Overview of Achievements, 2018-2019

The Hiscock Legal Aid Society (HLAS) continued to handle a high-volume caseload to assist low-income residents in the Central New York region. IOLA funding made it possible for HLAS to resolve a large number of cases in a wide variety of complex subject areas in our Civil Programs. These cases include unemployment, housing; divorce, domestic violence, custody, visitation and child support. By continuing to assess our staffing, processes and procedures; refine our systems for the delivery of legal services; and expand our programs, HLAS met its goals for 2018-2019. In 2018-2019, HLAS closed 2458 civil cases, representing another highly significant increase of 575 cases from the previous year when 1883 civil cases were closed. In addition, 5426 individuals benefitted from our Civil Program legal services in 2018-2019, compared to 3994 in 2017-18. During 2018-2019, HLAS closed 703 family cases (729 in 2017-2018); 1172 housing cases (750 in 2017-2018) (including both eviction and foreclosure cases) and 85 income maintenance matters (121 in 2017-2018) (mostly unemployment cases).

Dollar or Other Benefits Realized by Low Income People as a Direct Result HLAS Efforts:

HLAS secured $864,963.11 in back awards/settlements in 2018-2019, compared to $818,018 in 2017-2018. $70,624 in monthly benefits were obtained for clients and their families, up from $69,000 in 2017-2018. $429,476.43 in lump sum payments were obtained in 2018-2019 (up from $264,734 in 2017-2018) and $3,985.07 in monthly payments were avoided in 2018-2019, compared to $1,183 in 2017-2018. These dollar benefits have increased significantly from those reported in the prior grant year.

Increased Access to Justice or Improvements in the Administration of Justice:

We continued to concentrate our efforts upon clients in the most need of legal representation in Onondaga County: housing, family, domestic violence, immigration and unemployment matters. Specialized projects continued to provide representation to special populations including victims of domestic violence, cancer patients, immigrants, people facing homelessness and those who have become unemployed.

Population Served: Low Income Population

Area Served: Onondaga County

Total Funding: $2,865,506

Total IOLA Grant: $370,000

Staffing - Full Time Equivalents:

- Total Staff: 31.46
- Lawyers: 17.61
- Paralegals: 3.10
- Other: 10.75
Direct Legal Services

5,426 people benefitted
2,458 legal cases closed

Breakdown of cases by Legal Problem

Total Cases Closed 2,458 cases
Total People Benefitted 5,426 people

Immigration: An Earthquake Victim from Haiti

A case worker at Interfaith Works asked HLAS for immigration-related help for two persons from Haiti who had been granted Temporary Protected Status (“TPS”) in the U.S. after the 2010 earthquake that devastated much of that nation. We agreed to try to help them. Our immigration Staff Attorney met with each of them, advised them about their possible options in the future, and helped them file applications to renew their TPS. Mr. D. was a victim of the earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12, 2010, in which he was severely and permanently injured. His spine was crushed and he is paraplegic. He was airlifted by Medevac to Homestead Air Force Base in Miami, Florida on January 23, 2010 for emergency medical treatment. He was granted humanitarian parole and his parole was renewed to April 28, 2012. While still in that status, he applied for Temporary Protected Status, was granted it, and has maintained it since then. We helped him complete a TPS reregistration application. It was approved and his TPS will be valid until July 22, 2019. As TPS for Haiti is to end on that date, July 22, 2019, we have been asked by Interfaith Works to help Mr. D. apply prior to that for humanitarian parole. He does not have family in Haiti, or any source of support there. He would seek permission to remain in the U.S., in view of his physical condition and continuing medical needs. Mr. D has expressed his gratitude for our continuing help to them.

Domestic Relations: An Order of Custody for the Father

We were able to assist Mr. M. with a difficult divorce and custody matter that involved an unfortunate situation where the children’s mother had a history of mental health and substance abuse issues as well as several hospitalizations. An agreement was reached whereby Mr. M. was able to secure the home as a place where he could care for the children and the mother was afforded appropriate visitation.
Other Services...

