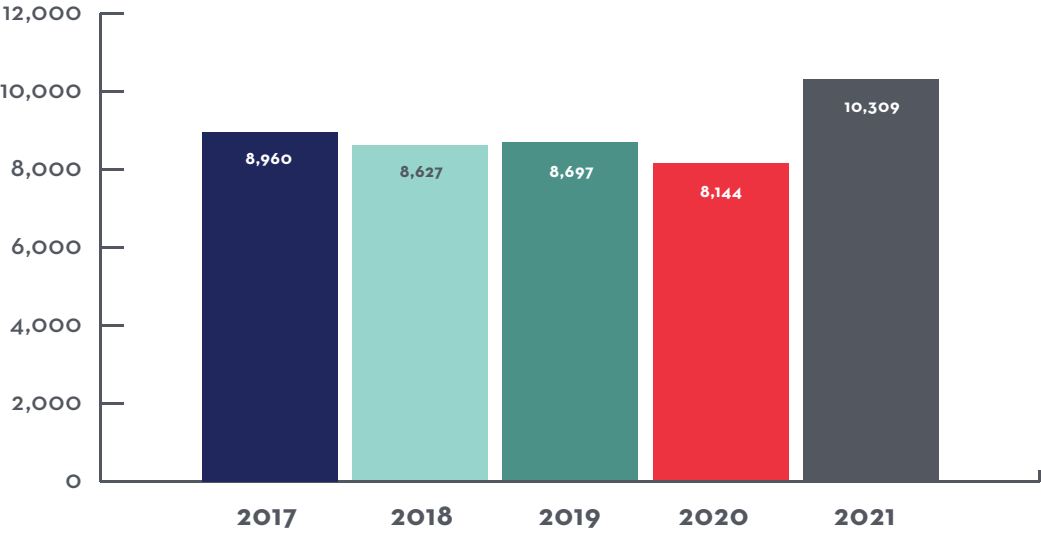
1,045

Individuals whose cases resulted in new access to employment and education.

1,000+

Children and adults whose safety was improved via orders of protection, restricted visitation, housing relocation, etc.

