



North Penn
LEGAL SERVICES

**REACHING FOR
EQUAL JUSTICE**

**2022-2023
ANNUAL REPORT**



North Penn LEGAL SERVICES

REACHING FOR EQUAL JUSTICE

North Penn Legal Services (NPLS) is committed to helping low-income individuals and families in need of legal assistance. We advocate for our clients with direct legal representation, legal clinics, and developing and maintaining partners in the justice and human services community. NPLS helps its clients reach for equal justice by sharing our expertise in poverty law issues, and provides legal education and self-help materials through community outreaches and on nplspa.org.

WHAT WE DO

As a regional provider of civil legal aid for more than 59 years, NPLS helps low-income people throughout 20 counties in Northeast Pennsylvania. At the close of our 2022-2023 fiscal year, NPLS had 9 offices and 3 satellite locations, with a staff of 93, including 41 attorneys and 23 paralegals. The staff's goal is to provide effective and impactful representation and community partnerships to best educate and support our client-eligible population.

Services include individual representation, information and advice, community legal education, and support for those clients who take direct responsibility for handling some or all aspects of their legal problem.



Message from the **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

This year's annual report reflects the changes we all experienced as we moved from the direct challenges of a pandemic that impacted us all in so many ways and is now endemic. We worked with more than 17,000 people who were provided direct services and almost 11,000 cases were handled in this past fiscal year, reflecting a 9% increase.

Our clients reached out for help when they and their families were faced with eviction, loss of income or benefits, struggled with domestic violence, or needed help understanding their legal rights. We saw increasing challenges, with tenants experiencing higher eviction filing rates than pre-pandemic numbers in many counties; increasing demand for safe and affordable housing; loss of medical assistance or waiver care supports that assist many elderly and disabled people with serious health challenges in their home; and the end to the child tax credits which lifted so many children, temporarily, from poverty.

The data in this report reflect NPLS's work providing direct representation to more individuals and families facing eviction; assisting with state assistance applications to avoid foreclosure and tax sales; and helping with timely advice and counsel to those seeking improved living situations or access to fair housing without discrimination. Along with almost every legal service program in the country, we saw an increase in demand for representation in housing cases. We continued to represent thousands of those with legal issues related to domestic violence, including housing struggles. In addition to direct representation, we've provided self-help resources and increased community outreach, including expanding efforts to reach those living in rural communities.

We are proud of the partnerships we have created during this time, working with community service agencies, municipal governments, and the justice system to find new ways to connect clients with legal help and social supports. We thank our dedicated staff, donors and funders, community partners, local bar associations, and many volunteers, including all the pro bono attorneys and our volunteer Board of Directors, for their help in overcoming many challenges and working for access to justice this year. Looking forward to the year ahead, when we will look back at the past sixty years, when the first legal aid program in Northeast Pennsylvania was incorporated, we continue to reach for justice for our clients and communities seeking civil justice.

Lori A. Molloy

Lori A. Molloy
Executive Director

REACHING FOR EQUAL JUSTICE

Public Benefits

In 2022-2023, NPLS advocates served more than 370 clients with public benefits issues, including terminations and denial of benefits such as medical assistance, SNAP (food) assistance, and reached about 550 people from our client community at 28 events discussing legal rights and responsibilities. Our advocates helped clients receive over \$7,700 in monthly benefits and avoid \$130,000 in alleged debt.



NPLS represented several clients who faced termination of MA and SNAP benefits, and SNAP overpayments and all were victims of domestic violence. With our advocacy work, we were able to convince the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Bureau of Policy to grant waivers to these clients based on the department's domestic violence policies. They also required that our clients be reinstated with back benefits, continue ongoing benefits, and they rescinded all SNAP overpayments. Without our advocacy help, these clients would have been unable to maintain essential benefits. In addition, the work helps survivors of domestic violence reduce the amount of stress they were facing because of the threatened terminations and focus on the recovery of themselves and their families.

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Employment Law

Last fiscal year, our employment attorneys and paralegals handled 665 cases, about 40% related to unemployment compensation and the rest related to barriers to employment created by criminal records, and advising employees on their rights.