Number of People Benefitted by Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>927 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Legal Education</td>
<td>535 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Se Assistance</td>
<td>392 people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Legal Related Services: Overview

Community Legal Education and Pro Se Assistance:
HLAS conducted 392 workshops and clinics and made 535 presentations to community groups at such organizations as ONA Consultation Centers in our region, the American Civic Association, the Center for Community Alternatives, the Chadwick Residence, Freedom Commons, CNY Services, Chapel House, the Department of Social Services, Easter Seals, In My Father’s Kitchen, InterFaith Works, Liberty Resources, the Rescue Mission and the Syracuse Housing Authority, just to name a few.

Referrals:
During 2018-2019, HLAS set out to service as many clients in house as possible while still providing high quality legal services. While appropriate referrals to other agencies for legal and social services continued to take place in substantial numbers, as demonstrated through the information provided above, HLAS handled hundreds more cases and benefitted thousand more individuals in our community through our expanded program, experienced staff and streamlined systems.

For those clients who required outside referrals, an experienced Law Assistant performed the following activities:
- Eligibility and conflict screening;
- Triage and referral “In House” for eligible cases handled by HLAS; and
- Appropriate referral of cases not handled by HLAS.

As a result of our increased ability to handle cases in house, in 2018-2019, HLAS referred 1,614 clients to other legal and social services in the community, compared to the 2298 who were referred to another agency during 2017-2018.

Other Legal Related Services: Examples

In 2018-2019 HLAS reached 535 people through presentations to a large number of community groups in Syracuse and across our region covering a wide range of useful housing, immigration and general legal topics. We helped 392 people through our clinics and workshops at numerous locations including shelters, and Office of New Americans Opportunity Centers.
Trainings

HLAS fosters professional development for all staff, including Managers, Supervisors, Attorneys and support staff. In 2017 we implemented an enhanced staff Orientation & Training plan that

Monthly full-staff Orientation and Training sessions with videotaping of presentations for
1. inclusion in HLA’s new online staff portal;
2. Monthly Program meetings;
3. Monthly practice group meetings;
4. By-weekly Management Team meetings;
5. Regular one on one and small group special case review and problem-solving meetings;
6. Regular informal performance reviews and professional development planning sessions;
7. Annual formal performance reviews and professional development planning sessions.

General Training and Orientation topics included: Ethics; Client-centered decision-making; Strength-based attorney-client communication; Assisting Clients with special needs; and IT and Case Management. Practice-specific topics have included such topics as Landlord Tenant Practice; Orders to Show Cause and Motions for Contempt; and Direct and Cross Examination. All staff attended trainings through the Onondaga County Bar Association throughout the year. These CLEs have included: Representation of Domestic Violence Survivors, Eviction Defense, Family and Matrimonial Law, Supreme Court Practice & Procedure, Surrogate’s Court Procedure, Opening & Closing Arguments, Ethics and Employment Rights. Many of our Civil Program attorneys attend the New York Legal Assistance Partnership Conference every two years, including the most recent one in October of 2018. Several attorneys have attended CLEs on special topics such as Representing Intimate Partner Violence Survivors, DV 101 Custody Training and Tipping Annual Ultimate Update on Matrimonial Law.

Technology

During 2018-2019, we continued to enhance our data collection and reporting capacity in Legal Server through IT development; support staff training and enhanced supervision of data entry activities. We further improved our intake structure in Legal Server to ensure appropriate referral activities both in house and to the community. In addition, with the use of Legal Server we created a system for following-up with our housing clients to determine whether they had been able to retain housing, and whether they needed any additional legal, housing or services referrals. We switched from a paper system to one whereby our intake and other support staff are able to locate attorneys whenever needed, thus making our intake more efficient and client centered. During the past year HLAS ungraded its security for our staff and clients by implementing an electronic key fob system within our offices. An “electronic billboard” carrying volumes of useful information for our clients has been installed in our waiting room. We continue to build our staff training and orientation materials in the “Cloud” so that they are accessible to all staff at any time. All of these improvements have made it possible for us to serve our clients in the best possible way in a professional environment.
The Hiscock Legal Aid Society maintained close cooperative relationships with many agencies and community organizations, particularly in the domestic relations, immigration, housing and re-entry fields.

