Overview of Achievements, 2018-2019

Hudson Valley Justice Center’s (HVJC) target population includes low income and poor non-citizens who do not have the necessary legal status to access legal services through other providers. Between April 1, 2018, and March 31, 2019, the Hudson Valley Justice Center’s two full time attorneys and Executive Director handled 83 cases, receiving legal results that benefitted 210 low-income individuals and families. Most matters involved eviction defense and immigration, but HVJC also assisted clients with consumer, family, and domestic violence matters, among other things. Some significant achievements include achieving citizenship for 6 clients, defeating evictions for 4 clients in private and public housing, and securing Special Immigrant Juvenile Status for a young man who witnessed a gang murder in Guatemala.

This reporting period saw major staffing changes at the agency when the Executive Director and sole staff attorney resigned in June 2018. As of October 2018, HVJC was again fully staffed and returned to our original mission – providing free legal representation, advocacy, and advice to low income immigrants who cannot receive services under LSC regulations.

In the last 5 months, HVJC made significant improvements to our delivery of services beginning with the implementation of LegalServer as our case management system in November 2018. With this new technology, we can provide more efficient services and track accurate information about our effectiveness. HVJC can now track and evaluate more metrics that were previously possible with the use of excel spreadsheets. An example is financial benefits to clients; in this reporting period we helped two clients in child support matters secure ongoing child support payments totaling more than $3,150 in monthly benefits and entitlement to child support arrears of $6,744.43.

Population Served: Low Income Population
Area Served: 7-County Area of SE New York
Total Funding: $350,260
Total IOLA Grant: $74,224
Staffing - Full Time Equivalents:
- Total Staff: 3.00
- Lawyers: 3.00
Direct Legal Services
210 people benefitted
80 legal cases closed

Breakdown of cases by Legal Problem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Cases Closed</th>
<th>80 cases</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total People Benefitted</td>
<td>210 people</td>
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</table>

-Family Law/Immigration: Maria and her husband have lived in the US for 14 years and have two US citizen children in common. Neither parent has legal status and they hired an attorney to assist them. They paid the attorney thousands of dollars to file Cancelation of Removal applications for them. After the birth of the parties second child, Maria’s husband began drinking heavily and became physically and emotionally abusive toward her. For many years, she suffered in silence because he threatened to take the children and have her deported, believing that custody was his means of remaining here. Maria finally reached out to the courts after her husband called Child Protective Services and alleged she was abusing her children. Fearing her husband would be deported if she called the police about the abuse, Maria chose instead to obtain a ‘Refrain from Order of Protection’ from the Family Court that restricted her husband from being intoxicated in the home or committing any further offenses against her. When her husband violated the order in front of the parties’ child, Maria finally decided to call the police and he was arrested. The criminal court issued a full stay away order of protection and directed that her husband have no contact with her. After the arrest, Maria started receiving calls from the parties’ immigration attorney instructing her to drop everything and return to her husband or her immigration status could be denied. The attorney relayed messages from her husband that he was a good man, that he was sorry, all in violation of the criminal order of protection. Around that time Maria found HVJC and we began taking steps to stabilize her life. She was awarded sole legal and physical custody of the children through family court and also received an order of support. In addition to securing custody, HVJC helped her to enforce her order of child support and defend against her husband’s attempts to reduce his obligation. After reviewing what had been done so far in the immigration case, HVJC determined that neither Maria nor her husband would have qualified for relief under that section of the law and would both face deportation if it was completed. HVJC is currently assisting Maria with applying for a U Visa so she can remain in the United States with her children.
Number of People Benefitted by Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Number of People</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48 people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Legal Education</td>
<td>48 people</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Other Legal Related Services: Overview

As part of our effort to increase access to legal services, we have engaged in community legal education events or ‘Know Your Rights’ presentations. Our goal is to increase knowledge of individual rights while increasing public knowledge of the services we can provide to clients. We find the most effective means of conducting these seminars is in person at locations and with groups that already provide services to immigrants so that they feel safe gathering. Since HVJC became fully staffed in October 2018, we have conducted 4 presentations targeted at educating the community and 48 people attended. Our recent presentations included:

- Intro to Immigration Law at Purchase College: HVJC’s Director of Litigation and Staff Attorney presented to group of college students about basic immigration rights with a focus the status of DACA.
- Tenant’s Rights Presentation at 116 School Street in Yonkers: HVJC’s Director of Litigation and Staff Attorney presented to a group of tenants at their building in Yonkers to inform them of their rights in a pending condemnation case.
- Tenant’s Rights Presentation at St. Mary’s Church in Yonkers: HVJC’s Director of Litigation and Staff Attorney met with tenants of a condemned three-building complex in Yonkers on New Main Street to provide general information on their rights as tenants and how to preserve their right to return in ETPA units.