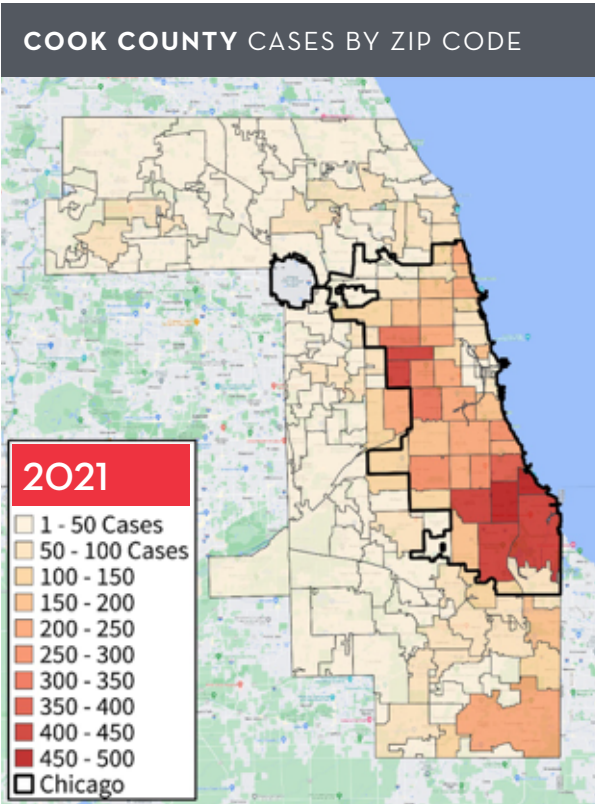
CASES OPENED EACH YEAR



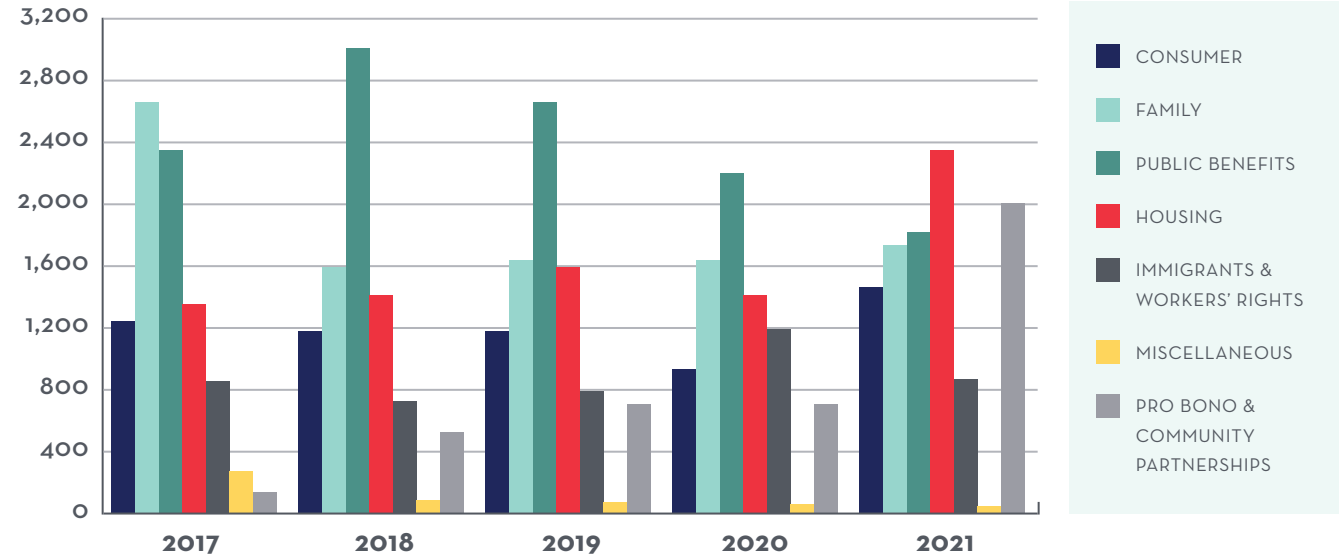
Legal Aid Chicago opened more cases in 2021 than in any of the past five years.

OUR GEOGRAPHIC IMPACT

The following maps represent the cases we accepted in 2021 across Chicago and greater Cook County. **Zip codes in red represent our most at-risk communities, including our south and west side neighborhoods, where low-income residents experience the most critical legal needs.**



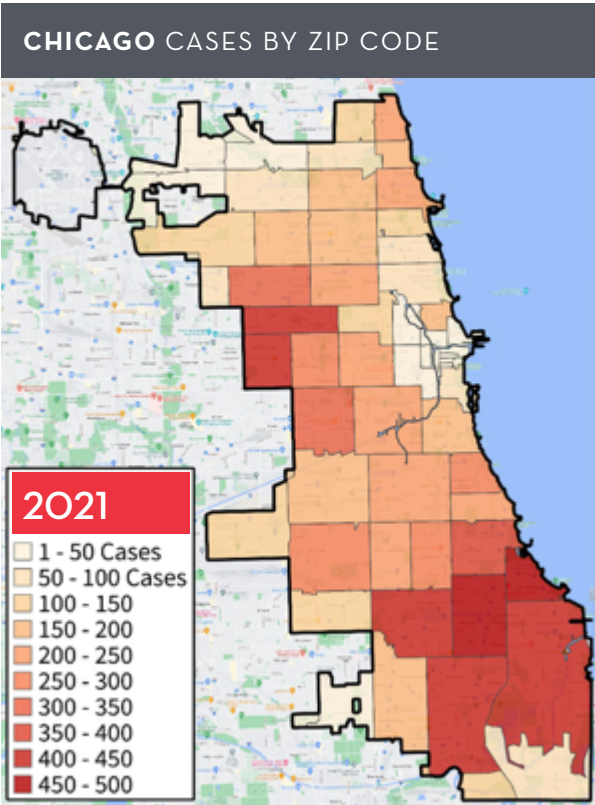
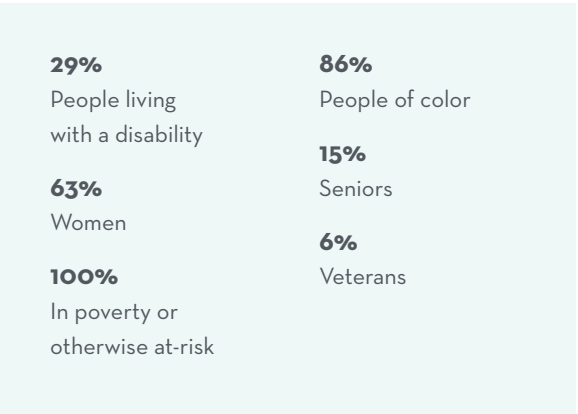
CASES OPENED BY PRACTICE AREAS EACH YEAR



Case types also shifted in 2021 to reflect our clients changing legal needs. In particular, housing issues increased dramatically. The work our Pro Bono & Community Partnerships group also greatly expanded, taking on hundreds of cases related to criminal records expungement/sealing.

CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2021, Legal Aid Chicago made equal justice a reality for tens of thousands of people across Cook County, with a particular focus on underserved populations. The following demographics represent clients whose cases were closed in 2021:





IT'S EASY TO MAKE A PLANNED GIFT TO LEGAL AID CHICAGO!

You can remember us in your estate plan (will and/or trust) and through many other vehicles, like naming us as a retirement plan beneficiary. We are creating a Planned Giving Society at Legal Aid Chicago, and we would love for you to be a member.

If you are interested in more information about making a planned gift, please contact:

Jen Miller, Chief External Relations Officer
jemiller@legalaidchicago.org
(312) 347-8381

If you have already remembered us in your estate plan, please let us know so we can count you as a member of our Planned Giving Society!

VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

Many hands help build resilient communities. Legal Aid Chicago is proud to partner with a team of pro bono attorneys, non-attorney professionals, and community leaders who volunteer their time to help meet the ever-growing need for legal services across Chicagoland. We are grateful to volunteers like **Larry Lieb**, who we are spotlighting this year.

Larry Lieb, of Chicago-based Tyger Forensics, is a nationally known expert in the field of computer forensics and electronic discovery. For over fifteen years, Larry has lent us his knowledge, helping identify, analyze, and report on electronically stored data and prepare information for litigation. For example, in a wrongful eviction case, Larry's metadata analysis can help gather supporting evidence from a landlord's email correspondence. He likewise assists with electronic storage issues, such as retrieving text messages from cellphones, preserving electronic information on opposing parties' computers, and much more. His efforts are a fantastic example of the ways in which a non-legal professional's expertise can make a deciding difference in our clients' legal outcomes.

Larry says, "I got involved in Legal Aid Chicago nearly two decades ago all because of my Mom, Roslyn, who worked as a public interest lawyer. I think of it as 'doing well by doing good.' I don't see a lot of non-lawyers doing pro bono work, so I love helping people in society be safe in their communities."

Legal Aid Chicago attorneys have relied on Larry's knowledge and skill time and time again in a variety of cases. By offering his consulting services at no charge, Larry has helped us provide the best possible legal services to our clients. He has worked tirelessly on some of our most factually complex cases and always puts the safety of our clients at the forefront of his mind.

We cannot thank Larry enough for his incredible dedication to our organization!

"I got involved in Legal Aid Chicago nearly two decades ago all because of my Mom, Roslyn, who worked as a public interest lawyer. I think of it as 'doing well by doing good.' I don't see a lot of non-lawyers doing pro bono work, so I love helping people in society be safe in their communities."



OUR 2021 DONORS

\$100,000+

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\$75,000+

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LIFETIME DONORS

Giving Last 10 Years: January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2021

\$1,000,000+

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Illinois Equal Justice Foundation
Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois
Sidley Austin LLP

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DONOR HIGHLIGHT



Chirag Badlani, Executive Director

The work of Legal Aid Chicago would not be possible without the support of its many wonderful donors and funders. This year, we are highlighting one of our longest-term private supporters: **Alphawood Foundation Chicago.**

Since its inception, Alphawood Foundation Chicago has partnered with organizations that focus on advocacy, legal aid, art and architecture, the LGBTQ+ community, and those living with HIV/AIDS, among other initiatives. We both share a vision of an equitable, just, and humane society. In the words of Chirag Badlani, Executive Director of the Foundation:

“Alphawood Foundation Chicago is extremely proud to have partnered with Legal Aid Chicago for the past 15 years, providing general operating grants to broadly support its mission of equal justice for all. As our community works to alleviate the effects of COVID-19 on our region’s most impacted groups, continued support for Legal Aid Chicago will advance its ability to serve even more individuals and families and make a greater impact on the greater Chicagoland community at large.”

