Overview of Achievements, 2018-2019

During the reporting period, the Albany County Bar Association recruited, trained, and scheduled volunteers to see clients at the Albany County Family Court Help Center. ACBA organized and facilitated (8) Help Center Training CLEs, reaching (26) attendees, resulting in an additional (9) consistent volunteers who, along with previous volunteers donated a combined 397 hours of their time to the Help Center, which allowed the Center to be open on 152 days. They saw 465 clients and benefited approximately 1,150 people. These achievements are the result of extensive advertising to, networking with, and recruiting from the ACBA membership.

In August ACBA representatives including then President Hon. Christina Ryba met with Administrative Judge Breslin (Third Department), District Executive Beth Diebel (Third Department), Albany County Family Court Judge Gerald Maney and Albany County Family Court Chief Clerk Nala Woodard met to discuss how to better communicate to court administrative staff and the public about the Help Center. This resulted in a number of public outreach materials being created to assist the intake staff at the Clerk’s window in directing appropriate litigants to the Help Center. ACBA’s Coordinating Attorney was allowed to meet and discuss the program with many of the court’s intake staff face-to-face, and provide them with Help Center promotional materials to pass out to potential clients.

Population Served: Low Income Populations

Area Served: Albany County

Total Funding: $72,500

Total IOLA Grant: $72,500

Staffing - Full Time Equivalents:

- Total Staff: 0.85
- Lawyers: 0.85
Direct Legal Services

1150 people benefitted
465 legal cases closed

Breakdown of cases by Legal Problem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Cases Closed</th>
<th>465 cases</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total People Benefitted</td>
<td>1150 people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Typical Cases and Client Outreach

As the Help Center deals only with family law, the typical cases seen in the Help Center by our volunteers are overwhelmingly associated with child custody, visitation, and support. Client outreach for the Help Center is done primarily by the court staff at the family court clerk’s window. As pro se petitioners request forms and assistance at the window, the staff refers individuals to the Help Center, located just down the hall. When the Help Center is not open, clerks often give litigants information about the hours that the Help Center will be staffed in the future, so clients may return for assistance from an attorney.

The ACBA also began an additional public-facing outreach campaign. The first step was to make a public version of the Help Center schedule available for viewing online. Help Center fliers were created and posted in visible areas of the Family Court waiting room, and around the Courthouse. After some discussion with the court intake staff, postcard-sized handouts were created for the intake staff at the window to hand out to prospective litigants. ACBA also provide the court staff with Help Center sticky notes that Judges, Clerks, intake staff at the Clerk’s window and others could easily pass out to litigants.

The Help Center intake is done by the volunteer attorney who will be assisting the client. The attorney explains the limited scope of the service he or she will be providing, and has the client sign two copies of a non-engagement letter; one for the client to keep and one to be retained by the ACBA. The attorney records basic but anonymous information for grant reporting purposes about the client’s area of need, gender, and any referrals the attorney makes to other legal service providers or community agencies.

The ACBA has also networked with community groups such as Mediation Matters, the Albany Public Library, Albany Law School’s Assistant Dean for Diversity and Inclusion, the Homeless and Travelers’ Aid Society, Veterans Housing Services, and Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless to make more agencies aware of the existence of the Help Center and the possibility of making referrals.
Other Services...

Number of People Benefitted by Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>165 people</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pro Se Assistance</td>
<td>165 people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trainings

The ACBA gave (8) Help Center Training CLEs during the reporting period, with a total of (26) attendees. The Help Center Training CLE includes a basic review of the substantive family law necessary to assist litigants with petitions, Help Center policies and procedures, and a segment on domestic violence presented by a representative from our partner organization, The Legal Project. The Legal Project’s section gives a brief overview of what is considered domestic violence, how to recognize and screen for domestic violence issues in a client’s case, and situations in which a domestic violence victim should consider not filing a petition. During the reporting period, the written training materials were updated to include additional information about domestic violence screening, and about when a volunteer should strongly consider not filing a petition in a domestic violence case.

The Coordinating Attorney works, observes, and learns alongside the Pro Bono Committee co-chairs and committee members, many of whom are seasoned family law practitioners or family court administrators and Judges. While developing a curriculum for CLEs and providing education to volunteers, the Coordinating Attorney has a multitude of development resources who further her knowledge of family law and practice, and how it relates back to the Help Center program. ACBA also holds approximately 25 live CLEs a year, available for free to staff members including the Coordinating Attorney. The Coordinating Attorney also attended NYSBA’s biennial Legal Assistance Partnership Conference in November 2018.

