



LASP

Legal Aid

of Southeastern PA

ANNUAL REPORT
2011-2012

INSIDE:

*The **real value**
of legal services
revealed*

MISSION

The mission of Legal Aid of Southeastern PA is to provide *quality legal representation* to low-income and vulnerable people in Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery Counties, *to empower* them to solve problems without legal representation through legal education and increased access to the courts, and *to change community practices* and systems that cause or aggravate poverty.

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WHAT IS THE REAL VALUE OF LEGAL AID?

Are poor people and victims of domestic violence really better off with the services of an attorney? Is there any tangible benefit to society as a whole when low income families are provided with legal aid? In a time of diminishing public and private monies, these are questions that must be addressed.

Fortunately, a number of researchers have done just that. What is more, they have found that, along with benefits for the clients themselves, civil legal aid yields substantial economic benefits for our larger society by preventing events that come at great public expense. These include domestic violence, long foster care stays, evictions and health emergencies. *(To **read more** about the research that has been done in this area, go to page 2.)*

We at LASP know that in these tough economic times, the legal services LASP provides have a significant positive impact. In 2011-2012 LASP handled over 10,700 cases for low income and otherwise vulnerable individuals and families in Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery Counties. It became more efficient, expanding pro bono programs and using technology in new ways to maintain and even expand services in certain areas of practice. One example of this was a new pro bono employment initiative in Delaware County. Attorneys who had never volunteered before assisted low income people in expunging their criminal records so they could attend school and get jobs. Another example was the development of document creation software in Bucks County to enable clients to create their own protection from abuse and custody petitions. Most recently, LASP successfully competed for a technology grant to upgrade and expand uses of its telephone helpline.

With the help of many wonderful donors and supporters, LASP will be here to work for justice for many years to come.

Elizabeth Wood Fritsch, Esq. and Harvey F. Strauss, Esq.

Co-Executive Directors

Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania

ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF LEGAL AID

WHAT FOLLOWS ARE JUST A FEW OF THEM

Recently, Laura Abel of the National Center for Access to Justice at the Cardozo Law School published an article on the economic benefits of civil legal aid. She referenced several studies in her piece demonstrating ways in which legal aid saves public money. Among her findings were the following:

- In the area of domestic violence, civil legal aid reduces repeat incidents of domestic violence by helping victims obtain custody and child support arrangements which permit them to leave the abusive relationship. It also reduces public spending on medical care to victims, counseling for affected children, and police resources. Finally, it cuts down on victims' property losses and lost days of work.
- When civil legal aid speeds up family reunification or adoption, it reduces public spending on payments to foster parents, subsidies for children's medical care, and all the expenses associated with oversight of the foster family.
- If tenants are represented by an attorney, they are less likely to become homeless, saving thousands of dollars in shelter costs.
- Civil legal aid improves clients' health by improving housing conditions where they live and getting them health benefits that keep them on better health regimens and out of emergency rooms. This reduces public spending on healthcare.

(The information here is derived from findings posted on www.ncforaj.org)

CLIENTS & CASES

THIS YEAR... **75%** of our cases helped female clients.

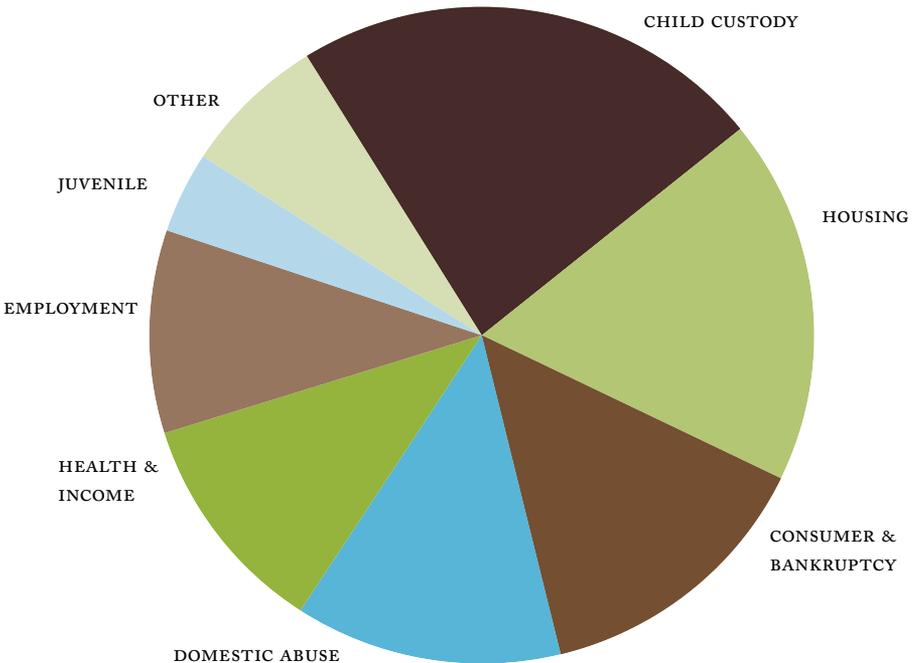
41% of our cases helped clients who were members of racial or ethnic minority groups.

