Overview of Achievements

During the grant period, Legal Service NYC handled 49,342 individual cases that benefitted more than 107,321 people. We obtained $12,386,363 in retroactive benefits and $590,843 in monthly benefits ($7,090,115 annualized). Our work saved taxpayers $165,640,644. Our systemic litigation and advocacy helped more than 2.9 million low-income New Yorkers. Examples of our accomplishments include:

Protecting Tenants – It is critical that low-income New Yorkers are not forced to pay illegally high rents. We reached an August settlement with the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) that enacts desperately needed protections for the city’s nearly 400,000 public housing tenants. For years, NYCHA has been violating federal law by charging tenants more than 30% of their income by failing to adjust rents when income levels dropped, attempting to collect more than tenants owed or could pay, and initiating eviction proceedings—often unnecessarily pushing families into homelessness. The settlement that we and our pro bono co-counsel, Jenner & Block, reached with NYCHA requires the agency to reform its entire rent adjustment system, retrain staff, inform tenants of the new rent-reduction rules, and report to LSNYC regarding the agency’s progress every six months for the next three years.

Protecting Students – LSNYC sued the NYC Department of Education (DOE) for its shocking practice of failing to help students who are sexually assaulted or harassed. One of our clients, a 14-year-old girl with autism, was raped by a classmate in a school stairwell in the Bronx, after having suffered harassment by the boy, all of which was known to school staff. Pursuant to the settlement agreement reached last summer, the NYC DOE will make reporting and investigation processes more transparent to students and parents, make it easier for students to report assaults and escalate complaints, train staff on the new policies, and strengthen special education supports for students impacted by sexual assault and trauma.

Population Served: General Low Income Population

Area Served: New York City Metropolitan Area

Total IOLA Grant: $5,040,000

Staffing Full Time Equivalents:
- Total Staff: 632.10
- Lawyers: 369.5
- Paralegals: 145.95
- Other: 116.8
Direct Legal Services: Cases

Immigration:
Mr. U, our LGBTQ client, fled to New York from his home country of Georgia after suffering repeated hate crimes, including beatings, death threats, and verbal abuse. Traumatized and terrified, he had nowhere to turn because Georgia police officers refused to protect LGBTQ people and Mr. U was even illegally arrested and detained while officers used anti-LGBTQ slurs. Our advocates located hundreds of pages of evidence about violence against sexual minorities in Georgia, prepared the case, and represented Mr. U at his hearing. Even after over an hour of difficult questioning by the government’s attorney, Mr. U was granted asylum. He now has the opportunity for a new life.

Consumer/Finance:
In January 2022, Ms. K and her four children became homeless after a fire in their building which killed 17 tenants. They were fortunate to escape with their lives, but lost everything they owned. When Ms. K tried to use her J.P. Morgan Chase debit card to access her life savings of $5,000 to buy necessities and to rent a new apartment, she discovered her account had been frozen pursuant to a default judgment in a court case she had never been served with. Although her bank account contained nothing but child tax credit money, which New York law protects from restraints, the bank refused to give Ms. K access to her money or to credit back the levy fee until we intervened. Once the account was unfrozen, Ms. K's financial stability was restored, and her family was able to move into a new home. We are now working with her to vacate the default judgment.
Other Services: Overview

LSNYC conducts hundreds of community education programs each year. From April 2021 through March 2022, our community education and outreach, pro se assistance, and online outreach assisted 1,583,733 people. This included 757 people reached through in-person events, 5,640 people participating in interactive online events, 65,716 people accessing pre-recorded or static online content, 1,504,989 people reached through print/broadcast Know Your Rights education, 358 people reached through pro se assistance, and 6,273 people reached through on-line web-based assistance (online outreach).

We distribute Know Your Rights (KYR) materials as widely as possible, especially through easy-to access online videos, presentations, and toolkits. LSNYC maintains a COVID resource page on our website. Additionally, we operate three Legal Hand sites to help community members learn about their legal rights and connect with essential resources.

| Number of People who Benefitted from Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| Community Legal Education       | 1,577,102         |
| Pro Se Assistance               | 358               |
| Online Assistance               | 6,273             |

1,583,733 People Benefitted by Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation
Other Services: Technology and Other Innovations

Over the past year, we made significant technological investments, including upgrading our phone system and introducing new applications needed in a pandemic environment such as tools to track staff vaccination and testing status. Mobile and Web application for reporting Covid-19 vaccination and testing status – We deployed Kokomo, an application in both a mobile and a web format, for employees to upload their Covid-19 vaccination certificate and their weekly testing results if unvaccinated.

Office Seat Management – In anticipation of returning to the office beginning in April, we deployed Robin, a web-based application that employees use to complete COVID exposure screening and book seats and/or conference rooms in our offices.

