Overview of Achievements, 2018-2019

Legal Assistance of Western New York, Inc. closed a total of 6,870 cases during the period from 4/1/18 – 3/31/19, benefitting a total of 15,013 people. LawNY clients obtained at least $205,426 in ongoing monthly benefits and other payments and $1,995,530 in one-time payments, for a total payout over 12 months of at least $4,460,642. Our target population is low-income people living across all of the IOLA CLS Unit 6 area, comprised of 14 counties and nearly 10,000 square miles.

In addition to payments made directly to our clients, we also achieved dollar savings to clients in the avoidance of ongoing monthly payments in the sum of $233,249, in fee waivers totaling $55,383 and in lump sum avoidances of $3,708,996 for an annualized total of $6,563,367. We achieved tax payer savings in the sum of at least $441,468.

Improvements specific to our service delivery systems included: a significant expansion in our capacity to serve victims of crime by obtaining funding through the New York State Office of Victim Services and an Equal Justice Works fellowship focusing on campus sexual assaults; expanding our public benefits work by adding a WIC Help Specialist paralegal who assists clients in obtaining WIC benefits in three counties; opening a satellite office in Livingston County where we house a paralegal who provides application level assistance to persons eligible for but not receiving SNAP; growing our participation on Enhanced Multidisciplinary Teams comprised of professionals from various disciplines focused on investigation, intervention and prevention of financial exploitation of adults age 60 and over from three to ten counties; hosting four VISTA members, each focused on a project area (opioid response, housing, at risk youth/school aged children and emeritus attorneys); completely revamping the structure of our pro bono program, discussed in section F, below; and making significant technology improvements including migrating one office from a cloud server to an on-site server, purchasing five additional servers and upgrading individual work stations.

Population Served: General Low Income Population

Area Served: Western Region of New York State

Total Funding: $12,719,586

Total IOLA Grant: $795,000

Staffing - Full Time Equivalents:

- Total Staff: 142.60
- Lawyers: 71.19
- Paralegals: 53.81
- Others: 17.60
Housing: Our client fell behind on his property taxes because of an over payment issue involving his social security disability benefits. Our client is deaf and has trouble accessing the court system. We served the client holistically to resolve three separate legal issues. We helped our client avert a tax foreclosure by advocating for him to receive emergency assistance from the Department of Social Services. We helped him resolve the social security disability over payment issue and got his benefits reinstated. We also helped our client with a utility issue involving a loss of power due to his inability to pay his bills when his social security benefits were terminated.

Consumer: We recently represented a low-income individual living in an opioid recovery facility, who was being sued for a debt on a car loan. This lawsuit was causing him significant distress and suicidal thoughts, for which he was hospitalized. We filed a motion to dismiss the lawsuit and negotiated a voluntary dismissal of the case with the opposing party, saving the client from having a judgment entered against him for nearly $6,000. Resolving the lawsuit also gave him peace of mind, allowing him to focus on his recovery.
Other Services...

**Number of People Benefitted by Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>490,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Legal Education</td>
<td>26,507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Se Assistance</td>
<td>3,224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Assistance</td>
<td>460,459</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other Legal Related Services: Overview**

LawNY provides community legal education to client groups to: 1) provide information about legal issues to help people recognize legal problems; 2) understand their legal rights and responsibilities; 3) take steps on their own to resolve problems; and 4) know when to seek assistance. We also provide community legal education to human service providers from local agencies with the goal of giving them information that they can use to help their clients avoid problems and also know when they should contact us for assistance.

For each of our programs, we offer a variety of advice and brief service assistance by telephone. During the reporting period, we intaked 4,551 households without meeting the clients in person. In addition, our hotline services included: our consumer group’s completion of 420 hotline calls; 210 helpline calls requesting assistance with health insurance enrollment through our Navigator helpline; 167 helpline calls requesting assistance with managed long-term care issues; 94 hotline calls requesting assistance with fair housing issues; 239 hotline calls for our Geneva office’s housing hotline; and 47 calls staffed by our Geneva office’s veterans hotline. Our Rochester office also staffs a seniors legal information helpline and a legal information helpline provided by our Community Health Advocates project. During the reporting period we provided legal information to 567 callers through these hotlines. The total number of hotline calls, 3,022, is reported in Part II, Section D.2.d as other pro se assistance.

