



The Chicago Bar Foundation: The Foundation at Work in 2007

The Chicago Bar Foundation (CBF) works to ensure equal access to justice for all Chicagoans. As the charitable arm of [The Chicago Bar Association](#), the CBF's mission is a reflection of the CBA's strong commitment to this fundamental American principle and our belief that the huge gap in access to our justice system today is a call to action for the legal community.

In Chicago, a dedicated group of legal aid and pro bono attorneys provide vital legal services to many thousands of the most vulnerable residents in our community. However, due to a long-term underinvestment in our pro bono and legal aid system, tens of thousands of less fortunate individuals continue to lack access to legal assistance that is often critical to their safety and independence. Hundreds of thousands more are left to attempt to solve often complex legal problems on their own.

The CBF takes a strategic approach to closing this gap by building the capacity of our pro bono and legal aid system through grants, advocacy and other support and aggressively working to eliminate systemic barriers to equal access to justice. Over the past year, the CBF made tremendous progress towards improving access to justice for the most vulnerable members of our community thanks to the generous support of a growing cadre of CBA members, law firms, corporations and other donors committed to the cause.

More information on the CBF's record-breaking Fiscal Year 2007 is available on the CBF's website, www.chicagobarfoundation.org. Over the past eight years, the CBF has more than quintupled the amount of its annual grants and fundraising, doubled its net assets, and played a lead role in launching a number of groundbreaking access to justice initiatives. This year, the CBF launched a bold new look, highlighted by a new logo, a new website, and a new video. Some of the other major highlights of 2007 included:

The CBF Achieves Record Fundraising Success, Significantly Expanding the CBF's Capacity to Ensure Access to Justice

- Received record contributions in FY 2007 from individual lawyers, law firms and corporations along with several large *cy pres* awards that made it possible for the CBF to award a record amount of grants and to initiate several groundbreaking new projects.
- Launched the 1st Annual *Investing in Justice Campaign* and raised \$900,000 to help address a growing crisis in the legal aid community: the combination of inordinately low salaries and skyrocketing law school debt that increasingly is making it financially untenable for dedicated lawyers to pursue legal aid careers.
- Received a total of nearly \$2.7 million in *cy pres* awards to start a number of innovative new projects, highlighted by a \$2 million award that will launch the new CBF Sun-Times Public Interest Law Fellowship Program in the Fall of 2007.
- Received major gifts from Thomas Morsch, which will continue the prestigious CBF Morsch Award, and the Estate of Sadie Berkson, which will complement the CBF's Milton Gray Fund and support access to justice initiatives of the CBA Young Lawyers Section targeted towards young people.

The CBF Continues to Build the Capacity of the Pro Bono and Legal Aid System

- Awarded a new record of more than \$1.3 million in grants to over 40 legal aid and public interest law organizations and related initiatives serving our community.

- Co-hosted another record-breaking CBA/CBF Pro Bono and Public Service Awards Luncheon, 2nd Annual CBA/CBF Pro Bono Week (which featured the 13th Annual YLS Pro Bono and Community Service Fair), 10th Annual CBF Fall Benefit, 6th Annual Fat Tuesday Challenge (co-hosted with the Association of Legal Administrators), and several other successful CBF Young Professionals Board events that highlighted the legal community's strong commitment to equal access to justice and engaged many more people in the cause.
- Partnered with PILI to re-launch the Pro Bono Initiative as a joint project to promote best practices for pro bono work, help ensure effective communication about available pro bono opportunities, and act as a clearinghouse and resource for pro bono issues.
- Joined with the Circuit Court's Probate Division and CVLS to help elderly and disabled residents through a newly expanded pro bono guardian ad litem project. The CBF also provided the seed funding a new pro bono project for veterans at the Legal Assistance Foundation and a pro bono program at the Community Economic Development Law Project to help strengthen legal aid and other nonprofit organizations serving our community.

The CBF Steps Up Its Investment in the Attorneys Dedicating Their Careers to Legal Aid

- Released the groundbreaking *Investing in Justice* study with the Illinois Coalition for Equal Justice in late 2006 (available at www.chicagobarfoundation.org), the first study of its kind taking an in-depth look at the challenges attorneys pursuing careers in legal aid face.
- Made it possible for several dedicated attorneys and law students to pursue careers in legal aid through the CBF's Anderson Fellowship, the Moses and the Marovitz Public Interest Law Scholarships, and the CBF's sponsorship of two Equal Justice Works public interest law fellowships.
- Partnered with the CBA on a new initiative for attorneys working at the many legal aid and public interest law organizations funded by the CBF which allows these attorneys to receive free CBA memberships and CBA CLE programs.

The CBF Plays a Lead Role in Several Systemic Initiatives to Improve Access to Justice

- Served as a lead partner in a Midwest regional conference on pro se litigation sponsored by the American Judicature Society in September, 2006, which helped key Illinois stakeholders develop a comprehensive plan for making the Illinois courts more user-friendly and accessible for the growing number of self-represented litigants.
- Continued its leadership in making the court system more user-friendly and accessible for the public by increasing its support for a number of successful pro se help desks in the state and federal courts and helping to launch two new court-based pro se assistance projects: a new help desk for the Circuit Court's Parentage and Child Support Division and an expanded help desk for the U.S. Bankruptcy Court here in Chicago.
- Through the CBF Young Professionals Board, partnered with the CBA Young Lawyers Section (YLS), the Circuit Court and Illinois Legal Aid Online to produce online videos and associated resources to educate and assist the many thousands of Chicagoans who have cases in traffic court.

The CBF Continues to Promote Broader Community Awareness and Support

- Continued its leadership in collaborative efforts to increase state and federal funding for legal aid and access to justice, which were highlighted this year by the first real increase in federal funding for legal aid in many years and new state legislation that will increase the number of *cy pres* awards going to support legal aid and access to justice initiatives.
- Furthered its leadership role in the philanthropic community both locally and nationally, highlighted this year by new collaborations with the Chicago Area Foundation for Legal Services (an arm of The Chicago Community Trust) and the Alvin H. Baum Family Fund.

Thanks to our many dedicated supporters, the CBF has made real strides towards closing the justice gap in our community. Still, we have a long way to go to achieve our vision of equal access to justice for all

Chicagoans. With several exciting new projects and initiatives on tap and the continued growth of our annual Investing in Justice Campaign and other CBF development efforts, we anticipate another successful year in FY 2008. For more information about the CBF and how you can get involved, please visit www.chicagobarfoundation.org or call us at (312) 554-1204.