17% of our cases helped clients aged 60 and older.

18,070 phone calls were handled by our helpline staff.

10,704 legal cases were handled total.

CASES HANDLED IN 2011-2012 BY CATEGORY



TRENDS & HIGHLIGHTS

PROTECTING AND ASSISTING FAMILIES

Issues of domestic violence, custody and child dependency all damage the fabric of family stability and safety and have far reaching repercussions. Legal Aid provides legal advice and representation in domestic abuse, custody and child dependency cases through our telephone helpline, clinics, and representation in administrative and judicial proceedings. Last year, orders were entered providing protection from domestic abuse for 963 adults and children and 820 custody arrangements were established or stabilized.

PRESERVING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

At a time when home owners struggle to hold onto their houses, and in a region that has a shortage of affordable housing, Legal Aid provides critical legal services to help families remain in their homes. Its work includes landlord/tenant disputes, including representation of tenants in evictions, Section 8 housing subsidy denials or revocations and homeowner issues such as mortgage foreclosure and tax liens. Through our efforts, last year, decent habitable housing was preserved for 809 people.

HELP FOR OLDER ADULTS

Older adults face the same challenges as other LASP clients, but must also deal with end-of-life issues and the need for more durable powers of attorney as they age. Problems with government benefit programs, credit, and housing can be especially catastrophic for older adults who are no longer able to work. The four suburban counties served by Legal Aid are “graying” at a rapid pace, and Legal Aid has seen increased demand for its services among people 60+. Legal Aid, supported through funding from county aging offices and private charitable foundations, is an important resource for vulnerable older adults in our region.

ONE CLIENT'S STORY

LASP HELPED THIS SINGLE MOTHER KEEP HER FAMILY TOGETHER.



Ms. H lived with her two children in her mother's home. She had been the primary custodian of the children since birth. When her mother downsized, Ms. H had nowhere to go and the father filed a complaint asking for primary custody.*

Ms. H contacted Legal Aid for help. Realizing that housing was a priority, her LASP attorney helped Ms. H and her children get into a shelter and subsequently into a transitional housing program which enabled her to find a full time job and childcare. LASP represented her at the custody review hearing and because her housing and employment situation had stabilized, she was able to retain primary custody of her children.

**No actual client names or photographs are used in this report.*

ONE CLIENT'S STORY

LASP HELPED HER STAY IN HER HOME AND REDUCE HER RENT.



Ms. B, who lived in public housing, contacted LASP because she had received notice that the Housing Authority intended to evict her for non-payment of rent.*

Her LASP advocate reviewed the client's rent ledger. As a result, the advocate wrote to the Housing Authority pointing out that the ledger indicated prior payments made by the client of approximately \$1,000 that had not been credited to the client's account.

Additionally, the Authority had failed to make the required rent adjustment based on the client's reduced income. Consequently, the client went from being behind in her rent to having a rental credit of approximately \$200. In addition, her rent was adjusted and she was able to keep her home.

**No actual client names or photographs are used in this report.*

TRENDS & HIGHLIGHTS

PROVIDING RELIEF FROM DEBT

Since the economic downturn, debt has become a serious problem for an increasing number of people in our region, including the elderly. Legal Aid works to help individuals and families regain control of their finances and their lives. Attorneys review loan and sale documents, negotiate with creditors and represent clients in bankruptcy. Last year, relief from debt problems, including bankruptcy protection, was obtained for 412 people.