Other Legal Related Services: Examples

HVJC’s advocacy and negotiation prevented the displacement of an entire building in Yonkers. After purchasing an 8 unit building at 116 School Street that was regulated by the Emergency Tenant Protection Act, the landlord neglected the boiler during frigid winter months. Once alerted of the problem, the Yonkers Department of Buildings determined that the building was dangerously cold, and threatened to condemn the building. Condemnation could benefit the landlord, who would then be able to charge higher rent for new vacancies when the order was lifted and potentially even higher rent if any improvements were made to the building. HVJC attorneys advocated with the Yonkers Department of Buildings, including the commissioner, urging the department to use its power to sanction the landlord in an effort to compel him to repair the boiler. HVJC also ensured that the tenants were aware of their right to preserve their ETPA tenancy by paying a nominal amount of money to DHCR during any time which they were removed from the building. HVJC also drafted an Article 7A petition (a procedure in which aggrieved tenants can appoint an administrator to manage a landlord-neglected building) in preparation for the condemnation. However, after pressure from HVJC, the building department, and the media, the landlord ultimately repaired the boiler and further court proceedings were avoided. HVJC’s advocacy helped prevent a condemnation that would have displaced more than 20 residents in 8 rental units. Instead the residents were able to spend the holidays at home with their families.
**Significant Collaborations**

- The most significant collaboration during the reporting period was with Legal Services of the Hudson Valley (‘LSHV’). As the largest provider of free civil legal services in the Hudson Valley, LSHV has multiple offices in the surrounding 7 counties and a long standing reputation as a provider of free legal assistance. As a Legal Services Corporation grantee, LSHV is prohibited from representing non-citizens in all but a few very limited circumstances. LSHV refers all matters involving ineligible non-citizens to our office as well as any cases in which a conflict prevents LSHV from providing services. Additionally, LSHV has a paralegal who sits in the Yonkers City Court several days a week and we have arranged for him to screen housing cases for undocumented clients who are then referred to HVJC.

- While we have not made formal arrangements with other IOLA grantees in the area to avoid duplication of effort, our agency specifically seeks to address the unmet needs of non-citizens in a broad range of civil legal matters. The majority of the clients we serve are non-citizens, rendering them ineligible for legal services and other benefits afforded to citizens.

**Technology**

In October 2018, HVJC contracted with PSI Technologies to provide HVJC with a case management through Legalsaver. Since our site went live in November 2018, Legalsaver has significantly improved our ability to provide efficient and effective services to our clients. It has also significantly improved our ability to maintain data and accurate records critical for reporting to funders and for evaluating our effectiveness. We would not have been able to make these improvements without funds from IOLA.

**Other Services**

HVJC relies on regular training, staff development and supervision to ensure that our clients receive high quality legal services. All staff are encouraged to seek out conferences and trainings that they believe will benefit their development. We have negotiated with the Practicing Law Institute to gain access to all their training at no cost so that we are not limited in the trainings our staff can attend based on our small budget. We also seek out opportunities to participate in local coalitions and task force meetings where some leadership responsibilities are available. During this reporting period, HVJC joined forces with several other non-profits to form a working group to discuss bringing the “Right to Counsel” to Westchester and to encourage a multi-disciplinary approach to addressing community needs. Notable trainings this reporting period included the Executive Director and the Director of Litigation attending the 2018 Legal Assistance Partnership Conference and our staff attorney attending the two day 51st Annual Immigration and Naturalization Institute.
Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

Due to our small staff and limited budget, we have not been able to develop a program for training and recruiting Pro Bono Attorneys. We have worked with volunteers through the Americorp Vista Volunteer program and during this reporting period we were selected to host another VISTA in the fall of 2019. We are also hosting a pro bono scholar from Pace Law School who started in March 2019. In his first month with HVJC, our pro bono scholar assisted on several cases and executed plans for a fundraising event we are holding in May 2019. With increased funding we anticipate for this fall, HVJC will be working with a retired attorney to develop a volunteer program to allow us to utilize volunteer services on a broader number of cases.

Pro Bono Statistics

Law Students: 1 Volunteer 150.50 Hours

Sources Of Funding

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iola Grant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foundations</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$350,260</td>
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