

VOLUNTEER LEGAL SERVICES PROJECT of MONROE COUNTY, INC.

Meeting unmet civil legal needs with pro bono attorneys

ANNUAL REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2017

April 1, 2016 - March 31, 2017



VOLUNTEER
LEGAL SERVICES
PROJECT
OF MONROE COUNTY, INC.

OUR MISSION, VISION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

OUR MISSION

VLSP improves the quality of life of low-income people in Monroe County by ensuring the existence of a readily available panel of skilled volunteer attorneys to resolve serious civil legal problems of the poor.

OUR VISION

There are no unmet civil legal needs of the poor in our community.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

I. RESPONSIVENESS

VLSP offers high quality legal services to the poor that are accessible to clients and which produce positive outcomes for clients. VLSP continually monitors and improves its processes and programs in order to identify changing civil legal needs of the poor, to be responsive to those needs and to be responsive to the needs of volunteer attorneys.

II. COORDINATION

VLSP works collaboratively and in coordination with other legal services programs and human services programs to ensure that volunteer attorneys are used to meet needs that are not met elsewhere, that clients can easily find legal help they need and that clients will readily access a range of services to meet their needs.

III. EFFICIENCY

VLSP maximizes productivity and efficiency in the delivery of legal services through systems and techniques that will include, among others, optimal use of technology, promotion of simplified procedures to address client problems and use of volunteers.

IV. MAXIMIZING VOLUNTEER RESOURCES

VLSP maximizes volunteer delivery of legal services to the poor through aggressive recruitment, particularly in substantive areas of high client demand, and through high quality training and support.

V. FISCAL STABILITY

VLSP obtains sufficient financial resources and maintains stability of funding sources to meet the operational needs of the program, while limiting expenditure of staff and board time in fundraising.



PRO BONO HONOR ROLL

Volunteer Legal Services Project acknowledges and thanks the attorneys, paralegals, students and others listed who accepted a VLSP case referral, advised and assisted with clients at VLSP's Debt Collection Advice Clinic, Family Court Custody Clinic, Pro Se Divorce Clinic, Willow Domestic Violence Center Clinic, Wills Clinic, or Hotline, represented tenants in the Lawyer of the Morning Program, assisted individuals at the 7th Judicial Help Center, presented training seminars, made calls for the Campaign for Justice, or served on the Campaign for Justice Cabinet and/or the VLSP Board of Directors between April 2016 and March 2017

Gary Abelson
Maroun Ajaka
Arslan Akhtar
Andrew J. Anderson
Andrew Anderson
John Annechino
Mary Aramini
Michael Arnold
Sara Ashcraft
Opal C. Bailey
Kevin Bambury
Sahar Basaria
Duwaine Bascoe
Alison Bates
Katherine Baynes
Lloyd Bean
Steven Beckerman
Frank Beretta
Lawrence Bice
Paul Blackburn
Judi Bogart
Iskra Bonanno
Eftihia Bourtis
Gabriel Bouvet-Boisclair
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Diana Clarkson
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Gary Cohen
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Kristine Demo-Vazquez
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Thomas P. Durkin
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Matthew Elgin
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Meghan Holleran
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Phillip Hurwitz
Shakira Hutchinson
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Deborah Indivino
Timothy Ingersoll
Kennina Ip
Jillian M. Jacobs
Rekha Jain
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Curtis Johnson
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Brittany Jones
Sylvia Josh
Geoff Kaeuper
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Nolan Lafler
Meredith Lamb
Samuel Langmann
Lucinda Lapoff
Stephanie Lapple
Edwin Larkin
Chris Larrabee