New Phone System – We have started to roll out Ring Central’s cloud-based phone system that integrates voice, text, chat, video and conference calling. We are also in the final stages of configuring and testing a new Call Center software from the same vendor. The latter integrates with Legal Server, our case management system, allowing our hotline staff to pull up a client’s case history automatically.

Access Line Automation – We have developed a project to automate several labor-intensive steps we currently use with the tens of thousands of callers to our Access Line. These include interactive decision trees, a robust contact data base and caller history, data interfaces to Legal Server and automated appointment scheduling between the intake client and our advocate. The solution incorporates several modern Call Center technologies such as Customer Relationship Management (CRM), interaction with callers using text, voice, and chat.

Other Services: Trainings

LSNYC operates the Justice Learning Center (JLC), the largest and most comprehensive CLE poverty law education program in the country. We train over 3,200 participants annually, including LSNYC staff, public interest attorneys and pro bono attorneys. Our course curriculum includes substantive law, practice skills, ethics, supervision/management and diversity, equity, and inclusion courses. In the last year we expanded our webinar and recorded on-demand offerings to give our advocates the opportunity to attend more courses and view courses on-demand. We now have over 100 on-demand trainings and recorded events.

In addition to the ongoing substantive trainings in areas including Housing, Immigration, Family, Government Benefits, Foreclosure, Economic Development, LGBTQ and HIV Advocacy, Consumer, Education and Employment law, in 2021 the JLC provided a portfolio of trainings focusing on specific pandemic practice topics such as the following: Non-payments in the Post-Pandemic Era, Housing Rights in the Age of Covid-19: Post Chrysafis-A Basic Overview of COVID Defenses, and LSNYC’s 2021 Veterans Justice Symposium: Pre, During and Post Pandemic Services for Veterans.
Impact Cases

Protecting Rent-Stabilized Tenants:
Landlord Emerald Equity Group applied to New York State’s Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) to have six of its Bronx apartment buildings deregulated so that the company could dramatically increase rents and force long-term rent-stabilized tenants to move out. Its application to do this was based on the expiration of a 20-year tax break provided after renovations were done to the buildings. The renovations had been paid for in the early ‘90s by government loans. We fought this unfair application, which would have displaced 500 low income people. In March 2022, we were successful and DHCR ruled against Emerald Equity so the buildings remain stabilized. We are now working to force Emerald Equity to repair many hazardous conditions in the buildings, including rodents, roaches, mold, leaks, plumbing problems, inconsistent heat and hot water, and dysfunctional elevators.

Repairs & Remuneration for Tenants in Fire-Ravaged Building:
In another case involving an unscrupulous landlord, we represented tenants in a Manhattan building on East 110th Street, negotiating a consent order requiring the landlord to make repairs following a fire that severely damaged the building. Instead of complying with their obligations, the landlord sold the building to new owners. Meanwhile, the City had ordered the tenants to vacate the building. We filed motions requesting that the court award our clients’ relocation and storage costs from the date of the fire through the date of restoration, as well as civil penalties and contempt damages. After extensive negotiations, in October of 2022, the tenants were finally able to return to the building and take possession of their newly renovated rent stabilized apartments. As part of the settlement, $262,200 in damages are being paid to our clients, who will also receive rent credits of nearly $35,000. Battling Discrimination in Benefits Provision – We filed a lawsuit with co-counsel NYCLU against New York State’s Office of Temporary Disability Assistance (OTDA), the agency in charge of public benefits, for discriminating against nonbinary New Yorkers by refusing to offer a “gender x” marker on forms and in their systems. The lawsuit challenges OTDA’s practice of forcing nonbinary New Yorkers to go without life-saving benefits unless they agree to mis-gender themselves. “New York State … [is] conditioning access to lifesaving assistance by forcing me to deny my true gender,” said one of our clients. This lawsuit is helping to propel expansion of the NY State Gender Recognition Act.
Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

LSNYC’s pro bono program utilizes law firms, corporations, law schools, and individual volunteers to serve clients and advance our mission. Pro bono volunteers help in at least three ways: (1) cocounseling on large cases; (2) taking on special projects—such as research and brief writing; and (3) direct representation of clients through clinics and individual placements.

Over the course of the past 12 months, LSNYC’s pro bono unit continued to create innovative new programming to respond to emergent client needs. In particular, we created an ERAP application clinic to help tenants remain in their homes and have back-rent and utility bills that accrued because of the pandemic paid by the government. Applying for this benefit was urgent, because once the funding was spent tenants who otherwise qualified for relief would be turned away. More than a dozen large law firms and corporations stepped up to help hundreds of tenants over 44 clinics—until ERAP funding was fully allocated.

