Overview of Achievements, 2020-2021

JASA/LSEJ provided no-cost civil legal services to low-income older adults throughout Queens County in the areas of housing, public benefits, family violence and fraud. As reported in DFTA’s latest Profile of Older New Yorkers, Queens is home to 434,672 adults 60 and older making up 19% of the borough’s population. Sixty-four percent (64%) of these seniors report being foreign born; over 50% speak a language other than English. During 2020-21 JASA/LSEJ continued to bring civil legal services to those older adults unable to access vital benefits, services, and the courts due to Covid-19, as well as social isolation, physical and mental health issues, language, and institutionalization.

During the reporting period JASA/LSEJ closed 665 cases benefiting 1217 individuals; conducted outreach and remote workshops and trainings reaching 1924 individuals, settled a Medicaid proposed class action and continued representing 2 Queens tenant associations seeking relief against their landlords for its unlawful and harassing actions. JASA/LSEJ worked with clients in obtaining relief and services available during the pandemic, such as obtaining orders of protection remotely through family court, obtaining extensions of time for older tenants to remain in their apartments, and preventing foreclosures by obtaining forbearances on homeowners’ mortgages.

Population Served: Low Income Queens Residents 60 and older

Area Served: Queens County

Total Funding: $3,232,571

Total IOLA Grant: $73,527

Staffing - Full Time Equivalents:
- Total Staff: 17.95
- Lawyers: 14.95
- Paralegals: 2.00
- Others: 1.00
Ms. M is a 68-year-old, retired school teacher who owns her own home. In February 2020, just when news about the COVID-19 started to hit New York, Ms. M opened her door to her younger brother, Ken, who lost his job and was evicted from his apartment.

As the months passed, Ken began getting more despondent and angrier over not being able to secure employment. Ken started taking out his frustration on Ms. M, occasionally shouting or screaming at her. One morning Ken approached Ms. M while she was speaking with a friend on the phone and began yelling and cursing at her, startling her, and causing her to retreat to her bedroom.

Later, when Ms. M started to tell Ken that she was alarmed at his behavior, he forcefully shoved Ms. M backwards against a wall, causing her to hurt her back. Then Ken punched Ms. M in the head, causing Ms. M to suffer debilitating headaches for a week. At that time, Ms. M was not willing to pursue legal or police intervention. JASA’s elder abuse prevention program (Project LEAP) assisted Ms. M with safety plan, ongoing counseling, and supportive services. Ms. M realized that she was in danger. Project LEAP then worked with Ms. M on videoconferencing and filing for an order of protection in Family Court. Kings County Family Court issued an Order of Protection and Ms. M continues to receive services from Project LEAP.

Ms. H is 65 and a long-time Section 8 recipient who lives in a rent stabilized apartment with her 88-year-old mother for over 30 years. For many years JASA/LSEJ has assisted Ms. H with her Section 8 recertification, especially since the process is now handled online and she does not have connectivity in her apartment. This year, although she was able to provide some information for the recertification, the pandemic slowed the Section 8 review process, and her financial information was deemed stale.

When contacted to provide updated information, Ms. H reported that she was stuck in Ecuador having become ill with COVID-19 and unable to return home. Thereafter she had great difficulty testing negative and getting a flight back to New York. JASA/LSEJ worked with the Section 8 supervisory staff so benefits remained active. In addition, JASA/LSEJ worked with the landlord who was not receiving the rent, preventing pre-eviction notices and a nonpayment proceeding from being served on Ms. H’s apartment and her mother. JASA/LSEJ was successful in recertifying Ms. H’s benefit and avoiding a non-payment case. Ms. H is now back in her Queens apartment.
Number of People Benefitted by Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,980 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Legal Education</td>
<td>1,924 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Se Assistance</td>
<td>56 people</td>
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Other Legal Related Services: Overview

Commencing with the closure of the court houses and government offices to the general public, JASA/LSEJ clinics needed to be redesigned from “walk in” to receiving direct referrals via emails and phone calls from judges, court attorneys, HRA, DFTA and CBOs. These referrals were generally individuals needing emergency legal assistance, for example illegal lockouts or orders of protections. Although referrals made to JASA/LSEJ were Queens residents of all ages, JASA/LSEJ’s focus continued to be individuals 60 or older in social or economic need.

