



North Penn
LEGAL SERVICES

Overcoming CHALLENGES



2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT



Overcoming CHALLENGES

IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

The justice system can be complicated and confusing, and often people need a helping hand.

By acting as a guide through information, advice or representation, and by providing education and self-help materials through our community outreaches and on northpennlegal.org, NPLS helps disadvantaged people to find the services and resources they need to overcome any obstacles on the path to equal justice.

NPLS is committed to helping those in need to successfully overcome challenges they face in the justice system.

WHAT WE DO

As a regional provider of civil legal aid for more than 50 years, North Penn Legal Services helps low-income people throughout 20 counties in Northeast Pennsylvania.

NPLS has nine offices and four satellite locations, with a staff of 85, including 38 attorneys and 20 paralegals. The staff's goal is to provide access to the justice system.

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*



As we reflect upon the past fiscal year, we are not alone in observing that this was a year unlike any other. At the start of our fiscal year, North Penn Legal Services advocates were focused on providing direct legal services for the most poor and vulnerable in our communities. The civil legal issues we help with impact their health, safety, family stability, and economic security. These legal issues were heightened as the COVID-19 virus threatened public health, and as news in February 2020 about the spreading health threat began to crystalize, we implemented our plan to keep our staff and clients safe, while continuing to provide these essential services.

By mid-March, the Governor issued stay-at-home orders, and this resulted in the closure of physical offices, loss of jobs, judicial emergency orders, and fracturing of social support networks. This pandemic was unlike anything we might have envisioned some time ago when we created a disaster preparedness plan, but our team pivoted to address the many facets of this disaster. While we had made access to virtual desktops a priority in the past, we regrouped to provide all staff with hardware and connectivity throughout our 4 urban and 16 rural counties to allow for telework for all staff as needed.

We are proud of the work that we did across our program, to change almost every aspect of how we connect with our clients and continue our advocacy. From our intake and support staff, who connected at first by returning calls to applicants and then doubling our online intake applications, to our fiscal and administrative team, who made sure we applied for funds to keep us operating safely. Our advocates worked to ensure access to courts by those needing protection from abuse or emergency services, while seeking to ensure continued best practices for trauma-informed services, especially for victims of crime.

We spread the word in our communities about moratoriums on evictions, foreclosures, and utility shut-offs. NPLS advocates reviewed all new federal and state emergency programs, such as those for unemployed workers and those not traditionally eligible for unemployment compensation because they work in the gig economy. We then worked with clients to make sure they got access to the administrative agencies, and legal advice and direct representation when needed, to obtain such income. We provided training to community agencies, pro bono attorneys, and clients. We highlighted some examples of litigation, which resulted in clients gaining access to income, avoiding self-help evictions and wrongful collection of alleged debts, and obtaining protection from abuse.

We thank our funders, who enabled us to get the equipment we needed to keep our staff connected and safe. We thank our many partner agencies and courts, who worked with us in many communities to find ways to connect with those who needed our legal representation. And we thank our dedicated staff, pro bono attorneys, interns, and volunteers, for their many contributions this year. Our Board of Directors, composed of volunteer lawyers and client-eligible community members, took on the work of strategically leading us through this past year, and ensuring that we would continue to provide essential legal services and community engagement throughout the pandemic.

Lori A. Molloy

Lori A. Molloy
Executive Director



Overcoming CHALLENGES

IN UNION, MONTOUR, COLUMBIA, SNYDER, & NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTIES

While the Governor's moratorium on evictions was in effect in the spring of 2020, Jane's landlord told police that she was staying in the property with her relative, but that she was not a tenant, and that she was not welcome on the property as she was a trespasser. The landlord turned off the power to the apartment, and when her boyfriend tried to restore the power, the police were called, but they would not assist Jane and told her that if she came back to the property that she could be arrested for trespassing.

When the client contacted NPLS, we were able to review her rental history, and gather evidence of prior rental payments. When unable to resolve the matter informally, we filed an emergency petition for injunctive relief to the court of common pleas. Jane had been sleeping in a tent for two days, until the court issued an emergency order enjoining the landlord from evicting or obstructing the tenant from occupying the residence. At the injunctive hearing, the Judge instructed the landlord further that no illegal self-help measures could be used to evict the tenant.