In one case, Sherry applied for legal services because she feared she was terminated from her job for discriminatory reasons and was denied unemployment compensation. There was also an issue of whether her appeal was filed late, which would have stopped her from challenging the decision of the Unemployment Compensation Claims office. We were able to help her submit proof of a timely appeal, and then represented at the hearing. Sherry was eligible for and received her benefits, and we advised her on her employment rights.

Partnerships

IN THE COMMUNITY

IN 2022-23, NPLS STRENGTHENED ITS PARTNERSHIPS REACHING FOR EQUAL JUSTICE

The NPLS website received 138,613 page views. Visitors to nplspa.org accessed helpful information such as our Employment Handbook, Self-Help Handbook for Tenants, Family Law Handbook, and custody videos.

2022 Marked the tenth year of our annual Raise a Glass to Justice event, raising \$16,615 for legal aid. This was also NPLS's first in-person event since the start of the pandemic, held outside at the historic Bethlehem Golf Club.

In the past year, we presented continuing legal education via distance learning for pro bono attorneys on the following topics: Relocation 101 – Fundamentals and Case Law Updates, Right to Counsel – Tipping the Scales Toward Justice, and Landlord/Tenant Refresher.

In April 2023, NPLS hosted a virtual panel discussion for fair housing awareness month called right to counsel in eviction cases: Tipping the Scales Toward Justice. The event, which included CLE credit, was focused on tenants' access to counsel in landlord/tenant proceedings.

We thank the **Northampton County Bar Association** for their continued support during the last fiscal year.

NPLS continued our extensive outreaches with Head Start on public benefits and to community organizations on a range of legal issues, from barriers to employment for persons with criminal records, to housing law and conditions, to mortgage foreclosure and trainings for seniors.

NPLS reached more than 4,100 people at community outreach events during the 2022-2023 fiscal year. 4,861 legal education brochures and other materials were distributed.

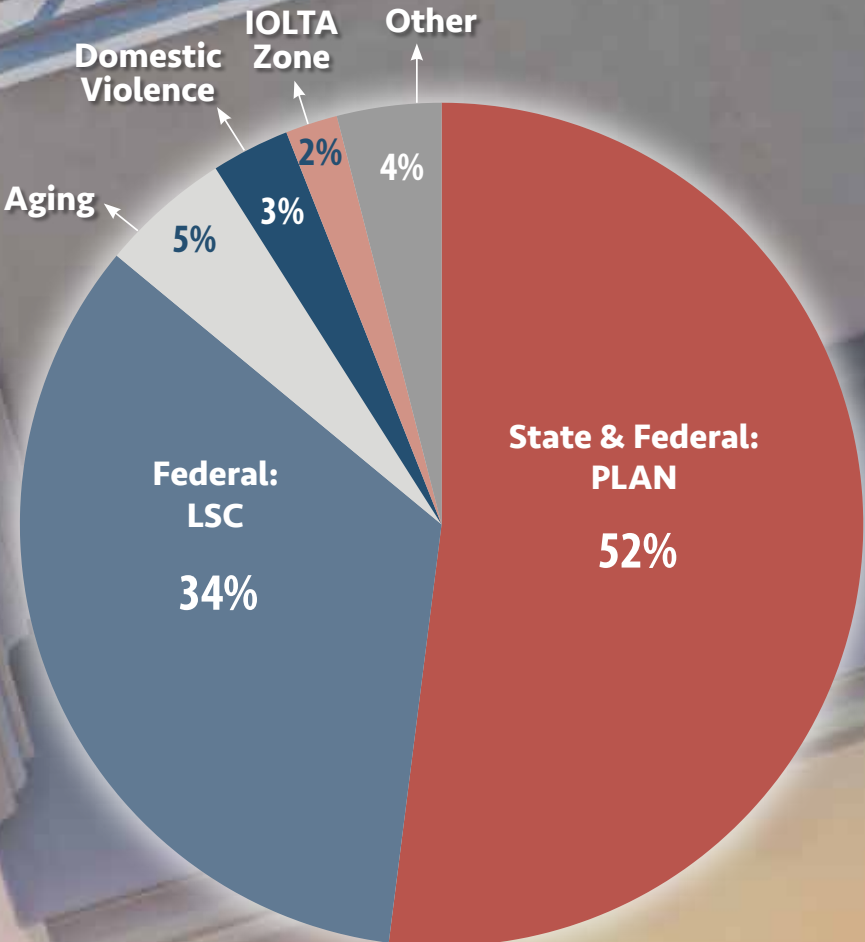
FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2023

