

Facts & Statistics

The Need for Legal Aid Today

- About 1.2 million people in Cook County—about 1 in 4—qualify for legal aid today.
- Studies have shown that about half of the people who qualify for legal aid will have a legal need over the course of a given year. That translates to about 600,000 people with a legal need in Cook County this year.
- Fewer than half of the people in need of legal help will be able to get it due to a shortage of pro bono and legal aid resources.
- As just one example, CARPLS—Cook County’s legal aid hotline—was able to respond to only 50% of the more than 100,000 calls received last year due to the large volume of calls and limited resources.
- As a result, many thousands of low-income and disadvantaged people—more than ever before—are going to court unrepresented. A recent national study estimates that in civil cases, at least one party is unrepresented in 3 out of 4 cases.
- The legal needs of low-income people run the gamut, from very simple questions that can be answered online or by court help desks, to complex problems that require hours of individual, and often specialized, legal counseling and extended representation.

Legal Aid’s Proven Impact—a Solid Investment

- Studies consistently show that in contested matters in court, the outcome often turns on whether or not a low-income or disadvantaged person has representation. Some findings from recent studies include:
 - **Domestic Violence.** Domestic violence survivors represented by an attorney can be 2.5 times more likely to successfully obtain a protective order than those who do not have a lawyer.
 - **Special Education.** In special education due process hearings, if a parent was not represented by a lawyer, the parent and child won only 20% of the time. With representation, that number rose to 50%.
 - **Unaccompanied Immigrant Children.** In almost half of the cases in which a child was represented in immigration court by a lawyer, the court allowed the child to stay in the United States. When children appeared in immigration court without a lawyer, nine out of ten were ordered deported.
 - **Asylum.** The single greatest factor that affects whether an asylum seeker wins or loses in immigration court is whether the applicant has a lawyer. Over the course of a year, only 11% of those without legal representation were granted asylum; with legal representation the odds rose to 54%.
 - **Debt Collection.** A represented defendant was four times more likely to prevail in a debt collection case than an unrepresented defendant. Represented defendants secured a settlement in nearly 25% of the cases, compared to 6.4% for unrepresented defendants.
 - **Eviction.** Tenants represented by a lawyer were six times more likely than unrepresented ones to win in court. Generally, almost 90% of landlords are represented by a lawyer, while less than 10% of tenants have representation.

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- A **major new study** confirms that legal representation for low-income people has a number of other benefits both to the litigants and significantly increases Court efficiency.
 - In landlord/tenant matters and contested child custody cases, legal representation dramatically improves court efficiencies and outcomes for low-income people. Representation by an attorney significantly increased the likelihood of settlement in eviction cases and the longevity of court orders in child custody cases, resulting in lower court costs and more family stability.
- Legal aid in Illinois produces an almost 2:1 economic return on investment according to a comprehensive Illinois **study**. The study's limited sampling of organizations alone produced economic benefits of more than \$70 million in a year.
 - By obtaining protective orders, divorces, child custody and legal recognition for noncitizens experiencing abuse, a sampling of legal aid providers in the study avoided \$9.4 million in costs of domestic violence to individuals.
 - By assisting clients with foreclosures, evictions or other housing issues, just a small sample of legal aid providers avoided \$1.9 million in costs related to homelessness.

The Legal Community's Increasingly Critical Role in Funding

- The legal community's support of legal aid is an increasingly critical source of funding. It has grown significantly over the past eleven years both through the Investing in Justice Campaign and in direct support to the many outstanding pro bono and legal aid organizations serving the community.
 - Since its inception in 2007, our legal community has collectively contributed more than \$15 million to the Campaign to support the work of our community's pro bono and legal aid organizations and their dedicated attorneys.
 - At the same time, contributions from individuals directly to our community's pro bono and legal aid organizations have more than doubled.
 - Since the Campaign's inception, the number of individual donors to the Campaign has more than tripled while at the same time the number of individual donors to pro bono and legal aid organizations in the Chicago area has also grown significantly.

Government funding is declining despite the growing need.

- Federal funding for legal aid was flat in 2017 and the government has yet to pass the FY 2018 budget. FY 2017 funding in real dollars is more than 20% below the 2010 level in real dollars and more than 50% less than its level in the early 1980's. At the same time, the number of people eligible and in need of free legal help has grown significantly to about 60 million nationally today.
- State funding for legal aid was cut 20% in the FY 2013 budget, after being slashed by 50% in FY 2010, and remains at that level following resolution of the state budget impasse in 2017.