LSNYC also created a clinic for Asian Pacific Islander (API) immigrants who had experienced violence, partnering with Skadden to determine whether clients qualified for a range of potential forms of immigration relief. Also notable was the creation of a new combined transgender affirmative asylum and name change clinic. Many of our transgender asylum clients have lived in the U.S. for more than a year, and therefore missed the window to apply for this relief. But securing a legal name change and gender marker change qualifies as a “changed circumstance” that enables these individuals to re-open the timeframe for applying for asylum. By using the same pro bono team to apply for both forms of relief, LSNYC ensures that clients not only obtain two essential forms of legal relief, but that the intersection of the name change with the asylum case is carefully managed by a legal team responsible for both.

3,972 Attorneys volunteered 52,248 hours

540 Law Students volunteered 16,528 hours

376 Other Volunteers volunteered 637 hours
Significant Collaborations

Across the city and in all of our practice areas, LSNYC has hundreds of collaborations with legal services providers, community-based organizations, law schools, elected officials, courts, and virtually every poverty-advocacy group in the city. Collaboration is a core part of our practice model. A few examples follow.

**Housing** – LSNYC works closely with tenant advocacy groups across the city to better assist low income tenants. Together we implement strategies including litigation, complaints to administrative agencies, and media campaigns. In May 2021, for example, we helped found the Bronx Rental Assistance Network (BRAN) to assist people with applications for ERAP. BRAN includes: BronxWorks, HELP USA, Montefiore Hospital’s University Behavioral Associates, WHEDco, FedCap, and Mosholu Montefiore Medical Center. BRAN created and still operates a hotline from 9:00 to 5:00 on weekdays. Similarly, in Queens we began collaborating with Catholic Charities and six other housing service providers to provide ERAP assistance. Also, in collaboration with VOCAL, Take Root Justice, MFJ, UJC/SNP, and Bronx Defenders, we provided legal support to SHOUT (Supportive Housing Organized and United Tenants), a new tenant-led coalition for residents of supportive housing.

**Foreclosure Prevention and Homeowner Protection** – As foreclosure moratoriums have concluded and foreclosure activity resumes in the courts, as noted above, New York confronts mortgage default rates that dwarf those seen during the height of the great recession, making LSNYC’s foreclosure prevention collaborations critically important. LSNYC serves as Technical Assistance Partner (TAP) for the Center for NYC Neighborhoods (CNYCN), which is the Anchor Partner for the Attorney General’s Home Ownership Protection Program. The program supports a statewide network of 90 housing counseling and legal services providers. In our TAP capacity, we provide training and mentoring to foreclosure prevention advocates statewide, and lead advocacy efforts focusing on predatory lending, abusive mortgage servicing and foreclosure consumer protections. We also partner with the judiciary to ensure a fair judicial foreclosure process and access to justice for those without access to counsel. Also, in a new effort in Staten Island, we are working with the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) to ensure an accessible and affordable process for low-income petitioners seeking to administer the estates of deceased loved ones so they can save family homes. In addition to helping HDP to assist new clients, our efforts will make the court more accessible to additional pro se litigants through reduced court fees.
Significant Collaborations

**LGBTQ Advocacy** – We are a founding member of a citywide LGBTQ legal services roundtable, which meets bi-monthly to collaborate on issues affecting low-income LGBTQ New Yorkers. We partner with many LGBTQ organizations. In just one example, we just expanded our partnership with Callen-Lorde Community Health Center, the largest LGBTQ-serving clinic in the nation. Starting in October 2021, we now also do intake at Callen-Lorde’s new Brooklyn location, which opened last year during the pandemic.

**Community-based Service Delivery** – Our community-based partnerships facilitate service delivery in a vast array of sites throughout the city, including Henry Street Settlement, Grand Street Settlement, Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, the Center for Family Life, the Fifth Avenue Committee, Good Shepherd Services, and Fortune Society. Additionally, we work with VA medical facilities, NYC’s Family Justice Centers, CLARO sites, and many other locations. In one of our new partnerships, we are working in Queens with Unite NYC, a network of health, social service, housing, and legal service providers formed in November 2021. Unite NYC is sponsored by the NYC Department of Veterans’ Services, Public Health Solutions, and the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice. The partnership provides referrals from dozens of community-based organizations that serve families and children. Pro Bono partnerships – We also have many important pro bono collaborations with law firms and corporations. For example, we partnered with Skadden, O’Melveny, Goodwin, Simpson Thacher, Cleary, MetLife, Bloomberg, Morgan Stanley, and many others to offer an ERAP virtual application clinic that has helped hundreds of low-income individuals seeking payment of back rent and utilities.

**Sources of Funding**

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![Source of Funding Pie Chart]

City 45%

Other 25%

State 12%

Federal 14%

IOLA 4%