

**EFFECTIVE  
COMMUNICATION DRIVES**



**JUSTICE**

**CADDAALAD LOO WADA DHAN YAHAY**

**JUSTICIA PARA TODOS**

**KEV NCAJ NCEES RAU TXHUA TUS**

**JUSTICE POUR TOUS**

**CÔNG LÝ CHO MỌI NGƯỜI**

**JUSTICE FOR ALL**

## **2019 MID-MINNESOTA LEGAL AID BOARD**

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## OUR MISSION

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**TO ADVOCATE FOR  
THE LEGAL RIGHTS OF  
DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE  
TO HAVE SAFE, HEALTHY  
AND INDEPENDENT LIVES IN  
STRONG COMMUNITIES.**

## DEAR FRIENDS,

In 2019, Legal Aid delivered on the promise of equal justice for all for over 10,000 Minnesotan families and individuals. We used skilled legal advocacy to defend their most basic civil and human rights to health, security, and well-being.

As we reflect on another year of life-changing work at Legal Aid, we'd like to highlight a critical component of our work: effective communication.

At Legal Aid, we recognize that our community includes people with a broad range of physical, cognitive, and linguistic abilities. Building relationships with our clients often requires creative communication strategies. More than 20 percent of our clients speak a primary language other than English, and we need to understand both language and culture if we hope to provide competent advocacy. Our many community partners help us to establish respectful and trusting relationships so we can best advocate for Minnesotans at every level, from individual negotiations to the courthouse to the state capitol.

In this report, you'll learn how we collaborate internally and with partner organizations to provide culturally competent representation. You'll read how we facilitated economic stability for a Somali elder with a history of trauma, how we helped a youth from rural Guatemala establish hope for his future, and how we demanded justice for a deaf man with cognitive disabilities who was being exploited by an employer. You'll see how we represent individuals and educate the public in multiple languages so our neighbors with limited understanding of English or of legal procedures can stand for their rights under the law.

You are part of Legal Aid's most reliable base, and your support makes a difference every single day. Your generosity helps our quest to ensure that all Minnesotans — no matter their abilities or primary mode of communication — have an opportunity to understand and defend their legal rights.

Thank you for making justice a reality for so many of our friends and neighbors in the communities we serve.

*Drew Schaffer, Executive Director*

P.S. When this report was written, COVID-19 was not yet on our minds. Now in the spring of 2020 with our physical offices closed, we continue to work with our clients by phone and internet. Our attorneys go to court as needed to deliver critical legal help to the communities we serve.

We are receiving many calls about the changes in law under the pandemic. For up-to-date information about federal and state laws, please go to [lawhelpmn.org](http://lawhelpmn.org) for up-to-date information. To give us a boost as we do our best to keep up with rising demand, please go to [mylegalaid.org/donate](https://mylegalaid.org/donate).

# Ensuring Language Justice for Refugees

**L**ul Hassan, who is tribally and culturally Somali, suffered grave loss and injury in Ethiopia, where she lived with her family. Arriving in the United States with no family or friends, she ended up moving into a St. Cloud apartment with a woman she'd meet in a refugee camp.

The trauma inflicted by the Ethiopian military left Hassan unable to leave the apartment independently. She applied for Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and her application was denied. She applied for reconsideration, and that was also denied on the grounds that she was “capable of sedentary work.”

“My life was all the way at the bottom,” Hassan says. “A man who lived nearby told me to go to Legal Aid and ask for help.”

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**“I’m so happy about the way her good work changed my life.”**

## GETTING THE FULL STORY

Heather Helmer, Paralegal in Legal Aid’s St. Cloud office, took Hassan’s case. In order to fully represent her, she needed to know the details of Hassan’s past and her present situation. Because Hassan’s physicians and therapists had used competent interpreters, she was able to glean the basic facts from Hassan’s records. Several fluent Somali speakers work in Legal Aid’s St. Cloud office, and Helmer was able to rely on them to interpret the detailed in-person conversations with Hassan.

“Lul had been so traumatized, it was difficult for her to discuss specifics,” says Helmer. “Our interpreter assessed and effectively conveyed the emotional content to me, so I could navigate through those challenging conversations with sensitivity and compassion.”

Hassan’s husband and five sons were all murdered in front of her, and she was subjected to physical and psychological torture. The ordeal left her with lasting physical and psychological disabilities. Chronic pain, difficulty walking, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder make learning difficult and regular employment impossible.

Helmer discovered that some key documents were missing from Hassan’s file with the Social Security Administration. She gathered records from the Center for Victims of Torture and from the doctors who had prescribed Hassan’s walker and scooter. She filed an appeal of the denial.

## CONVEYING INFORMATION VIA TELECONFERENCE

The appeal hearing was scheduled before an Administrative Law Judge via teleconference. Since there is no longer funding for teleconferences in St. Cloud, Hassan had to travel to Minneapolis for the hearing. Her walker was in for repairs, so traveling by public transit was not realistic. Helmer learned that the round trip would cost Hassan over \$200. Helmer drove Hassan to the hearing in Minneapolis and was by her side throughout the process with an interpreter from the St. Cloud office helping with communication by phone.

