Overview of Achievements, 2020-2021

During the grant period, Legal Service NYC handled 45,783 individual cases that benefitted more than 100,924 people. We obtained $9,630,986 in retroactive benefits and $675,102 in monthly benefits ($8,101,224 annualized). Our work saved taxpayers $154,996,285. Our systemic litigation and advocacy helped over 2,509,720 low-income New Yorkers.

Examples of our accomplishments include:

Securing Essential Public Benefits During the Pandemic - The need for public assistance skyrocketed in New York City due to the pandemic. In response, LSNYC created, launched, and operated a Covid Emergency Public Benefits Project which helped people to apply for and secure public benefits like cash benefits, SNAP, Medicaid and more. The project provided low-income New Yorkers with advice about eligibility, helped eligible families submit online applications to HRA, and guided people through the process of obtaining needed assistance. As a result of our Covid benefits work, we were able to provide legal assistance in over 4,840 public benefits cases benefiting over 10,595 clients and their family members.

Securing Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Protecting Worker’s Rights - Legal help with UI and other wage replacement programs have been vital during the pandemic. Since the beginning of the pandemic, through representation we have secured an average of $14,411 per client in UI matters. We also helped people obtain UI by giving them information about their rights, which changed rapidly during the pandemic, and by educating our partner organizations. We advocated with the Department of Labor to secure more access and litigated significant issues. For example, in July we won a significant victory for tens of thousands of app-based drivers: a federal judge ordered the NY Department of Labor to immediately pay Uber, Lyft, and app-based drivers the full amount owed to them.

Protecting Immigrants During the Pandemic - In April 2020, the pandemic was raging in New York City and, astonishingly, the immigration court system continued to demand in-person filings despite the extreme Covid risks that the practice unnecessarily created. After informal advocacy failed, we commenced litigation to halt the practice. Soon after we sued, the previously intransigent court system reversed itself and both allowed required filings by email and canceled filing deadlines in all cases in which hearings were postponed. In addition to protecting vulnerable New Yorkers, we issued a practice advisory and have advised lawyers around the country who have filed cases to postpone hearings due to Covid concerns.

Safeguarding Tenants During the Pandemic - The pandemic and resulting economic dislocation caused widespread fear of homelessness and the need for different kinds of legal support and guidance as the laws, policies, programs, and practices rapidly and repeatedly changed. LSNYC retooled our response to provide people seeking help with immediate phone access to attorneys and have made rapid training and practice adjustments to account for the quickly and constantly changing rights and obligations of tenants during this period.

Population Served: General Low Income Population
Area Served: New York City Metropolitan Area
Total Funding: $117,979,688
Total IOLA Grant: $3,937,500
Staffing - Full Time Equivalents:
- Total Staff: 616.34
- Lawyers: 362.90
- Paralegals: 131.20
- Others: 122.24
1. Ms. P worked as a building superintendent for almost six years and was never paid for a single hour. Her only “compensation” was being allowed to store the cans and bottles she collected for income at the building. After five years of work, the landlord asked the client if she wanted to move into a basement apartment in the building and she accepted. Two months later, the landlord started eviction proceedings against her claiming she was a squatter. LSNYC sued the landlord in federal court for violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act and New York Labor Law and negotiated a settlement. We secured $120,000 for Ms. P, plus a waiver of any use and occupancy fees owed to the landlord. This was a life-changing outcome for a New Yorker who suffered hardship and exploitation.

2. Mr. S came to us for assistance in his Social Security disability case after appealing pro se to federal court and obtaining a remand for a new hearing. Mr. S had a long, steady work history, but began experiencing excruciating leg pain that rendered him unable to work. His doctors could not find a cure to remedy the underlying condition, and instead were able only to treat his extreme pain. Presented with unusual medical evidence, the original hearing judge had failed to properly evaluate the severity of Mr. S’s condition. We compiled an additional 750 pages of medical documentation to show the debilitating impact of his medical condition on Mr. S’s day-to-day life. At the new hearing, we aided Mr. S in describing his extreme pain, its negative effects on his ability to work, and his dependence upon his wife to care for his basic needs. The judge ruled for Mr. S and awarded him more than $109,000 in retroactive benefits, and $1,476 in ongoing monthly SSD benefits.
Other Services...

