Overview of Achievements

From April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022, NYLAG’s paid staff increased to 334.7 FTE, including 208.45 FTE attorneys and 74.9 FTE paralegals. NYLAG closed 28,285 cases for 63,352 people in New York City, Westchester, and Long Island. Across New York State, 7,670,921 people benefited, or may benefit, from NYLAG’s successful impact litigation, either through active cases or ongoing monitoring. Some 5,093 individuals attended 150 community education workshops and trainings. There were 8,186,804 beneficiaries from closed impact cases or matters during the reporting period. Clients received back awards totaling $9,455,780 and monthly benefits totaling $391,556, including insurance payouts, public benefits, and child/spousal support. Clients avoided $31,317,656 in lump sum settlements and obtained $1,431,357 in ongoing monthly savings through reductions in consumer debt, mortgage payments, and other expenses. NYLAG’s pro bono program recruited 1,566 volunteer attorneys, paralegals, law students, and others, who donated 80029.81 hours. During the period, NYLAG launched and continued several initiatives to improve New Yorkers’ access to justice, including:

- **Afghan Humanitarian Parole Program:** In 2021, NYLAG, together with the International Rescue Committee and pro bono attorneys, developed a program to help Afghan refugees apply for Humanitarian Parole to bring family to the U.S. To date, we filed 200 applications and continue to mentor asylum cases, educate the community about Temporary Protected Status, and greet parolees brought to the U.S. NYLAG also just launched a program for Ukrainian refugees.

- **New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Defense Team (NDT):** Launched in response to the Right to Counsel program expansion to include administrative NYCHA Termination of Tenancy proceedings, NDT is the first team of legal advocates in New York solely dedicated to representing the interests and defending the rights of public housing residents through Right to Counsel and beyond. NDT engages in community outreach and organizing and policy advocacy.

---

**Population Served:** General Low Income Population  

**Area Served:** New York City Metropolitan Area  

**Total IOLA Grant:** $1,125,000  

**Staffing Full Time Equivalents:**  
- Total Staff: 334.70  
- Lawyers: 208.45  
- Paralegals: 74.90  
- Other: 51.35
Direct Legal Services: Cases

**Family Law:**
Aliza and Avi were married in Brooklyn in 2008. From the outset of their marriage, Avi had extreme outbursts that made Aliza feel unsafe. Aliza learned to expend all her energy trying to please Avi to keep him calm. Aliza had to call the police one day when Avi became so irate that he smashed their TV and computers with a baseball bat and threatened to strangle Aliza, waking up their two sons. Aliza endured Avi’s terrible outbursts and threats over the years, all while trying to protect their children. Once, Avi became so violent that he ripped their bedroom door from its hinges, threw Aliza’s vanity table against the wall, and forcefully grabbed Aliza’s laptop from her hands and smashed it on the floor, injuring Aliza.

In 2016, Aliza decided to leave Avi and found NYLAG through a family member. NYLAG helped Aliza file for custody and for an order of protection. Avi used the court process to continue to abuse and humiliate Aliza. Although Avi tried to stall the court process as much as possible, NYLAG succeeded in obtaining a final order of sole custody for Aliza with a five-year order of protection—the longest possible in New York Family Court. Even after these court cases were completed, Avi tried to vacate the final orders, but NYLAG got Avi’s case dismissed.
Direct Legal Services: Cases

Health Law:
Betty is a 76-year-old Jamaican immigrant who lives with her daughter in public housing. NYLAG previously helped her with naturalization in 2020. In July 2021, Betty’s daughter contacted NYLAG’s Evelyn Frank Legal Resources Program (EFLRP) because Betty, who has dementia, diabetes, and many other impairments, fell and then, while in rehab, suffered a severe stroke. She suddenly lost Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid during the 7-week rehab stay. Discontinuance of Medicaid triggered disenrollment from her Managed Long-Term Care (MLTC) plan that had been providing 70 hours/week of home care, which she needed to return home. EFLRP’s attorney settled a fair hearing, winning reinstatement of Medicaid and MLTC enrollment because discontinuance violated federal COVID-19 “maintenance of effort” protections. The attorney also won reinstatement of SSI after filing an appeal and the nursing home physician’s certification of Betty’s plan to return home, which continues SSI for 3 months.