“The video conference started as Lul came in on her crutches,” Helmer says. “We didn’t have a medical expert at the hearing, so I wanted the judge to see how she moved and understand the extent of her disability. The visual information was important.”

Helmer described Hassan’s background and current situation to the judge. She explained that because of the trauma, Hassan had difficulty retaining information. Between that, the language barrier, and her physical disabilities, Helmer argued that self-support through employment was unrealistic.



“The court interpreter was incredibly compassionate,” Helmer says. “She was able to convey the emotional tenor to the judge without making Lul speak directly about the torture.”

### **LIFE-CHANGING SUPPORT**

The judge found in Hassan’s favor, awarding ongoing monthly SSI benefits and substantial back pay. After the hearing, Helmer continued to work as an intermediary between Hassan and the legal and administrative systems.

“Lul has no one in her life who reads or speaks English,” Helmer explains. “It’s hard for her to go to the mosque or social events, because crowds feel threatening to her. I made the administrative calls and, with the help of our interpreter, explained the rules about what she can and cannot do with the money.”

Hassan, who had been sleeping on couches since her arrival in Minnesota, was pleased to learn that she could buy a bed. She moved into her own apartment and purchased furniture and clothing. She is now working toward U.S. citizenship.

“I still have bad memory loss and flashbacks,” she says. “I’m grateful for interpreters who helped me understand what was going on. I was surprised to learn there are people like Heather, and I’m so happy about the way her good work changed my life.”



## Culturally Competent Team Helps Teen Immigrant

**W**hen Ian was 10 years old, his 15-year-old brother was found dead in the street in Guatemala. A few years earlier, their older brother had also been murdered by a local gang. Unable to cope with the grief of two murdered children, his single mother started drinking heavily. Ian, already shattered over the loss of his brother, was left without a functional parent.

School required a long walk through streets full of gangs and drugs. Ian stopped going and worked long hours to help support the family. At the age of 13, he had no one to protect him and was terrified of being killed like his brothers. He left home, traveling alone to the United States. Border patrol detained him and transferred him to a facility for unaccompanied youth.

### **COMING TO MINNESOTA**

Ian's sister Lupe, who lives and works in Minnesota, welcomed Ian to live with her. She helped Ian enroll in school, found a counselor to help him deal with the trauma of

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## In three languages, Russell and Staff Attorney Betsy Parrell worked with Ian and Lupe to fully understand the family’s situation.

their brothers’ deaths, and took him to get glasses so he could see clearly for the first time in his life. She wanted to become Ian’s legal custodian so she could authorize medical treatment and make other critical decisions on his behalf.

At his immigration court hearing, Ian met with a volunteer who connected them with Legal Aid. Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) allows immigrant children to obtain lawful permanent immigration status if they cannot reunify with a parent due to abuse, abandonment, or neglect. Legal Aid’s Minneapolis Immigration Unit identified Ian as possibly eligible for SIJS and took his case.

### LANGUAGE BARRIERS LIFTED

Ian and Lupe are indigenous Guatemalans from a rural village. Their first language is Mam, one of the many indigenous languages of Guatemala. Neither spoke English when they arrived in the United States. By the time Ian arrived, Lupe was fluent in Spanish and proficient in English. Ian spoke and understood no English and minimal Spanish.

Luci Russell, Legal Aid’s Client Services Coordinator and Spanish Interpreter, worked with Legal Aid colleagues and the family to establish communication. Lupe’s English lacked the fluency of expression or understanding of a native speaker, and Legal Aid couldn’t find a local interpreter who spoke Ian’s specific dialect. After multiple tries, they found a Mam phone interpreter who was able to facilitate Ian’s meaningful participation.

In three languages, Russell and Staff Attorney Betsy Parrell worked with Ian and Lupe to fully understand the family’s situation. Lupe was clearly the adult best able to provide effective care if appointed as Ian’s custodian. Court proceedings to establish a custodian could also potentially lay groundwork for Ian to pursue SIJS status.

### PRO BONO ATTORNEY TAKES THE CASE

Parrell asked the Volunteer Lawyer Network (VLN) for family law help. Pro bono attorney Therese

Kieffer, Consultant with Wolters Kluwer Financial Services, took the third-party custody case. Legal Aid stayed involved throughout the case, providing language support and guidance on the complicated interplay between family law and immigration law.

“Legal Aid provided fantastic support,” says Kieffer. “Considering we had multiple levels of interpretation, I was really impressed with how smoothly it all went.”

### CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC INTERPRETATION

Kieffer needed to contact Ian’s mother in rural Guatemala and attempt to locate his absent father to notify them of the custody hearing. Russell used her awareness of indigenous culture to facilitate the communication and logistics necessary to satisfy court requirements for notification and documentation. Even in-person meetings with Ian and Lupe sometimes required cultural as well as linguistic interpretation.

“During one meeting, the interpreter recommended that I change my line of questioning,” recalls Kieffer. “The way I was asking had cultural implications that I wasn’t aware of. I was able to reconsider the questions and approach the matter in a different way, which helped Lupe to feel more comfortable sharing that particular information.”

