Overview of Achievements

We closed 1,010 cases and benefitted 1,748 individuals during the reporting period. The Pro Bono Programs of the New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) target individuals living in the five boroughs of New York City, but many of our programs serve residents of any county in New York State. Our programs work with various populations, including individuals with criminal records, individuals who have been wrongfully or unfairly investigated by the Administration for Children’s Services, individuals with disabilities who have been denied crucial government benefits, individuals with consumer debt issues, as well as low-income New Yorkers who have inquiries involving housing, employment, or family law.

Because of our work, low-income people have realized a number of benefits, such as:
- Stopping or reducing debt collection activity through limited scope advice and representation, in our CLARO and Volunteer Lawyer for the Day Programs;
- Avoiding or reversing findings of child neglect by child protective services agencies, through our State Central Registry Project, thereby improving access to employment and other opportunities;
- Winning remands in the Southern District of New York for individuals with disabilities who were denied Social Security benefits, through our Social Security SDNY Project;
- Removing barriers to employment, housing, and civic participation for individuals with criminal records through the Reentry Initiative, including the Certificates Project and Project Restore;
- Empowering low-income individuals to effectively resolve legal concerns relating to housing, employment, and family law through our Legal Counseling Project.

Population Served: General  Low Income Population

Area Served: New York County and Surrounding Areas

Total IOLA Grant: $62,500

Staffing Full Time Equivalents:
- Total Staff: 3.25
- Lawyers: 2.25
- Other: 1
Overview of Achievements

Following the onboarding of our new case management system LegalServer, that went live in the spring of 2020 staff and volunteers have been able to use LegalServer to securely store case documents and information, record time, and track case events such as hearings. During this reporting period we implemented the Online Intake Form module through LegalServer, to facilitate our access to potential clients and the process of collecting their information and documents. Our Pro Bono Department staff also expanded this year with the addition of a part-time staff attorney who provides direct case services and supervision across our programs. Another part-time staff attorney is exclusively devoted to our consumer debt work.

Direct Legal Services: Cases

Case Example 1 (from our Social Security SDNY Project)—Category: Health
Ms. D is 61 years old. She worked as a registered nurse for many years, until she was assaulted by a patient in 2015 and suffered a traumatic brain injury. She was found eligible for Workers Compensation, but was denied Social Security Disability Benefits. She suffers from a degenerative joint disease of the knees and shoulders, bilaterally, osteoarthritis of the feet, post-concussion syndrome, neuro-cognitive disorder, anxiety, depression, traumatic brain injury, and narcolepsy. An Administrative Law Judge wrongfully made light of her mental and cognitive impairments, and despite her advanced age found, incorrectly, that Ms. D could work, and was therefore ineligible for benefits.

A NYCLA volunteer attorney took on Ms. D’s case in the United States District Court in the Southern District of New York as part of our Social Security SDNY Project. The volunteer prepared a letter advocating for the case to be remanded out of the Southern District for another hearing at the administrative level. The volunteer’s advocacy was strong enough that the Social Security Administration agreed to a voluntary remand based on the points made in that letter, which showed the inaccuracies of the ALJ’s initial decision. Ms. D is now able to pursue receiving the benefits she needs and deserves.
Direct Legal Services: Cases

Case Example 2 (from our State Central Registry Project)—Category: Family

Ms. P is an individual who was reported to the State Central Registry of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) in 2016. At that time, she had recently moved into an apartment from a domestic violence shelter, after fleeing abuse from her partner and her own mother. In the new apartment, the windows had loose locks but had bars on the windows. Ms. P informed the landlord of the loose window locks. In 2016, Ms. P’s toddler got out of bed and climbed between the bars on the window. Ms. P soon woke up and pulled her son back inside. He was not hurt, but someone had noticed him at the window and a report was made to the SCR. Ms. P cooperated with the Administration of Children’s Services (ACS) and was not taken to court, and thought the incident was fully resolved until she applied for a teaching position years later and was informed about the indicated report against her on the SCR.

