Overview of Achievements, 2020-2021

We closed 476 cases and served 352 young people overall while strictly complying with social distancing measures. We partnered with 18 community-based organizations to deliver legal representation, Know Your Rights workshops, and capacity-building technical assistance.

Target Population Our clients are primarily young men and women of color under the age of 25 from NYC’s five boroughs. Twenty-four percent come from Brooklyn, 30% come from the Bronx, 20% from Manhattan, 14% from Queens, and 3% are from Staten Island. All have some form of justice system involvement; the majority are poor. Many are enrolled in programs run by community-based organizations or the City. They often face court involvement that overlaps with other judicial or administrative systems, including Family Courts, as well as civil issues like unsafe housing conditions or navigating unemployment benefits. Thirty-two percent of our clients have no high school diploma/equivalent, 56% are unemployed, and 15% are under-employed. Twenty-four percent live in subsidized housing; 16% live in unstable housing situations such as shelters or group homes or are unsheltered. Forty-three percent are African American; 29% are Latino. Fifty-five percent are male, 39% are female, and at least 6% are gender non-conforming.

Financial Benefits Realized by Target Populations We saved our clients $8,624 in lump sums, and we secured $187,750 in affirmative employment judgments and $6,647 in monthly Social Security Insurance and Unemployment benefits. We also helped clients remove obstacles to employment and kept them from getting evicted, providing additional unquantifiable value.

Population Served: Youth who have been involved in the criminal justice system
Area Served: New York City Metropolitan Area
Total Funding: $951,551
Total IOLA Grant: $75,000
Staffing - Full Time Equivalents:
- Total Staff: 6.24
- Lawyers: 4.42
- Paralegals: 0.84
- Others: 0.98
“Cee” is a non-binary young person with asthma, severe anxiety, and depression who lives with their mother and two young siblings in a New York City Housing Authority apartment in the Bronx. Cee reached out because their home had become uninhabitable and unsanitary: their stove had not worked in more than a year; there was a mouse infestation; their toilet and bathtub were both clogged; their kitchen pipes leaked; and paint was chipping off the walls. It had gotten so bad that the family was forced to go to a friend’s apartment just to bathe.

Their repeated attempts to have NYCHA make repairs were repeatedly ignored. As New York City’s right to counsel in housing matters only applies to evictions, they felt hopeless. This area of practice is new for us, but after consulting with other housing attorneys who lacked the capacity to take on the case, we filed a petition on behalf of Cee and demanded NYCHA make the repairs right away, providing extensive documentation of NYCHA’s failure to remedy the issues over a significant period of time. The judge admonished NYCHA for their inexcusable delays and ordered them to remedy the conditions immediately.

One client who reached us just after Covid-19 hit New York City was “Ben,” who learned of our services through a counselor at Rockland Community College. Ben connected with us just as New York was shutting down; he was a healthcare professional who had recently interviewed for an EMS position. Ben was concerned that his previous court involvement would prove an insurmountable obstacle to obtaining this job: he had been adjudicated a Youthful Offender after an incident in high school that arose after severe and ongoing bullying. He was nervous that the EMS employer would see these cases on his background check or that they would come up during an interview, and he was unsure of how to discuss them if they did. Our staff attorney obtained his criminal background and explained everything that would show up on a check, and advised him of his legal rights under the New York’s “ban-the-box” law and employment discrimination law. We also conducted some mock interviews so that Ben would be as prepared and as comfortable as possible walking into a job interview. Ben ultimately secured a position that was superior to the one he had been conditionally offered by EMS, and he remains gainfully employed, even during the pandemic.
Other Services...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of People Benefitted by</th>
<th>Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,160 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Legal Education</td>
<td>1,160 people</td>
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*Other Legal Related Services: Overview*

Through our partnership model, we continued to provide Know Your Rights workshops for youth and technical assistance for staff at community-based organizations. Know Your Rights workshops educate young people on their legal rights and responsibilities, and address specific situations such as interacting with the police; conducting a job search with a criminal history; responding to a school suspension; or facing exclusion from public housing.

Technical assistance gives organizations the tools necessary to prepare clients for questions about criminal backgrounds on job applications and in interviews. We teach staff how to identify and respond to the unique needs of court-involved youth, and we explain how various convictions or plea deals will appear on criminal background checks. We also highlight obstacles that can impede a young person’s chance at success: e.g., licensing bars, housing evictions, family court issues, school suspensions, employment discrimination, immigration status, sexual orientation, and gender non-conformity.

