Overview of Achievements, 2020-2021

In the 12-month reporting period, NYLPI provided direct legal services, education, and training that benefitted approximately 85,000 people in New York and accomplished significant impact achievements improving the lives of more than 1.4 million New Yorkers. Where direct benefits and cost savings were measured, the value to clients topped $2 million. Our unique community lawyering model depends on our long-term relationships with community groups to build power for positive change through a wide range of legal services, community education, and organizing. Examples include:

- **With our Medical Providers Network, we provided rapid medical evaluations and advocacy for people at high risk in detention facilities.** NYLPI represents clients in detention and connects them to medical professionals in our growing network of over 200 volunteer medical providers. These volunteers provide medical review and consultation, advocacy letters to support release, bond, and better medical care through our MedicalLegal Community Partnership, and contribute to strategic, systemic change. The healthcare crisis in immigration detention has worsened over the past several years and has become even more urgent as COVID-19 spreads through communities, federal detention facilities, and local jails. We provided services on 118 COVID-19 related cases and won release of 34 people due to NYLPI’s advocacy (with cases still pending).

- **144,000 paratransit riders were protected after our coalition won new COVID-19 safety protocols** for cleaning, eliminating shared rides, PPE, and fare collection, supporting New Yorkers with disabilities who rely on Access-A-Ride for lifesaving access to healthcare providers. • We published a series of COVID-19 resource guides for nonprofits and connected dozens of organizations to pro bono legal aid for accessing resources such as the Small Business Administration Paycheck Protection Program and guidance on commercial leases during the pandemic.

- **220,000 Black and Latinx public high school students will benefit from class certification** in our Fair Play coalition case challenging racial discrimination in high school sports.

**Population Served:** People with Disabilities  
**Area Served:** New York City Metropolitan Area  
**Total Funding:** $6,128,447  
**Total IOLA Grant:** $295,000  
**Staffing - Full Time Equivalents:**  
- Total Staff: 30.89  
- Lawyers: 13.12  
- Paralegals: 9.96  
- Others: 7.81
Case 1 – Health: In early November, we successfully advocated for the removal of an ankle monitor from our client Maria’s body that was causing her severe mental and physical distress. Maria is a 34-year-old transgender woman living with HIV. She suffers from PTSD and fled her country due to persecution on account of her gender identity. We succeeded in obtaining a passport for Maria from the Mexican consulate and negotiated with the ICE officer to remove the ankle monitor, a device that has been reported to cause inflammation, bleeding, sores, and numbness around the foot and leg, as well as damaging psychological effects. The immigration court also granted a change of venue request for her pending case. We now represent Maria in her asylum case, and she can wait for the hearing in New York.

Case 2 – Accommodations in Testing: NYLPI assisted a law student with disabilities to obtain “reasonable accommodations” for the remote administration of the October 2020 New York State Bar examination. Following surgery, the client developed a wound which resisted healing. The client was unable to sit upright for extended periods of time without severe pain and risking further disruption of the healing process. For security purposes, the Board of Law Examiners (BOLE) mandated that exam-takers sit upright while taking the exam, to remain in full view of video surveillance camera software. NYLPI’s client sought to use a bed/couch desk so she could partially recline, while remaining visible to BOLE monitors. NYLPI drafted a demand letter detailing the client’s disability and the requested accommodation. Shortly after receiving the letter, BOLE granted the client’s request.
Other Services...

Number of People Benefitted by Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Number of People</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>84,603 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Legal Education</td>
<td>64,104 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Se Assistance</td>
<td>5,693 people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Assistance</td>
<td>14,806 people</td>
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*Other Legal Related Services: Overview*

We have an extensive community education program, supported in part by IOLA funds. NYLPI’s attorneys, and community organizers, social workers, and other advocates regularly provide trainings to community groups and stakeholders to empower them to better advocate for themselves. In the past 12 months, we trained and provided resources to more than 84,000 community members on empowerment strategies to access healthcare, education, transportation, and housing.