Alphawood Foundation’s funding provides critical flexibility. Rather than being tied to a specific legal practice area, such as housing or public benefits, its unrestricted support helps all of our programs and services, including new initiatives. This allows Legal Aid Chicago to quickly adapt to disruptive events, like the pandemic crisis, and respond to our community’s most pressing needs.

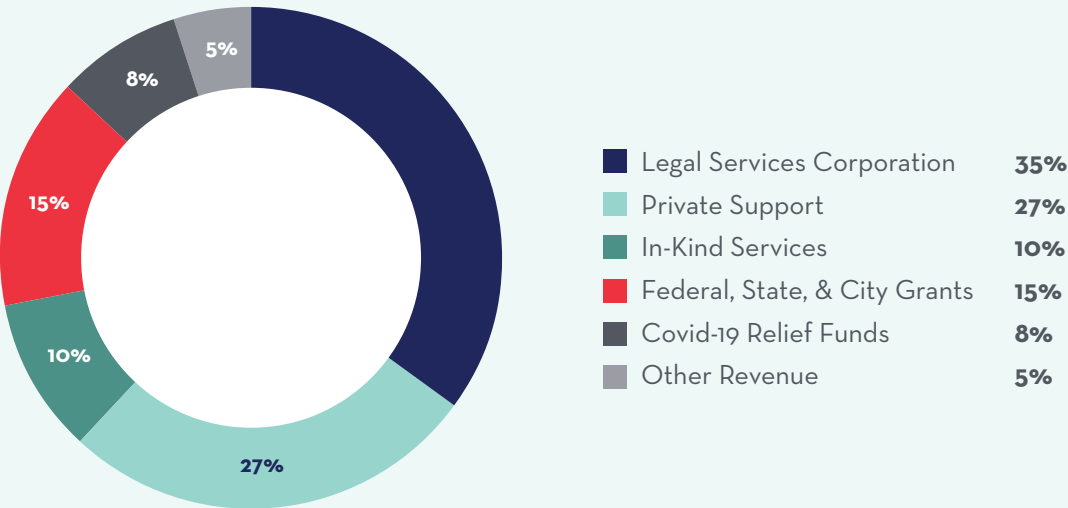
Legal Aid Chicago is grateful to Alphawood Foundation Chicago for its long-time partnership and support. Our clients, families, and our staff cannot thank you enough for everything!



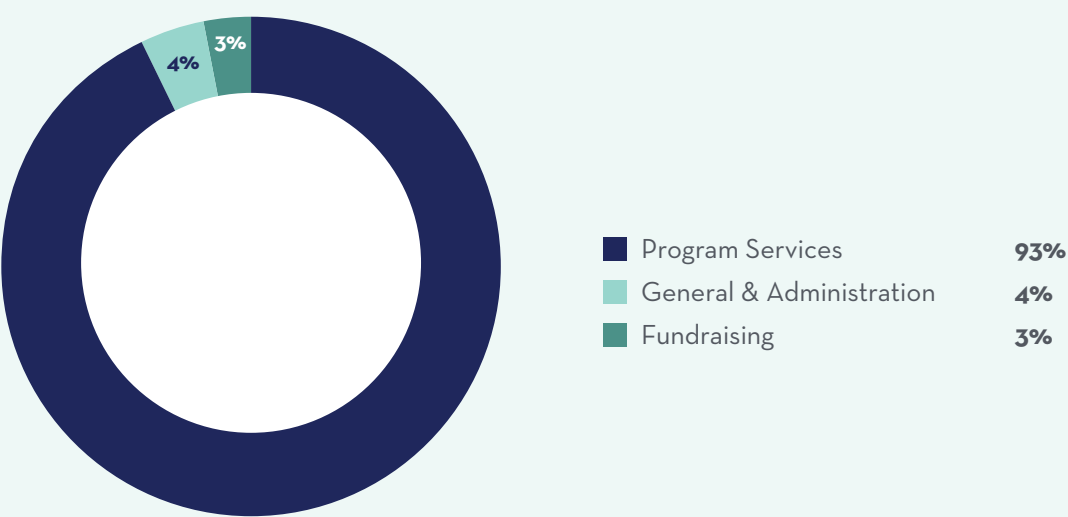
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FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