### PATH TO U.S. CITIZENSHIP

Lupe is now Ian’s legal guardian. With SIJS and Employment Authorization approved, Ian is working toward U.S. citizenship. Lupe and Ian hope others will understand how much Legal Aid’s cultural awareness and use of the right interpreters helped them, especially when Ian first arrived.

Ian is on course to graduate from high school in 2020 and hopes to go to college. He’d like to become a police officer so he can help others the way he was helped. He wants to live in a world where no one fears death on their walk to school.

# Community Grant Facilitates Access to Housing Justice

**H**alimo Mohamed cleaned her St. Cloud apartment thoroughly for the final landlord walkthrough. She had an English speaker with her for language support. The landlord's representative told her to expect a portion of her \$1,500 security deposit back within a few weeks.

A month later, Mohamed still hadn't received anything. When she inquired at the landlord's office, they handed her a bill for \$500. That, in addition to her security deposit, totaled more than \$2,000 in charges for vaguely stated damages and cleaning expenses. Mohamed's friend told her she should go to Legal Aid.

## **PROMOTING HOUSING JUSTICE FOR THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY**

Typically, Legal Aid prioritizes eviction cases and does not represent clients with security deposit disputes. But thanks to a grant from the Central Minnesota Community Foundation, Paralegal Abdirahman Hussein, a native Somali speaker, met with Mohamed and listened to her story. Hussein quickly recognized Mohamed's experience as part of a familiar pattern.

Landlords frequently use language barriers, cultural issues, and lack of understanding of tenant rights to take advantage of East African immigrants. The goal of the Community Foundation's grant is to prevent homelessness in the East African community by protecting rent subsidies, opposing unlawful efforts to evict tenants and ensuring that unlawful charges and penalties are not assessed. The grant funds Hussein and an attorney to dedicate their skills to housing justice for the East African community.

## **CULTURAL COMPETENCE MAKES THE DIFFERENCE**

"The East African community is very vulnerable, and they are on the defensive," Hussein says. "They don't necessarily trust interpreters. When I speak with a client, I can explain the law and put it into cultural

context. A client often will not ask the same questions with an attorney in the room as they will if I'm sitting alone with them. I can use my familiarity with cultural concerns and my knowledge of the law to clear their fears."

Legal Aid sent a demand letter on Mohamed's behalf reminding the landlord that the law requires notice of retention of a security deposit along with documentation of specific reasons for withholding funds within three weeks. The landlord quickly agreed to a settlement, and Mohamed received a total of \$3,000.

"A lot of people in the Somali community do not know they can get legal assistance," says Mohamed. "They think maybe it is a crime to fight against the landlord, and they will end up homeless."

Hussein, who is an immigrant and a former tenant, understands those concerns. He's heard clients say, "I have a green card. I don't want to be deported. I'll just do whatever the landlord says." He assures them that in the eyes of the law, a green card holder is entitled to the same housing rights as a U.S. Citizen.

"When I came to Legal Aid, everything changed for the better," says Mohamed. "I was helped by someone who speaks my language, and I've learned so much. For example, I paid for all maintenance and repairs on the apartment while I lived there. I learned that should not have been the case. The landlord took advantage of the language and cultural barriers to ask me for unlawful payments."

## **HOUSING LAWS AND RIGHTS — EDUCATION IS CRITICAL**

In addition to representing clients and investigating systemic problems, the grant provides funding for Legal Aid to conduct public education and information sessions. In this outreach work, Legal Aid has received a great deal of support and assistance from Jama Alimad, an elder in the St. Cloud Somali





community. He refers people with legal problems to Legal Aid and helps to coordinate the public education sessions.

“Housing is a major problem for the East African community in Central Minnesota,” Alimad says. “Without Legal Aid, we would have very limited recourse when problems arise. I don’t know how we could sustain ourselves without the caliber of information, education, and legal counsel and defense that we get from Legal Aid.”

The grant, now in its second year, has broadened the scope of Legal Aid’s housing work in St. Cloud. As more people have legal representation and good outcomes, the news spreads. That and the public education sessions help the community to understand that they do not have to do whatever the landlord says. They have rights, and they can believe what they are told when they go to Legal Aid.

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**“When I came to Legal Aid, everything changed for the better. I was helped by someone who speaks my language, and I’ve learned so much.”**



## Representation and Advocacy for Tenants' Rights

**D**evonta Washington lives in a North Minneapolis duplex with his three children. When he received an eviction notice, he called the Legal Aid intake line and explained his situation. Although resources are limited and many tenants face housing court on their own, Legal Aid was able to take Washington's case. Staff Attorney Colleen Daly represented him at his first appearance in Hennepin County Housing Court.

"Without a lawyer, I would've just showed up empty-handed trying to handle the situation," Washington says. "I knew I was right about some things, but I probably would've lost because I didn't have the knowledge or expertise to state my case."

### **STANDING WITH TENANTS IN COURT**

Washington had tried to get his landlord to deal with pest infestations, mold, and other repairs. The landlord sold the property, and Washington received a rental request from a

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## “Without a lawyer, I would’ve just showed up empty-handed trying to handle the situation.”

stranger. He thought it might be a scam, so he didn’t pay. Then he received the eviction notice.