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IN TIOGA, BRADFORD, CLINTON, LYCOMING, & SULLIVAN COUNTIES

In 2018, Sandra's home was sold at sheriff sale for unpaid taxes. Sandra is an elderly widow, living below the poverty level, with her nephew. Both have disabilities and Sandra uses a wheelchair due to the complications of an autoimmune disease.

They came to NPLS after the sale, and did not know what to do next. The NPLS attorney was able to file a petition to set aside the sale because of defects in the procedure. The tax bureau eventually decided not to oppose the petition, and the buyer later followed suit. With the help of extended family, the client paid past due taxes to avoid another sale in 2019, and was able to enter into a payment agreement so they could remain in their home.

Partnerships IN THE Community

IN 2019 – 2020, NPLS STRENGTHENED ITS PARTNERSHIPS & OVERCAME CHALLENGES IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM.



The NPLS website received 135,982 page views. Visitors to northpennlegal.org accessed helpful information such as our Employment Handbook, Self-Help Handbook for Tenants, Family Law Handbook and custody videos.



2019 marked the eighth year of our annual Raise a Glass To Justice event, raising more than \$12,800 for legal aid.



In the past year, we presented Continuing Legal Education for pro bono attorneys on representing domestic violence survivors seeking protection orders in Lycoming and Lehigh County.



NPLS presented fair housing information throughout the Lehigh Valley at 37 outreach events, meetings, and brochure locations.



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.



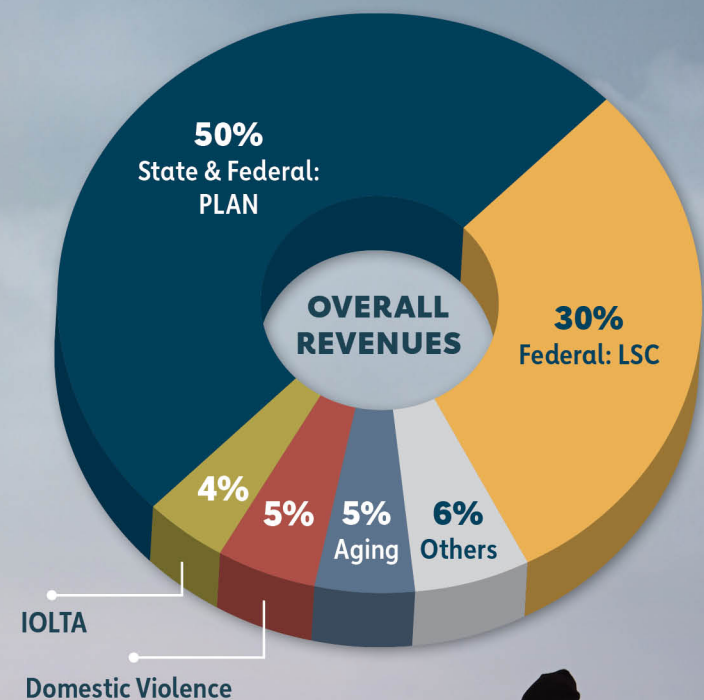
NPLS reached more than 2,200 people at community outreach events during the 2019 – 2020 fiscal year. 4,469 legal education brochures and other materials were distributed.

FINANCIAL POSITION

YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2020

(with comparative totals for the year ended June 30, 2019)

Revenues & Other Support	2020	2019
Contracts & Grants	\$6,365,491	\$6,601,056
Contributions: In Kind	149,505	152,865
Other	18,175	68,692
Interest Income	6,516	4,423
Other	824,252	8,542
Total Revenue & Other Support	\$7,363,939	\$6,835,578
Expenses	2020	2019
Program Services	\$6,625,966	\$5,838,967
Management & General	758,017	748,510
Fund Raising	10,854	12,826
Total Expenses	\$7,394,837	\$6,600,303



2019-20

PROGRAM

ACHIEVEMENTS



\$2.5
MILLION

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

Outcome Value Category	Sum of Amount
Lump Sum Avoidance	\$,955.40
Lump Sum Recovery	440,013.55
Monthly Avoidance	33,937.20
Monthly Recovery	116,184.25
GRAND TOTAL	\$2,514,090.40

14,512
PEOPLE PROVIDED
DIRECT SERVICES



NPLS SERVICE AREA

POVERTY POPULATION:
279,231

20
COUNTIES



• **9,111** cases handled • **6,547** cases closed

3,880 CLIENTS PROVIDED COUNSEL
& ADVICE OR LIMITED ACTION

4,727
ONLINE INTAKES
WERE RECEIVED



Resource materials were
made available on NPLS'
website, which received
135,982 page views.