NYCLA volunteer attorneys from a partner law firm represented Ms. P’s case at the administrative level. They advocated that Ms. P’s report be amended and sealed so it would no longer be an obstacle to her livelihood. Their advocacy was compelling enough that the ACS agreed that the report should be amended and sealed, however the Administrative Law Judge ruled against Ms. P. The attorneys decided to continue representation of Ms. P to appeal in New York State Supreme Court in an Article 78 proceeding, which resulted in a favorable settlement for the client. Ms. P is now able to pursue her chosen profession without unfair obstacles.
Other Services: Overview

NYCLA’s Pro Bono Department provides Community Legal Education as a form of outreach for our programs. During this reporting period, we conducted 15 outreach programs which served a total of 673 individuals. Organizing virtual presentations has become an increasing focus since the COVID-19 pandemic affected our in-person program operations. While our direct legal services have been relatively easy to provide remotely, accessing the target populations for each of our programs has been more challenging, especially for programs that previously reached clients through in-person clinics. NYCLA’s Director of Pro Bono Programs has given a number of presentations to partner community organizations, including to The Doe Fund and The HOPE Program on our Certificates Project, aimed at individuals with criminal records. Presentations were also held at General Membership Meetings of the Independent Drivers Guild, on the Eviction Moratorium, the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, and the housing help provided by our Legal Counseling Project. The Pro Bono Department has also given presentations to the Attorney Emeritus Program volunteer base to provide information to prospective volunteers.

| Number of People who Benefitted from Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Community Legal Education                                      | 673                         |
Other Services: Technology and Other Innovations

During the reporting period, we expanded our use of our case management system, LegalServer. The most significant expansion of this system is our implementation of online intake forms, primarily for the Legal Counseling Project and the Volunteer Lawyer for the Day Consumer Debt Program. This platform has facilitated the process of tracking case data and volunteer assignments, and securely storing documents. NYCLA is also exploring the texting feature of the LegalServer technology.

During this reporting period we also implemented the use of phone interpretation services to better provide assistance to non-English speakers. This service has been invaluable for expanding our access to the target populations for our programs and providing more inclusive legal help.

Other Services: Trainings

The New York County Lawyers Association ensures that the Board attends periodic trainings on good governance. Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler LLP is our non-profit outside counsel, with expertise to conduct these trainings.

We have two part-time staff attorneys in addition to the Pro Bono Director, one of whom focuses on consumer debt, and one of whom is a generalist. The consumer debt staff attorney attends regular CLE programs to stay up to date on the latest developments. The generalist took all of our available pro bono program trainings and received individualized training and resources from the Pro Bono Director and Pro Bono Programs Administrator. As we expand and add additional attorneys, we tailor professional development programs to their needs. The Pro Bono Director attends periodic training programs on current issues in the law.

For our Pro Bono Programs Administrator, our co-employer provides online professional development tools and classes. The Pro Bono Director also directly mentors the Pro Bono Programs Administrator.

Further, NYCLA takes issues of cultural humility and diversity seriously. NYCLA’s Pro Bono Director and staff attorneys have attended the Cultural Humility Trainings developed by the New York State Bar Association in collaboration with the Attorney Emeritus Program. In addition, both NYCLA’s Pro Bono Director and Pro Bono Programs Administrator participated in the InclusionLabs 9-week Fellowship Program, which equips leaders with the critical understanding of identity and DEI, the practical skills for identifying and acting upon opportunities for inclusion, and the learning community of fellow leaders that are crucial to growing and sustaining inclusive leadership practices, both in and out of the workplace.
Impact Cases

Impact Litigation:
The New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA), in collaboration with other Bar Leaders filed a lawsuit in June 2021 against New York State and New York City to improve the compensation provided to attorneys who serve the indigent as assigned counsel pursuant to Article 18-B of the County Law. The lawsuit highlights the pay inequities for assigned counsel in New York State and calls for an end to the violation of the constitutional rights of children and indigent adults to meaningful and effective legal representation by the 18B and AFC panels in family and criminal court proceedings. As of the date of the submission of this annual report, the lawsuit is pending and awaiting a decision on NYCLA’s motion for a preliminary injunction. At this time, NYCLA conservatively estimates 400 direct beneficiaries of this lawsuit, however the ripple effects on the lives of children and indigent adults will be in the thousands.