(with comparative totals for the year ended June 30, 2022)

Revenues & Other Support	2023	2022
Contracts & Grants	\$8,951,074	\$8,443,636
Contributions of Financial Assets	62,064	53,141
Contributions of Nonfinancial Assets	124,815	102,090
Interest Income	4,850	4,419
Other	3,119	3,350
Total Revenue & Other Support	\$9,147,945	\$8,638,868

Expenses	2023	2022
Program Services	\$8,015,144	\$7,752,583
Management & General	1,160,750	877,598
Fund Raising	4,408	2,444
Total Expenses	\$9,180,302	\$8,632,625



\$2.7
MILLION

AWARDED TO OR
DEBT AVOIDED FOR
OUR CLIENTS,
PRIMARILY IN CONSUMER
CASES IN 2022-2023.



7,592 PEOPLE WITH HOUSING ISSUES
HELPED

455 PREVENTED EVICTION / SHELTER
PRESERVED

17,867
PEOPLE PROVIDED
WITH DIRECT SERVICES



RESOURCE MATERIALS
WERE MADE AVAILABLE
ON NPLS'S WEBSITE,
WHICH RECEIVED
138,613 PAGE VIEWS.



6,137
ONLINE
APPLICATIONS
INTERVIEWED

GETTING

NORTH PENN LEGAL SERVICES



1,892 CASES LITIGATED IN COURT

160 CASES LITIGATED IN ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNALS

539 PROTECTION FROM ABUSE ORDERS OBTAINED

5,079

CLIENTS PROVIDED WITH COUNSEL AND ADVICE OR LIMITED ACTION



85 PRIVATE ATTORNEYS ACCEPTED **252** PRO BONO CASES.

21 JUDICARE ATTORNEYS ACCEPTED **212** CASES.



10,933 CASES HANDLED

8,042 CASES CLOSED

RESULTS

PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS

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Disability Advocacy

During the last fiscal year, NPLS disability advocates and PAI attorneys helped over 630 SSI/SSD clients, obtained \$220,000 in lump sum benefits, and avoided over \$112,000 in alleged overpayments.



Theo was receiving childhood disability benefits when his parents received a notice of overpayment and a reduction in benefits. The overpayment was over \$4,000 and the client's benefits were being reduced to under \$5.00 per month. We were told that there was a recalculation of income for one of the parents because of periodic overtime and that caused an overpayment. We helped the client's mother complete a request for a waiver of overpayment and provided SSA with supporting documents including pay stubs, tax returns, and bank statements. The waiver was initially denied and we helped the client's mother file an appeal. At the appeal hearing, we argued that the overpayment was caused by the federal pandemic stimulus checks which are exempt from SSA income calculations. As a result of appealing the decision and presenting the hearing officer with the supporting evidence, the overpayment was waived and the client received \$2,200 in underpayments and his monthly income was restored to \$250 per month.

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Housing Law

The need for legal assistance with rental housing increased again this year, with thousands of families seeking to avoid eviction and find a stable living situation in a very difficult housing market. NPLS piloted an access to counsel program in three locations, providing direct representation to eligible tenants at several, successfully representing many to avoid evictions, avoid excessive costs, and resolve landlord-tenant issues.



NPLS provided representation to Dina, and her elderly mother Lucy, who has disabilities. They signed a rent-to-own agreement with the owner of the property, but unknown to them, he was already in financial distress and the property was sold at a sheriff's sale. The tenants were behind in the rent, but the new owner sought to evict them, and would not accept rental assistance payments. We represented in court, and helped ensure that the eviction matter was resolved with payment of the amount of rent owed to the current owner. During this difficult time with limited housing options, NPLS assisted tenants in enforcing their legal rights, avoiding additional debt, and maintaining stable housing.