118 private attorneys accepted **369** Pro Bono cases.

27 Judicare attorneys accepted **163** cases.

663 PROTECTION FROM ABUSE ORDERS OBTAINED
314 CUSTODY & VISITATION ORDERS OBTAINED



- **1,814** cases litigated in court
- **243** cases litigated in administrative tribunals
- **4,895** people with housing issues helped by NPLS staff



87 TOTAL STAFF

- **28** Lawyers • **20** Paralegals
- **20** Office & Support Staff • **8** Administrative Staff
- **11** Supervising Attorneys, Managing Paralegal



Overcoming CHALLENGES

IN CARBON, MONROE, PIKE, LEHIGH, & NORTHAMPTON COUNTIES

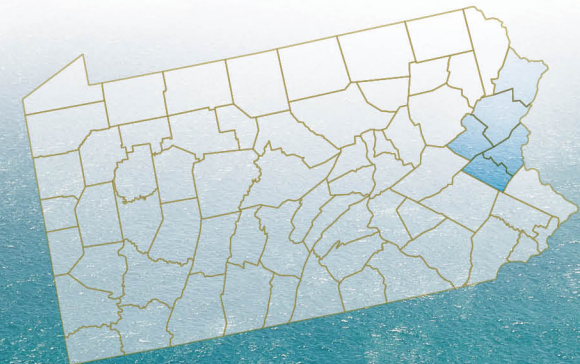
Jenn filed for protection from abuse in Pennsylvania, after fleeing an abusive relationship in another state and continuing to receive threatening emails and texts from the abuser. NPLS represented the client in the final hearing, and after a contested hearing, she was granted a final three year order of protection. The defendant filed an appeal to the Superior Court, claiming that the trial court was without jurisdiction. NPLS represented in the appellate court and submitted briefs. The case was decided in favor of our client, and the appeal was dismissed as lacking legal merit. Jenn was grateful for the hard work and effort of the advocate to ensure her continued protection.



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IN SUSQUEHANNA, WAYNE, WYOMING, LUZERNE, & LACKAWANNA COUNTIES

Betty, the mother of three children, was struggling to support them while separated from her husband. Before the pandemic, she received a notice of overpayment of SNAP (food stamp) benefits, and appealed that decision. NPLS represented her in a hearing before the Administrative Law Judge. We were able to gather all the information needed to refute the claims of OIG, and as a result, her appeal was sustained and an order was issued to rescind the alleged \$3,500 overpayment. With legal representation, our client was able to avoid the overpayment and was provided assistance in obtaining needed benefits during this difficult pandemic year.



NORTH PENN LEGAL SERVICES

Locations

BRADFORD & SUSQUEHANNA COUNTIES

Towanda Office 213 Main Street, Ste. 1, 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



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LEGAL SERVICES

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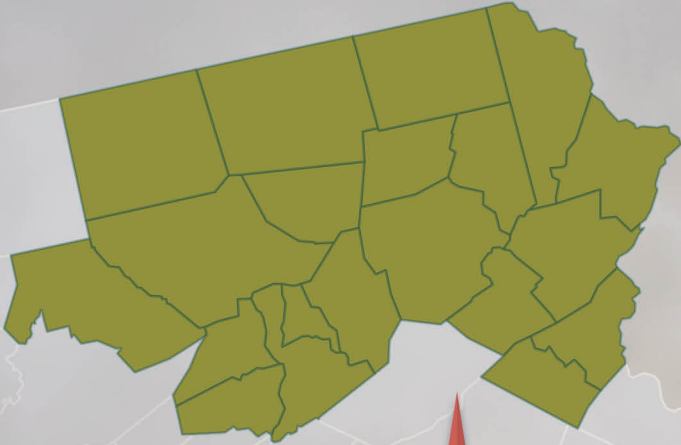
SERVING 20 COUNTIES IN NORTHEAST PENNSYLVANIA

Bradford ♦ Carbon ♦ Clinton ♦ Columbia ♦ Lackawanna

Lehigh ♦ Luzerne ♦ Lycoming ♦ Monroe ♦ Montour

Northampton ♦ Northumberland ♦ Pike ♦ Snyder ♦ Sullivan

Susquehanna ♦ Tioga ♦ Union ♦ Wayne ♦ Wyoming



North Penn LEGAL SERVICES

NORTH PENNLEGAL.ORG

877-953-4250

