

HUDSON VALLEY JUSTICE CENTER

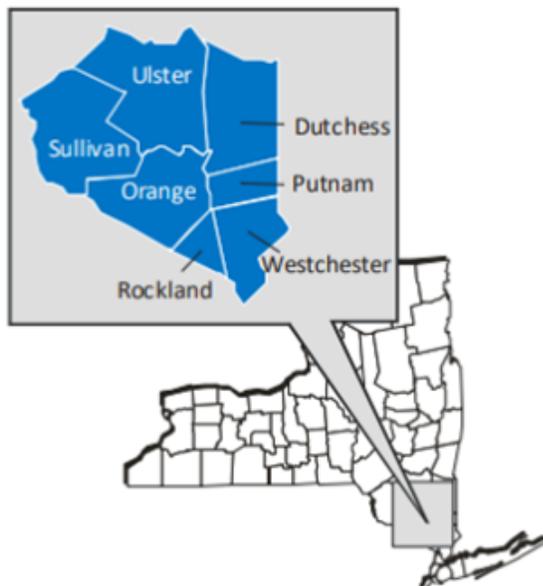
2022-2023



OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

During 2022, HVJC experienced major growth and our capacity to provide free legal services increased substantially. We hired several new staff members, increasing our total staff to 15 by year end. We opened a new office in Newburgh NY, expanding our physical presence beyond Westchester County and providing more direct representation for Orange County residents. We also relocated our White Plains office to a larger space to accommodate our growing staff.

From April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023, we handled 736 legal matters, nearly 200% more cases than the previous year, benefitting the lives of 2,052 individuals and family members. Cases handled covered a variety of practice areas, including housing, immigration, family law, health matters and consumer issues. Our target population includes individuals living at or below 200% of the poverty level, regardless of immigration status. We specifically seek to service non-citizens ineligible for assistance from LSC funded programs like Legal Services of the Hudson Valley, as well as individuals who are conflicted out or turned away due to program capacity. We are the only agency that provides comprehensive representation in eviction matters for this population across the Hudson Valley. As the number of eviction filings steadily increases toward pre-pandemic highs across the Hudson Valley, we are seeing a shift in our client base as we become the agency of last resort for a growing number of citizens and non-citizens alike. Approximately 51% of clients served in the last year were non-citizens, compared to 73% during the preceding year. Clients with Limited English Proficiency made up 325 of those served, with nearly all of those clients requiring Spanish translation to access services.



Population Served: Low Income Populations

Total Funding: \$1,383,064.21

Total IOLA Grant: \$70,000.00

Staffing Full Time Equivalents:

- Total Staff: 15
- Paralegals: 5
- Lawyers: 9
- Other: 1

From April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023, we completed 1,082 intakes, up 25% from the previous year. More than 75% of callers sought legal assistance with housing matters. Many clients faced unaffordable arrears and had little to no likelihood of preserving their tenancies. Despite those challenges, we prevented 78 evictions, preserving tenancies for 47 individuals and family members. In addition, our legal staff delayed 48 evictions, giving 133 individuals and their families time to find alternative housing arrangements.

In addition to our housing work, we promoted family stability and economic independence for 5 victims of abuse and their families by securing legal status under VAWA and securing 9 new child support orders. During the reporting period, we secured \$300,695.66 in total financial benefits for our clients, including \$11,112.00 in lump sum awards in child support matters and \$2,700.00 in monthly child support awards. We secured \$286,883.66 dollars in savings for our clients resulting from vacated judgments and payments avoided including rent abatements. Avoiding these judgments was especially critical for tenants facing evictions, who were then free to utilize their money for relocation costs rather than debts. In addition to the financial benefits listed above, our ERAP program facilitated access to funding for rental and utility arrears for eligible tenants struggling to stay housed after COVID related financial hardship.

DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES: CASES

Case 1:

Marie came to HVJC after being served with eviction papers. She lived in the same home for many years but fell behind on rent during the Pandemic. After receiving an ERAP payout, the LL raised the rent by several hundred dollars, refused to renew her lease, and insisted she pay in cash without providing receipts. Marie is a non-citizen whose 4 children live with her and rely on her for support. Her youngest toddler has special needs. He is unable to eat solid food and requires specialized care. His father was recently deported and has been unable to send financial support to the household. Marie must work long hours to earn sufficient wages to support her family but most of her wages go toward appropriate care for her children while she works.

After months of advocacy, Marie secured a placement at a special school for her youngest son. If evicted, Marie feared she would have to leave the district and lose his placement. HVJC accepted the case and advocated for enforcement of the ERAP provisions as well as protections under the Tenant Safe Harbor Act.