Brittany Lawrence
C. Bruce Lawrence
Jon Lazenby
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LaToya S. Lee
Herbert LePage
Steven Levitsky
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Andre Lindsay
John Lockhart
Jayla Lombardo
John P. Lowe
Judith Lynch
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Heidi Martinez
Lisa Maslow
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David Mayer
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Christopher McClary
Jean McCreary
Katherine McCurdy
David Mcknight
John McQueen
Isabelle E. Melody
John Menard
Harry Messina
Danielle Mettler-LaFeir
Joseph Midiri
Jake Miller
Shani C. Mitchell
Mark Molloy
Mary Moore
Lucien A. Morin II
Lisa Morris
Benjamin Mudrick
Maureen Mulholland
Liam Murphy
Katarzyna Murphy
Charu Narang
Robert Nassau
William J. Neild
Michael Nicholson
Robert Nicolais
Aleks Nikolic
Gail M. Norris
Frank Novak
Robert F. O'Connell
Eugene O'Connor
Christine O'Connor
Gary O'Donnell

PRO BONO HONOR ROLL (continued)

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Charlene Ochogo
Barbara Orenstein
Luis Ormaechea
Anthony Orphe
Adam Oshrin
Lisa Paine
Fauna Pappalardo
George L. Parker
Audrey Peartree
Bryan Pelkey
Helen Perkins
Michael Personte
Craig D. Peterson
Christina Petrella
Ann Pfeiffer
Anthony Piazza
Gregory Piede
Kaylan Porter
Tracy Powell
Ana Quesada-Fritz
Emily Stouffer Quinn
Gregg Redmond
Maria Reed
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Jodi A. Reynolds
Paul Richardson
Scott Rogoff
Thomas Rohr
Vanessa Romance
Alan L. Ross
Joseph Rossi
Theresa Rusnak
Jodie Ryan
Robert Salerno
Paul Sanders
Ernest D. Santoro
Anthony Scalia
George Schell
Glenn Schieck
Michael Schmitt
Michael Schnittman
Robert Schwartz
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Peter Scribner
Stephanie Seiffert
Robert Shaddock
Josie Sheppard
Jeremy Sher
M. Aileen Shinaman
Jennifer Shoemaker

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Thomas G. Smith
Karen Smith Callanan
Rachel Sparks
Mike Staszkiw
John Suda
Laura Taylor
Kim Taylor
Stefanie Tedesco
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Evan Thompson
Michael Tomaino
Edward Townsend
Jonathan Trotto
Lynn Trudell
Michael Tuohey
Thomas Tuori
Donald Twietmeyer
Gary VanGraafeiland
Christopher Van Kirk
Nathan Van Loon
Radhika Varavenkataraman
Thomas Walsh
Andrew Walters
Kristin Warner
Thomas Warth
Paul B. Watkins
Jon Webster
Michael Wegman
John Weider
Seymour Weinstein
Kimberly Weisbeck
Warren Welch
John Wells
Christopher K. Werner
Donald A. White
Mark Whitford
John Wieser
Beth Wilkens
David Wilks
Keana Williams
Sandra Williams
Ryan Woodworth
Mark R. Wright
Franz Wright
Luke Wright
Constantina Zacharakis
Helen A. Zamboni
Adam Zielinski
Iska Ziver

The list of individual attorneys and paralegals includes VLSP participants from firms and law departments, as well as solo practitioners.

We sincerely regret any omissions.

If we omitted your name, please call VLSP at 232-3051, and we will add your name on the next publication list.

Please note the names and affiliations listed are as of the date of service.



PRO BONO HONOR ROLL (continued)

