Overview of Achievements, 2020-2021

The Goddard Riverside Law Project provided direct legal services, community legal education, and pro se assistance to over 1700 people residing in New York County during the 2021 Fiscal Year. Given our focus and expertise on SRO housing, our office has always prioritized providing assistance to tenants living in SRO housing that are at risk of eviction. Goddard Riverside's Law Project serves low-income individuals and families who live in SRO buildings on the West Side of Manhattan from 14th Street to 220th Street, and apartment tenants who live in the Manhattan Valley area between West 91st Street to West 116th Street. Our target population is low-income individuals and families, including frail and mentally and physically disabled older adults, immigrants, and the most vulnerable populations living in SRO housing and apartments. Approximately 50% of the program’s clients are Spanish-speaking. The Law Project provided direct legal services to more than 160 people this year. Direct Legal Services includes legal representation, brief advice, as well as counsel. During the 2020-2021 contract year, the Law Project reached more than 900 people through presentations at community events, know your rights trainings, local building events, provided pro se assistance to over 140 individuals. Representation and community education regarding housing rights and available remedies improve the administration of justice by ensuring that tenants have a voice and are empowered to assert their rights. During this past year when the eviction moratoriums, information on housing courts, and tenant protections were constantly being updated, it was all the more important to be available and provide information quickly and cohesively.

Population Served: Low Income Populations

Area Served: New York County

Total Funding: $1,379,500

Total IOLA Grant: $75,000

Staffing - Full Time Equivalents:

- Total Staff: 10.83
- Lawyers: 5.50
- Paralegals: 1.00
- Other Staff: 4.33
Mrs. H came to the Law Project after her landlord served her with a nonpayment case alleging that she owed over $30,000 for her small SRO unit. Mrs. H fell behind in rent when a new owner purchased the building and was elusive as to where to pay her rent to. The new owner refused to repair any conditions in her unit, returned any rent payment she made, and alleged that she was a licensee without any rights to the unit. After the landlord finally accepted her as a permanent SRO tenant, the landlord subsequently sued her in a nonpayment proceeding alleging she owed over $30,000 in back rent. With our help, she was able to interpose an amended answer that addressed the poor conditions in her unit and the harassment she endured since the new owner took over. We were then able to settle her case with her moving to a bigger, renovated unit in the building for the same rent and the landlord agreed to waive all of her arrears as part of the settlement. Thus, she was able to save her housing and get all her arrears waived.

Mrs. P., a senior citizen living on her own in a rent controlled apartment was referred to our office when her landlord sued her a nuisance holdover proceeding alleging that Mrs. P was creating a nuisance because of her son’s actions that were disturbing neighbors. However, Mrs. P had an active restraining order against her son, due to domestic violence and she was already not allowing her son into her unit or building. Through the Law Project’s advocacy, the proceeding was discontinued with prejudice. We were able to advocate that domestic violence victims could not be evicted for any alleged acts of their abuser. Through the Law Project’s efforts, Mrs. P’s long term affordable housing of over 50 years was preserved.
Other Services...

Number of People Benefitted by Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,442 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Legal Education</td>
<td>1,300 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Se Assistance</td>
<td>142 people</td>
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Overview

The Law Project has undertaken a multipronged outreach campaign with the goal of providing information on landlord and tenant’s rights and responsibilities; helping people to understand the Housing Court process, the rent stabilization code and legal rent enforcement; informing residents about community housing services and resources available; and teaching tenants how to get repairs done and otherwise enforce their rights. The Law Project’s target population for these events are low-income individuals and families who live in SRO buildings on the west side of Manhattan and rent regulated buildings in the Manhattan Valley area of New York City. We provide self-help materials and support to tenants to advocate for themselves. We conduct monthly Know-Your-Rights trainings, tenant union meetings in which tenants, tenant leaders, and staff tenant organizers discuss various housing issues, as well as helping to facilitate tenant association meetings in various buildings in our catchment area where we support tenant groups who are trying to advocate for better housing conditions and address concerns of tenants with their landlord. In this fiscal year, the Law Project participated 63 presentations at community events, know your rights trainings, and local building events and reached more than 1300 tenants through these events. The Law Project’s target population for these events are all low-income individuals and families living in SRO buildings.

Examples of Other Services

Mrs. T previously filed a Rent Overcharge with the Division of Housing and Community Renewal DHCR (HCR) on her own. She came to our office seeking pro se assistance after receiving correspondence from HCR with the landlord’s reposnse in which the landlord claimed that the rent increase was proper given individual apartment improvements. Our office gave her information on what to include in her response and provided some self help packets on how to respond to requests from HCR. Mrs. T was then able to respond to HCR’s request on her own after speaking with our office.