HLAS accepts case referrals from all such organizations and also utilizes the resources of these organizations to provide assistance to clients. A domestic and sexual violence services coalition and shelter system in Onondaga County is utilized to provide shelter and other social services on behalf of clients who are victims of domestic violence, and is also a source of referrals to our domestic relations practice. As a result of this coalition, in partnership with Vera House, Inc., HLAS was awarded funding from the NYS Office of Victims Services for the representation of victims of domestic violence who face neglect charges as the result of their victimization.

HLAS also participated in the Housing and Homeless Coalition and had on-going contact with the City of Syracuse, Legal Services of CNY, and the Volunteer Lawyers Project staff to coordinate efforts in Landlord Tenant Court with the goal of providing representation to every client facing homelessness. HLAS is very pleased to be receiving additional funding to augment its housing practice staff so that more clients can receive representation.

Other important collaborations that have strengthened our immigration practice and have been described in greater detail above include the NYS Office for New Americans, Empire Justice and the New York Immigration Coalition. As the result of our strong immigration practice during 2018-2019, we have been awarded additional funding from the NYS Office for New Americans that will allow us to nearly double the number of exigent cases we can handle in the coming year.

As the result of joint fund raising efforts, we were able to continue to work in partnership with the Legal Services of Central New York on our Cancer Legal Advocacy and Services Project (CLASP).

This effort also allowed us to receive additional funding to continue this project in the coming year.

HLAS also joined forces with the Center for Community Alternatives to do child support re-entry work together upon their receipt of federal funding of which we have received a portion to handle 80 child support modification matters for those seeking to re-enter the community following incarceration.

The Hiscock Legal Aid Society continued to work closely with the Onondaga County Bar Association (to attend and give CLE presentations and receive and make referrals to the Lawyer’s Reference Service) and its Assigned Counsel Program to exchange resources and ideas for domestic relations work in family court.

We also collaborated with the Syracuse University College of Law to place interns, externs, Pro Bono Scholars and newly admitted attorneys in HLAS programs. HLAS also brings one or more Falk School of Social Work students on board each semester as interns to assist our clients with housing and social services referrals.
Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

While our partner, the Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga, continues to serve as the main source of volunteer development in Onondaga County, HLAS continued to increase its development and use of volunteers, targeting their services to programs where they are most needed to serve more clients. Our continuing expansion of supervisory staff and enhancement of our workspace made it possible for HLAS to utilize more volunteers this year. Syracuse College of Law interns continue to work with our dedicated Senior Attorney assigned to Landlord Tenant work increasing our available services to clients in the Syracuse City Landlord Tenant court where we handled over 500 more of these cases this year. We continued to work with the Syracuse College of Law to identify a place for interns, externs and Pro Bono Scholars in our programs, and this has resulted in the creation of a pool of candidates from which we can hire skilled staff attorneys.

HLAS continued to recruit clerical volunteers through job training programs and paralegal volunteers through the accredited paralegal programs in our region. These workers have assisted us with document management activities and other important tasks.

HLAS again served as a placement site for graduate social work interns through the Syracuse School of Social Work and these individuals worked with our Client Advocate who helped provide follow-up with nearly 50 of our housing clients. During the reporting period, 11 interns, externs and other volunteers were placed with HLAS.

Our interns, externs and Pro Bono Scholars are each well-incorporated into the work and life of the Hiscock Legal Aid Society while placed with us. They attend all program and staff meetings; participate in our Training & Orientation presentations, and attend our social events. We are very grateful for their presence and work.

Pro Bono Statistics

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law Students</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1664</td>
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Sources Of Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iola Grant</td>
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<td>Foundations</td>
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<td>State Funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>$796,396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$2,865,506</td>
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