2021 TOTAL REVENUE



2021 TOTAL EXPENSES



CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
REVENUE			
Grants and contributions – LSC	\$ —	\$ 9,150,396	\$ 9,150,396
Grants and contributions – other government	—	3,973,306	3,973,306
Foundations, fellowships, and others	460,854	4,061,225	4,522,079
Contributions	2,298,962	179,627	2,478,589
COVID-19 Relief Funds	2,190,900	—	2,190,900
Special events	29,204	—	29,204
Less cost of direct benefit to donors	(25,922)	—	(25,922)
Cy Pres awards	255,692	—	255,692
Attorney’s fees	44,054	18,800	62,854
Investment return – net	496,561	4,138	500,699
Miscellaneous	338,518	—	338,518
Services, in-kind	2,518,014	171,613	2,689,627
Net assets released from restrictions			
Satisfaction of program restrictions	17,347,641	(17,347,641)	—
TOTAL REVENUE	25,954,478	211,464	26,165,942
EXPENSES			
Program services	21,250,366	—	21,250,366
General and administration	874,353	—	874,353
Fundraising	763,727	—	763,727
TOTAL EXPENSES	22,888,446	—	22,888,446
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	3,066,032	211,464	3,277,496
NET ASSETS			
Beginning of year	7,226,354	785,743	8,012,097
End of year	\$ 10,292,386	\$ 997,207	\$ 11,289,593

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS CONTINUED

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS	2021	2020	LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	2021	2020
CURRENT ASSETS			CURRENT LIABILITIES		
CASH			Fringe benefits and payroll withholdings	\$ 69,552	\$ 60,148
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 4,029,459	\$ 5,941,474	Accounts payable	126,069	71,363
Restricted cash - client deposits	456,544	152,355	Grants payable	159,219	138,056
Restricted cash - letter of credit deposit	500,000	750,000	Deferred revenue	142,625	1,884,670
Total cash	4,986,003	6,843,829	Deferred rent	487,726	459,848
			Accrued vacation expense	707,223	684,356
RECEIVABLES			Client deposits	456,544	152,355
Grants and contributions receivable	2,347,085	1,884,092	Total current liabilities	2,148,958	3,450,796
Miscellaneous	490,657	333,389			
Total receivables	2,837,742	2,217,481	NONCURRENT LIABILITIES		
			Loans payable	—	2,190,900
PREPAID EXPENSES	564,046	287,370	Deferred rent	2,279,814	2,767,541
			Total liabilities	4,428,772	8,409,237
INVESTMENTS	2,903,254	2,747,874			
Total current assets	11,291,045	12,096,554	NET ASSETS		
Noncurrent assets			Without donor restrictions		
INVESTMENTS	3,258,891	2,892,140	Undesignated	7,133,495	4,434,214
			Board designated endowment	3,158,891	2,792,140
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT			Total without donor restrictions	10,292,386	7,226,354
Computer equipment and software	287,954	287,954	With donor restrictions	997,207	785,743
Furniture and equipment	1,024,329	1,024,329	Total net assets	11,289,593	8,012,097
Leasehold improvements	3,269,328	3,269,328	Total liabilities and net assets	\$ 15,718,365	\$ 16,421,334
	4,581,611	4,581,611			
Less accumulated depreciation	(3,413,182)	(3,148,971)			
Net property and equipment	1,168,429	1,432,640			
Total noncurrent assets	4,427,320	4,324,780			
Total assets	\$ 15,718,365	\$ 16,421,334			

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AMBASSADORS HIGHLIGHT



Many of Chicagoland’s most engaging and philanthropic professionals, attorneys and non-attorneys alike, support Legal Aid Chicago by joining our Ambassadors Board (AB). Members include community-focused individuals who embody the spirit of justice and wish to challenge inequity in our legal system. Each ambassador develops a personal relationship with Legal Aid Chicago and acts as a community representative by raising funds and advocating for equal justice.

Amie Bauer, a litigation associate in the Chicago office of Kirkland & Ellis LLP, is an AB Co-Chair who has passionately served on the Board since 2017. Earlier in her career, she completed a Fellowship within Legal Aid Chicago’s Children & Families Practice Group, where she helped represent survivors of domestic violence.

“I love staying connected to Legal Aid Chicago,” Amie says, “Through my AB membership, I get to see the attorneys and paralegals I worked with at my Fellowship. I spend time with the interns and volunteer in the pro bono clinics. Even though I no longer work at Legal Aid Chicago, I feel like I am a part of the team.”

