Overview of Achievements

Thanks in large part to the help of 2021-2022 IOLA funding the Hiscock Legal Aid Society (HLA) was again able to resolve a large number of civil cases and address the critical legal issues of low-income residents of our Central New York community. Our casework focuses on the essentials of life and includes representing clients in custody, domestic violence, divorce, child support, immigration, housing, and unemployment insurance benefit matters. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to increase the need for civil legal services, and our staff has worked hard to meet this need while dealing with a court system that became even more difficult to navigate as a result of the pandemic. During this funding year we closed 2,630 civil cases, benefitting 6,378 individuals. The practice area breakdown of the 2,630 closed cases is as follows: 903 family law; 789 immigration; 692 housing; 245 unemployment insurance benefit; and 1 health services.

The pandemic has led to the overall increase in unemployment insurance benefit cases handled by our agency, compared to what we saw in the years before the pandemic. In 2020-2021 we handled 379 unemployment insurance benefit cases and in 2021-2022 we handled 245 of those cases. The 245 unemployment insurance benefit cases closed this past year is a more than 300% increase over the 68 unemployment benefit cases we handled 2 years ago, a direct reflection of the impact the COVID-19 continued to have on our community and an example of the critical role played by civil legal services in promoting community well-being and stability.

We are also proud to have another year of having handled a large number of immigration cases, closing 789 in the past year. Thanks in large part to ongoing funding from the New York State Office for New Americans we are able to help address the dire need for immigration legal services, including hundreds of Afghan refugees who have been resettled in our community.

Providing legal services to domestic violence survivors has been a long-standing priority of ours, and we have represented well over 3,000 survivors since 1999, including 711 in the last year alone. Our representation of domestic violence survivors is supported not only by IOLA funding, but by funding from the New York State Office on Violence Against Women that we receive in partnership with Vera House, Inc.

Population Served: Low Income Populations

Area Served: Onondaga County

Total IOLA Grant: $497,068

Staffing Full Time Equivalents:
- Total Staff: 40.03
- Lawyers: 26.65
- Paralegal: 2
- Other: 11.38
Direct Legal Services: Cases

**Landlord/Tenant – Illegal Eviction**
One typical case involved a client and her wife who were victims of an unlawful eviction. At the time there was a pending eviction action for non-payment of rent as well. We helped the client contact the police, who issued an appearance ticket to the property manager, and also filed an emergency order to show cause seeking restoration and damages. On the basis of the order to show cause the Court granted restoration and the eviction action was dismissed with prejudice, but the court reserved on damages as there was the pending criminal matter as well. We connected with the District Attorney’s office on the matter and provided additional information to aid in their prosecution of the property manager and owner. In the end, our client was awarded $5,000.00 damages.

**Immigration – Cancellation of Removal**
We represented a Cuban national who entered the United States without documentation. Due to the end of the wet foot/dry foot policy, Immigration and Customs Enforcement refused to parole her into the United States. Pursuant to the Cuban Adjustment Act, a parole would have allowed her to file for her lawful permanent residence (LPR) after one year and one day of presence in the United States. With this repeal, the only relief available to her was asylum. For the fiscal year of 2022, the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) reports that only 5% of asylums filed by Cubans were granted in court. We were able to successfully represent her before the EOIR and argue here eligibility for asylum. The client now has lawful asylee status and will be eligible to file for LPR status within a year of this grant.
Other Services: Overview

HLA conducted 91 workshops and clinics benefitting 456 people, made 43 presentations to the community that reached 700 people, and participated in 73 collaborations with a total of 1,388 other people. Some of the locations where we held workshops or clinics and where we made community presentations include, but are not limited to: Westside Learning Center; Jervis Public Library; Office for New Americans Opportunity Centers; InterFaith Works; Catholic Charities; BOCES; Toomey Residential; The Center; Workers’ Center of CNY; YWCA of Mohawk Valley; and the Utica Public Library.

In addition to providing direct representation and community outreach HLA serves as a major source of referrals for residents of Onondaga County and the surrounding region. Since we have been in existence for over 70 years many clients call us for help no matter their legal issue, and while we strive to provide direct representation to as many clients as people there are some areas of the law we do not handle or some people who are not eligible for our services. Each client who calls is screened for eligibility by a well-trained and knowledgeable Law Assistant, who opens a case in our case management system if the caller is eligible or, when possible, makes an appropriate referral if the caller is not eligible for our services. In the 2021-2022 year HLA made 2,282 referrals.

| Number of People who Benefitted from Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Community Legal Education         | 10,700                        |
| Pro Se Assistance                 | 456                           |

11,156 People Benefitted by Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation
Other Services: Technology and Other Innovations

HLA continued to enhance and refine our data collection and reporting capacity in our case management system LegalServer through IT development, support staff training, and ongoing supervision of data entry. In addition, HLA leadership participated in the Central New York Community Foundation’s Performance Management Learning Community to increase data collection capacity.

