



North Penn LEGAL SERVICES

Celebrating
60 YEARS



**2023-2024
ANNUAL REPORT**



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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 60 years, NPLS helps low-income people throughout 20 counties in Northeast Pennsylvania. At the close of our 2023-2024 fiscal year, NPLS had 9 offices and 3 satellite locations, with a staff of 91, including 39 attorneys and 21 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.



July 1970

Luzerne County Legal Services Association, Inc. was formed in July 1970. In the mid to late 1970s the program expanded to Carbon, Monroe, and Pike counties as *Legal Services of Northeastern Pennsylvania, Inc.*

Message from the



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This year, we have been honoring our history of establishing and expanding civil legal aid services across Northeastern Pennsylvania. The landmark Supreme Court decision in *Gideon v. Wainwright*, 372 U.S.335 (1963) required states to provide counsel for those who could not afford an attorney in criminal cases. (See: Constitution Center - *Gideon v. Wainwright*). This constitutional right to counsel ensured competent legal representation was available for poor defendants. During this time, private lawyers, bar associations, and communities began forming programs to provide representation and equal access to justice in civil legal cases. Bar associations and law schools created pilot programs to serve those living in poverty and sought financial support to grow and sustain them.

Local bar associations across Pennsylvania began creating programs to address these critical needs. On August 19, 1964, twenty-one members formed the Lackawanna County Legal Aid and Defender Association in Scranton, PA. Similar programs began operating in many counties. In 1974, when President Richard M. Nixon signed a law creating the non-profit Legal Services Corporation to establish and fund it, civil legal aid became more widely available across Pennsylvania. In 2001, some of those regional programs merged to create North Penn Legal Services, Inc., a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation, providing essential civil legal services in twenty counties of Northeast Pennsylvania.

The pioneers of civil legal aid programs understood the challenges of individuals and families threatened with lack of access or loss of vital services. We continue that work to ensure legal help accessing and preserving health care services; safe and stable housing; overcoming barriers to employment and financial help caused by unemployment or disability; and protection of families from physical, emotional, and economic harms. This year our amazing advocates and support staff helped more than 18,000 people, with the dedicated leadership of our administrative team and the NPLS Board of Directors. We are so grateful for the ongoing support from our federal, state, and local funders, private donors, the judiciary, volunteer lawyers and paralegals, and all those who support our mission to provide professional representation and community legal education for their constituents and neighbors who rely upon these services.

Lori A. Molloy

Lori A. Molloy
Executive Director



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Disability Law

NPLS's Disability Advocacy Project helps those, like Janey, who applied for social security disability (SSDI) and supplemental security income (SSI) because they have a disabling condition that stops or limits the ability to work. Janey's condition started in childhood, and in high school she applied for and received benefits for a short while and then the benefits stopped. She filed an appeal and eventually scheduled hearing before an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ). Janey and her mom came into our office about two weeks before the ALJ hearing when she and her mother realized they needed legal help.

At the suggestion of our disability advocate, Janey requested a continuance so that we could prepare for the hearing. Janey's medical conditions included a serious neurological disorder and heart condition, with symptoms that made it difficult to walk and participate in activities for extended periods of time. She was able to graduate from high school and take some classes at community college, with the hope of eventually finding a career path.

With credible testimony from our client, support from the medical record, and effective advocacy at the hearing, we were able to secure a favorable opinion resulting in an award of ongoing monthly benefits and back payments for eighteen months.

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Public Benefits and the Waiver Program

The Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) assistance program is also known as the "waiver program" because the federal government "waives" the rules for institutional care to support home assistance for those who otherwise would need to be in a nursing home. Mr. Johnson's discharge from the hospital following treatment for a stroke included a plan to make needed modifications as part of the waiver program. Without modifications in the home, he could not access the upstairs living area of his home because he used a wheelchair and needed a lift or elevator installed.

A hospital bed was set up in his basement garage, which was supposed to be temporary, because there was neither running water nor a good heating source there. For about one year, Mr. Johnson remained in the basement because the modifications promised were delayed and finally denied on the basis that the equipment needed could not be installed in the home.