Joining the Ambassador’s Board, Amie says, has enriched both her personal life and her professional development. Early in her membership, other AB members invited Amie to join an intramural basketball league, where she made new friends and helped her team win several championships. On another occasion, a fellow AB member helped her revamp her resume, which helped her secure a position at the firm of yet another AB member.

Now, as an AB Co-Chair, Amie remains dedicated to fostering fairness and integrity in a system that often leaves people behind. “Like most attorneys, I value justice,” Amie said. “Unfortunately, not everyone has the same access to justice. Legal Aid Chicago works to level that playing field.”

Thank you to Amie and to all the leaders who serve on Legal Aid Chicago’s Ambassadors Board!

*“I love staying connected to Legal Aid Chicago,”
Amie says, “Even though I no longer work at Legal
Aid Chicago, I feel like I am a part of the team.”*

CHAMPIONS OF JUSTICE AWARD

This year, Legal Aid Chicago recognized the **Westside Justice Center** and **Resurrection Project** as our Champions of Justice Award recipients. As the administrative leaders of the Illinois Access to Justice Network, the Resurrection Project and Westside Justice Center seek to mitigate the devastating consequences of incarceration and deportation in vulnerable communities across Illinois. They are also one of the leading advocates for legal assistance in the Illinois legislature, successfully championing state budget increases that have helped expand access to holistic services and enact transformational change.



In 2021, Illinois Access to Justice (ILA2J) funded 61 organizations, including Legal Aid Chicago, and served clients in 95 Illinois counties. Across the network, ILA2J partners provided legal information and education to over 380,000 individuals, offered over 13,000 legal screenings, and trained more than 750 Community Navigators, who provide invaluable outreach and navigation assistance to Illinois' marginalized communities.



It was a great privilege to welcome staff from the Resurrection Project and Westside Justice Center at this year's Justice is Served

event. There, after graciously accepting the award, our guests gave remarks that inspired and reenergized all in attendance. In the words of Westside Justice Center's Executive Director, Tanya D. Woods:

"It is our charge and our challenge to break down, dismantle, and destroy systems that continue to oppress our people. This message, this journey, and this calling of liberating ourselves and liberating our people is one that we take very seriously ... We challenge you to continue to spread the word about what really happens when grassroots organizations come together; when we refuse to accept the narrative that we must fight one another for small pieces of the pie. So our mantra, on the daily, is to bake a bigger pie."

Thank you to Access to Justice, Westside Justice Center, and the Resurrection Project for supporting our work, bringing communities together, and nurturing partnerships that invigorate our fight for justice, equality, and dignity.

JEROLD S. SOLOVY EQUAL JUSTICE AWARD



The Jerold S. Solovy Equal Justice Award was created to honor Mr. Solovy's 50-year career as a practicing lawyer at Jenner & Block, which began in 1955. The prestigious award represents Jerry's fundamental belief that every person, regardless of means, deserves competent and zealous representation. Each year, staff at Legal Aid Chicago nominate an attorney whose outstanding leadership and service embody Mr. Solovy's commitment to public interest work.

The 2021 Solovy Award recipient was Benna Crawford, Director of Legal Aid Chicago's Children and Families Practice Group. Each of Benna's many nominations noted her steadfast dedication and innovative service. Her work has driven nearly every major local initiative to improve safety and achieve justice for survivors of domestic and sexual violence, and her exemplary leadership has made a profound impact in the lives of survivors in Cook County.

For example, within days of the pandemic shutdown, Benna created an Order of Protection Hotline to ensure that survivors saw almost no gap in access to the Domestic Violence courts. Benna then recruited staff and volunteer attorneys to draft and submit petitions for protective orders and created a process that enabled same-day emergency hearings via videoconference. When the Cook County Clerk's Office failed to deliver copies of Emergency Orders of Protection to survivors and law enforcement, Benna and her team filed a mandamus civil action, ensuring that this dangerous situation was rectified.

Benna is a selfless and inspiring leader who always finds a way to meet the needs of survivors. In her acceptance speech, Benna spoke about the ways the pandemic forced us all to redefine what it means to be safe:

"I am only as safe as those around me. Safety is not individual when it comes to domestic violence, and we can't tolerate violence in our communities just because it happens behind closed doors. **Those of us who are lucky enough to call our homes 'safe' have a responsibility to help those who can't.** I feel so lucky to work at Legal Aid Chicago surrounded by so many dedicated, passionate, and skilled advocates. This award really belongs to not just me, but the group of attorneys who do our domestic violence work. Everyone deserves to be safe, and I just feel so privileged to get to do this work with all of you."