After talking with Washington, Daly investigated the landlord’s rental license, utility billings, and conditions of the duplex. When the landlord’s representative saw the evidence Daly had collected, she agreed to negotiate. The parties reached a settlement that gave Washington money off his rent, several months to find a new place, and a clean housing record.

“I feel like the settlement is fair,” Washington says. “Colleen dug deep and did a lot of research to be sure everyone was treated fairly. It was a comfort to have someone representing me. Also, I didn’t know that even if I win in court, the eviction stays on my record. You have to ask a judge for an expungement to get that removed.”

### GETTING THE WORD OUT TO THE TENANT COMMUNITY

Because Legal Aid lacks the resources to give all tenants the type of in-depth representation that Washington received, public education and communication is a critical component for housing justice. Staff Attorney Colleen Kelly recently fielded questions from tenants and advocates about security deposits, late fees, and what to do about landlords who won’t make repairs.

“Too often, tenants don’t know their rights,” Kelly says. “They think it’s just about rent money, but they may have multiple defenses and ways to win in housing court, even without a lawyer. I try to give them tools to defend themselves in a system that is weighted toward the landlords.”

### ADVOCACY TO SHIFT THE BALANCE

Joey Dobson, another attorney in Legal Aid’s Housing Unit, recently appeared on local radio stations (in English, Somali, Spanish, and Hmong) with information on new tenant protection ordinances passed by the Minneapolis City Council. Dobson was

instrumental in the drafting, creation, and passage of those ordinances.

Legal Aid’s Legal Services Advocacy Project (LSAP) advocates for fair housing law and tenant protections at the state level. In a significant success, LSAP advocated for a law that allows victims of domestic or sexual violence to legally break their leases.

### A THREE-PRONGED STRATEGY FOR HOUSING JUSTICE

Minnesota has the third-fastest eviction process in the country and is one of only seven states that does not require landlords to give tenants a written warning before eviction. Thousands of tenants face an opposing attorney with little or no knowledge of their rights. Legal Aid is one of their few lines of defense.

Three afternoons a week, 45 tenants are scheduled for first appearance at Housing Court. Legal Aid has three lawyers there and can generally help 10-15 tenants in the course of an afternoon. One lawyer gives limited advice and services, and the other two provide full representation.

Of tenants in housing court, around 80% are facing their first eviction ever. Legal Aid’s recent study of Hennepin County Housing Court found that over 90% of tenants with full representation successfully won or settled their cases, and 78% left court with the eviction cleared from their record. Without an attorney, only 6% were able to clear their record.

Ideally, everyone who needs an attorney could have one. For those who face landlord attorneys and housing court on their own, Legal Aid provides public advocacy, education, and on-line resources. Even a basic understanding of the law and resources can help tenants avoid eviction, a bad housing record, and homelessness.

# Combating Misinformation to Calm Fears in Immigrant Communities

In 2018, the media began to report on the federal government’s intention to make changes to the “Public Charge” immigration rule. Misinformation and fear cast a chill across immigrant communities long before the rule was even published. Many of Legal Aid’s clients heard that if they received any benefit at all — school lunch, reduced-rate transit tickets, health insurance — they might be deported.

## RUMOR CONTROL

Anne Quincy, Supervising Attorney of Legal Aid’s Government Benefits unit, immediately launched a rumor-control mission. She has been dispersing accurate, up-to-date information verbally and in writing to client and advocate communities as things have continued to change and change again. The U.S. Supreme Court allowed the public charge rule to go into effect on Feb. 24, 2020, while the appeals in lower courts continue.

*“I’m a U.S. citizen and my husband has a green card. Our kids are U.S. citizens and they get free lunch through school. Will that mean my husband can’t become a citizen? Should we stop the lunches?”*

— Caller to Legal Aid hotline, Nov. 2019

**No, don’t stop the lunches! The free/reduced price school lunch program (FRPL) is open to all low-income school children, regardless of their immigration status. Getting FRPL will have no impact on your husband’s citizenship.**

In public presentations throughout 2019, Quincy spoke with school counselors, school nurses, agencies, advocates, hospitals, and churches. She has been on Spanish- and Somali-speaking radio shows, and she presented to the American Immigration Lawyers Association, along with partners in legal services.

## NON-PROFITS HELP SPREAD GOOD INFORMATION

Jasmin Maldonado is a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Outreach Specialist at Second Harvest Heartland. She and her colleagues have seen a lot of confusion about public charge in the Spanish-speaking community.

“People I talk to are very fearful,” she says. “Many of them won’t consider SNAP — even if they desperately need food support — because they don’t want to put their family in a bad situation.”

Second Harvest, like many organizations, has come to rely on Quincy and Legal Aid for direct information about public benefits and changes to the law. They consult with her on confusing cases, send employees to her presentations, and share her written materials with their clients.

“Legal Aid does a great job getting the information out,” Maldonado said. “I assure my clients that they can talk to Legal Aid and share their concerns and fears. Quincy makes herself very available and she responds quickly.”