*Other Legal Related Services: Examples*

**Multilingual Online Forums Addressing COVID-19 Safety and Systemic Racism** - Responding to deadly threats to individual and community health this past year, NYLPI produced a series of accessible virtual events in English, Spanish, and Chinese. Our lawyers and community organizers created, broadcast, and recorded events addressing fears in the immigrant community that accessing medical care for COVID-19 would jeopardize immigration status. We brought together community partners and physicians from NYLPI’s Medical Providers Network to address the health, safety and legal rights of protesters who took to the streets for months of protests against police violence. As they were broadcasted, and continuing to this day, the widely publicized sessions drew thousands of viewers. We staffed question-and-answer chats in the moment and continued to provide individual and group know-your-rights consultations.

**Medical Provider Network (MPN) activism and expansion** – NYLPI’s MPN, a linchpin of our medical-legal-community partnership, has grown from 95 members at the beginning of 2020 to over 200 trained and available medical providers, with 25+ medical specialties, including mental health providers. Much of our efforts have been to expand our capacity to have MPN volunteers conduct consultations during the pandemic, based on increasing requests from immigration legal service providers and the inability to visit detention centers in-person, as well as to support broader advocacy efforts, speaking out against the atrocities in detention. We coordinated an open letter to ICE advocating for the release of people from detention and developed a template letter and quick response process for COVID-19 related medical advocacy requests.
Significant Collaborations

Nonprofit New York is a capacity-building organization that works to build a thriving community of extraordinary nonprofits through training and educational programs, policy, and legislative advocacy on behalf of the nonprofit sector and offering expert resources and guidance to its members. NYLPI collaborated with Nonprofit New York to produce innovative and impactful webinars to quickly respond to the crisis nonprofits were facing under COVID-19. These webinars were launched swiftly to answer the urgent questions and needs of nonprofits around federal relief programs, employment law, contracts and more. The webinars were attended by 985 representatives from nonprofit organizations.

In a partnership with multiple pro bono law firms, we published a series of resource guides for nonprofits and small businesses as they navigated the pandemic and economic crisis, available online through the NYLPI Nonprofit Toolkit. We also provided live workshops on each guide.

Lenox Hill Neighborhood House is a multi-service community-based organization providing effective and integrated human services to over 20,000 New Yorkers in need annually. NYLPI has run a successful partnership with Lenox Hill to help seniors navigate the process of selecting a private insurance plan to receive drug coverage. The partnership pairs seniors with volunteer attorneys who can guide them through the online system with its overwhelming amount of information, which can be daunting, particularly for seniors who are not computer proficient. Volunteer attorneys from Kasowitz Benson Torres LLP and Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson LLP have served 39 clients in the reporting period.

NYLPI continues to work closely with LEAP, a legal advocacy network of 18 NYC civil legal services providers who came together in 2004 to expand the availability of quality legal services. Collectively, we employ over 600 lawyers, advocates, organizers, and other staff, who provide critical assistance to over 130,000 low-income individuals annually via innovative legal services delivery models. NYLPI has also collaborated to provide representation to immigrants and people with disabilities facing harassment or discrimination in their housing. We are also members of and work closely with the New York Legal Services Coalition.
Impact Cases

Securing Justice for Children with Disabilities Facing School Discrimination and Setting Precedent to Pay for Expert Support - NYLPI obtained a $2.4 million judgment in a discrimination case brought on behalf of families of five young children with disabilities against the Success Academy Charter Schools, and established precedent for reimbursing expert fees under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The litigation challenged the charter school network’s practices designed to drive out students with disabilities through enforcement of unreasonably harsh disciplinary policies, including refusal to provide appropriate accommodations, frequently dismissing students prior to the end of the school day – often for behaviors like fidgeting and pouting -- and creating a “Got to Go” list, which targeted the plaintiff students to be pushed out of the school. The case also recognized that prevailing parties in Section 504 discrimination cases are entitled to reimbursement of expert fees, thereby establishing precedent in the Second Circuit, and providing a depth of reasoning previously unavailable in any Circuit. NYLPI is educating widely on the decision, including through formal CLE programming.