Congratulations Benna!



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LEGAL AID CHICAGO STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

The following staff represent our most longstanding members of our community. Thank you for your many years of service at Legal Aid Chicago!

30+ Years

Irma Amaro
James Brady
Denise Davis
Mary Diaz
Shelia Fernandez
Evelyn Gonzalez
Vivian Hessel
Timothy Hufman
Amanda Palacios
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Mona Green

Daniel Lindsey
Kate McCartin
Matthew Monahan
Beverly Nunnally
Cynthia Sadkin
Kate Shank
Piper Taggart
Lisa Palumbo
Michelle Weinberg

10+ Years

Kulsum Ameji
Kari Beyer
Dennericka Brooks Lewis
Ashley Fretthold
Yolanda Madrigal
Amy Marinacci
Desiree Mathews-Plonowski
Peter Mural
Justine Rodriguez
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5+ Years

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Dolores Cole
Suzanne Courtheoux
Benna Crawford
Mischa Fleishman
Nykia Fuller
Talissa Guerrero
Myka Held
Kathryn Huber Kenyon
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**Represents Legal Aid Chicago's leadership team as of the printing of this report.*

LEGAL AID CHICAGO PLUS BCLP EQUALS A FABULOUS FELLOWS PROGRAM!



For some time, the Chicago offices of **Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner (BCLP)** had wanted to join forces with a well-known legal aid organization, creating a Fellows Program for recent law school graduates who were interested in doing pro bono work. BCLP found a true partner with Legal Aid Chicago, and the BCLP Fellowship Program was born.

Faisal Delawalla, a BCLP partner who leads Recruitment, says, **“We envisioned a two-year fellowship where attorney(s) would work 50% in a traditional law firm setting and spend 50% at Legal Aid Chicago, thus giving back to the community by directly working with clients and Legal Aid attorneys.”**

Katherine Vega is one of two inaugural Fellows this year, who started in October. At BCLP, Katherine assists with general litigation matters. At Legal Aid, Katherine works in the Immigrants and Workers’ Rights Practice Group.

Katherine says of her experience, “Being a Fellow has already taught me a lesson in empathy. I have learned that society does not always afford our clients the respect and dignity they deserve. I am working hard to become more empathetic every day by seeing firsthand how immigration issues affect people and understanding the types of traumas that result. This has made a better lawyer and a better person.”

Kristopher Fernandez, a second year Fellow, splits his time between the firm’s general litigation practice and with Legal Aid’s Public Benefits Practice Group. Kris reflects, “There is tremendous value working for the public interest. Seeing a case through that improves a person’s life is incredibly gratifying, especially once you see the difficulties they would have in attempting to navigate the public benefits space without an attorney. I am bringing this knowledge to all of my work at BCLP.”

Brent Vincent, a BCLP partner who helped create the program, reflects, “We are getting better, more compassionate lawyers now with this innovative model, and hopefully, more firms will follow our lead.” Brian Sher, a BCLP partner who helped conceptualize and make the program a reality, agrees, “I see attorneys who are rooted in pro bono as a new breed of ‘super lawyers.’ Clearly, it is a huge win for everyone involved.”



REMEMBERING BARBARA RICHARDSON

A TIRELESS ADVOCATE FOR JUSTICE

In 2021, we sadly lost our dear friend and colleague, Barbara Richardson. In her 30 years with Legal Aid Chicago, Barbara served in several different roles as an advocate for justice. She began as a staff attorney in our West Side Neighborhood Office in 1990, eventually moving into the role of Senior Attorney in the Consumer Practice Group, where she served as our go-to utilities guru. She was often able to “wave a magic wand” to resolve our clients’ problems through connections with gas and electric companies and community groups. Many families had heat in winter because of her efforts. Barbara also led our union for two terms and chaired our Civil Rights Task Force. One of her recent clients summed up the feelings of all who knew Barbara when she wrote: “You are amazing, and I want to thank you because I believe you went above and beyond ...

Thank you Ms. Richardson for everything.”



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