*“I’m a U.S. citizen and I’m sponsoring my husband. He has a brain tumor and needs an operation. Can we get Emergency Medical Assistance, or will that get us in trouble with immigration?”*

— Caller to Legal Aid hotline, Mar. 2019

**Your husband has nothing to fear from applying for EMA; it has no impact on immigration status. He may also be eligible for other health coverage, like MinnesotaCare.**

At the public information sessions, Quincy talks in detail about the history and purpose of the public



**PANDEMIC NOTE:** All relief provided under the CARES and Families First Coronavirus Response Acts (stimulus checks, unemployment) constitute short-term disaster relief and none are considered public benefits under public charge rules. Legal Aid continues to provide the latest information to advocates, agencies, and the public.

charge rule, the proposed changes, and who would be affected. She has found that information sometimes gets dropped or confused in transmission, so she encourages people to call Legal Aid's hotline themselves for clear and direct answers.

### **LEGAL AID HOTLINE PROVIDES CASE-SPECIFIC ADVICE**

The hotline is free and available for the public. They don't need to identify themselves or give any personal information. They can simply call, describe the details of their situation, and get immediate and direct advice in Spanish, Somali, or Russian. Free phone interpreters are provided for other languages.

*"My husband and I are permanent residents, and our child is a U.S. citizen. Our child gets food stamps. I heard there's a new law saying that will get us in trouble."*

— Caller to the Legal Aid hotline, Nov. 2019

**Your child is entitled to any benefits for which you qualify based on your income. Benefits given to U.S. citizen children do not affect their parents' immigration status.**

Even if the rule ultimately stands, the number of people affected is a tiny fraction of the number who are not impacted but have dropped benefits out of fear.

"It's a series of bad rumors, and the cost is enormous," Quincy says. "That's why we want to make it easy and safe for people to call us. They tell us about their specific situation, and we tell most of them to go ahead and get that school lunch or health insurance or food support. Those benefits, and the rules governing them, have not changed."

# 2019

## Community Awards

### ISUROON'S CIVIL RIGHTS AWARD

At the Isuroon 2019 International Women's Day for Women of African Descent Conference, Staff Attorney **Greger Calhan** was presented with the Human Rights Award in recognition of his work managing MMLA's East African Community Legal Clinic. The legal clinic is a partnership with Isuroon, a grassroots organization working for the health and connectedness of Somali women and girls so they and their families can thrive in Minnesota and globally.



Greger is now in his third year at the clinic, which receives generous funding from The Pat and Tom Grossman Family Fund. He meets with clients at Isuroon three days a week. The other two days, he collaborates with his colleagues at MMLA to remove barriers to justice within Minneapolis's vibrant Muslim, Somali, and East African communities using direct legal representation, advocacy, and education. He works closely with the staff at Isuroon serving clients with a wide array of legal challenges.

"Greger listens," says Fartun Weli, Executive Director of Isuroon. "He is respectful, kind, competent and very empathetic. It is not about the paperwork or the job. He wants to help people."

### MINNESOTA JUSTICE FOUNDATION'S OUTSTANDING ADVOCATE AWARD

For over 30 years, Legal Advocate **Lori Leistriz** has been going the extra mile to serve clients. She was recognized by the Minnesota Justice Foundation as this year's Outstanding Advocate.

Leistriz started at MMLA as a switchboard operator in 1989 and went on to work as a volunteer coordinator and intake specialist. For the past 19 years, Leistriz has been a paralegal in the public benefits unit providing holistic advice to individuals and clients across a wide spectrum of programs. She helps clients navigate the complex world of government benefits, including Social Security, Unemployment Insurance, General Assistance, and public health care, and she handles appeals up to the federal district court level.

"Lori is an exceptional team player who goes far out of her way to serve her clients," says Supervising Attorney Anne Quincy. "She meets them where they are, whether in the hospital, at a shelter, or couch-hopping at a friend's place. She



is amazingly creative and identifies solutions where others see no hope. She sees each client as an individual and seeks to meet them where they are, and help them stand for their rights and achieve their goals."

### MINNESOTA LEGAL SERVICES COALITION PILLAR OF JUSTICE AWARD

At the 2019 Legal Services Statewide Conference, Staff Attorney **Jessica Webster** was honored with the Pillar of Justice Award. Honorees are chosen by consensus of the executive directors of the Minnesota Legal Services Coalition in recognition of their undeterred, unsurpassed and unexcelled support of equal justice.



Webster is a staff attorney with Legal Aid's Legal Services

# LawHelpMN Can Help

Where can you go for accessible, quick and accurate civil legal information? LawHelpMN ([www.lawhelpmn.org](http://www.lawhelpmn.org)) is the place.

Recently rebuilt by Legal Aid's State Support team, LawHelpMN is a legal guide for Minnesotans without specialized legal knowledge. "Low-income people, seniors, and people with disabilities are the populations that drive our design and focus," says Legal Projects Manager Emily Good.

The central feature of the website is the LawHelpMN Guide (the Guide), which draws data from a Self-Help Library and a Provider/Clinic Directory.