Allstate
Appellate Division 4th Department
Ashcraft Franklin Young & Peters, LLP
Barclay Damon LLP
Basch & Nickerson LLP
Beckerman & Beckerman
Blitman & King LLP
Bond, Schoeneck & King, PLLC
Boylan Code, LLP
City of Rochester Law Department
Connors & Corcoran, LLP
Cusker & Cusker
Davidson Fink LLP
Dentino, Cammarata, Fazio, LLP
District Attorney's Office
Duke Law Firm
Ernstrom & Dreeste LLP
Faraci Lange, LLP
Fero & Ingersoll, LLP
Forsyth & Forsyth
Forsythe, Howe, O'Dwyer, Kalb & Murphy P.C.
Gallo & Iacovangelo, LLP
Goldberg Segalla LLP
Gray & Feldman LLP
Grodensky & Partners, LP
Handelman, Witkowitz & Levitsky, LLP
Harris Beach PLLC
Harris, Chesworth, O'Brien, Johnstone, Welch & Leone
Harter Secrest & Emery LLP
Jeffrey Freedman Attorneys at Law
Kaman, Berlove, Marafioti, Jacobstein & Goldman LLP
Kammholz Law PLLC
Klafehn, Heise & Johnson P.L.L.C.
Lacy Katzen LLP
Leclair Korona Vahey Cole LLP
Lexis-Nexis
McConville Considine Cooman & Morin, P.C.
McElroy, Deutsch, Mulvaney & Carenter, LLP
Merzbach Law Office, P.C.
Michael D. Schmitt & Associates P.C.

Miller Mayer LLP
Modica & Associates, Attorneys, PLLC
Monroe County Conflict Defender's Office
Monroe County Public Defender's Office
Nixon Peabody
Parrs Perotto & Magee, LLP
Pelkey & Pelkey, P.C.
Petralia, Webb & O'Connell PC
Phillips Lytle LLP
Piede Sun LLP
Pirrello, Missal, Personte & Feder
Presutti Law Office, P.C.
Pullano & Farrow PLLC
Rochester City School District
Rochester Institute of Technology - Office of Legal Affairs
Schell & Schell
Syracuse University Clinical Legal Education
The Woodworth Law Firm
Thomson Reuters
Trevett Cristo Salzer & Andolina P.C.
Trotto Law Firm
Underberg & Kessler LLP
University of Rochester
Van Kirk Law Office, PLLC
Van Loon Menard, Attorneys at Law
Ward Greenberg Heller & Reidy
Weinstein & Randisi Law Firm
Wesley Clark & Bates LLP
Woodruff & Luo, LLC
Woods Oviatt Gilman LLP
Xerox Corporation



PRO BONO OPPORTUNITIES

The range of pro bono opportunities available through VLSP is extremely broad. VLSP assists clients in a wide variety of substantive areas, in a number of different judicial and administrative forums and with non-litigation as well as litigation matters. In addition to direct one-on-one representation of clients, VLSP offers two clinics through which volunteers can provide advice and immediate brief assistance to low income clients.

Priority Areas

VLSP particularly needs help in the substantive areas of divorce, family court practice, unemployment insurance representation, tax and immigration disputes. In these areas, client need often outstrips availability of volunteer attorneys. We hope that volunteers will consider accepting referrals in one of these areas.

Divorce and Family Court Practice

There is a tremendous demand for representation in the family law area and the need for volunteers is great. VLSP currently handles cases in two priority areas: representing victims of domestic violence and representing parents in custody and visitation disputes. The custody and visitation cases are litigated in either Family Court or Supreme Court. VLSP has extensive resource materials on matrimonial practice, and expert practitioners are available for consultation and to assist volunteers with their cases. Clinic opportunities are also available to assist with uncontested divorces on a limited basis and also to assist clients filing petitions in Family Court. Volunteers can also assist families completing family court petitions through the Family Law Remote Assistance Project, which connects rural clients with attorney volunteers through webcam.

Kinship Care

VLSP helps individuals with non-parent family law matter including custody, visitation, guardianships and adoptions. Volunteer attorneys at our clinic help non-parents complete petitions and instruct them on how to proceed.

Standby Guardianship

Volunteer attorneys represent parents with HIV/AIDS, Cancer and other serious illnesses in standby guardianship proceedings, to designate custodians of their children in the event of incapacity or death.

Unemployment Insurance Benefits

VLSP provides representation to people who are denied unemployment insurance benefits. There are only a handful of attorneys who are currently handling these cases. The law in this area is not very complex, and the vast majority of hearings involve factual questions. Unemployment insurance hearings offer a wonderful opportunity to try cases in an adversarial forum. An attorney need not be admitted to practice in New York to handle these hearings.