Our website, www.lawny.org, currently has over 62 English and seven Spanish self-help pages, community legal education articles and videos, many of which are also published on LawHelpNY. During the period from 4/1/18 – 3/31/19, www.lawny.org had 410,936 users, 490,525 sessions and 618,623 page views. For individuals who we cannot help, we try to make referrals to other service providers in the community who can help. During the reporting period we referred 436 applicants for services to other legal service programs, 1,018 to the private bar and 252 to non-legal human service agencies. In addition, 889 persons were referred to other sources of assistance, including code enforcement offices, the public defenders’ offices and LawHelpNY.
Other Legal Related Services: Examples

As just one example of the outreach work done by the paralegals in our project to provide application level assistance to people eligible for but not receiving SNAP, on 7/28/18, one of our paralegals set up an informational table at the Canandaigua Mobile Food Pantry to provide anyone utilizing the pantry with information about SNAP benefits and our ability to assist with the application process. Our paralegal provided information to 131 community members about these services during this particular outreach event.

A major goal of our community education strategy is to give direct providers of human services practical information that they can use to immediately assist the low-income persons that they have contact with on a daily basis or to make a referral to our offices when appropriate. One example during the reporting period was a training event presented by two of our attorneys for 25 members of the Chemung County Homeless Housing Task Force on the eviction process and tenants’ rights. We explained each of the steps required to lawfully evict a tenant, the time frame and the ways that they could intervene to directly assist, educate or refer a client.

LawNY again participated in Project Homeless Connect on 9/13/18. We had 20 volunteers on-site at five tables. LawNY coordinated the local legal services providers. We provided information to attendees and intaked new clients. The event was attended by at least 1,038 people and we were able to assist over 200 people with legal information and other services.

Impact Cases and Other Group Entity Representation: Narratives

A stipulation was filed to discontinue an action to foreclose a reverse mortgage which had been commenced in 6/2016. The plaintiff attempted to obtain a judgment without holding a mandatory settlement conference. Our intervention led to a holding by the Supreme Court that the requirement for mandatory settlement conferences applies to reverse mortgages. We were able to have the decision published as a precedent that could be applied to all reverse mortgage foreclosures brought in New York State. The resulting delay gave our client time to work with our housing counseling agency partner to obtain a mortgage assistance program (MAP) grant to settle the case and save his home.

LawNY represented a client negatively impacted by a housing complex rule limiting visitation to a specified number of days. Our client has a grandchild who is serving as a caregiver. The visitation policy restricted the ability of the grandchild to serve in this capacity. LawNY negotiated with the complex. The grandchild was provided a key fob for easier access and the policy was changed to allow caregivers to stay more than 14 days. This complex has 109 units.

Our office filed a federal lawsuit in November 2018 against a national subprime auto lender and a local dealership for violations of the Truth in Lending Act and other consumer protection laws. Although we are representing only one individual, we also filed a simultaneous complaint with the Attorney General’s office, as this lender and dealership have likely engaged in these practices more than once, and we are hoping our lawsuit brings attention to their deceptive practices. It is too early to know how many people will be impacted.
Trainings

LawNY is a certified CLE accredited provider. During the reporting period we provided or sponsored at least ten trainings for our staff and pro bono attorneys which qualified for CLE at which there were 177 attendees and one person viewed an on-demand training.

During the reporting period, LawNY staff members attended at least four internal training sessions at which there were 100 attendees. Noteworthy were trainings provided on LGBTQ cultural competency as well as implicit bias.

Staff also routinely attend external trainings in their substantive practice areas. This year there were at least 189 attendees at such sessions. Trainings of note include the ABA/NLADA Equal Justice Conference, the NYSBA Young Lawyers Section Trial Academy at Cornell University, NITA Trial Skills Training, the Shriver Center’s Basic Affirmative Litigation Training, the MIE Administrators’ Conference and the NYSBA Partnership Conference.

We also conducted a board member training on LSC’s rules, regulations and performance criteria.

To encourage professional development, we circulate information about training opportunities, including in-person and webinars, to staff via the staff email listserv and work group listservs. We encourage staff to take advantage of PLI trainings, which are available to all LawNY staff without charge. Our Training and Leadership Development Work Group helps oversee the development of LawNY-sponsored CLEs.