Number of People Benefitted by Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>56,716 people</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Legal Education</td>
<td>20,476 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Se Assistance</td>
<td>335 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Assistance</td>
<td>35,905 people</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Other Legal Related Services: Overview

LSNYC conducts hundreds of community education programs each year. From April 2020 through March 2021, our community education and outreach, pro se assistance, and online outreach assisted 56,707 people. Last March, LSNYC immediately began Covid-related community education. We started with unemployment insurance and wage replacement programs, creating a UI application fact sheet for community members and advocates and beginning a series of training workshops to be delivered via videoconference with a variety of partners. We distribute Know Your Rights (KYR) materials as widely as possible, especially through easy-to-access online videos, presentations, and toolkits. During the grant period, we created many new KYR materials, webpages, social media posts, and flyers related to Covid, including vaccine eligibility; state, federal and immigration updates; domestic violence; virtual court appearances; tenants’ rights; mortgage and tax lien sales for homeowners; economic impact payments; unemployment insurance, wage replacement and paid sick leave; education and student loan payments; food, health and mental health resources; veterans rights, and more.

LSNYC constantly strives to reach people and populations who may have special access challenges through multiple methods. These include limited English proficient (LEP) New Yorkers, LGBTQ people, veterans, low-income working clients; people with disabilities; domestic violence survivors; and senior citizens. Additionally, we operate three Legal Hand sites to help community members learn about their legal rights and connect with essential resources.
Examples

UI, Wage Replacement and Public Assistance Rights Legal Education in Response to Covid

In response to the unprecedented increase in unemployment because of the pandemic, LSNYC immediately launched Covid-related community education. We started with unemployment insurance benefits (UIB) and wage replacement programs, creating a UIB application fact sheet for community members and advocates, and a series of training workshops to be delivered via videoconference with a variety of partners. Because of these trainings, more than 5,600 attendees have obtained critical UIB, PUA, and public assistance benefits education. Just a few examples of these include:

- A training on Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), lease negotiation tips, and the CARES Act for small businesses at the “Made in NYC Covid-19 Town Hall”
- A training on UIB and PUA for New York City Housing Authority tenants
- A webinar on PUA for small business owners at the Brooklyn Navy Yard and a similar training for members of the cinematographer’s union
- A South Bronx Virtual Town Hall co-sponsored by Councilmembers Gibson and Ayala to discuss the impact of Covid on public benefits, housing and small business

Housing Rights Legal Education for Tenants During the Pandemic

We provided numerous trainings on housing rights, the state and federal rent moratoriums, special rental assistance programs, and the NYC “hardship declaration” process during the pandemic. These trainings have prevented homelessness by helping tenants stay in their homes and low-income homeowners to avoid foreclosure. Just a few examples include:

- A Covid housing rights training for clients of Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration
- A “Covid and Legal Services” housing rights and predatory lending townhall sponsored by Councilmember Lancman of Queens
- A Know Your Rights workshop on evictions, housing court, benefits, and public charge co-sponsored by CASA and LIFT in the Bronx
- A presentation on how to fight eviction during Covid and succession rights with the Visiting Nurse Service and the Chinatown Community Center.
Trainings

LSNYC operates the Justice Learning Center (JLC), the largest and most comprehensive CLE poverty law education program in the country. We present virtual and in-person classes, which are attended by about 5,000 participants annually, including LSNYC staff, public interest attorneys and pro bono attorneys. Our course curriculum includes substantive law, practice skills, ethics, management and diversity, equity, and inclusion courses. We offer more than 150 trainings annually, and have included 80 new on-demand courses this year alone. We expanded our on-demand offerings to give our growing number of advocates the opportunity to attend more courses or view courses at their own pace.

In response to the pandemic, the JLC has made major adjustments to our curriculum. In addition to the ongoing substantive trainings in areas including Housing, Immigration, Family, Government Benefits, Foreclosure, Economic Development, LGBTQ Rights, HIV Advocacy, Consumer, Education and Employment, the JLC provided many new trainings to address the needs of advocates as they were managing the new challenges of the pandemic. One example is “Rebuilding Education Supports During the Pandemic.” Other trainings included “Ethics of Remote Practice During Covid-19” and “ Appearing Virtually in Housing Court” to help us address this new mode of practice while keeping pace with the threat of numerous evictions and other legal issues. As the pandemic intensified, the JLC also offered a series of workshops to address mental health. They were designed for frontline staff to assist clients who were experiencing heightened levels of stress and trauma.

Pursuant to LSNYC’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan, the JLC also offered training for managers on “Debiasing the Hiring Process.” The JLC also offered several workshops on discrimination among client communities in different practice areas, such as “Language Justice: The Rights of LEP Clients.”

Our staff members also present and attend many trainings around the country, including at the Partnership Conference, NLADA’s Annual Conference, the Equal Justice Conference, LSC’s Innovations in Technology Conference, NCLC’s Consumer Rights Litigation Conference and PLI.
Significant Collaborations

Across the city and in all of our practice areas, LSNYC has developed hundreds of collaborations with legal services providers, community-based organizations, law schools, elected officials, courts, and virtually every poverty-advocacy group. These connections with organizations and community leaders have been critical to our effectiveness during Covid. Collaboration is a core part of our practice model. A few examples follow.