JASA/LSEJ conducted remote workshops, trainings, and clinics, focusing on areas and services of most concern during the pandemic: housing, food insecurity, elder abuse and racial equity. JASA/LSEJ continued its existing collaboration with Catholic Migration Services (CMS) and participated in Community Workshop events hosted by CMS. JASA/LSEJ also arranged with local CBOs and legislative offices, including Woodside on the Move (located in Woodside Queens) and the district Office of State Senator Sanders (located in Southeast Queens) to hold remote trainings and clinics. JASA/LSEJ reached 1711 people through these services.

JASA/LSEJ spoke to the Elder Justice Coalition (ECJ) a 3,000-membership organization on recognizing scams and what steps older individuals and their families can take to avoid being tricked by scammers. EJC distributed the interview to its members and posted it on their Twitter and Facebook pages. During the grant period JASA/LSEJ also provided a series of trainings to social workers, case workers and other professionals both inside and outside of JASA on elder abuse and financial exploitation reaching 213 professionals who work directly with older New Yorkers.

Examples

- JASA/LSEJ, NMIC, Cardozo Bet Tzedek Legal Services worked with the NYC Department of Finance (DOF) to draft template letters to beneficiaries as well as online information for SCRIE and DRIE beneficiaries on COVID related suspensions and extensions.
- JASA/LSEJ partnered with the Queens Borough President’s Office, NYC HRA, Legal Aid Society, Housing Court Answers and NYLAG to provide a virtual Town Hall on Housing and the Eviction Moratorium.
- JASA/LSEJ and JASA social services presented a virtual training on Elder Abuse: signs, prevention and intervention to Master of Social Work students attending Stoney Brook University, School of Social Welfare.
Significant Collaborations

JASA/LSEJ continued to work in close collaboration with the Queens legal services community to promote coordinated service delivery to low-income Queens residents. These agencies include: Legal Services NYC, Legal Aid Society, NYLAG, MFJ, Catholic Migration Services, Empire Justice, the New York City and Queens County Bar Associations, CUNY and St. John’s Law School. JASA/LSEJ worked throughout the last year with our partners to ensure that the public had accurate information regarding benefits, resources, and court access to needed emergency services. In addition, legal services’ task forces worked with the courts to respond to barriers to access, including the digital divide and provision of reasonable accommodations. Although there was a temporary suspension of the operation of the two courthouse walk in clinics these programs are expected to resume in some fashion in FY 22.

JASA/LSEJ also participates in New York’s Family Justice Centers (FJC). The FJCs act as a “one stop shop” of legal, social, mental health and government providers for victims of family violence. By providing services in one location the effectiveness of service delivery is enhanced and immediate coordinated assistance is provided to those individuals who are subjected to domestic violence and elder abuse. During the reporting period the FJC virtually operated and made referrals to JASA/LSEJ for clients seeking emergency orders of protection.

As part of the NYC Elder Abuse Center (EAC) JASA/LSEJ participated in the New York City’s Enhanced Multidisciplinary Teams for Elder Abuse Prevention to Queens County. EMDTs bring together a team of professionals from different disciplines to work on difficult complex elder abuse cases. The Queens team consists of social services agencies (including JASA social services), the Queens legal services providers, the Queens DA office, Queens APS, the NYC Department for the Aging and Weil Cornell Medicine. The team met virtually 2x a month throughout the grant period and reviewed over 75 complex cases.