## THE GUIDE

The Guide uses a branching logic tree to streamline a wealth of information and deliver results tailored to the user's needs. It delivers a list of curated resources from the Self-Help Library. In its first year, the Guide has delivered results to almost 15,000 users.

"Our Education for Justice resources are front and center in the Library," says Good. "All materials are written by lawyers in a manner accessible to the general public. The fact sheets and booklets are carefully reviewed for legal changes annually, and our guided interviews have received national kudos."

## PROVIDER/CLINIC DIRECTORY

If the user thinks they need more help, the Guide asks a few demographic questions which are matched with eligibility criteria and available services to produce a list of legal services offices and justice partners who might be able to help.

The resulting listing is pulled from the statewide Provider/Clinic Directory. Most legal services organizations maintain their own information in real time, updating locations, times, and contact information, which increases reliability and builds user trust.

The Guide itself is only available in English, but the rest of the site is available in Spanish, Hmong, and Somali. Many of the fact sheets and booklets show translations in multiple languages.

The site had well over 500,000 visits in 2019.

**VISIT [WWW.LAWHELPMN.ORG](http://WWW.LAWHELPMN.ORG) TO EXPLORE.**

Advocacy Project (LSAP). One of her signature achievements is her multi-year effort to end school lunch-shaming practices in Minnesota, resulting in legislation and a formal written opinion from the Attorney General. In 2019, her work of 13 years on the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) culminated in the first increase for families in over 30 years. Webster brings solid legal and policy research and analysis to legislators across the political spectrum to achieve legislative justice for Legal Aid's clients.

"Jessica exhibits the perfect balance of seeking to advance our clients' interests at every turn while keeping a longer view perspective," says Supervising Attorney Ron Elwood. "She understands that it sometimes takes years of chipping away before the legislative barriers faced by our clients begin to crumble. Tireless and indefatigable, Jessica never gives up on any issue that demands Legal Aid's advocacy to improve the lives of our clients."

## SUPER LAWYERS "RISING STAR"

**Joy Beitzel**, Staff Attorney in the Family Law unit, was selected by the Super Lawyers rating service as a 2019 Rising Star. Rising Stars are newer attorneys (40 years of age or younger, or in practice for 10 years or less), who have attained a high degree of peer recognition and professional achievement. No more than

2.5% of attorneys in the state are chosen as Rising Stars each year.

Beitzel came to Legal Aid in July after representing family law clients in private practice for five years. She now uses her considerable legal skills to represent low-income residents of Hennepin County in family court. In addition to legal acumen, Beitzel is fluent in Spanish, which helps Legal Aid better meet the needs of our Spanish-speaking clients.



"Joy is an incredibly able and compassionate advocate who never hesitates to take difficult cases," says Jayne Barnard McCoy, Supervising Attorney of the Family Law Unit. "We're so lucky to have her. She fully recognizes the need for clients to have dedicated representation as they navigate the most challenging times, while protecting their own safety and their children's best interests."

## FINANCIALS

### REVENUE & EXPENDITURES | 2019

#### REVENUE

United Ways	\$548,086
Federal	3,810,689
State	4,971,315
Foundations	1,854,831
Local Government	629,905
Fund for Legal Aid	1,300,000
Legal Services Advisory Committee (LSAC)	1,743,152
State Support and LSAP	425,743
Attorney Fees	129,338
Miscellaneous	1,054,223
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$16,467,282</b>

#### EXPENDITURES

Poverty Law	10,217,878
Disability Law	2,378,104
Administration	1,477,572
LSAP	516,787
State Support	741,464
Fundraising	408,537
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$15,740,342</b>
Prior Reserve	3,160,025
Year End Reserve	3,886,965

### CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEETS | 12.31.19

#### ASSETS

##### CURRENT ASSETS

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$2,893,459
Client Escrow Funds	\$29,127
Receivables:	
Grants and Contracts	2,094,181
Pledges and Other	109,421
Prepaid Expenses	83,909
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>5,210,097</b>

##### PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT, at cost

Less Accumulated Depreciation	(406,944)
<b>TOTAL PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT (NET)</b>	<b>\$589,249</b>

##### OTHER LONG-TERM ASSETS

Funds Held by Community Foundation	2,912,228
<b>TOTAL OTHER LONG-TERM ASSETS</b>	<b>2,912,228</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$8,711,574</b>

#### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

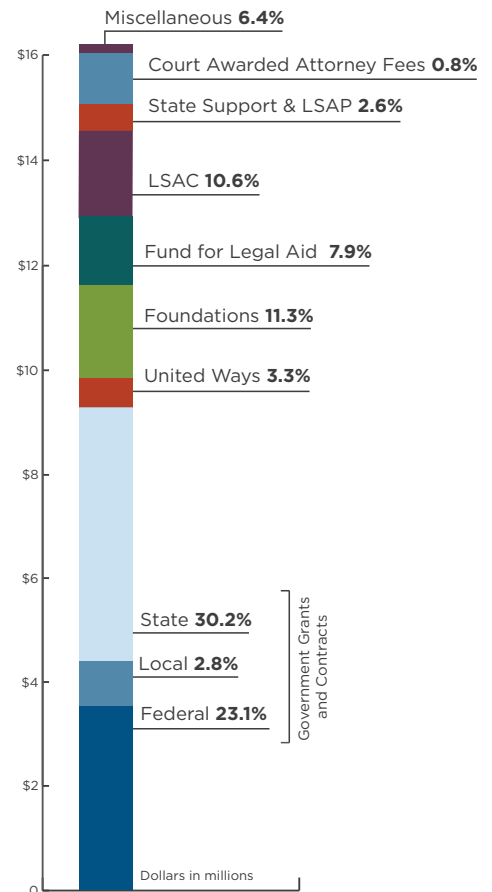
##### CURRENT LIABILITIES

Accounts Payable	\$338,584
Client Trust Deposits	29,122
Accrued Expenses	413,488
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>781,194</b>

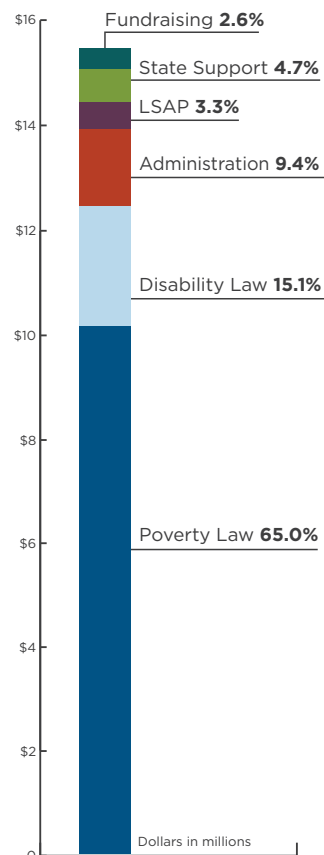
##### NET ASSETS

Net assets without donor restrictions	5,002,998
Net assets with donor restrictions	2,927,382
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>7,930,381</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$8,711,574</b>

#### REVENUE



#### EXPENDITURES





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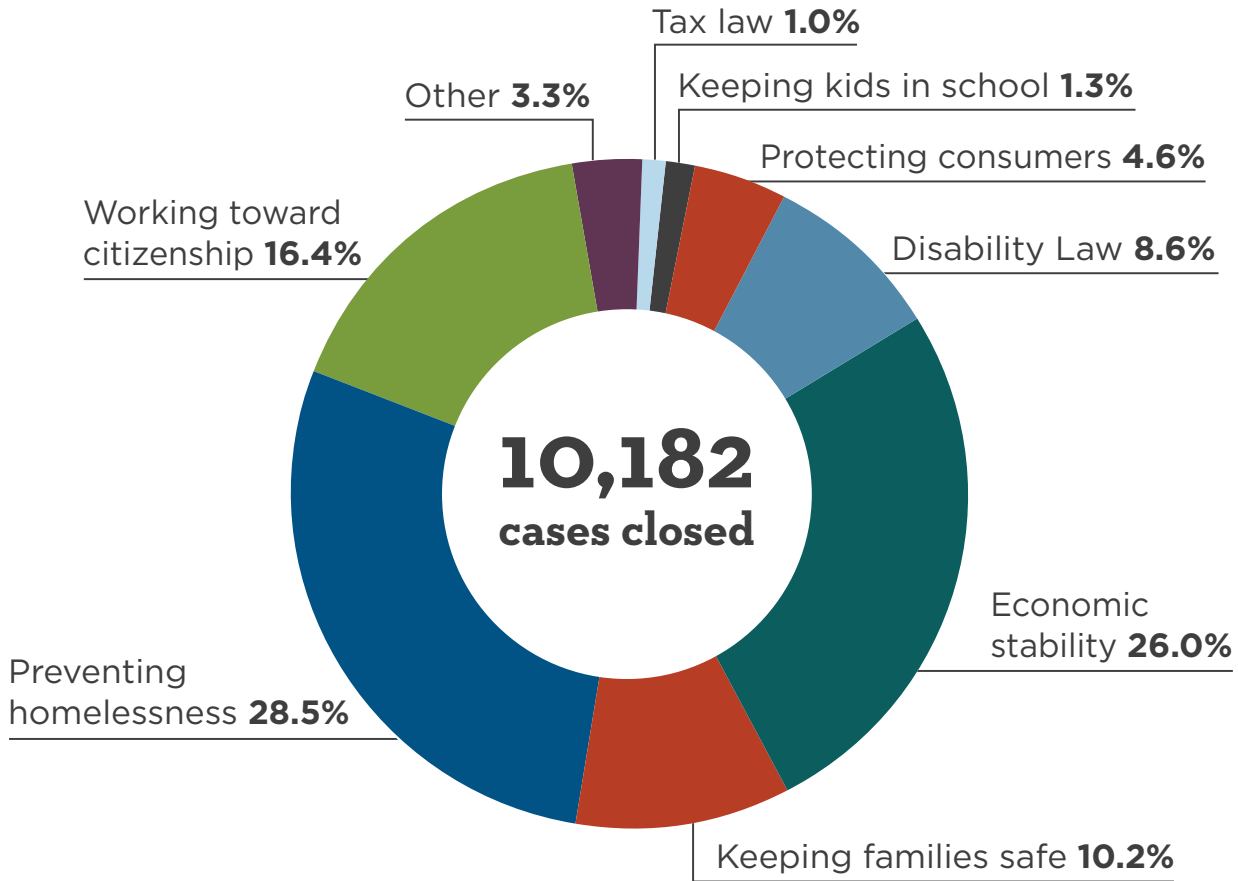
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52