Tax

VLSP handles almost any type of dispute with the IRS including, but not limited to, issues with earned income tax credit, dependency exemptions, head of household filing status, pension income, independent contractors, and other tax issues. VLSP can help with examinations or audits, collections, appeals, and injured spouse tax relief.

Immigration

VLSP helps unite and keep together families of U.S. citizens and permanent residents by obtaining immigration status for their undocumented family members. The legal representation provided by our volunteer attorneys includes applying for U.S. citizenship, permanent residence status, adjustment of status applications and petitioning for fiancé visas.



PRO BONO OPPORTUNITIES (continued)

Wills and Estates

Volunteer attorneys assist people with serious illnesses such as HIV/AIDS, cancer and other life threatening illnesses in drafting wills, powers of attorney and health care proxies. On a limited basis (dependent on income, asset eligibility and value of the estate), volunteers also assist people with estate administration and probate.

Landlord/Tenant and Real Estate

Volunteers are needed to represent tenants in matters involving conversion by landlords of tenants' personal property (it is not uncommon for landlords to illegally lock out tenants and keep all of their belongings). VLSP handles house closings for individuals who purchase homes from Habitat for Humanity as well as some deed transfers and partition actions.

Bankruptcy

Wage earners who meet VLSP's eligibility guidelines (no more than 200% of the federal poverty level) and who face income execution need representation in Chapter 7 Bankruptcy proceedings. Clients with debt collection problems are screened for bankruptcy representation at VLSP's Debt Collection Advice Clinic.

Consumer

VLSP represents clients with a variety of consumer problems including name changes, record expungement cases and debt collection actions for which there are good legal or factual defenses.

Employment/Labor

Clients present a varied array of labor problems including pension cases, licensure cases (e.g., state denies employment license) and removing mandatory legal bar of disability imposed as a result of criminal conviction.

Help Center

The Help Center is a collaboration between the state court system and VLSP to provide legal information to unrepresented litigants. Help Center volunteers do not give legal advice, but provide legal information to individuals on a walk-in basis at the Monroe County Hall of Justice and the Rochester Central Library. Volunteers make referrals to appropriate local agencies, help explain court process and procedures to clients, and provide access to and assistance with filling out forms.



SNAPSHOT OF ACHIEVEMENTS

Volunteer Legal Services Project of Monroe County Inc. (VLSP) closed 1,943 cases in FY2017, serving clients through a wide range of legal assistance provided by pro bono attorneys. 381 cases were referred to pro bono counsel for representation in matters involving domestic violence, eviction and foreclosure, denial of unemployment insurance benefits and consumer problems, among many other civil legal problems. Volunteer attorneys assisted an additional 324 clients with advice and brief service at VLSP's six clinics.

For the period ending on March 31, 2017, ten pro bono attorneys at the Family Law Remote Assistance Project offered advice and counsel to 28 clients seeking child support petitions or modifications, as well as custody and/or visitation petitions and modifications through the Family Court utilizing video technology. The Tenant Town Court Program assists low-income unrepresented tenants in defending eviction proceedings for non-payment or holdovers in Irondequoit Town Court. During this reporting period 12 pro bono attorneys provided limited scope representation to 48 clients facing eviction proceedings.

VLSP attorneys provided significant benefits for clients. During 4/1/16-3/31/17, clients recovered \$583,255 in lump sum awards, and an aggregate \$12,954 per month was awarded in spousal support, child support, unemployment compensation and consumer judgments. VLSP also handles defensive litigation, and prevented the loss of significant financial resources. VLSP clients avoided recovery of \$347,754 in lump sum awards and an aggregate \$650 per month.