REACHING FOR EQUAL JUSTICE

Home Preservation – Sheriff's Sale

The vast majority of NPLS clients, who live at or near poverty, are renters or live in a room, shelter, with relatives, other shared living space, or were homeless. About 15% of last year's clients owned their own home, manufactured home, or condominium. Preserving home ownership increases family stability and helps create equity and generational wealth. When low-income homeowners fell behind in taxes or mortgage last year, NPLS was able to help with representation and applications to Pennsylvania's Housing Assistance Fund.

NPLS was contacted by a homeowner in December 2022, distressed because her property was scheduled for sheriff's sale in January 2023. This client is a person with disabilities related to her memory and cognition. We were able to negotiate with the opposing law office, and have the sheriff's sale continued, while we assisted the client with navigating the PAHAF system. PAHAF eventually paid all of her township tax arrears and a sheriff's sale of her home was avoided. In addition, the liens on her property were satisfied by assisting the client with seeking exoneration of certain charges due to her limited income.



**FOR
SALE**
SHERIFF'S SALE

NORTH PENN LEGAL SERVICES

Locations

BRADFORD, SUSQUEHANNA & TIOGA COUNTIES

Towanda Office 21 Main Street, Towanda, PA 18848

P: 877-515-7732 ♦ F: 570-534-0976

CARBON & LUZERNE COUNTIES

Hazleton Office 101 W. Broad Street, Ste. 713, Hazleton, PA 18201

P: 570-455-9512 ♦ Toll Free: 877-515-7628 ♦ F: 570-455-3625

CLINTON, LYCOMING & TIOGA COUNTIES

Williamsport Office 25 W. 3rd St., Ste. 400, Williamsport, PA 17701

P: 570-323-8741 ♦ Toll Free: 800-326-7436 ♦ F: 570-323-5256

COLUMBIA & MONTOUR COUNTIES

Bloomsburg Office 168 E. 5th Street, Bloomsburg, PA 17815

P: 570-784-8760 ♦ Toll Free: 877-515-7079 ♦ F: 570-784-4840

LACKAWANNA, LUZERNE, SULLIVAN & WYOMING COUNTIES

Pittston Office 33 N. Main Street, Ste. 200, Pittston, PA 18640

P: 570-299-4100 ♦ Toll Free: 855-236-6405 ♦ F: 570-824-0001

LEHIGH & NORTHAMPTON COUNTIES

Bethlehem Office 559 Main St., Ste. 200, Bethlehem, PA 18018

P: 610-317-8757 ♦ F: 610-317-8778

MONROE & PIKE COUNTIES

Stroudsburg Office 10 N. 10th Street, Stroudsburg, PA 18360

P: 570-424-5338 ♦ Toll Free: 800-532-8282 ♦ F: 570-754-8508

NORTHUMBERLAND, SNYDER & UNION COUNTIES

Sunbury Office 133 N. 2nd Street, Sunbury, PA 17801

P: 570-286-5687 ♦ Toll Free: 877-515-7730 ♦ F: 570-286-2203

WAYNE COUNTY

Honesdale Office

Wayne County Courthouse, 925 Court St., Honesdale, PA 18431

P: 877-515-7465 ♦ F: 570-754-8510



North Penn LEGAL SERVICES

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

(as of 6/30/23)

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REACHING
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JUSTICE



Serving 20 Counties in
NORTHEAST PENNSYLVANIA

BRADFORD ♦ CARBON ♦ CLINTON ♦ COLUMBIA
LACKAWANNA ♦ LEHIGH ♦ LUZERNE ♦ LYCOMING
MONROE ♦ MONTOUR ♦ NORTHAMPTON
NORTHUMBERLAND ♦ PIKE ♦ SNYDER ♦ SULLIVAN
SUSQUEHANNA ♦ TIOGA ♦ UNION ♦ WAYNE ♦ WYOMING



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NPLSPA.ORG
877-953-4250