By September 2021, Betty was ready to go home, but the MLTC plan refused to increase hours to 24-hour care. Betty needed this both because of her diminished condition and because her daughter could no longer provide daily care. EFLRP’s attorney filed a request to increase her hours, which the MLTC plan denied initially and after a plan appeal. EFLRP’s attorney requested a fair hearing on Nov. 9, 2021. Over the next month, while awaiting the fair hearing to be scheduled, EFLRP’s attorney negotiated with the MLTC plan’s representatives, presenting compelling evidence of Betty’s need. After the plan first agreed only to increase services to 24-hour live in, they finally agreed to provide 24-hour split-shift, allowing Betty to come home.

Other Services: Overview

Community Education: NYLAG conducted virtual community education workshops in partnership with health and human service organizations, offices of elected officials, government agencies, and schools, educating New Yorkers on their rights and the availability of free legal services. Staff conducted 150 community trainings and clinics for 4,410 community members. The following are a few examples. The Mediation Project offered a remote mediation training to court staff and Legal Services of NYC attorneys and conducted a webinar on intimate partner violence and consensual dispute resolution. The Immigrant Protection Unit has been offering a lot of community education on Temporary Protected Status (for Haitians, Venezuelans, Syrians, and now Afghans and Ukrainians) as well as other changes in options for immigration status and relief. The Foreclosure Prevention Project held town hall outreach events to educate New Yorkers about the Homeowners Assistance Fund program.
Other Services: Overview

The Consumer Protection Unit participated in town hall outreach events to describe our legal services through our Taxi Advocacy Project with the TLC commissioner and the Department of Consumer Affairs. EFLRP conducted virtual presentations during the annual Medicare Part D enrollment period. The Tenants’ Right Unit conducted a five-part virtual training for caseworkers and consumers of Center for Independence of the Disabled focusing on the housing rights for individuals with disabilities. LegalHealth hosted several webinars and virtual events on the NYC Eviction Moratorium and other updates to housing law during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Public Benefits Unit’s Elder Law Practice staff trained community members on Medicaid and pooled trusts, supplemental hardship fund for Holocaust survivors, advance planning, guardianship alternatives, and elder abuse, scams and financial protection. The Employment Law Practice continued to offer trainings on workers’ rights, including on pandemic-related insurance programs, COVID-related sick and family leave, and workers’ rights accommodations.

Pro Se Assistance & Volunteer Resources: NYLAG offers pro se assistance and resources to individuals (563 this period, which is lower than usual given the challenges of remote service delivery for pro se assistance). NYLAG typically co-runs Project FAIR with Legal Aid Society, staffing a help desk with Public Benefits Unit staff and law students at the Economic Justice Clinic. The Project was put on hold in March 2020; when sites re-open, the Project will resume.

The Consumer Protection Unit’s Volunteer Lawyer for The Day (VLFD) Project made significant strides in its collaboration and coordination with Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island Courts. VLFD staff began talks and provided presentations to Judges in these counties. Judges ask for our program to run on as many days as possible and view VLFD as a valuable service to defendants and the courts. We have served ~30,000 clients since the program started in 2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of People who Benefitted from Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Legal Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Se Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Assistance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

269,781 People Benefitted by Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation
Other Services: Technology and Other Innovations

Given the rapid shift to remote work with the onset of the pandemic, all of NYLAG’s Units and Projects have continued to rely on mobile technology to offer high quality virtual services to clients. Throughout the year, staff have been offering trainings and meeting with clients through videoconferencing platforms, using Microsoft Teams to facilitate internal communications, and relying on SharePoint to organize and share documents. Online access to the Legal Server database facilitates effective offsite work, which has been invaluable for the agency’s current remote working model. The agency has also continued to utilize online intake, enabling clients and case workers to fill out basic contact, demographic, and legal information, which is automatically uploaded to NYLAG’s case management database before the client connects with a NYLAG case handler. The agency has designed online intake forms for a number of practice areas to ensure the best information is captured for clients, allowing case handlers to dedicate more of their time to direct client services.