Technology and Other Innovations

The ACBA used technology to more efficiently reach potential Help Center clients and attorney volunteers during the reporting period. The Help Center schedule was embedded into the ACBA website and is viewable by the public at www.albanycountybar.com/help center. As the schedule changes often, all promotional materials reference the website, so that clients are viewing the current version of the calendar. The Help Center Training CLE was also recorded with help from Albany Law School. The recorded version was available for prospective volunteers to watch via USB, and redeem the credits using a code in the presentation.
Collaborations With Other Service Providers

The ACBA has made many efforts to promote the volunteer opportunities of our partners. We have partnered with the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York (LASNNY), The Legal Project, Prisoners’ Legal Services of NY, and the Rural Justice Center. We have worked together to provide in-person networking at each and every Albany area event (not only those held by ACBA) as well as a social media campaign directing ACBA’s followers to partner websites. These efforts have increased the visibility of all pro bono opportunities across Albany County. In our weekly e-newsletter (the “e-blast”), ACBA takes care to promote every event and CLE training for our partner organizations. This often involves maintaining constant contact with the organizations to gather information, logos, fliers and the like. The ACBA Coordinating Attorney also writes articles for the “Pro Bono Corner” of the ACBA’s monthly newsletter, highlighting available pro bono opportunities at our partner organizations and advertising their events.

The ACBA collaborated with LASNNY to hold a Landlord/Tenant Training CLE to prepare attorneys to volunteer with LASNNY’s Attorney for the Day program in Albany City Court. This was attended by 25 interested attorneys, the ACBA’s Coordinating Attorney, and the Chief Clerk of the Albany County Family Court. These guides became available for distribution during this reporting period.

The ACBA also finished a collaboration with LIFT Family Legal Center in NYC that began in the previous reporting cycle to develop self-help materials for Albany Family Court pro se litigants. In a collaborative effort between LIFT and the ACBAs staff and Pro Bono Committee, Legal Resource Guides LIFT had produced for downstate and Fourth Department courts were reviewed, edited and adapted for use in the Albany County Family Court. The guides underwent several rounds of revision by a Family Court Judge’s Clerk, a prominent and experienced Albany family law attorney, the ACBA’s Coordinating Attorney, and the Chief Clerk of the Albany County Family Court. These guides became available for distribution during this reporting period.
Advocacy Projects

ASC is currently working on challenging regulations redefining the term “public charge” that would bar a very large number of clients (including all HIV-positive clients) from pursuing immigration relief. "Public charge" - is a legal determination that can block an individual's path to permanent residency (i.e., obtaining a green card). Under U.S. immigration law, a person seeking a green card through a family relationship must show that they "are not likely to become a public charge," which under current law is someone who is unable to support themselves and would likely depend on government benefits for income.

Historically, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has only excluded applicants based on continuous receipt of cash benefits or long-term institutionalization at the government’s expense, so as not to "inhibit access to non-cash benefits that serve important public interests." A draft of proposed changes to the law shows that the government is now seeking to redefine "public charge" to include mere "use" of any public subsidy, rather than "dependency." Otherwise eligible applicants would be unable to adjust their status to lawful permanent resident (i.e., green card holder) if they or their U.S. citizen family members access any subsidies from a range of government programs and benefits, including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); housing and shelter benefits; and non-cash Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits. This rule would essentially operate as a de facto ban on HIV-positive individuals seeking permanent residence in the U.S. Immigrants with disabilities or pre-existing medical conditions such as HIV/AIDS would be required to show proof of unsubsidized health insurance -- i.e., no Medicaid, ADAP, or Obamacare, thus creating a back door to a reinstatement of the HIV immigration ban.

ASC is leading an effort among legal services providers in the HIV community to contest these changes. ASC is collecting client stories that would show the effect of such regulation in anticipation of litigation when the rule goes into effect. ASC also prepared materials relating to Statutory and Legislative History on Public Charge in anticipation of litigation.
Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

The legal services provided at Albany County Family Court Help Center are given entirely by volunteer attorneys. The Coordinating Attorney on staff at ACBA recruits, trains, and schedules the volunteer attorneys for shifts at the Help Center, but all Help Center clients are seen exclusively by volunteers. ACBA held (8) Help Center Training CLEs, reaching (26) attendees, resulting in an additional (9) consistent volunteers who, along with previous volunteers donated a combined (397) hours of their time to the Help Center, which allowed the Center to be open on 152 days. They saw 465 clients and benefited approximately 1,150 people. These achievements are the result of extensive advertising to, networking with, and recruiting from the ACBA membership.

Pro Bono Statistics

Attorneys: 39 Volunteers 397 Hours

Sources Of Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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