Technology

We worked with project partners to design and implement a technology training platform to help legal services attorneys enhance their technology skills. One partner was another IOLA grantee, Legal Services of the Hudson Valley. The pilot training focused on working with legal documents using the Microsoft Word software. There are further lesson plans beyond the pilot that cover data reports and exhibits in Excel and presentations in PowerPoint. The lessons cover a set of skills for each topic that the user will then need to master in order to pass the accompanying knowledge check.

We also piloted and implemented a client communication channel in LegalServer. Advocates can now send online forms for clients to fill out via email or text message. The client can access the form from anywhere they have internet access and securely return it directly to LegalServer. This communication channel also allows clients to upload files directly to their case in LegalServer. Using IOLA bank settlement funds, we designed a website for community groups and non-profit organizations. The website connects existing non-profits and unincorporated community groups to pro se legal information and resources on governance and compliance through an online learning experience. The web platform currently contains four courses on non-profit formation and compliance, and LawNY will be updating the website with additional pro se information and materials. The website also connects groups, as well as public users of the site, to each other for more effective projects, through an interactive map and user database system. The website is located at https://groundwork.savvysuit.com/ but will soon transfer to http://www.communitygroundwork.org
Significant Collaborations

A summary of our most significant collaborations during the reporting period is as follows:

Participation in Justice for All, a Permanent Commission pilot project in Monroe County, with LawNY playing a leadership role on initiatives for on-line access in real time to all filings in the summary proceeding and the small claims parts of the Town and Village Courts, to obtain uniform data collection for all civil cases filed over a two month period, on conducting a needs assessment to identify unmet legal needs and gaps in knowledge about services available, and to get legal services better connected in a county systems integration project that has 300 local health, education and human services organizations participating, including through business process mapping; Participating in an Access to Justice Initiative has started in the 8th Judicial District; Participating in a new Risk Reduction Civil Legal Assistance Program aimed at reducing the risk of homicide for victims of domestic violence in Steuben County, including through training on and promoting the use of a danger assessment tool to identify high-risk cases to review and to identify any systemic barriers that need to be addressed to enhance the safety of victims found to be at high risk; Continuing to lead a Legal Assistance for Victims (LAV) grant collaboration in partnership with the domestic violence and sexual assault providers in 13 counties, as well as the Gender Justice Clinic at Cornell Law School; and Making major contributions to the success of the Partnership Conference, with a supervising attorney serving on the Steering Committee, 16 other LawNYers participating either as topic leaders, task force coordinators, presenters or panelists and sending 71 staff members to attend the conference.
## Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

During the reporting period, 48 pro bono attorneys, 82 law students and 15 other volunteers donated an estimated 5,072 hours of services to LawNY. In addition, we estimate that our AmeriCorps and VISTA members provided 46,620 hours of service during the reporting period. Also, VLSP closed an estimated 695 cases utilizing LawNY’s subcontracted LSC and private foundation funds.

During the reporting period, we restructured the pro bono component of our service delivery system. We now have a Director of Pro Bono Affairs and created dedicated staff attorney and staff paralegal pro bono coordinator positions. Each LawNY office also now has a pro bono responsible staff member. A Feerick Center funded Attorney Emeritus Program Upstate Coordinator is housed in our Rochester office, and she is working to increase the number of Attorneys Emeritus volunteering with LawNY and other upstate legal services providers.

Highlights of our pro bono efforts with law schools include: continued collaboration with a Cornell Law School student-run uncontested divorce clinic where student volunteers complete uncontested divorce pleadings and review them with LawNY clients through videoconferencing technology; alternative law school spring breaks with Stanford and Roger Williams University law students volunteering in our offices; hosting Cornell Law School Oaklander Legal Fellows; and partnering with a Cornell Law School Pro Bono Scholar who is working on community development projects. We have also partnered with the Finger Lakes Community College paralegal program and a University at Buffalo Law School clinic to assist LawNY clients with drafting pro se divorces.

Our pro bono team developed online tools for interested volunteers to use to apply for assignments or to provide assistance to clients and we received 46 applications to volunteer via the form and seven inquiries via doprobono@lawny.org. Our work with law school graduates has also allowed LawNY to secure future private attorney involvement, as we ask them to pledge to perform an additional ten hours of pro bono service after they are registered.

### Pro Bono Statistics

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<th>Attorneys</th>
<th>Law Students</th>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hours</td>
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<td>4,453</td>
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### Sources Of Funding

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![Sources Of Funding Chart]

Legal Assistance of Western New York