Our model pairs a single attorney with a community-partner organization. Our attorney goes on site at least once a year to deliver staff trainings (excepting this year). When possible, we also conduct regular workshops (which are contingent on the partner’s intake schedule).

Our goal was to reach 1,850 participants through our Know Your Rights workshops, partner staff workshops and community education workshops over the two-year grant period. This year, we reached a total of 864 youth participants through Know Your Rights workshops, 234 people through staff trainings and 62 people at community education workshops, for a total of 1,160. Workshops are contingent on the requests from our partners: requests for staff trainings and community workshops were lower than we expected; requests for youth workshops fell short of our goals.
**Other Services**

**Significant Collaborations**

We have contracted fee-for-service partnerships with the following 18 nonprofits and agencies to deliver workshops and staff trainings, and provide legal representation and advice to participants: Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services, Catholic Charities, Safe Passage, The Door, UnLocal, the Department of Probation, the Department of Youth and Community Development, Drive Change, Friends of Island Academy, Getting Out and Staying Out, Henry Street Settlement, Mt. Sinai Adolescent Health Center, Marsha’s House, Streetworks, Queens Community House, Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center, Westhab, and Year Up. We also receive referrals from many other nonprofits to represent clients on an informal basis.

This year, because our clients are more isolated than ever before, we concentrated on improving our referral system, improving the accuracy with which we record referrals in our database and establishing new relationships with partners to cross-refer young people:

Now Pow is a personalized community referral platform that Youth Represent has onboarded to increase referral efficiency and effectiveness. The platform catalogs a range of organizations throughout the city, and allows the user to filter by referral need, location, language, insurance, age, etc. An individualized referral list is created and sent directly to the client for follow up. The hope is that the partnership will decrease the research time that legal staff normally spend on finding referrals.

The Financial Clinic builds the financial security of poor individuals through various strategies including direct service, capacity building for other non-profits, and social innovations to create systemic change. In response to the Covid-19 crisis, they made free and direct financial coaching services available to clients. Services include helping clients learn to save consistently; decrease debts; increase credit score; plan for taxes; connect to workforce development programs; and more generally adapt to sudden changes in resources that communities are experiencing due to the pandemic. Additionally, the coach can support clients with public benefits planning.

The NYC Health Justice Network is a holistic reentry program at DOHMH that connects individuals returning from jail or prison to healthcare and reentry/social services. They have Community Health Workers with lived experience of the criminal legal system embedded at six partner sites to support participants in health promotion, peer support, and connection to voluntary health and social services. Youth Represent has begun collaborating with HJN to facilitate a mutual referral system.
Impact Cases

We have continued to expand our impact cases over this past year. We have seven new impact cases being litigated and have officially closed four cases. For the closed cases, we settled all four class action matters against large employers for job discrimination against individuals with criminal histories. These cases secured substantial financial payments to thousands of system-involved New Yorkers, included class members’ access to securing employment, and required employers to undergo significant hiring practice changes to ensure applicants who apply for a job in the future will be fairly evaluated.

For new active cases this year, we have expanded our work to include litigating matters in the EEOC and partnering on a major SDNY case with fellow IOLA-grantee the Community Service Society. As unemployment among our target population remains high, and major corporate employers continue to engage in discriminatory hiring practices, the work of our impact litigation is more important than ever.

Trainings

Given the significance of the past year’s events for the push for greater racial equity and the dismantling of white supremacy, Youth Represent has renewed its commitment to anti-racism in new and concrete ways. We established affinity groups for staff of color and white staff; created an action plan to advance racial equity at the interpersonal, organizational, and community levels; and have held organizational conversations about bias. Both the staff and Board have received thorough training in issues like systemic racism and shared terminology.

Ongoing training is addressed by our internal Training Committee, which develops comprehensive training for all new legal staff, and provides “refreshers” for current staff. All staff also enjoy pro bono access to the Practising Law Institute, where they can access free training for Continuing Legal Education credit. We are currently in the process of providing upto-date training to all legal staff on our Salesforce database.
Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

Youth Represent operates a Youth Reentry Clinic at Brooklyn Law School; two students are placed as clinical interns at our office each semester, and we remotely hired a summer legal intern last year as well. We also hosted a Brooklyn Law School Manne Graduates' Fellow for four months; this fellowship sponsors recent graduates who were studying for the Bar exam by placing them at nonprofit organizations.

Pro Bono Statistics

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<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<td>Law Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>IOLA Grant</td>
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Sources Of Funding