

**FRANK H.  
HISCOCK LEGAL  
AID SOCIETY**

2022-2023

# OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

Thanks in large part to the help of 2022-2023 IOLA funding Hiscock Legal Aid Society (HLA) was again able to resolve a large number of civil cases and address the critical legal issues affecting low-income residents of our Central New York community. Our casework focuses on the essentials of life and includes representing clients in custody, domestic violence, divorce, child support, immigration, housing, and unemployment insurance benefit matters. There continues to be a high need for civil legal services, and our staff has continued to work hard to meet this need while dealing with high caseloads. During this funding year we closed 2,990 civil cases, benefitting 7,129 individuals. The practice area breakdown of the 2,991 closed cases is as follows: 839 family law; 878 immigration; 1,151 housing; and 122 unemployment insurance benefit.

The end of New York States eviction moratorium has led to the overall increase in housing cases handled by our agency, compared to what we saw before and during the beginning stages of the pandemic. In 2021-2022, during the moratorium, we handled 692 housing cases and in 2022-2023, after it ended, we handled 1,151 of those cases. That is over a 60% increase in cases handled last year and a direct example of the critical role played by civil legal services in promoting community well-being and stability in changing conditions.

We are also proud to have another year of having handled a large number of immigration cases, closing 878 in the past year. Thanks in large part to ongoing funding from the New York State Office for New Americans we are able to help address the dire need for immigration legal services, including the hundreds of Afghan and Ukrainian refugees who have been resettled in our community.



**Population Served: Low Income Populations**

**Total Funding: \$4,577,202.18**

**Total IOLA Grant: \$602,931.69**

**Staffing Full Time Equivalents:**

- Total Staff: 45.20 • Paralegals: 1
- Lawyers: 27.95 • Other: 16.25

Also, providing legal services to domestic violence survivors has been a long-standing priority of ours, and we have represented well over 7,500 survivors since 1999, including 549 in the last year alone. IOLA funding plays a critical role in our legal assistance to domestic violence survivors.

**Dollar or other benefits realized by low income people as a direct result of our efforts:** This year HLA secured \$588,674.77 in back awards and settlements and another \$81,037.84 in monthly benefits, and also helped clients avoid owing \$895,318.15 in back awards and settlements and \$290.00 in monthly benefits. Thus, HLA clients saw a total benefit of \$1,483,992.92 in back awards and settlements and a total monthly monetary benefit of \$81,327.84 in the last year.

**Increased access to justice or improvements in the administration of justice:** Given the ripple effects that the pandemic continues to have, HLA's on-going focus over the last year has been on providing essential legal services to clients in as safe and efficient a manner as possible. We conducted outreach efforts to ensure that tenants and homeowners were aware of the end of the protections put in place to promote housing stability and that Afghan and Ukrainian refugees, along with other non-citizens, were aware of the legal assistance available to them. We continued to concentrate our efforts on those most in need of legal representation in Onondaga County, including those facing housing, family, domestic violence, immigration, or unemployment issues.

**Significant improvements in our program's capacity to deliver services:** HLA has taken great strides in the last year to improve our capacity to deliver services. We have increased our staffing to meet the demand for services, and have also focused efforts on improving our retention and recruitment of staff. We also continue to leverage technology to provide services as efficiently as we can. When possible we continue to use virtual platforms such as Microsoft Teams and have ensured that every staff member has webcam capabilities, and has access to safe spaces where clients who do not have the capability at home can come participate in virtual court appearances. We continue to use Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone system so staff can utilize their office number no matter their location, ensuring greater connectivity to clients. We continue to accept client intakes by phone and email, and have a brief online intake form on our website. We are always working to efficiently deliver high-quality services.

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# DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES: CASES

## Landlord/Tenant – Stay of Eviction:

This past year we represented a client that was facing an imminent order of eviction. Our client, who is severely disabled, was unable to leave the rental property by the date the court had ordered.

Our office got involved and was able to stay enforcement of that order pursuant to the Real Property Actions and Proceedings Law 753. Our office filed an emergency stay of eviction arguing serious hardship. In a rare occurrence, the court allowed our client to stay in the property in exchange for reasonable payment to the landlord.

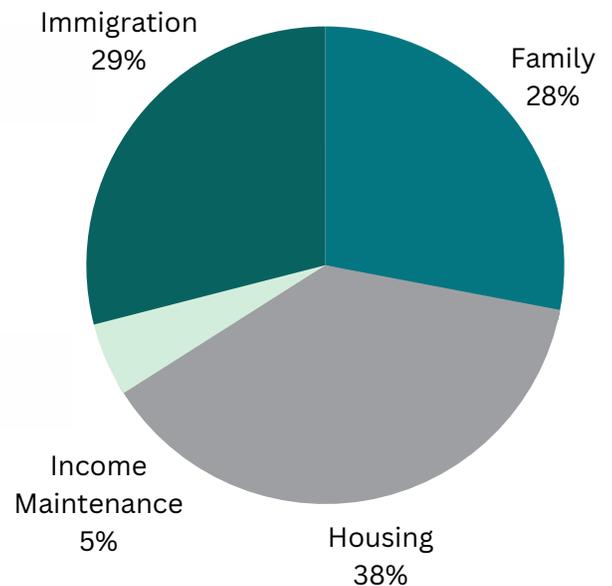
This win meant a lot to our client who needed the time to find a place that had the accessibility measures she needed.