As described above, JASA/LSEJ also collaborates with both legal services providers and pro bono counsel on class action and impact litigation. During this fiscal year, through our collaboration with Cardozo Bet Tzedek Legal Services and NYLAG vital Medicaid homecare services were restored through Llambelis et al. v. Visiting Nursing Services. Further we continued our representation of a group of low-income tenants against Zara Realty with the Pro Bono firm of Milbank LLC and Take Root Justice.
Trainings

JASA/LSEJ provides both internal and external training opportunities throughout the year in substantive legal trainings and staff development. These trainings target all members of our staff including non-attorney staff members. JASA offered several different types of training and professional development opportunities this year. Additionally, staff are strongly encouraged to attend local, statewide, and national conferences. Some examples include:

- New Challenges Facing Frontline Workers: Effective Service Delivery to Older Persons During the Pandemic;
- Trauma Informed Practice in Working with Victims of Elder Mistreatment in the time of COVID;
- DEIB Training: Belong @ JASA initiative focusing on the goal of operating as an inclusive organization, with a thriving and engaged workforce;
- All staff and supervisors attended multiple trainings offered on the Eviction and Foreclosure Moratoriums, COVID-19 resources and providing services through virtual lawyering;
- Foreclosure prevention and housing stability staff attended the National Consumer Law Center’s Consumer Rights Litigation Conference which held workshops and panels virtually throughout a two-week period.

Technology and Other Innovations

JASA IT worked with JASA/LSEJ staff during the year to implement remote access to all JASA/LSEJ databases and files making sure that JASA security was maintained. In addition, enabling staff to participate in the various platforms being used by the courts, government agencies and CBOs including Microsoft Teams, WebEx, Zoom and GoogleMeets. Laptops, updated cell phones, printers and other equipment were delivered to staff so remote work and access could be maintained throughout the grant period.

In addition, JASA/LSEJ purchased additional laptops and IT equipment specifically for use by clients needing access to such technology in order to participate in court hearings and trials. It is anticipated that such equipment will be available for clients to “borrow.” JASA/LSEJ also purchased additional IT equipment so a separate office space can be set up in JASA/LSEJ’s Rego Park office for clients who need to participate in their cases, but cannot or do not wish to do so from their homes or the courthouses.
Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

JASA has a central volunteer recruitment program for individuals wishing to volunteer in one or more of JASA programs. Individuals can apply on-line by calling the volunteer number or emailing volunteer@JASA.org. JASA trains and supervises all volunteers and matches volunteers with appropriate JASA programs.

More specifically JASA/LSEJ collaborates with the NYS Bar Association Emeritus Program through Fordham Law School to serve as a placement for retired attorneys and is placement for law school students and graduates to complete their 50-hour pro bono service. This year JASA/LSEJ has one Emeritus Attorney volunteering between 14-20 hours weekly. In changes in the laws affecting populations served are distributed to staff and reviewed at staff meetings. All staff have access to advocacy on-line services such as probono.net and lawhelp.org. Volunteers and students attend webinars and participate on advocacy listservs where information can be distributed, questions presented, and ideas exchanged. In addition, commencing in March 2021 JASA/LSEJ became a placement for a Pro Bono Scholar from New York Law School.

JASA/LSEJ partners with private law firms to assist low-income seniors and currently is working with Milbank LLP and Take Root Justice in representing a tenant association in an action against their landlord.

JASA requires that all staff including volunteers and law students receive appropriate orientation training on JASA policies and procedures. In addition to regular supervision, all staff, fellows, students, and volunteers attend on-going legal education and training beyond the minimum continuing legal education credits required by New York State. Information on changes in the laws affecting populations served are distributed to staff and reviewed at staff meetings. All staff have access to advocacy on-line services such as probono.net and lawhelp.org. Volunteers and students attend webinars and participate on advocacy listservs where information can be distributed, questions presented, and ideas exchanged.

Pro Bono Statistics

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<th>Attorney: 1 Volunteers</th>
<th>448 Hours</th>
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<tr>
<td>Law Students</td>
<td>4 Volunteers</td>
<td>3,711 Hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
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Sources Of Funding

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<tr>
<td>IOLA Grant</td>
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<td>State Funding</td>
<td>$587,146</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>$2,571,898</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$3,232,571</td>
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