He filed a grievance and contacted NPLS for help in early 2024. NPLS advocates worked with the Johnsons, and they obtained two additional reports from contractors who disagreed with the first assessment, and then negotiated with the home-based services provider to make sure accessibility and safety issues were fully resolved.

Although it took multiple attempts and more time to complete the work than was expected, Mr. Johnson and his wife are now able to live together on the main floor of their home, where there is a safe and accessible shower and bathroom in addition to the comfort and enjoyment of their home. They are thankful for our assistance and grateful that the provider and contractor were able to continue to address the modification issues.

June 1972

The legal aid offices on South Main Street in Wilkes-Barre were lost in the Agnes flooding disaster. The floodwaters breached levees and inundated neighborhoods, leading to unprecedented property damage and economic disruption. The aftermath of the disaster saw a rebuilding of our communities, and also a recognition of the devastation faced by low-income communities and the need for inclusive disaster planning.

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Partnerships

IN THE COMMUNITY

IN 2023-24, NPLS STRENGTHENED ITS PARTNERSHIPS REACHING FOR EQUAL JUSTICE

The NPLS website received 149,056 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.

In the past year, we presented **Continuing Legal Education** for pro bono attorneys on the following topics: Handling Custody Cases for Legal Aid Attorneys, The Tax Implications of Estate Planning, Tenants Rights and Drafting an Enforceable Lease, and Pennsylvania's Protection from Abuse and Sexual Violence and Intimidation Acts.

In April 2024, NPLS hosted a Distance Learning CLE for Fair Housing Awareness Month called **An Overview of the PHRC and the Path of a PHRC Complaint**. The CLE reviewed the role of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission in addressing housing discrimination, and the elements needed to prove a housing discrimination claim under the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act.

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. With support from IOLTA, we have been able to expand our rural outreach program for the past two years with a Specialized Zone Grant.

NPLS reached more than 5,900 people at community outreach events during the 2023-2024 fiscal year. 5,879 legal education brochures and other materials were distributed.

We thank all the attorneys who assisted us with CLEs and community presentations which we hosted or took place at local bar associations. With much gratitude, we thank those NPLS staff and their friends and families who participated in the **Highmark Walk For A Healthy Community** in Center Valley, **Raise the Region** hosted by the First Community Foundation Partnership in north central PA, and a fun **NPLS Designer Purse Bingo** in Lackawanna County.

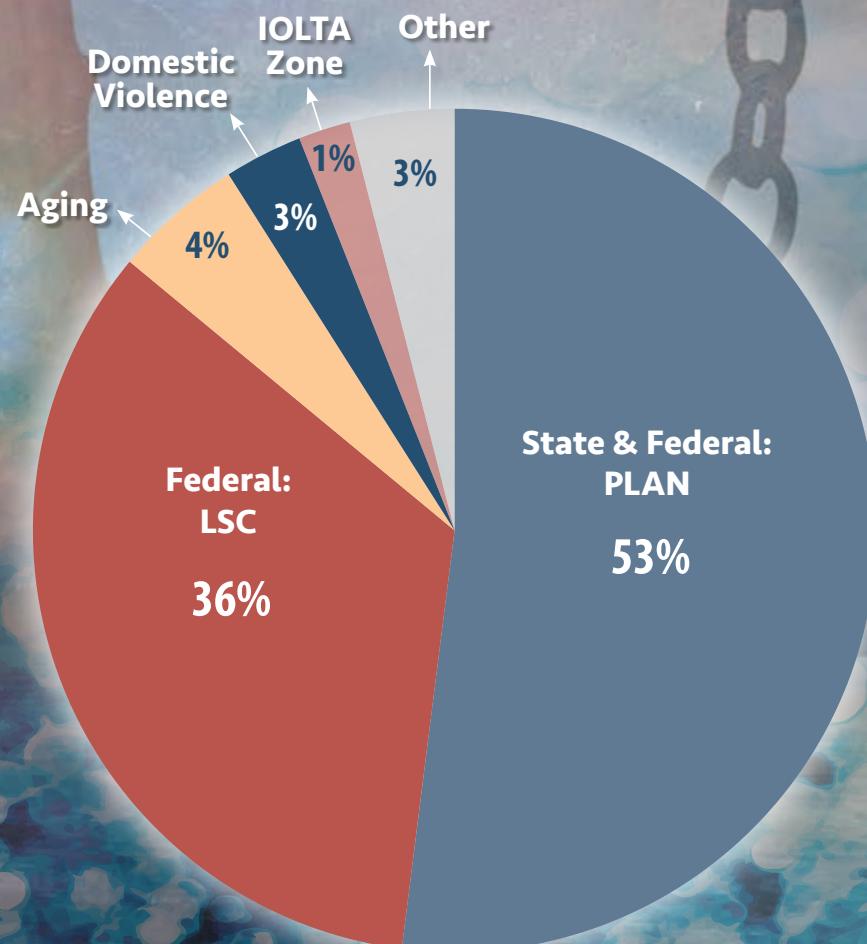
FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2024