On account of the COVID-19 pandemic we have been providing the majority of our services remotely until very recently, and have made great strides in technological capacity. All staff members now have webcams to allow for virtual meetings via Microsoft Teams with coworkers, community partners, and clients. We transferred phone service providers and switched over to a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) system, allowing all staff to be reachable at their HLA office line no matter where they are located. We have made investments in laptops and other mobile technology to ensure that staff can provide high quality services regardless of whether they are in office. Our website has been upgraded to be mobile-friendly, allowing potential clients and others to access our website to see our services and complete a brief intake form from any device.

Overall, these technological upgrades allowed us to transition quickly to a remote work environment when the COVID-19 pandemic began, and continued upgrades have allowed us to continue to provide our full-scope of legal services safely and securely throughout the pandemic and until this day.

Other Services: Trainings

Training and professional development are essential components of HLA. Our Management Teams take these obligations seriously, and make sure to provide professional, ethics, diversity and inclusion, anti-oppression, and cultural competency training to our staff. We maintain an Employee Portal on SharePoint, where staff can easily access policies, procedures, resources, and prior training materials. We also hold the following on-going intra-office meetings to allow for subject matter training and to foster professional growth: monthly Program meetings; monthly Practice Group meetings; Management Team meetings; and annual professional development and performance review meetings.

HLA also maintains an agreement with the Onondaga County Bar Association (OCBA) that allows all HLA staff to attend OCBA CLEs in our areas of practice at no charge. While generally these CLEs have been in person, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic they have been and will remain virtual. HLA also provides all staff with access to video CLEs available through the Practicing Law Institute, online Sexual Harassment Prevention and Anti-Discrimination training through Chubbworks, and will pay for staff to attend NYSBA and other trainings and CLEs on an individual basis, as appropriate.
Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

While Volunteer Lawyers Project of Central New York continues its role as the main source of volunteer implementation in Onondaga County we at HLA continue to recruit and develop interns, externs, pro bono scholars, and volunteers to aid in our representation and outreach.

We actively recruit interns and externs from the Syracuse University College of Law, participating in on-campus interviewing programs and speaking to externship classes. We also have a history of hosting pro bono scholars from Syracuse University College of Law. These interns, externs, and pro bono scholars provide vital support to our housing, immigration, and unemployment insurance benefit practice areas, increasing our capacity to assist those in need.

We also maintain an ongoing relationship with the Citizenship and Civic Engagement Program at Syracuse University, and have been the host for student placements for many years now. These undergraduate students assist us with outreach and community engagement, promoting our work and services to the wider community.

HLA also serves as a placement for students from the Falk School of Social Work at Syracuse University, and these students are able to work with our staff social workers to provide needed support to clients in need of services.

Our website also includes a portal through which people interested in volunteering can submit their information.

In 2021-2022 HLA hosted 20 volunteers who received training and experience and who provided support and assistance to our agency and programs.

13 Law Students volunteered 2,031 hours

7 Other Volunteers volunteered 513 hours
**Significant Collaborations**

Hiscock Legal Aid maintains close working relationships with many agencies and community organizations in Central and Upstate New York, particularly in the areas of domestic violence, immigration, and housing. We accept case referrals from all such organizations and also utilize the resources and expertise of these partner agencies to provide the best possible assistance to our clients.

One of our more long-standing partnerships is with Vera House, Inc., the local domestic violence prevention agency. Through our partnership with Vera House we obtained funding through the New York State Office of Violence Services to provide representation to survivors of domestic violence in family court abuse and neglect cases, and also serve as a primary source of referrals for domestic violence survivors who contact Vera House and need divorce, custody, support, or order of protection representation.

We are also members of the Housing and Homelessness Coalition of Central New York, which includes agencies from Onondaga, Oswego, and Cayuga Counties working to reduce, and hopefully eliminate, homelessness. In our role as a primary provider of representation to tenants we coordinate closely with the City of Syracuse, Legal Services of Central New York, Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York, and Volunteer Lawyers Project of Central New York to ensure that we are representing as many tenants as possible, with the goal being that every tenant in need of legal assistance is able to obtain it. Our Foreclosure Prevention Project also works closely with Home HeadQuarters, Inc. to provide housing counseling and legal services to homeowners facing foreclosure.

Our expanded Immigration Program serves an 18 county region of Upstate New York, and works closely with community organizations throughout this large geographic region. Volunteer Lawyers Project of Central New York is a subcontractor of ours on a portion of our funding from the Office of New Americans, and we collaborate closely with them to provide high quality immigration legal services throughout the region. Serving such a large geographic also requires maintaining strong relationships with other agencies, including The Center, Joint Council for Economic Opportunity of Clinton and Franklin Counties, Catholic Charities Northside CYO, InterFaith Works, Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency, and many others.

We also continue to collaborate with the Syracuse University College of Law, speaking to classes about our work and hosting interns, externs, pro bono scholars, volunteers, and newly admitted attorneys. We also have a relationship with the Falk School of Social Work at Syracuse University and the ability to host a social work student who can assist clients with accessing needed services.
## Sources of Funding

**State** 73%

- **IOLA Grant** $497,068
- **State Funding** $2,691,465
- **City and County Funding** $240,548
- **Federal Funding** $139,395
- **Other** $139,608

**Total** $3,708,084