

75 Years of Advocating for Civil Justice

Civil legal aid is essential to the health and well-being of all in Delaware



DELAWARE'S THREE NONPROFIT CIVIL LEGAL AID agencies provide essential lifesaving, community-preserving legal help to Delaware's most vulnerable citizens to protect homes, their health, and their safety. Civil legal aid helps ensure fairness for Delaware's most marginalized residents—particularly those who are poor, disabled, or elderly. Without adequate funding for legal aid, more Delawareans will be homeless, hungry, and unsafe.

Delaware's Legal Aid Agencies:



Represents people who:

- are victims of domestic violence and need protection from abuse orders;
- have problems with public benefits or subsidized housing;
- have disabilities or are elderly, immigrants, or victims of housing discrimination.

Coordinates pro bono legal services, and provides legal assistance to people who:

- are domestic violence victims and need protection from abuse orders and help with related family law matters;
- have private housing issues;
- want help removing barriers to employment, with adult guardianships, or with estate planning



Represents people who:

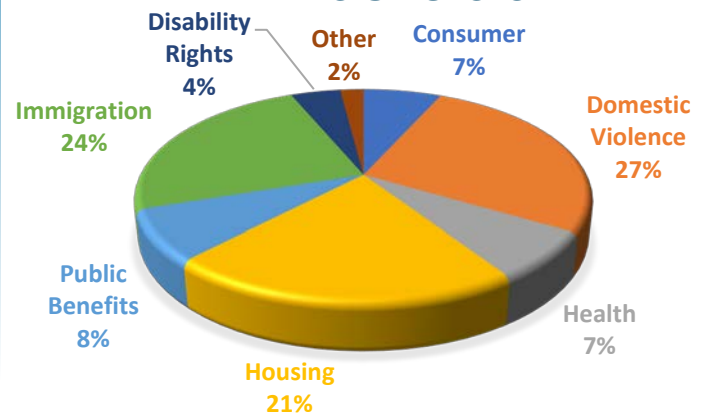
- need to file for bankruptcy;
- are experiencing consumer fraud;
- need assistance with mortgage foreclosure;
- have private landlord/tenant issues;
- need assistance with unemployment compensation claims.

We improve the health and well-being of low-income communities.

In 2020, Delaware's legal aid agencies served 5,404 vulnerable Delawareans (13,543 household members): people who are poor, disabled, elderly, veterans, and/or victims of domestic violence.

- We bring federal benefits to Delaware that clients spend in their communities.
- We improve housing stock by forcing landlords to remediate mold, lead, and other dangerous conditions.
- We prevent homelessness that occurs when families are evicted and avoid costs associated with shelters and rehousing.
- We reduce the cascading emotional and financial cost of domestic violence when we help victims obtain protective orders against their perpetrators.

TYPES OF CASES



A study commissioned by the Longwood Foundation found that every \$1 invested in civil legal aid in Delaware returns \$7.23 in economic and social benefits to Delaware and its communities.

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What is happening in 2021?

FUNDING IS CRITICAL

Approximately 70-80% of low income Delawareans have experienced a civil legal problem within the past year, yet in 2020 the three civil legal aid programs had combined budgets (federal, state, and private funding) of only \$9.7 million. The agencies were able to handle 6,044 cases, helping over 13,000 people at a cost per case of \$1600. But that's only a small fraction of the low income people who would have benefited from legal aid if more funding had been available. **Comparatively, neighboring states provide much more generous support to their civil legal aid programs, ranging from \$12 to \$32 per person in poverty. Delaware funding for legal aid amounts to \$9 per person in poverty.**

Impact of Covid-19

Even in "normal" times, there is an overwhelming need for civil legal aid in matters of housing, employment, food security, public benefits including unemployment insurance, children's safety, education, disability services, and health insurance, and we are forced to turn away many potential clients because we do not have the resources to serve them. **Despite the roll out of vaccines and the lifting of many restrictions, the looming issue is the continued effects COVID-19 will have on the Delaware economy and those most negatively impacted by the Pandemic. More people than ever are facing mounting debt, unemployment, and potential homelessness. Legal aid is a first line of defense against many of these problems, and also a key to help people solve them.**

Campaign Chair
William Lafferty ...

"Delaware's legal aid agencies are such an integral part of the Delaware legal community. I am a longtime supporter of CCJ because of the absolutely vital assistance that these organizations provide to those in need of legal services in Delaware. These agencies have been working hard throughout the pandemic to ensure that as many Delawareans as possible have access to life affirming legal assistance. I feel lucky and honored every day to practice law as a member of one of the very best bars in the world. And, I am equally honored and humbled to follow in the huge footsteps of prior CCJ chairs. Please join me in celebrating 75 years of civil legal aid in Delaware this year by making a meaningful contribution to the Combined Campaign for Justice!"

In the words of a client ...

"Without the help from legal aid, I would be homeless and hungry...it pains me deeply to think Delaware's legal aid agencies do not have the resources to help everyone in my position."

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