Other Services: Trainings

NYLAG cultivates the professional development of its staff. The agency continues to implement a mandatory implicit bias training offered to staff in small groups, offers ongoing sexual harassment trainings, and offers a cyber security training for all staff. As part of its summer internship program, NYLAG ran a virtual Continuing Legal Education program for interns and NYLAG staff in the summer of 2021, hosting 45 CLE trainings on various topics. The Consumer Protection Unit’s newer staff from the Taxi Advocacy Project attended the National Consumer Law Center Annual Conference. The Foreclosure Prevention Project is a New York State Homeowner Assistance Fund partner and its staff has been trained on the program. The Domestic Violence Law Unit has structured monthly meetings, which include a substantive learning portion or vicarious trauma/wellness component to help our staff more holistically respond to client needs. The Mediation Project attended trainings on bankruptcy and matrimonial law, ethics for mediators, mediating with attorneys in the room and mediating real estate issues. The Public Benefits Unit continued to participate in webinars on COVID-related laws and issues to stay up-to-date on best practices for addressing changes with Medicaid and home care, remote notarization of documents, and virtual execution of advance directives. The Immigrant Protection Unit sent staff to trainings on acquisition of citizenship, administrative claims for abuse and misconduct by immigration officers, bond proceedings, U Visas, and more. The Tenants’ Rights Unit held a ten-part remote training series for newly hired attorneys and paralegals. Employment Law Project attended Practicing Law Institute trainings on discrimination, wage and hour, and sick and family leave. LegalHealth invited various organizations, including NY Cares, NYC H+H, and God’s Love We Deliver, to present at weekly staff meetings. EFLRP attorneys and volunteers attended the two-day Annual Meeting of the NYSBA Elder Law and Special Needs Section in January 2022.
Impact Cases

SIJS/PRUCOL:
NYLAG negotiated a settlement, pre-litigation, with the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) and the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) in August 2021, on behalf of Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) beneficiaries—unmarried immigrants under 21 years old who were abandoned, abused, or neglected by one or both of their parents. Due to a visa backlog, approximately 7,695 abused and neglected youth in New York State have been granted SIJ status but are not yet eligible to receive green cards and work permits. NYLAG challenged New York’s policy that found SIJS beneficiaries categorically ineligible for basic New York-funded subsistence benefits, called Safety Net Assistance, even though such benefits were available to other similarly-situated immigrants who are considered “Permanently Residing Under Color of Law” (PRUCOL).

Milestones: In August 2021, OTDA changed its policy to allow SIJS beneficiaries to apply for these essential state-funded cash assistance benefits.

Impact: During the two- to five-year wait resulting from the visa backlog, children with approved SIJS are unable to work lawfully, access federal financial aid for college, and provide for themselves. Due to NYLAG’s advocacy, 7,695 SIJS beneficiaries in New York State awaiting adjustment of status can obtain state-funded benefits if they are financially eligible.

Class Action filed in June 2017 against The New York State Department of Health (DOH). This lawsuit challenged New York’s failure to protect individuals with low incomes who depend on Medicaid home care, called Managed Long Term Care Plans (MLTCs), when the private companies providing the care close. DOH allowed enrollees of the closing MLTCs to lose care services without any notice or a hearing.

Milestones: In October 2021, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York granted summary judgment in favor of the Plaintiffs, finding that DOH violated their rights under the Medicaid Act and the due process clause of the fourteenth amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The Parties are currently negotiating declaratory and injunctive relief for the class.

Impact: NYLAG hopes to ensure that Medicaid recipients are not deprived of their vital right to adequate notice before reduction in Medicaid-funded services.
Impact Cases

Williams v. Equitable Acceptance:
Class Action filed in August 2018, against Equitable Acceptance Corporation (EAC) and its President Jeffrey Henn. The complaint alleged that EAC, its President, and more than 40 other companies engaged in a coordinated scheme to sell sham debt relief services to tens of thousands of federal student loan borrowers. These companies charged borrowers about $1,300, told them they could pay with a “payment plan,” and sent borrowers to EAC, which gave them an entirely new loan in the form of a maxed-out line of credit—with sky-high 21% interest. Co-counsel Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan, LLP.

Milestones: On August 3, 2021, the Court granted approval to a class-wide Settlement.

Impact: EAC agreed to stop collecting on all loans, selling borrowers’ remaining balance to another company, and credit reporting. EAC is also forbidden from financing new student debt relief. The settlement provided relief totaling over $2M to tens of thousands of borrowers. The case is a model for state law enforcement, which filed against the same entities after NYLAG.