ENSURING HEALTH AND INCOME SUPPORTS

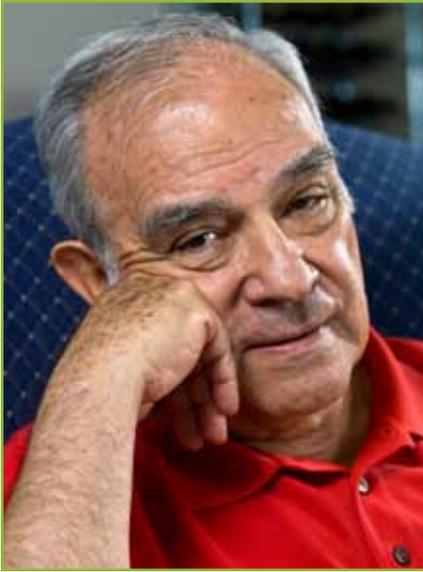
For those facing domestic violence or caring for a disabled family member, for the working poor or those experiencing an unexpected job loss, government unemployment, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Medicaid, Food Stamps and Cash Assistance are absolutely essential safety nets. Legal Aid steps in when oversights or errors result in benefit loss or denial. In the 2011-12 fiscal year we recovered \$829,989 in lump sum payments and established \$165,365 in monthly payments for our clients.

REMOVING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

In recent years, higher levels of unemployment have increased competition for jobs. In response, Legal Aid has assisted with the correction and deletion of old and incorrect criminal records, removing barriers for many seeking employment and educational opportunities. Legal Aid clients are also helped to overcome job discrimination, obtain back wages, avoid discharge from their jobs and, when job loss occurs, obtain unemployment compensation. Last year, LASP handled 549 employment cases, an increase of 19% from the year before.

ONE CLIENT'S STORY

LASP HELPED HIM GET UC BENEFITS DURING HIS JOB SEARCH.



Mr. K worked at a large chain store which sold home repair goods and services. He and his wife, both seniors, needed to replace some of the windows in their home. They contracted with the chain store to have new windows installed. When the workman did not do a good job, Mrs. K called the store to complain. Mr. K was then called into the office and told that he was fired and that he and his wife were not to come into the store again. When Mr. K filed for Unemployment Compensation, the*

employer objected and he was denied benefits.

Mr. K came to Legal Aid and, with the help of an attorney, appealed the decision. The Unemployment Compensation Review Board found in Mr. K's favor and awarded him benefits. As a result, Mr. K and his wife are able to pay their bills and remain in their home while he looks for other employment.

**No actual client names or photographs are used in this report.*

IN THEIR WORDS

Here are some responses to a question on client satisfaction surveys sent out in the last few months asking if there is anything that can be improved with our services:

- "I can honestly say, I can't imagine the service being any better than it was...my lawyer was outstanding!"
- "You always got back to me to let me know what was going on. Thank you."
- "I surely have many issues psychologically and appreciated the professional tolerance."
- "I really never felt unwelcomed or ignored."
- "Searched and prepared my case very well and won it. Keep it as it is."
- "I always felt accommodated regarding appointments."
- "I was extremely satisfied. My lawyer saved my house from foreclosure."
- "My lawyer kept her word and she gave me proper advice. No need to do anything differently."
- "All of my questions and concerns were answered and explained in-depth."
- "I am very grateful for the help I received. Thank you with all my heart."

WITH SINCERE THANKS

2011-12 BUSINESS, FOUNDATION & INSTITUTIONAL FUNDERS

GOVERNMENT GRANTS AND CONTRACTS

Bucks Co. Area Agency on Aging
Bucks Co. Children and Youth
Social Services Agency
Bucks Co. Commissioners
Bucks Co. Dept. of
Community and Business Development
Chester Co. Dept. of Aging Services
Chester Co. Dept. of Community Development
Delaware Co. Office of
Housing and Community Development
Delaware Co. Office of Services to the Aging
Legal Services Corporation
Montgomery Co. Commissioners
Montgomery Co. Dept. of
Housing and Community Development
Montgomery Co. Office of
Aging and Adult Services
Pennsylvania Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts
Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network

CHARITABLE FOUNDATIONS & TRUSTS

1675 Foundation
Bucks Co. Foundation
E Wallace Chadwick Memorial Fund
The Claneil Foundation
The Genuardi Family Foundation
Green Tree Community Health Foundation
Independence Foundation
Montgomery Co. Foundation
OMG Capacity Program for the Pew Fund
The Patricia Kind Family Foundation
The Philadelphia Foundation
Pew Fund for Health and Human Services
Taylor Community Foundation