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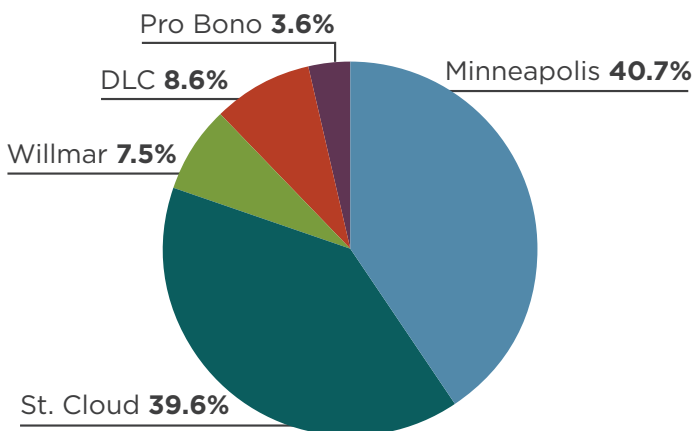
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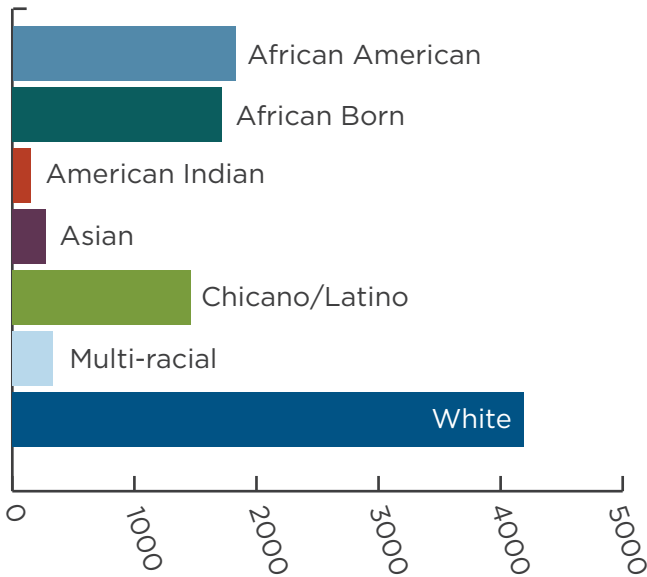
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# Congratulations and *thank you*

The 2019 Associates' Campaign raised more than \$104,000!

### TOP DONATING FIRMS

The Associates' Campaign carries out a friendly competition to benefit Legal Aid's clients. Firms are grouped by number of associates and compete for the top spots. This year's top-donating firms in each category are:

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#### 21-34 Associates

Jones Day\*\*

#### 12-20 Associates

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#### 1-6 Associates

Greenberg Traurig, LLP

*\*A special thank you to the **Robins Kaplan LLP** associates, who have held the top spot since we began keeping records. They brought in over \$11,000 this year with 100% participation.*

*\*\*A grateful nod to **Jones Day**, new to the top tier of fundraisers in the Campaign, out-performing larger firms to land in 2nd place with over \$7,000.*

### 100% PARTICIPATION

Thank you to the associates from the firms with 100% participation in the 2019 One Hour of Sharing Associates' Campaign.

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Associates' Campaign Champions are those who made an extraordinary gift of \$1,000 or more. Thank you for your personal commitment to equal justice.

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### SPECIAL RECOGNITION

An extra boost came from Andrew & Hannah Leiendecker, associates at Jones Day and Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP. In lieu of wedding gifts, they asked guests to make donations to Legal Aid, and brought in over \$5,000 to jumpstart this year's Associates' Campaign. Thank you to Andrew, Hannah, and your generous wedding guests!

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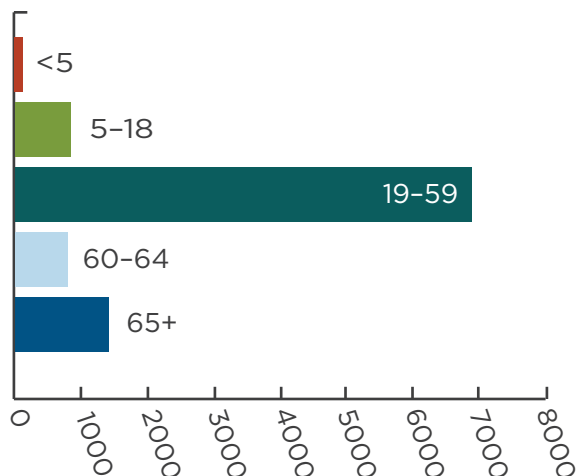
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