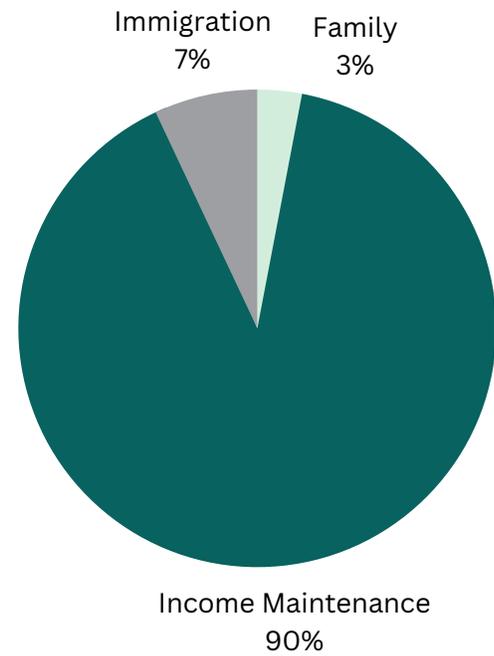
After much negotiation, her LL agreed to a 16 month lease and another 16 month renewal; LL agreed to a provision requiring good cause for refusal to renew and a very reasonable payment plan for remaining arrears, allowing Marie and her children to remain in the home where they have lived since 2018.

Case 2:

Amy is a single mother caring for 3 children under the age of 9. She has struggled over the years financially and has been in and out of shelter with her children. She fell behind during the pandemic following a very difficult pregnancy with her 4th child. Amy is a non-citizen who does not speak English and lacked job protection when health complications prevented her return to work. Her child was born with multiple medical issues and was subsequently placed in hospice care. When her LL filed a non-payment proceeding, Amy tried unsuccessfully to secure assistance from ERAP and other programs but could not show income ongoing or provide correct documents. Amy then learned her children tested positive for lead poisoning due to conditions in the apartment. Although she initially came to HVJC during the pandemic and the eviction moratorium, financial assistance could not have covered all of her arrears, which spanned over 28 months. Amy’s goal was to move to the Bronx to be near her family for support but she feared a judgment against her would jeopardize future placement in subsidized housing.

HVJC negotiated with the LL and secured a full waiver of her \$55,000 rental arrears in exchange for an expedited move out date. We then assisted Amy with securing temporary shelter near her family.

2,052 people benefitted from 736 legal cases closed



Cases by Legal Problem Area

OTHER SERVICES: OVERVIEW

HVJC engages in a range of outreach activities to raise public awareness and increase access to justice. We collaborate with schools, churches, food pantries, parent groups and other service providers to provide outreach. We distribute brochures to local businesses and provide legal information at tabling events, food pantries, local courts, and libraries. We also present ‘Know Your Rights’ trainings for community members and tenant groups.

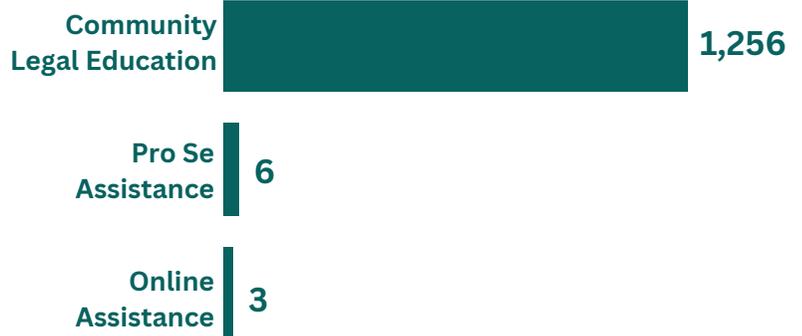
From April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023, HVJC participated in 22 outreach events reaching 1,256 community members. Events included 9 presentations on legal rights, 8 in person and 1 virtual, and 13 community events where legal brochures and information were provided. Staff attending outreach events have paper intakes and can conduct conflict and eligibility checks in the field as needed.

In July 2022, we participated in Alianza Latina’s Hispanic Heritage Festival at Kensico Dam Park in Valhalla, New York. Our staff members provided legal information to community members, handed out 92 brochures, and accepted paper intakes for follow up.

In March 2023, HVJC received a referral from a local State Senator’s office regarding an apartment building in terrible disrepair. We went to the building and gave a presentation to 10 building residents on Tenants Rights and available legal options when a landlord refuses to make repairs. Several tenants reached out for additional assistance following the event.

**1,265 People
Benefitted from
Services Other
Than Direct
Legal Services**

Number of People Benefitted from Other Services



OTHER SERVICES: TECHNOLOGY

During the reporting period, HVJC completed an internal review of our office technology systems and determined a plan for streamlining use and increasing effectiveness. In February 2023, we contracted with JustTech to complete an overhaul of our LegalServer site, create additional grant specific reporting modules, and conduct agency wide training for new and existing staff. In October 2022, we hired Mannix Marketing to redesign our website and install required software to monitor and track downloadable resources. Once the site is live, they will conduct monthly monitoring to ensure all resources provided are ADA compliant and the site is protected against cyber-attacks. The site should be live by Mid-May 2023. In preparation, we upgraded to a new larger remote server with enhanced security protections to accommodate our growing staff.

