Overview of Achievements, 2018-2019

The Urban Justice Center (UJC) closed 11,104 cases this fiscal year; provided 21,000 people with direct legal services; conducted 10,845 intakes in-person, by telephone or online; presented community legal education through printed materials as well as in-person presentations to 5,957 people in the community; assisted 4,661 people through pro se workshops, clinics, and materials; aided an additional 1,874 people through multiple UJC helplines; made 4,826 referrals for services either not provided by UJC or to supplement UJC’s services; and, worked on 9 impact cases/projects, with over 35,000 beneficiaries. We are especially proud that through UJC’s exceptional work, over $4.1 million dollars were awarded directly to clients and a value of over $1.3 million dollars of judgments or payments were avoided.

During the 2018-2019 contract year, UJC has demonstrated excellence in three core aspects: Defending individual rights, building an inclusive community and fueling systemic change. To advance and defend individual rights, for example, The Community Development Project (CDP) has seen an increase over the past several years in cases at the intersection of tenants’ and consumer rights; namely, breach-of-lease cases in which landlords sue tenants for unpaid arrears after they have moved out of their apartments, and often for amounts larger than what is actually or legally owed.

Building an inclusive community is at the heart of UJC’s work, for example Street Vendors Projects’ (SVP) legal services are provided on a membership-based model that works in conjunction with our community organizing. Trainings are often provided by vendors and for vendors, in conjunction with SVP lawyers, at monthly general membership meetings where vendors come together to talk about their individual and collective problems. These meetings and training sessions, which are conducted in 5 languages simultaneously, include skits and other popular education devices. Specifically, this year SVP provided trainings on the DOHMH’s new letter grading rules and procedures for food vendors.

Lastly, UJC fueled systemic change, not only through impact litigation, but also through efforts like Safety Net Project’s (SNP) report Bureaucracy of Benefits: Struggling to Access Public Assistance and SNAP in NYC, which details many of the challenges that New Yorkers face as they attempt to access Public Assistance and Food Stamps. The report was been cited frequently by NYC Council Members and was covered in a variety of news outlets. Further, in June, SNP launched Stories of Resilience, a multi-media campaign that illustrates the breadth and complexity of the human experience of poverty in the United States by telling the stories of those affected, to combat the stigma and widespread myths surrounding poverty in the US.

Population Served: General Low Income Population

Area Served: New York City Metropolitan Area

Total Funding: $39,850,937

Total IOLA Grant: $800,000

Staffing - Full Time Equivalents:
- Total Staff: 141.00
- Lawyers: 87.50
- Paralegals: 16.00
- Other: 37.50
A veteran came to UJC for a housing case; over the course of representation our staff suspected he had Post Traumatic Stress. When they inquired whether he was receiving health care, he said he had lived with PTSD for decades but believed he was not eligible for any VA benefits because of his military discharge status. A VAP attorney advocated for him with the VA, successfully arguing that his prior period of service counted as Honorable. The veteran is now enrolled and gets wraparound healthcare from VHA. Additionally, VAP’s social services provider assisted him in obtaining federal funding for veterans and families in arrears, which prevented him from getting evicted from his home. Further, VAP is working on a discharge upgrade application for him, and one of our advocates is assisting the veteran with applying for disability compensation. VAP is making sure that the veteran gets every benefit he earned while in service. Instead of relying on local resources, our veteran client can take advantage of the specialized federal programs intended for veterans who have earned these benefits.

“Karen” is a transgender woman and human rights activist from Mexico who experienced severe violence and discrimination from the police and community members due to her gender identity. In Mexico, Karen endured violent attacks, societal marginalization, and threats to her life. Due to increasingly severe persecution, Karen eventually fled for her life. She entered the United States, and came to New York City, where a friend referred her to UJC’s SWP for assistance. To apply for asylum for Karen, SWP addressed several legal issues that were barriers to her obtaining immigration status. First, SWP successfully represented Karen before New York City Civil Court to obtain a legal name change order so that her documentation will reflect a name consistent with Karen’s gender identity. Karen also found it immensely meaningful to have her true gender identity recognized by a government entity for the first time. Next, SWP conducted extensive outreach efforts to secure Karen a defense attorney local to a criminal court where she had an out-of-state criminal warrant that had previously prevented her from applying for immigration status. SWP then worked closely with the local defense attorney to discover that the underlying arrest and charge were legally insufficient and a result of discriminatory profiling. With this advocacy, all charges against Karen were fully dismissed and the warrant was cancelled.