Significant Collaborations

Collaboration with other legal services organizations, community groups, and social service providers is central to NYLAG’s service-delivery model. The agency maintains mutual referral relationships with many organizations and participates in community events, trainings, and workshops. During the reporting period, NYLAG maintained many partnerships, which enabled the agency to carry out more efficient and effective programs that had a broader impact. The Tenants Rights Unit’s NYCHA Defense Team (NDT) has connected with several community-based and tenant organizations that serve the public housing community in New York City, including The Red Hook Initiative, the Red Hook Community Justice Center, GOLES, Residents to Preserve Public Housing, Community Voices Heard and Manhattan Community Board 11. Through these connections, we have set up and conducted Know Your Rights trainings, and created referral pipelines for NYCHA-specific representation and advice and counsel. The Immigrant Protection Unit continues to work closely with partners as part of the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative, which has been instrumental this year in advocating for detained immigrants affected by the closure of three local ICE detention facilities. LegalHealth strengthened collaborations through the National Cancer Legal Services Network (NCLSN), founded by LegalHealth in 2008. In December 2021, NCLSN formed the NCLSN Leadership Team, comprised of members from four different NCLSN organizations, to increase community education efforts.
Significant Collaborations

The Foreclosure Prevention Project partnered with NYC Office of Trials and Hearings (OATH) and launched pro bono projects in Queens and the Bronx. Our attorneys now assist unrepresented homeowners defend against Department of Building violations at OATH hearings and have saved New York homeowners thousands of dollars in dismissed and reduced violations. In March 2021, The Domestic Violence Law Unit connected with and began accepting referrals from Nido de Esperanza, an organization that works with pregnant and parenting mothers. The Mediation Project worked with a group of domestic violence advocates, court administrators, judges and private mediators to create a new pre-mediation screening tool to be used uniformly in NYS to evaluate which matrimonial and family court cases are appropriate for mediation and to design a training on the new pre-mediation screening tool mandatory for any mediator on court rosters.

The Public Benefits Unit and Evelyn Frank Legal Resources Program continue to participate in a Medicaid Advocacy Group with the Human Resources Administration, which took place every two weeks. During these meetings, staff discuss Medicaid and home care issues and advocate for changes. Both units are also part of the HIICAP (Health Insurance Information, Counseling, and Assistance Program) Consortium, a group of non-profits convened by the NY State Office for the Aging to provide expertise to county offices of the aging that counsel seniors on Medicare and Medicaid, and to conduct direct Medicare counseling. EFLRP joined with five other organizations, including Legal Aid Society, to launch an advocacy initiative to equalize eligibility for all Medicaid recipients. Thanks to their advocacy, Medicaid and Medicare Savings Program (MSP) income and asset limits were increased in the NYS Budget in April 2022.

Sources of Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IOLA Grant</td>
<td>$1,125,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City and County Funding</td>
<td>$17,117,737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Funding</td>
<td>$6,959,631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>$6,225,391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundations</td>
<td>$3,111,423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>$1,366,328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$35,905,510</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

NYLAG’s Pro Bono and Volunteer Unit leverages volunteers to enhance the agency’s programs. In addition to internal volunteers, the agency hosts clinics in partnership with law firms and makes referrals to attorneys who work on cases under NYLAG’s supervision. This reporting period, the Unit recruited 1,034 pro bono attorneys who donated 24,498.81. We recruited pro bono attorneys to handle cases under NYLAG mentorship and recruited additional pro bono attorneys for clinics. NYLAG also hosted 132 college students, law students and law graduates as part of an internship program. In total, 353 law students provided case/matter services. The Unit is training 25 new volunteer interpreters and translators for the Language Access Volunteer Program.

NYLAG’s Immigrant Protection Unit partnered with law firms, which are providing pro bono support for our Afghan Humanitarian Parole program, who have helped to file more than 200 Humanitarian Parole applications for Afghans. NYLAG’s Domestic Violence Law Unit worked with law students, interns, and pro bono attorneys to assist survivors of domestic violence with obtaining orders of protection. NYLAG continued its partnership with Shearman & Sterling LLP through which the firm’s pro bono attorneys assist with staffing NYLAG’s COVID-19 Legal Resource Hotline. NYLAG also expanded capacity by including law students and law graduates. To date, 75 volunteers have volunteered 1,095 hours. To support Veteran’s Practice’s new Discharge Upgrade Project, we have two law firms working with us. The Veterans Practice established an experiential project with Columbia Law in Fall 2021. Over the academic year, six Columbia law students have worked with the Veterans Practice for over 800 hours of volunteer work. NYLAG’s Mediation Project continued to work with pro bono attorneys and mediators, with 32 volunteers offering comprehensive services, from intake to final divorce judgment; four law students worked on the Project as well.

1,034 Attorneys volunteered 24,499 hours

353 Law Students volunteered 30,651 hours

171 Other Volunteers volunteered 24,149 hours