## Immigration – VAWA Relief:

Our office represented two brothers who entered the United States as minors and who were victims of domestic violence at the hands of their stepmother. While immigration was claiming that the father had entered into a fraudulent marriage in order to disqualify the family from relief, we were able to argue and prove that the brothers were victims pursuant to the Violence Against Women Act.

In a case that took a little over 5 years of processing, immigration finally approved their I-360, Petition for Special Immigrant in November of 2022 and the brothers were able to seek their green cards.

**7,129 people benefitted from 2,990 legal cases closed**



**Cases by Legal Problem Area**

# OTHER SERVICES: OVERVIEW

This past year HLA has conducted 113 workshops and clinics benefitting 650 people, made 59 presentations to the community that reached 642 people, and participated in 104 collaborations with a total of 1,374 other people. Some of the locations where we held workshops or clinics and where we made community presentations include, but are not limited to: Westside Learning Center; Jervis Public Library; Office for New Americans Opportunity Centers; InterFaith Works; Catholic Charities; BOCES; Toomey Residential; The Center; Workers’ Center of CNY; YWCA of Mohawk Valley; and the Utica Public Library.

In addition to providing direct representation and community outreach HLA serves as a major source of referrals for residents of Onondaga County and the surrounding region. Since we have been in existence for over 73 years many clients call us for help no matter their legal issue, and while we strive to provide direct representation to as many clients as people there are some areas of the law we do not handle or some people who are not eligible for our services. Each client who calls is screened for eligibility by a well-trained and knowledgeable Law Assistant, who opens a case in our case management system if the caller is eligible or, when possible, makes an appropriate referral if the caller is not eligible for our services. In the 2022-2023 year HLA made 3,005 referrals

In April of 2022 we partnered with Volunteer Lawyers Project of Central New York to host a legal workshop/clinic for Afghan evacuees who had been resettled in Central New York following the withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan. Staff attorneys from each organization and volunteer lawyers from the community came together to screen these new members of our community for immigration relief and legal representation.

**1,292 People  
Benefitted from  
Services Other  
Than Direct  
Legal Services**



## OTHER SERVICES: TECHNOLOGY

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HLA has continued to enhance and refine our data collection and reporting capacity in our case management system LegalServer through IT development and ongoing supervision of data entry.

We have made great strides in technological capacity which has increased our capacity and efficiency and which allows us to offer services in whichever medium is best for our clients. All staff members now have webcams to allow for virtual meetings via Microsoft Teams with coworkers, community partners, and client and our we have a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone system, allowing all staff to be reachable at their HLA office line no matter where they are located. We have made investments in laptops and docking stations and other mobile technology to ensure that staff can provide high quality services regardless of whether they are in office. Our website has been upgraded to be mobile-friendly, allowing potential clients and others to access our website to see our services and complete a brief intake form from any device.

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## OTHER SERVICES: TRAININGS

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Training and professional development are essential components of HLA. Our Management Teams take these obligations seriously, and make sure to provide professional, ethics, diversity and inclusion, anti-oppression, and cultural competency training to our staff. We maintain an Employee Portal on SharePoint, where staff can easily access policies, procedures, resources, and prior training materials. We also hold the following on-going intra-office meetings to allow for subject matter training and to foster professional growth: Program meetings; Practice Group meetings; Management Team meetings; and annual professional development and performance review meetings.

HLA also maintains an agreement with the Onondaga County Bar Association (OCBA) that allows all HLA staff to attend OCBA CLEs in our areas of practice at no charge. HLA also provides all staff with access to video CLEs available through the Practising Law Institute, online Sexual Harassment Prevention and Anti-Discrimination training through Chubbworks, and will pay for staff to attend NYSBA and other trainings and CLEs on an individual basis, as appropriate.

# PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

While Volunteer Lawyers Project of Central New York continues its role as the main source of volunteer implementation in Onondaga County we at HLA continue to recruit and develop interns, externs, pro bono scholars, and volunteers to aid in our representation and outreach.

We actively recruit interns and externs from the Syracuse University College of Law, participating in on-campus interviewing programs and speaking to externship classes. We also have a history of hosting pro bono scholars from Syracuse University College of Law. These interns, externs, and pro bono scholars provide vital support to our housing, immigration, and unemployment insurance benefit practice areas, increasing our capacity to assist those in need.