Finally, we could assist Karen in preparing an affirmative application for asylum. SWP successfully applied for work authorization for Karen based on the pending asylum case, and Karen was able to find work as a result. Through SWP’s trauma-informed expertise, we worked with Karen to create an affidavit detailing the persecution she suffered. SWP prepared her for her interview before the asylum office, advising her on how to speak about her lived experiences in a way that clearly connected them to asylum eligibility requirements and on how to highlight the positive equities in her case. SWP represented Karen at the asylum interview with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, where Karen answered all questions the officer asked with detail and pathos. Karen felt empowered to tell her story, which helped her feel that she can now put these experiences behind her. Karen was granted asylum in January 2019 and feels renewed hope for the future and for living without fear in the U.S.
### Other Services…

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>10,618 people</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Legal Education</td>
<td>5,957 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Se Assistance</td>
<td>4,661 people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Other Legal Related Services: Overview

UJC provides many forms of community legal education, pro se assistance, referrals, and Know Your Rights trainings/workshops. This includes community legal education for low-income New Yorkers on matters such as housing, employment, public benefits, identification documentation, consumer debt, and immigration; and transactional legal assistance to community-based nonprofit organizations in low-income communities. For example, PCYP provides training to social service providers for homeless youth to assist with spotting legal issues common among this population and helping them connect youth with our services. SNP’s other legal related services include conducting Know Your Rights trainings at NYCHA buildings; trainings on one shot deals and rental assistance; monthly presentations at senior centers in the Bronx; tabling at community fairs hosted by elected officials (estimated 50-70 served at four presentations each); and, participating in coalition work, including community meetings with tenant organizers and leaders on the Right to Counsel court watch program. SNP was also involved in several media campaigns and community outreach organized rallies and events. MHP provides advocacy courses to low-income mental health consumers to develop, improve, and practice oral advocacy skills to address both individual issues and also to create systemic change on local and state levels. CDP’s transactional legal assistance to community-based nonprofit organizations includes advising on issues such as incorporation, obtaining 501c3 status, lease negotiations, and organizational development. CDP provides capacity-building assistance for community organizations on matters such as negotiating community benefits agreements when the city proposes development projects, which provide such benefits as local hiring, living wage guarantees, and community space, pro se assistance for low-income individuals dealing with housing and consumer debt-related matters, referrals to a wide variety of services such as credit counseling, financial planning, public benefits access, banking resources, and other matters that are often causes of or have direct bearing on the legal issues experience by clients.
Other Legal Related Services—Examples

- In January 2019, SNP trained 20 City Council staff members on one shot deals and how to obtain rental assistance for constituents. In March 2019, we did outreach to 100 SNAP recipients in NYC to see if they were receiving their benefits in a timely manner. In fall 2018, we conducted outreach to 35 individuals with experience with the DHS shelter system to learn more about their experiences with being transferred between different shelters.

- CDP offers grassroots community groups training and assistance related to their formation and operation as not-for-profit organizations. As part of this work, we help form worker-owned cooperatives in service industries such as childcare, housecleaning, construction, and more. Co-ops develop entrepreneurial skills and create living-wage jobs for low-wage workers, who are often immigrants and/or people of color. One such example is 3rd Eye Depiction, a group of photographers based in the Bronx who came together to form a cooperative. They specialize in portraits and work primarily with schools and students. CDP aided 3rd Eye on entity formation and governance, in addition to reviewing contracts and helping the co-op with formation and incorporation. In June 2018, 3rd Eye obtained its incorporation status, and have been successfully serving Bronx families, students, and schools since then.

Impact Cases

- The group HP case *Deseri Acevedo, et al. v. Fordham Fulton Realty* has been open with extensive litigation since 2016, where a group of tenants we represented sued the landlord in an HP action for necessary and extensive repairs. After at least four stipulations of settlement, the case was finally discontinued by a two-attorney stipulation of settlement where all repairs have been marked completed in March 2019.

- The *Tabuteau v. 21 East 21st Street LLC* is also a group HP where tenants have brought their landlord to court for extensive repairs in Brooklyn. The case has at least twelve tenant-petitioners and is currently being litigated and negotiated for settlement.
Significant Collaborations

MHP has been collaborating with NYLAG as co-counsel on *Amin v. Berryhill*, a lawsuit challenging the Social Security Administration’s failure to properly process non-disability appeals. This year they were joined by national non-profit Justice in Aging and the law firm Arnold & Porter as new, additional co-counsel. Also, as part of its community workshop efforts, MHP held a workshop at Immanuel & First Spanish United Methodist Church and co-facilitated with Pastor Benny, a highly regarded member of that community who had spent an extensive amount of time in solitary confinement at Riker’s Island. This collaboration allowed the workshop to bridge the topics of wellness, reentry, and benefits for the mental health consumers who attended. Additionally, MHP collaborated this year with NYU to hold a symposium for law and social work students focusing on best practices on reentry services for clients with mental health concerns.