Covid-Related Collaborations with Elected Officials – Since the beginning of the pandemic, LSNYC has done a series of more than 30 collaborations with local legislators to inform over 7,500 low-income New Yorkers about accessing our services during the pandemic and about numerous legal topics affecting those impacted by Covid. They have taken place across the city. Examples include: We collaborated with Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz to hold a virtual forum on Navigating the Unemployment System. We held a similar event in Spanish for the Spanish speaking community. We also collaborated with NY City Council Majority Leader Laurie Cumbo and Moms Make it Work to hold a virtual forum to provide information on public benefits to mothers during the pandemic. In another example, we held a Virtual Housing 101 training with HRA Homebase.

Foreclosure Prevention – As the pandemic-related mortgage delinquency rates reach levels unseen even in prior recessions, LSNYC’s foreclosure prevention collaborations are critically important. At the end of 2020, 11.8% of New York State homeowners were delinquent on their mortgages. This rate is over 3 times the last high of 3.8% at the height of the recession in January 2009. LSNYC serves as Technical Assistance Partner (TAA) for the Center for NYC Neighborhoods (CNYCN), which is the Anchor Partner for the Attorney General’s Home Ownership Protection Program. The program supports a statewide network of 90 housing counseling and legal services providers. In our TAA capacity, we provide training and mentoring to foreclosure prevention advocates statewide, and lead advocacy efforts focusing on predatory lending, abusive mortgage servicing and foreclosure consumer protections.

Tenant Advocacy – LSNYC works closely with tenant advocacy groups across the city to identify buildings where tenants face uninhabitable conditions or landlord harassment. Together we implement strategies including litigation, complaints to administrative agencies, and media campaigns. Our community partners include Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA), Urban Homesteading Assistance Board, and Met Council on Housing. As an illustration of our collaborative work, LSNYC staffs a clinic focused on housing each Thursday at CASA. Tenants get advice or more in-depth service. Many of the issues addressed at the CASA clinic involved pre-litigation advocacy such as helping a tenant draft a letter to get repairs addressed or drafting an advocacy letter to their landlord detailing an overcharge which could prevent a non-payment proceeding.

LGBTQ Advocacy – We are a founding member of a citywide LGBTQ legal services roundtable, which meets bi-monthly to collaborate on issues affecting low-income LGBTQ New Yorkers. We also collaborate to provide services at Callen-Lorde Community Health Center, the largest LGBTQ-serving clinic in the nation, and several other LGBTQ-serving organizations.

Community-based Service Delivery – Our community-based partnerships facilitate service delivery in a vast array of sites throughout the city, including Henry Street Settlement, Grand Street Settlement, Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, the Center for Family Life, the Fifth Avenue Committee, Good Shepherd Services, and Fortune Society. Additionally, we work in several major VA medical facilities, NYC’s Family Justice Centers in all boroughs, CLARO sites, and other locations.
Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

LSNYC's pro bono program utilizes law firms, corporations, law schools, and individual volunteers to serve clients and advance our mission. Pro bono volunteers help in at least three ways: (1) co-counseling on large cases; (2) taking on special projects—such as research and brief writing; and (3) direct representation of clients through clinics and individual placements.

Over the course of the past 12 months, LSNYC’s pro bono unit created new programming to respond to the pandemic and pivoted our preexisting work to a remote model. Of particular note is the pro bono component of the Covid Emergency Public Benefits Project that LSNYC created in response to a sharp increase in callers seeking public assistance. In partnership with Skadden, Gibson Dunn, Goodwin, Morgan Lewis, and O’Melveny, LSNYC staffed three clinics per week over the course of almost a year. Hundreds of pro bono volunteers helped more than 1,000 clients pursue relief through this program. LSNYC also shifted our clinical model to become entirely virtual for a number our core initiatives, including: (1) housing conditions cases, (2) asylum, (3) U-visas, (4) VA-WA self-petitions, (5) adjustment of status cases, and (6) transgender name changes. In total, LSNYC conducted more than 100 virtual clinics this year.

While the changes wrought by the pandemic have been challenging, they have also presented new opportunities to expand and improve our work. Law firms are now able to staff our matters with attorneys who are in any of their offices worldwide. And for clients with adequate access to technology, remote work is often more convenient than travelling to law offices and courts. We have used this time not only to create temporary programs in response to extraordinary circumstances, but to build a robust virtual pro bono program that will strengthen our work going forward.

Pro Bono Statistics

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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<td>Law Students</td>
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<td>Others</td>
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Sources Of Funding

<table>
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<tr>
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