

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF CLEVELAND



2021
ANNUAL
REPORT

**Alone we can
do so little.**

**Together
We Can
do so much.**

– Helen Keller



Executive Director's Note

A collective commitment to justice is foundational to a democracy's health, progress, and vitality. 2021 marked the second year of a modern global pandemic that challenged us all. As a justice-centered organization, Legal Aid expanded programs and outreach in COVID-safe ways while strengthening community connections. Together, we worked to ensure access to basic needs like shelter, safety, and economic security.

Alongside our clients, dedicated volunteers, generous supporters, and partner organizations, we secured justice for thousands of Northeast Ohioans. We achieved, learned, and grew from our work with people like Sarah (*names changed for privacy*), a single mother of four who was diagnosed with breast cancer during the worst months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sarah knew continuing to work as a home healthcare provider would compromise her already weakened immune system. So, the single mother of four made the difficult decision to leave her job and seek a position that was less risky. Meanwhile, she got a new landlord who didn't clearly outline how to make rent payments. The first time Sarah heard from him was when he filed for an eviction.

Fearing she would have to battle both cancer and homelessness, Sarah called Legal Aid for help. Her attorney worked quickly to secure Sarah more time to stay in her home and helped her apply for rent assistance funds. Thanks to the attorney's assistance, Sarah was quickly approved for \$3,024. The money went straight to her landlord, who dropped the eviction and discussed the procedure for future rent payments with Sarah. Finally, as part of negotiations, the attorney got Sarah's landlord to agree to make much-needed improvements to the property.

In 2021, Legal Aid helped more than 17,300 people like Sarah through more than 6,600 cases – and we touched thousands more through our community outreach, education, and advocacy work.

As Helen Keller once said, "Alone we can do so littler. Together we can do so much." Legal Aid is inspired by this call to action – and in 2021, we came together with our clients, partners, and community members to do so, so much.

Thank you for your part in this story of collective action. Together, we are making real and lasting change.

Sincerely,

Colleen M. Cotter, Esq.
Executive Director
The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland

Legal Aid uses the power of the law to ensure access to basic needs and lift people out of poverty. Thanks to thousands of supporters and community partners, Legal Aid provides services that improve safety and health; promote education and economic stability; secure decent, affordable housing; and ensure the justice system and government entities are accountable and accessible.

The mission of The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland is to secure justice and resolve fundamental problems for those who are low income and vulnerable by providing high-quality legal services and working for systemic solutions.

2021 Finances

REVENUE AND OTHER SUPPORT	2021	2020
Legal Services Corporation (LSC)	\$3,048,953	\$2,886,167
Ohio Access to Justice Foundation	\$2,518,115	\$2,737,870
Donations and Private Grants	\$5,027,189	\$5,498,881
Donated Services	\$836,952	\$668,368
Other Government Grants	\$1,176,229	\$996,227
United Ways	\$999,412	\$676,451
Partner Agencies (contracts for legal services with partner agencies)	\$507,825	\$317,267
Other Income	\$885,813	\$1,007,372
TOTAL REVENUE	\$15,000,488	\$14,788,603
EXPENSES	2021	2020
Program Services	\$12,488,116	\$10,344,396
Support Services (administration & development)	\$2,238,603	\$1,957,935
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$14,726,719	\$12,302,331
Excess of Revenue over Expenditures	\$1,774,069	\$2,486,272
Beginning Net Assets	\$14,299,560	\$11,813,288
NET ASSETS as of year end	\$16,073,629	\$14,299,560
OTHER INCOME		
Paycheck Protection Program	\$1,500,300	\$0
BREAKDOWN OF NET ASSETS	2021	2020
Without donor restrictions		
-Undesignated	\$2,410,188	\$1,942,775
-Net Investment in Property	\$3,031,753	\$3,130,211
-Board Designated Endowment	\$37,422	\$27,273
-Board Designated Reserve Fund	\$8,473,772	\$6,679,737
	\$13,953,135	\$11,779,996
Temporarily Restricted	\$1,486,628	\$2,073,597
Permanently Restricted	\$633,866	\$445,967
NET ASSETS	\$16,073,629	\$14,299,560





IN 2021, LEGAL AID SERVED 17,115 PEOPLE THROUGH 6,655 CASES

LAST YEAR, LEGAL AID Increased assets and income and reduced debt for our clients by more than \$7.43 million

98% 
safety **SECURED**

93% 
evictions or involuntary moves **PREVENTED**

84% 
rent assistance **SECURED**

97% 
REMOVED barriers to education

88% 
REDUCED debt

CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS

 **81.6%** of households served **MAKE LESS THAN \$25,000/year**

 **353** cases involved **U.S. VETERANS** or **ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY MEMBERS**, impacting **727 PEOPLE**