OTHER SERVICES: TRAININGS

We maintain a contract with the Practicing Law Institute to provide full on demand and live access to training for our staff. We regularly provide in house training on substantive legal issues and case management. Staff are encouraged to participate in training related to their practice areas and we cover costs for any approved CLE courses. With the recent addition of several newly admitted attorneys to our staff, we set aside funding for an intensive skills training for all new staff and are seeking quotes from providers. Currently, we are completing plans for an in house NITA Trial Skill Training for all staff. In November 2022, we held a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training for all staff utilizing a facilitator from the Racial Equity Center in White Plains, NY.

We also encourage staff to participate in local coalitions and task force meetings and take leadership roles where possible to promote professional growth. We currently participate in the Statewide Right to Counsel Movement, the Westchester Right to Counsel Coalition, the Westchester Family Task Force, New York Immigration Coalition, Westchester Steering Committee, the Westchester Eviction Prevention Network, and the Hudson Valley Immigration Practitioners group.

PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

We have experienced tremendous growth over the last year and have focused our resources on getting our new staff members trained and increasing our internal capacity. We have not secured dedicated funding for a volunteer program but we are working in collaboration with the Elisabeth Haub School of Law to establish paid internship and externship opportunities for law students beyond just participation in the Pro Bono Scholars program.

We also continue to work with a retired law professor from the Elisabeth Haub School of Law who ran the law school clinical program and is working with us to secure funding for an in-house volunteer attorney program.

1 Attorney volunteered 10 hours

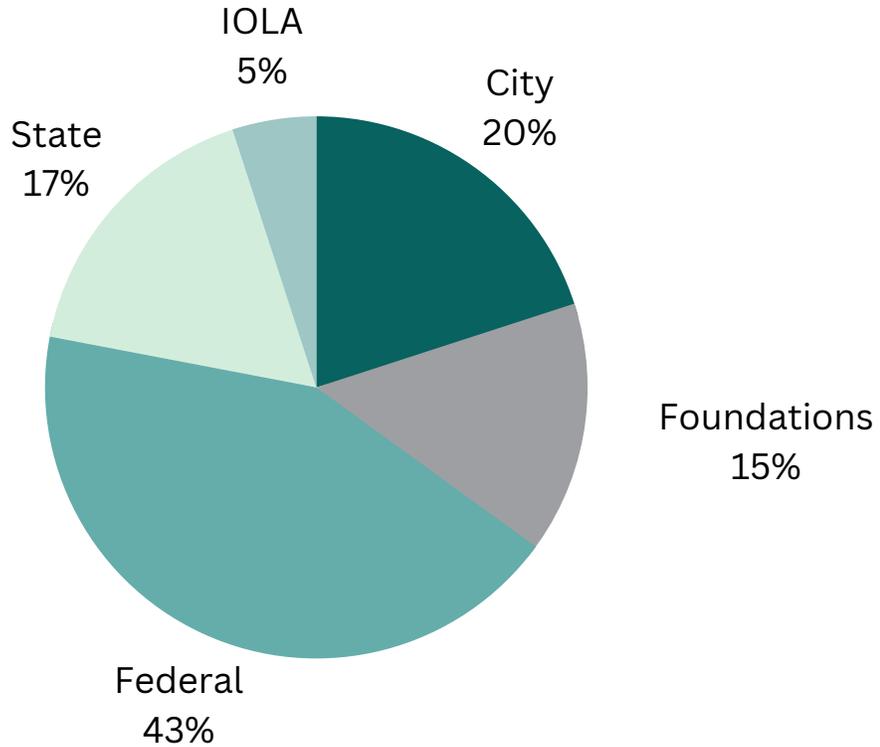
SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

HVJC collaborates with several immigrant service groups and providers of free civil legal services in the Hudson Valley. We work closely with Legal Services of the Hudson Valley on two significant eviction prevention projects, including as a subgrantee on OTDA's ERAP Representation Grant, focused on providing eviction prevention services to tenants throughout the Hudson Valley region. In addition, we are collaborating with Legal Services of the Hudson Valley and Community Voices Heard on a HUD funded Eviction Prevention Project serving underserved communities in Dutchess County with a focus on the City of Poughkeepsie and surrounding areas. The project aims to engage with tenant groups to increase community involvement and seek out creative and collaborative means of addressing the needs of unique urban and rural communities that historically lack meaningful access to justice.

In addition to our specific projects, we participate in Westchester's Eviction Prevention Network and regularly receive referrals from members including Catholic Charities, CLUSTER, Mount Vernon United Tenants, Westchester Residential Opportunities, and the Bridge Fund.

SOURCES OF FUNDING

Hudson Valley Justice Center received **\$1,383,064** in total funding this past year



Federal Funding	\$587,676
City and County Funding	\$279,559
State Funding	\$230,732
Foundations	\$208,625
IOLA Grant	\$70,000
Other Funding	\$6,472