Overview of Achievements, 2020-2021

We closed 293 cases and benefitted 425 individuals during the reporting period. The Pro Bono Programs of the New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) target individuals living in the five boroughs of New York City, but many of our programs serve residents of any county in New York state. Our programs work with various populations, including individuals with criminal records, individuals who have been wrongfully or unfairly investigated by the Administration for Children’s Services, individuals with disabilities who have been denied crucial government benefits, individuals with consumer debt issues, as well as low-income New Yorkers who have inquiries involving housing, employment, or family law.

Because of our work, low-income people have realized a number of benefits, such as:

- Stopping or reducing debt collection activity through limited scope advice and representation, in our CLARO and Volunteer Lawyer for the Day Programs.
- Avoiding or reversing findings of child neglect by the Administration for Children Services, through our State Central Registry Project, thereby improving access to employment and other opportunities.
- Winning remands in the Southern District of New York for individuals with disabilities who were denied Social Security benefits, through our Social Security SDNY Project.
- Removing barriers to employment, housing, and voting rights for individuals with criminal records through the Reentry Initiative, including the Certificates Project and Project Restore.
- Empowering low-income individuals to effectively resolve legal concerns relating to housing, employment, and family law through our Legal Counseling Project.

The New York County Lawyers Association is the only program in New York County that has a dedicated Pro Bono apparatus to assist individuals appealing their denial of Social Security Disability benefits in the Southern District of New York. We have strong partnerships with the Office of Pro Se Litigation in the Southern District, law firms, and other members of our bar association to serve this need.

Our Reentry Initiative, which consists of programs to assist individuals with criminal records, has expanded to provide higher levels of assistance, and to assist in a wider range of areas. We’ve continued to deepen and cultivate new relationships with community organizations that work with populations that can benefit from our programs. These partnerships have been especially important for increasing access to our programs during the COVID-19 pandemic. These partners include The Doe Fund, The Fortune Society, The HOPE Program, and The Center for Appellate Litigation. A new pilot program, the Parole Prep Project, is a collaboration with the Parole Preparation Project and partner law firms to assist currently incarcerated New Yorkers seeking parole.

Population Served: General Low Income Population

Area Served: New York County and Surrounding Areas

Total Funding: $188,542

Total IOLA Grant: $62,500

Staffing - Full Time Equivalents:

- Total Staff: 3.00
- Lawyers: 1.50
- Others: 1.50
NF is a foster mother who was already providing care when her own granddaughter needed a foster care setting, and she became her granddaughter’s kinship foster mother. Her granddaughter needed a therapeutic level of foster care, and since NF’s own foster agency did not provide therapeutic foster care she was going through another certification process with the foster care agency in charge of her granddaughter. While NF was undergoing certification, her granddaughter was still allowed to stay in her home. During a week-long visit with the child’s mother, there was a report made to the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) that the mother was not giving the child her medication. During this time the granddaughter’s medication was also in the process of being adjusted, and NF was taking the child to several appointments regarding this. During the ACS investigation regarding the child’s medication, NF’s care also came into question. She explained that the behavioral therapists who were supposed to work with her granddaughter had not been coming at the agreed upon times. She also subsequently resolved an issue where the child’s medication had been missing, and she was able to refill the prescription for the child. However, since NF was not yet certified as a therapeutic foster parent, her granddaughter was removed from her home. NF continued to take additional trainings about working with children with special needs, and wished to continue to be a foster parent or otherwise working with children. A NYCLA volunteer was assigned to represent NF at her hearing. The volunteer wrote an advocacy letter requesting that NF’s report be amended and sealed, and the strength of this letter led the ACS to agree to amend and seal the report without presenting any evidence to maintain their indications of NF’s lack of care for her granddaughter. NF’s scheduled hearing was no longer required, and she obtained a favorable outcome: since her indicated report was amended to “unfounded” and sealed, she can continue being a foster parent and/or pursue a career in childcare.
Other Services...

Number of People Benefitted by Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>464 people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Legal Education</td>
<td>335 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Se Assistance</td>
<td>129 people</td>
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Other Legal Related Services: Overview

NYCLA’s Pro Bono Department provides Community Legal Education as a form of outreach for our programs. During this reporting period, we conducted seven outreach programs which served a total of 335 individuals. Organizing virtual presentations has become an increasing focus since the COVID-19 pandemic affected our in-person program operations. While our direct legal services have been relatively easy to provide remotely, accessing the target populations for each of our programs has been more challenging, especially for programs that previously reached clients through in-person clinics. NYCLA’s Director of Pro Bono Programs has given a number of presentations to partner community organizations, including to the Center for Appellate Litigation and the Fortune Society on our Certificates Project, aimed at individuals with criminal records. Another presentation was held for the General Membership Meeting of the Independent Drivers Guild, on the Eviction Moratorium and housing help provided by our Legal Counseling Project. The Pro Bono Department has also given presentations to the Attorney Emeritus Program volunteer base to provide information to prospective volunteers.