 **55.1%** of all households helped included **CHILDREN**

 **58%** of all cases were **BLACK-LED HOUSEHOLDS**

(60+) **17.7%** of all clients were **OLDER ADULTS**

 **73%** of all clients served were **FEMALE**

COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

94 neighborhood clinics (*76 virtual, 18 in-person*)



65 education presentations and outreach events for community groups (*including 24 presented on Facebook Live*)



125 educational presentations for social service providers



CASES BY COUNTY



83% Cuyahoga

8% Lorain

4% Lake

4% Ashtabula

1% Geauga

OUR PEOPLE

2021 Staff
64 Attorneys / **51** Support Staff

2021 Supporters
1,656 Total Donors **1,469** Individuals **75** Law Firms/Corporations
73 Foundations **12** United Ways **27** Partner Agencies

CASES BY PRACTICE

5% Other
10% Health & Opportunity
15% Family
33% Economic Justice
37% Housing

Legal Aid helps thousands more each year through community legal education and advocacy.

2021 CASES BY INITIAL CONTACT



74%
client completed intake over the **PHONE**



2%
WALK-IN
*(*Note: Walk-in availability limited due to COVID-19)*



19%
client completed intake **ONLINE**



ONLINE INTAKE:
We launched the English version of our online intake form in Summer 2019, the Spanish version launched in Summer 2021.



3%
outreach **CLINICS**



3%
ONLINE REFERRAL
(partner portal)

Together We Can achieve housing justice

In July 2020, the City of Cleveland became the first city in the midwest and only the fourth city in the United States to legislate a “right to counsel” in certain eviction cases – guaranteeing eligible low-income Cleveland tenants free legal representation in eviction hearings in Cleveland Housing Court. As a result, Legal Aid’s housing practice has grown tremendously.



Five years ago **17%** of all Legal Aid cases were housing cases.

In 2021, **37%** of all cases were housing cases.

Of all housing cases in 2021, **17%** were because a Cleveland resident **asserted their right to counsel.**



LEGAL AID staff **DOUBLED** in recent years **thanks to community investment**

VOLUNTEERS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN HELPING LEGAL AID CLOSE THE JUSTICE GAP.

Annually, up to 20% of Legal Aid’s matters are handled by *pro bono* attorneys.



Volunteer hours:
8,363 total volunteer hours contributed in **2021**

» **5,033 HOURS** contributed **FROM 80 IN-HOUSE VOLUNTEERS** (those providing extended service)

» **3,330 HOURS** contributed **FROM 278 VOLUNTEERS** (such as attorneys and law students helping at a Brief Advice Clinic or other community event)



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five-year giving society (“+”). We welcome our first-time givers (“#”).

We honor the memory of deceased donors in italics.

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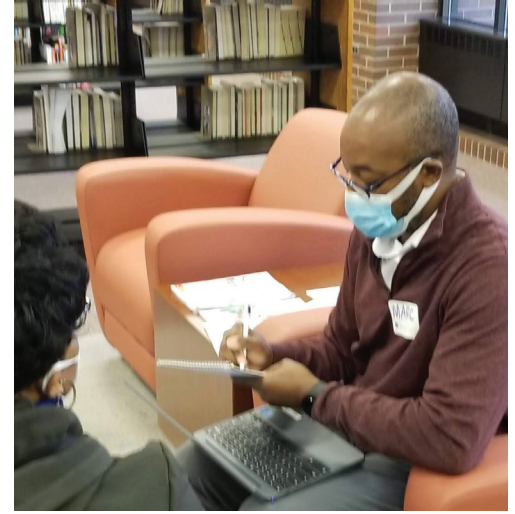
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”
After becoming a single father, Darnell immediately became focused on providing his son Devon a stable, safe, and loving home. Devon had severe behavioral issues due to trauma he’d experienced in his short life, and taking care of him became such a priority for Darnell that he took some time off of work. When he couldn't pay rent during COVID-19, his landlord tried to evict him. A Legal Aid attorney represented Darnell in the eviction case and helped him get rent assistance funds. Thanks to this skilled and timely assistance, Darnell won his case and he and Devon could stay in their home.
“



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Sasha is a single mother raising two young children on her own. After losing her job, her unemployment compensation suddenly stopped. Sasha had gone on some payment plans with her landlord, but eventually received an eviction notice. With help from her Legal Aid attorney, Sasha was able to receive CHN rent assistance which paid her back rent plus three months of future rent, and the eviction case got dismissed as well.



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”

Cristina got a divorce from her abusive husband with help from a Legal Aid attorney. The judge on the case denied her husband visitation rights with her children, but a few months later, he tried again to get visitation by filing a new case. The Legal Aid attorney once again successfully represented Cristina and was able to protect the children from being around this abusive man.

“

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Tom, a widower raising two boys on his own, had relied on his job's medical insurance to pay for the family's health care. His employer penalized him for avoiding heavy physical labor while suffering a back injury and denied him the required two weeks of paid leave when he had COVID-19. Legal Aid's advocacy led to a hearing decision that awarded Tom \$6,645 in back-paid unemployment compensation and \$3,900 in Pandemic Unemployment Assistance.