COLLABORATIVE GRANTS

Bucks Co. STOP Grant
(Collaboration w/NOVA and A Woman's Place)
Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation
(Partnership w/VNA Community Services)

BUSINESS, CORPORATE, SERVICE, RELIGIOUS & OTHERS

Aetna
Both is Better LLC
Chester Co. Paralegal Assn.
Citadel Federal Credit Union
Eastern District Bankruptcy Conference
First Presbyterian Church Of West Chester
Flexible Benefits Plan
Goodsearch
Heart of Europe Tours
Helping Through Hoops
Joyce Miller & Associates
Kiwanis Club Of Lansdale
Merck Company Foundation
MOVAD
Peace a Pizza
United Way of Bucks Co.
United Way of Chester Co.
United Way of Delaware
United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania
United Way Of Southern Chester Co.
Univest National Bank & Trust Co.
Donald E. Wright & Co.
WSFS Bank

BAR ASSOCIATIONS, FOUNDATIONS AND BAR-RELATED ORGANIZATIONS

Bucks Co. Bar Association
Charitable Foundation of the
Bucks Co. Bar Association
Chester Co. Bar Association
Chester Co. Bar Foundation
Delaware Co. Bar Association
Delaware Co. Bar Foundation
Doris J. Freed American Inn of Court
Family Law Section of the
Delaware Co. Bar Association
Montgomery Bar Association
Montgomery Bar Foundation

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You'll find more thanks online to the individual donors, volunteer attorneys and law firms who have helped those who call or come through our doors.

TO SUPPORT LEGAL AID AND
HELP NEIGHBORS IN NEED:

VISIT LASP.ORG/HOW-YOU-CAN-HELP

Join the Legal Aid supporters who make a difference in their community. Go online to learn about donating your time, or make a financial contribution.



JULY 2011 to JUNE 2012

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION¹

REVENUE

Government Funding	\$ 3,355,527
Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts (IOLTA)	\$ 274,937
Foundations & Corporations	\$ 358,039
Annual Donor Appeals	\$ 226,879
Bar Associations & Foundations	\$ 79,214
United Ways	\$ 52,692
Other Funding Sources	\$ 7,666
Total Funding	\$ 4,354,954

EXPENSES

Salaries	\$ 3,060,513
Employee Benefits	\$ 811,674
Consultants & Contract Services	\$ 42,064
Travel	\$ 31,195
Space Costs	\$ 244,235
Consumables	\$ 37,771
Equipment Rental & Maintenance	\$ 81,656
Other Expenses	\$ 189,771
Total Expenses	\$ 4,498,879

Change in Net Assets: (\$143,925)

In-Kind Resources: \$1,080,862

- Donated Attorney Services (4,945.2 hours @ \$150/hour)
\$741,780
- Other Donated Services (4,891.37 hours @ \$60/hour)
\$293,482.20
- Donated Office Space
\$45,600

¹ Figures based on audited financial statement for FY 2012.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

go online

Visit lasp.org to learn more about our organization and to find helpful legal news and resources. Visit dontborrowtroublesepa.org for information about mortgage foreclosure and predatory lending.

call us

OUR TOLL-FREE HELPLINE

For legal help, call 1-877-429-5994.
Helpline hours are 9am - 1pm,
Monday through Friday.

DON'T BORROW TROUBLE

For help with predatory lending
and mortgage foreclosure,
call 1-888-275-8843.
Helpline hours are 9am - 1pm,
Monday through Thursday.

locations

BUCKS CO.

1290 Veterans Highway
Box 809
Bristol, PA 19007
215-781-1111

108 N. Main Street
Doylestown, PA 18901
215-340-1818

CHESTER CO.

222 N. Walnut Street
West Chester, PA 19380
610-436-4510

DELAWARE CO.

410 Welsh Street
Chester, PA 19013
610-874-8421

MONTGOMERY CO.

625 Swede Street
Norristown, PA 19401
610-275-5400

248 King Street
Pottstown, PA 19464
610-326-8280



ADMINISTRATION
625 Swede Street
Norristown, PA 19401

www.lasp.org

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