Other Legal Related Services: Example

During the reporting period, we conducted two virtual presentations on the Certificates Project, one with the Center for Appellate Litigation, and one at the Fortune Society. Participants were a combination of staff and clients of these organizations, both of which serve individuals with criminal records who could benefit from our Certificates Project. These presentations provided information on the rights of individuals with criminal records, including on what Certificates of Relief from Civil Disabilities and Certificates of Good Conduct are and how they can help improve access to employment, housing, and voting rights. These presentations aimed to reach more people with criminal records directly, who can benefit from applying for a Certificate themselves, as well as staff who would be equipped to provide information to their clients on our program, and facilitate more referrals.
Trainings

The New York County Lawyers Association ensures that the Board attends periodic trainings on good governance. Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler LLP is our non-profit outside counsel, with expertise to conduct these trainings.

We currently have one part-time staff attorney in addition to the Pro Bono Director. This staff attorney, who focuses on consumer debt, attends regular CLE programs to stay up to date on the latest developments. As we expand and add additional attorneys, we will tailor professional development programs to their needs. The Pro Bono Director attends periodic training programs.

For our Pro Bono Programs Administrator, our co-employer provides online professional development tools and classes. The Pro Bono Director also directly mentors the Pro Bono Programs Administrator.

A virtual training program was also provided to AEP Host Organizations, which the Director of Pro Bono Programs and the Pro Bono Programs Administrator attended, since NYCLA hosts AEP volunteers. This training focused on cultural humility in civil legal services, and also aimed to equip host organizations to transfer these concepts to their AEP and other volunteers.

Significant Collaborations

Reentry Initiative (Certificates Project, Project Restore, Parole Prep Pilot Project): We work closely with a number of community organizations that serve individuals with criminal records, especially for our Certificates Project. These organizations, which include The Doe Fund, The Fortune Society, The HOPE Program, and The Center for Appellate Litigation, typically host in-person legal clinics to connect their clients with NYCLA Pro Bono volunteers. Since the COVID-19 pandemic led to in-person assistance being suspended, these organizations have continued to provide regular referrals to connect their clients to our Reentry Initiative programs. For Project Restore, we work especially closely with the law firm Patterson Belknap Webb and Tyler LLP, and their attorneys take a number of these cases on for representation. The Parole Prep Pilot Project is a new collaboration with the Parole Preparation organization, and connects incarcerated individuals seeking parole to NYCLA volunteer attorneys.

Legal Counseling Project: As mentioned in section C, we recently started a new collaboration with the Independent Drivers Guild, which represents black car drivers, in order to facilitate legal services for housing law concerns for their members. NYCLA also typically collaborates with the New York City Bar Association when Legal Counseling clinics are held in person, as described below, to avoid duplication of services. The New York City Bar Association Monday Night Law clinic was suspended due to COVID, though NYCLA still refers individuals seeking help beyond the scope of our programs to other City Bar Association legal services such as their phone hotline.

Social Security SDNY Project: We collaborate with Mobilization for Justice for our training, as well as to refer cases. The success of this program is also in large part to our successful partnership with the Office of Pro Se Litigation at the SDNY, that includes our program flyer with the materials it provides to pro se litigants when they initiate an appeal in the SDNY.

State Central Registry Project: Our partners on this project are Bronx Legal Services, which collects intake information and provides us with case information, including client documents and narrative descriptions, in order to match clients with volunteer attorneys to represent their case. Bronx Legal Services and the NYU Family Defense Clinic also assists with trainings and is available to provide substantive help to volunteer attorneys throughout their cases. We also collaborate often with the law firm of Lansner & Kubitschek, which has litigated seminal cases in this area of law.
Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

Our recruitment, training and deployment of pro bono attorneys, law students and other volunteers is tailored differently for each of our programs. We use our #NYCLAMission Pro Bono Programs Newsletter to highlight the work of our volunteers in the various programs we run, and as a general recruitment tool.

The Social Security SDNY Project has a recorded webinar training available on our website to any interested volunteer. This program is pitched to law firms or other attorneys seeking experience in federal litigation, particularly in the Southern District of New York.

The State Central Registry Project has a recorded webinar training available on our website to any interested volunteer. We have success assigning cases to a variety of attorney volunteers, from big law firms to solo practitioners. We also use this program for our recent law graduates who are interested in earning their 50 hours of pro bono, since the time commitment is less burdensome than traditional litigation.

Our two Reentry Initiative programs—the Certificat es Project and Project Restore—each traditionally only had live in-classroom training. With the help of a college intern, we are working on developing online webinars for each of these programs to bolster recruitment.

The Legal Counseling Program has recorded webinar trainings in the areas of Housing, Family, and Employment Law available on our website to any interested volunteer. Additional webinar trainings specifically focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Employment law and Housing law are also available to volunteers online. This program is a good fit for solo/small firm practitioners or AEP attorneys.

Pro Bono Statistics

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<tr>
<th>Attorneys:</th>
<th>291 Volunteers</th>
<th>902 Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law Students:</td>
<td>2 Volunteers</td>
<td>95 Hours</td>
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Sources Of Funding

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<th>Source</th>
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<td>IOLA Grant</td>
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<td>State Funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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New York County Lawyers Association