PCYP’s most significant collaborations are with the drop-in centers where homeless LGBTQQ young people already congregate to access food, shelter, healthcare, counseling, case management, and community. PCYP operates our drop-in legal clinics at these centers. Further, PCYP collaborates with a wide network of partner organizations from which we accept referrals and field questions from case managers, social workers, and doctors about the legal rights of LGBTQQ youth. These agencies include the Callen-Lorde Community Health Center, The Door, FIERCE!, and other agencies.

Most of the social service agencies that refer clients to us do not have legal departments, and we also refer young people to these organizations where appropriate. SWP continued its collaboration with Legal Aid Society, Center for Appellate Litigation, Appellate Advocates, and Office of the Appellate Defender to offer broader access to the Vacating Convictions for Trafficked Persons remedy. Though this process occurs in criminal court, it substantially affects survivors’ civil legal rights by enabling access to employment without discrimination and immigration status. SWP is part of the DecrimNY coalition, along with GMHC, the New York City Anti-Violence Project, Make the Road New York, Womankind, the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, and Brooklyn Defender Services. DecrimNY is advocating for policy changes to expand the vacatur bill in New York State, among other initiatives. These changes would provide new, life changing access to immigration options to many of our clients who currently face obstacles to obtaining status because of trafficking-related convictions.

DVP has partnered with ECHO, a Bronx based medical school student led clinic, to provide free medical exams and clearance by a USCIS authorized civil surgeon, which is otherwise a prohibitive-ly expensive exam that is required for DVP’s clients to apply for Legal Permanent Residence Status.
**Dollar Benefits Achieved for Clients**

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<th>Category</th>
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<td>Federal Benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affirmative Consumer Judgments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veterans Benefits</td>
<td>$445,997</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family (Child &amp; Spousal Support)</td>
<td>$370,529</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$28,933,315</strong></td>
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**Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement**

UJC significantly utilizes pro-bono attorneys, law students, social work interns, and other volunteers across several legal practice areas, while also offering them appropriate trainings and supervision. During this reporting period, projects partnered with 161 pro bono attorneys, who contributed more than 2,600 hours of service. We supervised 41 law students, who provided 7,828 hours of assistance, and worked with 33 other individuals, who provided 6,255 combined service hours. For example, DVP recruits legal summer interns as well as volunteers throughout the year. During the summer, legal interns are provided UJC wide training in addition to project specific training. Throughout the year, DVP provides targeted training on provision of services to survivors and trains on UJC’s case management system. In addition to formal pro bono relationships and student intern/extern work, projects at UJC also rely on attorneys to provide representation that exceeds our capacity to do so. VAP regularly trains attorneys at law firms on discharge upgrades, and works closely with such law firms who serve our clients pro bono. Arnold & Porter joined MHP’s impact litigation to provide invaluable resources to support the matter. CDP's co-counseling work with Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom is an example of how our pro bono partnerships enhance our work and expand capacity to advocate for our community partners and clients. Together, our Tenants' Rights team and Skadden represented a group of tenants - families, single women, and senior citizens - organized by the Cooper Square Committee in the East Village. The tenants’ homes were caught in a "loan-to-own" predatory scheme, with Madison Realty Capital (who is presently being investigated by the Attorney General) lending money to a convicted felon named Raphael Toledano, who proceeded to try to harass rent stabilized tenants out of their homes. Skadden spent countless hours working to ensure that Madison Realty Capital does not benefit from Raphael Toledano’s dirty work. Skadden stood with our team in negotiations at the Attorney General’s office across from Madison and Toledano’s lawyers and bankruptcy court. These efforts have protected the tenants in their homes, securing their rights to continue to live in the building during and after bankruptcy, while staving off further harassment.

**Pro Bono Statistics**

- **Attorneys:** 161 Volunteers, 2,607 Hours
- **Law Students:** 41 Volunteers, 7,828 Hours
- **Other Volunteers:** 33 Volunteers, 6,255 Hours

**Sources Of Funding**

- **IOLA Grant:** $400,000
- **Foundations:** $4,654,962
- **State Funding:** $4,479,549
- **City and County Funding:** $20,504,651
- **Fundraising:** $6,490,894
- **Other:** $3,320,881
- **TOTAL:** $39,850,937