Spotlight Police Violence Against People Experiencing Mental Health Crises - In NYLPI’s ongoing campaign to secure a health-centered first response for people experiencing mental health crises – and seeking to eliminate police response and frequent police violence during these crises - NYLPI won additional decisions under New York’s Freedom of Information Law. The New York State Supreme Court and the Appellate Division, First Department ordered the New York Police Department to turn over body-worn camera footage in the fatal police shooting of Susan Muller, killed by the NYPD in her home after calling police while experiencing a mental health crisis. The decision compelling release of the footage, showing that police shot Ms. Muller less than a minute after arriving at her home, affirms the public’s significant interest in disclosure in these deadly incidents, with the goal of changing policy and saving lives. We paired our legal wins with public education, presenting webinars in which NYLPI used footage secured in the litigation as a basis to analyzed police violence, bringing in physicians and community peers to join our lawyers in the broadcasts.

Pursuing Environmental Justice for Queens Community Devastated by Sewage Infrastructure Disaster – After an infrastructure failure flooded homes in South Ozone Park, Queens with raw sewage, an entire neighborhood of families with homes damaged and belongings ruined faced the challenge of navigating time-sensitive governmental claims processes amid their disrupted lives. NYLPI initiated the South Ozone Park Sewage Legal Assistance Project after community members experienced confusion and reported conflicting guidance from the City Comptroller’s Office – the government entity charged with administering their claims and compensating them for their losses. Some received offers of compensation amounting to a fraction of the value they reported losing. Others were still waiting for offers almost a year after the disaster, and reported newer problems affecting their homes and implicating their health, like mold. NYLPI and pro bono partners secured meetings with toplevel staff in the Comptroller’s office to address patterns of obstacles in the claims process, and the Sewage Legal Assistance Project secured pro bono assistance of six major law firms to represent more than fifteen families, several of whom subsequently negotiated settlements.
Trainings

- NYLPI Lawyers continued to access unlimited Continuing Legal Education sessions through the Practising Law Institute and NYLPI continued to pay for a bar membership for each attorney, and attorney members of the New York City Bar Association accessed CLE in-person and remotely through the Association. Staff members across the organization attended a training on best practices for delivering powerful online presentations.

- Members of NYLPI’s Environmental Justice Program attended trainings offered through the Environmental Law Institute.

- Staff attorneys attended a training on best practices for Article 78 proceedings, offered by a Leap Coalition partner, and shared materials with other NYLPI attorneys.


- A community organizer attended the Action Center on Race and the Economy’s series of trainings on Defunding the Police in a Recession. A community organizer and member of the social media team and an attorney attended varied trainings on communications skills and strategies.

- A senior staff attorney attended the New York Legal Services Coalition’s week-long Leadership for Justice intensive training.

- Leadership Team members regularly attended workshops offered by the Executives Undoing Racism Collective and shared notes and resources with team members.
Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

NYLPI promotes a legal culture where pro bono involvement is valued and prioritized. NYLPI’s staff regularly meet with key partners at law firms and corporate legal departments to encourage and facilitate pro bono opportunities, and when possible, tailor pro bono projects.

We work to foster a lifetime commitment to pro bono through our annual summer program. In addition, NYLPI hosts summer interns from law schools, providing an organized twelve-week program that introduces them to community lawyering and affords the opportunity to work on a range of issues.

During the grant period, our Clearinghouse engaged 895 pro bono attorneys from nearly 80 law firms, who donated over 17,000 pro bono hours and represented 401 nonprofits and community groups by providing counsel on matters such as corporate structure, contract negotiations, litigations, and more. These nonprofits are then able to focus on serving their communities by utilizing their resources for their missions rather than on costly legal services.

The Clearinghouse has expanded its client services by organizing workshops for nonprofit leaders, using pro bono attorneys as teachers on topics including fiscal sponsorship, intellectual property, and employment law. Over 1,070 nonprofit representatives have attended these courses during the grant period.

### Pro Bono Statistics

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Attorneys</th>
<th>895 Volunteer</th>
<th>16,924 Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law Students</td>
<td>12 Volunteer</td>
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<td>4,694 Hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>5 Volunteer</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,756 Hours</td>
</tr>
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### Sources Of Funding

- **IOLA Grant** $295,000
- **Foundations** $764,053
- **Fundraising** $2,480,799
- **Other** $2,588,625
- **Total:** $6,128,477