We also maintain an ongoing relationship with the Citizenship and Civic Engagement Program at Syracuse University, and have been the host for student placements for many years now. These undergraduate students assist us with outreach and community engagement, promoting our work and services to the wider community.

Our website also includes a portal through which people interested in volunteering can submit their information, and we have hosted volunteers who have reached us through this portal.

In 2022-2023 HLA hosted 21 volunteers who received training and experience and who provided support and assistance to our agency and programs.



**14 Law Students volunteered 3,176 hours**

**7 Other Volunteers volunteered 526 hours**

Each  icon is equal to 2.1 volunteers.  
 Law Students are represented through the Green Figure.  
 Other Volunteers are represented through the Grey Figure.

# SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

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Hiscock Legal Aid maintains close working relationships with many agencies and community organizations in Central and Upstate New York, particularly in the areas of domestic violence, immigration, and housing. We accept case referrals from all such organizations and also utilize the resources and expertise of these partner agencies to provide the best possible assistance to our clients.

We are also members of the Housing and Homelessness Coalition of Central New York, which includes agencies from Onondaga, Oswego, and Cayuga Counties working to reduce, and hopefully eliminate, homelessness. In our role as a primary provider of representation to tenants we coordinate closely with the City of Syracuse, Legal Services of Central New York, Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York, and Volunteer Lawyers Project of Central New York to ensure that we are representing as many tenants as possible, with the goal being that every tenant in need of legal assistance can obtain it.

Our Foreclosure Prevention Project also works closely with Home HeadQuarters, Inc. to provide housing counseling and legal services to homeowners facing foreclosure.

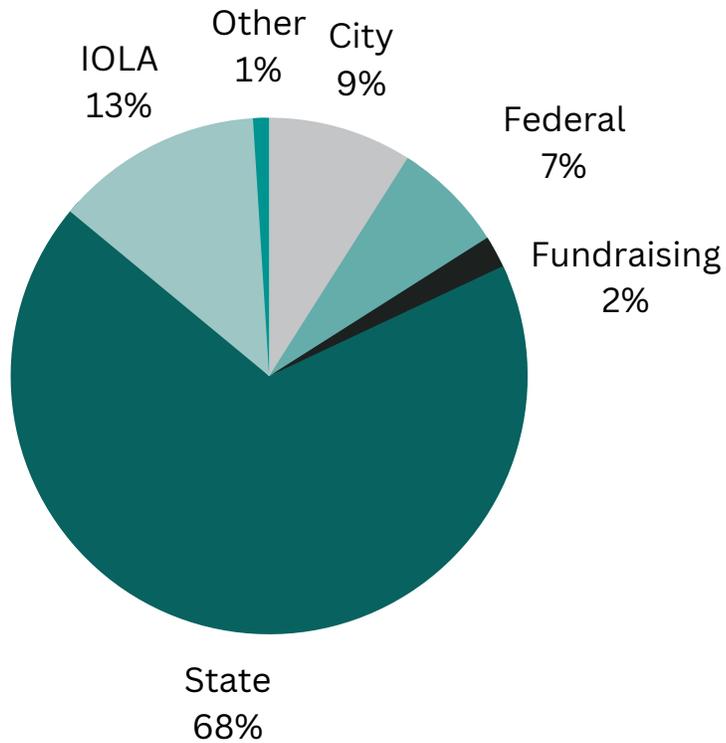
Our expanded Immigration Program serves an 18 county region of Upstate New York, and works closely with community organizations throughout this large geographic region. Volunteer Lawyers Project of Central New York is a subcontractor of ours on a portion of our funding from the Office for New Americans, and we collaborate closely with them to provide high quality immigration legal services throughout the region. We received additional funding from Catholic Charities, InterFaith Works, and the Office for New Americans specifically to serve Afghan evacuees resettled in Central New York. Serving such a large geographic also requires maintaining strong relationships with other agencies, including The Center, Joint Council for Economic Opportunity of Clinton and Franklin Counties, Catholic Charities Northside CYO, InterFaith Works, Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency, and many others.

We also continue to collaborate with the Syracuse University College of Law, speaking to classes about our work and hosting interns, externs, pro bono scholars, volunteers, and newly admitted attorneys. We also have a relationship with the Falk School of Social Work at Syracuse University and the ability to host a social work student who can assist clients with accessing needed services.

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# SOURCES OF FUNDING

Frank H. Hiscock Legal Aid Society received **\$4,577,202** in total funding this past year



<b>State Funding</b>	<b>\$3,128,312</b>
<b>IOLA Grant</b>	<b>\$602,932</b>
<b>City and County Funding</b>	<b>\$402,058</b>
<b>Federal Funding</b>	<b>\$311,066</b>
<b>Fundraising</b>	<b>\$85,796</b>
<b>Other Funding</b>	<b>\$47,038</b>