Investing in Justice Campaign

Justice People Deserve, Not Just What They Can Afford

2018

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Our Combined Impact through the Campaign

- More than 30 pro bono and legal aid organizations receive funding from the Campaign and are able to help tens of thousands of low-income and disadvantaged people each year as a direct result.
- The Campaign funds a continuum of legal services to help people in need, ranging from web-based information and resources, legal aid hotlines, advice desks and clinics, to extended legal representation and larger impact litigation and advocacy.
- In 2016, pro bono and legal aid organizations funded through the Investing in Justice Campaign closed over 115,000 cases on behalf of low-income and disadvantaged people.
- Last year, almost 15,000 people received brief advice and legal help at court-based advice desks that receive funding from the Campaign.
- In addition to the cases handled by pro bono and legal aid organizations, in 2017 Illinoisans visited www.illinoislegalaid.org more than 1.4 million times. The website provides helpful legal information and resources for the public.
- Your contributions to the Investing in Justice Campaign leverage over \$500,000 in support from other foundations and government entities that would not otherwise be available to organizations supported by the Campaign.

Contributions Go a Long Way

- \$100 will help three people get brief advice and assistance at a help desk in the Circuit Court.
- \$250 will help seven people get brief advice on the CARPLS legal aid hotline.
- \$500 will help someone in need to get extended legal representation for many typical cases handled by pro bono and legal aid programs.
- \$1,000 will enable a victim of domestic violence to get an order of protection and divorce, providing temporary safety, as well as a path to longer-term stability and independence.



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Impact Stories

The three examples below are representative stories from the many thousands of low-income and disadvantaged people who depend on Chicago's pro bono and legal aid organizations to protect their safety and independence. Your Campaign contributions help make that possible through CBF grants to more than 30 pro bono and legal aid organizations, including the ones below.

A Community Institution Preserved

The American Indian Center (AIC) has been a second home for thousands of Native Americans in the Chicago area for more than six decades. From vital services like health clinics and food and clothing banks to cultural activities like pow wows and storytelling nights, the AIC has been a community anchor since 1953.

But this critical institution's future was thrown into doubt in 2014 when, facing asbestos contamination, heating issues and the need for other major repairs to their building, the AIC realized they could no longer afford to maintain their longtime space in Uptown. And they didn't know where to turn.

Facing this seemingly insurmountable challenge, the AIC was fortunate to be connected to the Community Law Project of the Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights. The program specializes in helping nonprofits in need of transactional legal assistance. The AIC was paired with two pro bono attorneys, who quickly got to work finding the AIC a commercial broker to represent them, navigating a whole thicket of legal issues, and connecting them to financial and environmental consultants to advise on other issues regarding the sale and purchase of a new property.

With the help of these pro bono lawyers and the network of partners they assembled, the AIC eventually found the perfect space nearby at an accessible building with classrooms, a small kitchen, and a gymnasium. By selling their old building, AIC was able to cover the new purchase price, plus the cost of renovations and operations. In March 2017, the AIC invited its members for a symbolic two-mile walk from Uptown to Albany Park to inaugurate the new center, and the AIC now has a new spiritual home for many years to come.

Impact Stories

Turning Questions into Answers

Like many low and moderate-income people in the Chicago area, Mary depended on having a reliable vehicle for her livelihood and wellbeing. In Mary's case, that vehicle was a truck, and when her truck needed repairs it was a big deal for her.

Mary took her truck into a repair shop, where she expected it to be a straightforward process and gave them a hefty \$2,500 down-payment. However, soon after there was a fire at the repair shop, and Mary's truck was destroyed. The repair shop's insurer offered to pay \$5,900 to cover the value of the car but refused to reimburse Mary's down payment on the repair.

Mary came to the Municipal Court Advice Desk in the Circuit Court looking for help, where she was able to get advice and assistance from an experienced attorney at CARPLS. The attorney helped her draft and file a complaint in the Pro Se Small Claims Court and coached her on the process from there. As Mary put it, "I had more questions than answers prior to coming here with a very stressful situation. The attorney made my stress level diminish. I walked out of there more confident."

With Mary empowered by the legal advice and assistance she received from CARPLS, the repair shop eventually agreed to make monthly installment payments on the \$2,500 down-payment plus the court costs, and Mary can now move on with her life without this situation hanging over her.

** This story also appears in sample email 2.*

Going the Distance

Eight-year-old Ley'gacy happily lived with her grandmother, who had guardianship because Ley'gacy's mother was unable to care for her. Suddenly, however, Ley'gacy's mother—who had a history of mental illness and instability—decided to assert her parental rights. And soon after, Ley'gacy disappeared from her grandmother's home. She had been kidnapped by her mother.

Fortunately, Chicago Volunteer Legal Services stepped in to help and put a pro bono attorney through the CVLS Guardian ad Litem for Minors Program on the case. The attorney searched for weeks, trying to figure out where Ley'gacy's mother had taken the child, until one day the grandmother was contacted by a California school district where Ley'gacy had been enrolled. The next thing the attorney knew, he was on a plane to San Bernardino County.

It can be exceedingly difficult to return a child from another state, or even enforce court orders out of state. But the attorney was resolute, and after hundreds of hours of pro bono work and a lengthy hearing, the judge ultimately decided in his favor. The attorney accompanied Ley'gacy—who he has described as the best behaved eight-year-old on the planet—back to Illinois, where she now is back in a happy and stable home with her grandmother.