VLSP AT A GLANCE	
Population Served:	Low Income Population
Area Served:	Monroe County
FY 2017 Funding (Total):	1,243,135
Program Size	
Total Staff:	14.63
Lawyers:	6.73
Paralegals/Legal Assts.:	4.0
Other Staff:	3.9

The VLSP Help Centers and the VLSP Family Law Remote Assistance Project ("FLRAP") increase access to and improve the administrative of justice. The 7th Judicial District VLSP Help Center, (Hall of Justice), and the VLSP Library Help Center, (Rochester Central Library), jointly provided 2,937 unrepresented litigants with free legal and court procedural information. FLRAP operates in Ontario, Livingston, Monroe, Wayne, Orleans, and Yates county libraries assisting rural clients with Rochester pro bono attorneys. Clients remotely connect with attorneys in their homes or offices.

VLSP continues to make significant program capacity improvements through the use of technology and database upgrades (client online fillable forms, pro bono attorney online scheduling, Live Help) and the addition of pro bono (Appellate Division Fourth Department) government attorneys to our panel. Pro bono attorney online training videos and YouTube client and pro bono attorney video testimonials greatly increased our capacity to recruit, train and recognize pro bono attorneys.

The VLSP HELP Project provides legal services to low income seniors who reside in Rochester Housing Authority ("RHA") buildings. Pro bono attorneys meet with seniors in their building's community room. During this reporting period, the HELP Project served 80 seniors. The Federal Pro Se Assistance Program ("FPSAP") was established to assist the growing number of unrepresented litigants in the U.S. District Court WDNY, Rochester Division. The FPSAP is a collaboration between SUNY Buffalo Law School, Volunteer Legal Services Project of Monroe County, Inc. (VLSP) and the U.S District Court Western District of New York. Rochester pro bono attorneys, with the assistance of SUNY Buffalo Law students, provide free limited scope legal assistance to individuals in Rochester who cannot afford an attorney.

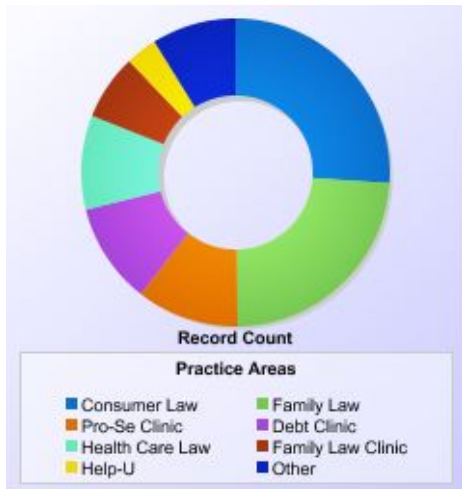
FACTS & FIGURES

OUTCOMES

4,198 Individuals Benefited from Direct Civil Legal Representation

- Extended Representation Outcomes
 - 164 people obtained a divorce, legal separation or annulment
 - 75 people obtained preserved or increased unemployment insurance benefits rights
 - 121 people obtained or maintained custody of children
 - 390 people obtained benefits from other “extended representation”
 - 104 people obtained a will
- Brief Representation Outcomes
 - 3,256 people benefited from legal advice and counsel
 - 88 people benefited from non-litigation advocacy services

BREAKDOWN BY LEGAL PROBLEM AREA



NUMBER OF PEOPLE BENEFITED BY LEGAL SERVICES OTHER THAN DIRECT LEGAL REPRESENTATION

- Total of 25,012 people
 - 20,860 people benefited from Community Legal Education
 - 3,057 people benefited from Pro Se Assistance
 - 1,095 people benefited from referrals to other sources of help

PRO BONO STATISTICS

In FY2017, volunteer lawyers participating in our program achieved the following results:

Number of cases completed:	1,943
Hours contributed:	7326.40
Dollar value of services:	\$1,312,226

FINANCIAL STATEMENT



REVENUE	
Donated Services	\$1,312,226
Contributions	\$191,363
United Way	\$49,181
Grants	\$944,181
Miscellaneous	\$45,760
Investment Gain/Loss	\$21,453
TOTAL Revenue and Support	\$2,564,164

EXPENSES	
Program Services	\$2,420,994
Management/General	\$134,367
Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets	\$8,803
TOTAL Expenses	\$2,555,361

VLSP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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