Mr. R and Mr. G came to our office to get information about succession rights. Mr. R was Mr. G’s caretaker and had a very strong family-like relationship. Mr. G confirmed that Mr. R is like an adoptive son to Mr. G and had been taking care of him for many years. We provided some self-help packets and pro se assistance on how to assert succession claim and provided the HCR forms for them to fill out to notify the landlord and section 9 of the change in household composition. Through our office’s assistance, Mr. R understood the process for a succession claim and was able to complete the forms on his own.
Collaborations With Other Service Providers

Our office is a co-founder of LEAP, a coalition of legal services providers that includes Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, The Bronx Defenders, Make the Road New York, Urban Justice Center, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, Housing Conservation Coordinators, CAMBA Legal Services, MFY Legal Services, Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A, The Door Legal Services, Catholic Migration Services, VOLS, Take Root Justice, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, and Brooklyn Defender Services. We work together to conduct staff trainings for our programs, make and accept legal referrals, share best practices, co-counsel on various types of litigation, and work together to increase the quality and accessibility of civil legal services in New York City.

Our office is also a member of the Right To Counsel Coalition which first campaigned to get legal representation for tenants facing evictions in housing court. In March 2020, the Right To Counsel Coalition had a major victory after campaign in the state to place an eviction moratorium due to the Coronavirus. Additionally, this past year, The Law Project is also a member of the Housing Justice for All Coalition which campaigned and for stronger rent stabilization and tenant protections. In 2019, it achieved a major victory with the new changes in the rent laws providing stronger protections for tenants in rent regulated housing.

Technology and Other Innovations

Staff are part of a few different listservs including other housing listserv, LEAP, and RTC Coalition and both provide and obtain useful support through it. Using these listservs as a resource is a tremendous productivity enhancement, often providing quick answers to questions that might otherwise take hours to obtain.

Staff also use LegalServer and Powerbase to manage casework, building outreach, community events, and organizing. Our office has been using LegalServer since 2015, but over the last year we spent some time investing in reconfiguring our LegalServer database to better capture information that we collect by working with a consultant.

During the 2020 year and due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, our office has shifted to remote work. This has pushed our program to become more technologically advanced. Since April 2020, we have incorporated using Microsoft TEAMS and Zoom for meetings. Our office has purchased laptops for the staff to be able to continue to work remotely and have upgraded the server in our office to be able to connect to SharePoint so that staff can easily access documents from the office on their laptops at home. Additionally, our office is in the process of transitioning to electronic document storage as a way to protect confidential client information and records as well as provide access to case files and documents remotely.
Trainings

The Law Project, as a member of the LEAP Coalition, participates in trainings provided to attorneys on housing matters and other civil legal matters. Many of the CLEs are conducted by senior and supervising staff from the various LEAP Coalition organizations and are specifically targeted at new housing rights attorneys as well as seasoned attorneys with experience. The LEAP Coalition has an ongoing discussion for new and relevant trainings to develop for all attorneys within the LEAP organizations.

Tenant Organizers at the Law Project participate at trainings conducted at the ANHD Center for Community Leadership, which trains and supports organizers to increase the capacity of grassroots organizations to win concrete change.

Additionally, Goddard Riverside Community Center provides trainings for staff each year which include Sexual Harassment Prevention Trainings, Corporate Compliance, Incident Report Training, IT Support training, De-Escalation and Safety, and Cultural Competence and Diversity Trainings. These trainings are available to staff on a monthly basis. Certain agency-wide trainings are mandatory each year.
Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

Our office also works closely with law students from Columbia Law School’s Tenants’ Rights Project in which we partner with the students in the provision of legal services. Law student interns work closely with our staff attorneys and provide support with legal research, drafting pleadings, trial preparation and document review, all of which enlarges our capacity to assist more clients. Additionally, we hire legal and organizing interns and volunteers throughout the course of the year who provide support with legal research, drafting pleadings, trial preparation, client meetings, and document review.

Our program has a practice order from the Appellate Division that permits us to supervise law students.

We also participate in NYLPI’s summer associate program in which summer associates from private law firms are placed with our organization to volunteer their time.

Our office also seeks and encourages tenant leaders that we work with to volunteer their time and help the tenant organizers in our office on the various city and statewide coalitions and campaigns that our office is a member of. Many of the tenant volunteers conduct phone banking, reaching out to other tenants to engage with on the program.

Pro Bono Statistics

| Law Students: | 8 Volunteers | 1,115 Hours |

Sources Of Funding

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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IOLA Grant</td>
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<td>Foundations</td>
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<td>State funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,379,500</strong></td>
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