Amicus Briefs:
In December 2021, NYCLA filed an amicus brief in the matter of Jesus Ferreira v. City of Binghamton, Binghamton Police Department, and Police Officer Kevin Miller in the New York State Court of Appeals regarding insufficient regulation of police raids, arguing against the application of the “special duty” doctrine and asking the court to apply standard tort law to the facts of the case.

NYCLA filed an amicus brief in the Supreme Court of the United States in the matter of the New York State Rifle & Pistol Association, Inc. et al. v. Kevin P. Bruen, in his Official Capacity as Superintendent New York State Police et al., regarding gun regulation and particularly the proliferation of untraceable “ghost guns”.

Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

Our recruitment, training and deployment of pro bono attorneys, law students and other volunteers is tailored differently for each of our programs. We use our #NYCLAMission Pro Bono Programs Newsletter to highlight the work of our volunteers in the various programs we run, and as a general recruitment tool.

The Social Security SDNY Project has a recorded webinar training available on our website to any interested volunteer. This program is pitched to law firms or other attorneys seeking experience in federal litigation, particularly in the Southern District of New York.

The State Central Registry Project has a recorded webinar training available on our website to any interested volunteer. We have success assigning cases to a variety of attorney volunteers, from big law firms to solo practitioners. We also use this program for our recent law graduates who are interested in earning their 50 hours of pro bono, since the time commitment is less burdensome than traditional litigation.

The Legal Counseling Program has recorded webinar trainings in the areas of Housing, Family, and Employment Law available on our website to any interested volunteer. Additional webinar trainings specifically focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Employment law and Housing law are also available to volunteers online. This program is a good fit for solo/small firm practitioners or AEP attorneys.

Our Reentry Initiative programs offer opportunities for new volunteers to review training materials and receive training from the Director of Pro Bono Programs. With the implementation of virtual legal clinics for the Certificates Project, new volunteers are able to observe and assist experienced volunteers in consultations with clients before moving on to conduct consultations themselves.

366 Attorneys volunteered 2,667 hours

12 Law Students volunteered 133 hours

1 Other Volunteer volunteered 22 hours
Significant Collaborations

We work closely with a number of community organizations that serve individuals with criminal records, primarily for our Certificates Project. These organizations, which include The Doe Fund, The Fortune Society, The HOPE Program, and The Center for Appellate Litigation, typically host in-person legal clinics to connect their clients with NYCLA Pro Bono volunteers. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, these organizations have continued to provide regular referrals to connect their clients to our Reentry Initiative programs. We also held six virtual legal clinics during the reporting period with The Doe Fund and The HOPE Program. These events provided direct services for multiple clients. For our programs that provide full representation, including the Social Security SDNY Project, the State Central Registry Project, Project Restore, and the Veterans Discharge Upgrade Project, we work closely with a number of law firms whose attorneys regularly take on these cases. These law firms include Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler LLP, White & Case LLP, Seward & Kissel LLP, Barton LLP, and Akerman LLP.

We have a collaboration between our Legal Counseling Project and the Independent Drivers Guild, which represents black car drivers, in order to facilitate legal services for housing law concerns for their members. This partnership expanded during the reporting period to cover family law help as well. NYCLA also collaborated with the New York City Bar Association when Legal Counseling clinics were held in person to avoid duplication of services. The New York City Bar Association Monday Night Law clinic was suspended due to COVID, and they now regularly refer clients to our services.

Our Social Security SDNY Project collaborates with Mobilization for Justice for our training, as well as to refer cases. The success of this program is also due in large part to our successful partnership with the Office of Pro Se Litigation at the SDNY, that includes our program flyer with the materials it provides to pro se litigants when they initiate an appeal in the SDNY.

Our partners for the State Central Registry Project are Bronx Legal Services, which collects intake information and provides us with case information, including client documents and narrative descriptions, in order to match clients with volunteer attorneys to represent their case. Bronx Legal Services and the NYU Family Defense Clinic also assists with trainings and are available to provide substantive help to volunteer attorneys throughout their cases. We also collaborate often with the law firm of Lansner & Kubitschek, which has litigated seminal cases in this area of law.
Sources of Funding

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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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