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In honor of those who are depending on justice

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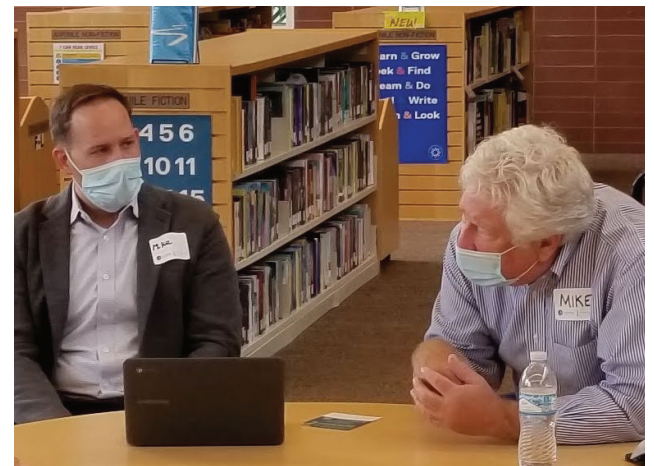
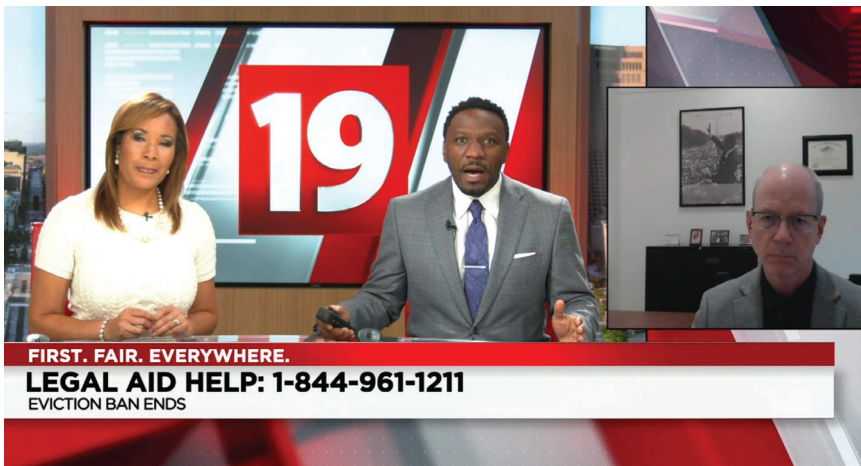
At the age of 60, Kathy had to care for her infant great-grandchild, Mia, when the girl's parents disappeared without a trace. When Kathy took Mia to MetroHealth Buckeye to get her medical care and vaccinations, a nurse referred her Legal Aid for help obtaining insurance and public benefits to cover these unexpected costs. A Legal Aid attorney and paralegal team helped Kathy enroll Mia in Medicaid for healthcare and obtain Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to help with the cost of food.

“



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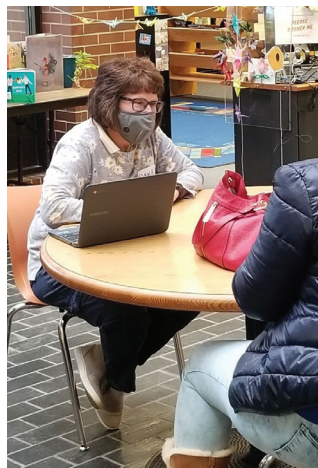
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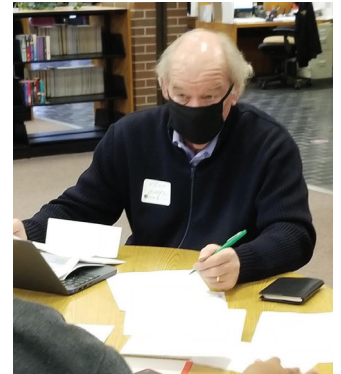
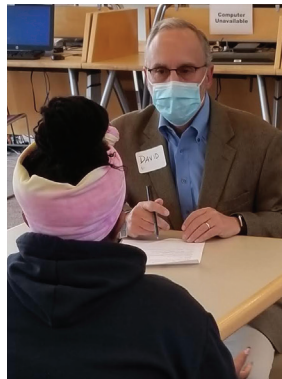
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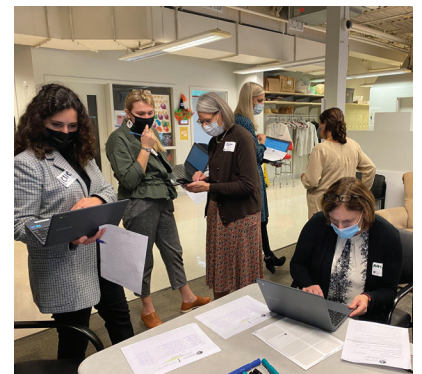
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