(with comparative totals for the year ended June 30, 2023)

Revenues & Other Support	2024	2023
Contracts & Grants	\$9,511,789	\$8,951,074
Contributions of Financial Assets	35,963	62,064
Contributions of Nonfinancial Assets	105,315	124,815
Interest Income	42,513	4,850
Other	6,774	3,119
Total Revenue & Other Support	\$9,702,354	\$9,145,922

Expenses	2024	2023
Program Services	\$8,393,848	\$8,015,144
Management & General	1,297,792	1,160,750
Fund Raising	6,318	4,408
Total Expenses	\$9,697,958	\$9,180,302





\$8.5 MILLION
AWARDED TO OR DEBT AVOIDED
FOR OUR CLIENTS, PRIMARILY IN
CONSUMER CASES IN 2023-24

18,763

PEOPLE PROVIDED
WITH DIRECT
SERVICES



2,048
CASES LITIGATED
IN COURT

PEOPLE WITH
HOUSING ISSUES
PROVIDED LEGAL
HELP

7,767



10,933
CASES
HANDLED



19
JUDICARE ATTORNEYS
ACCEPTED 163 CASES

427

PREVENTED
EVICTION / SHELTER
PRESERVED



8,749
CASES
CLOSED



DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE
SURVIVORS
HELPED

2,446



675
PROTECTION FROM ABUSE
ORDERS OBTAINED



**70 PRIVATE
ATTORNEYS**
ACCEPTED 203
PRO BONO CASES

5,707

CLIENTS PROVIDED
WITH COUNSEL
AND ADVICE OR
LIMITED ACTION



180
CASES LITIGATED IN
ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNALS

**GETTING
RESULTS**



RESOURCE MATERIALS WERE
MADE AVAILABLE ON NPLS'S
WEBSITE, WHICH RECEIVED
**149,056 PAGE
VIEWS**

NORTH PENN LEGAL SERVICES

PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS

Celebrating 60 YEARS

Housing Law - Landlord/Tenant

NPLS serves twenty counties in Northeast Pennsylvania and each year over 18,000 households in our service area receive eviction complaints. The number of people living with poverty is increasing in our area and so are the costs for essentials, such as rent and utilities. We provide resources for self-representation support, legal advice, and direct representation when we have available staff or pro bono attorneys. That representation can make a real difference for tenants and the communities where they live.



In one case, the owner of the property filed for an eviction based on non-payment of rent without presenting the client with the required notice prior to filing the complaint. The owner had a history of picking up rent payments but stopped suddenly a few months before filing and the client could not get in touch with him or get his help with essential property repairs. We represented the tenant in a hearing held in one of our rural counties. The landlord did not bring a lease or ledger to the hearing. Based on these facts, the judge granted our motion to dismiss. At the hearing, we also addressed the severe habitability issues and the judge reminded the owner of his duty to make such repairs.

We helped the client draft a letter formally requesting repairs that made the home uninhabitable and notifying the owner of her intent to withhold rent until the issues were fixed. She did a great job advocating for herself and now has resolved the issues with the owner and has working heat, plumbing, hot water, and a front door that securely shuts and locks. The parties are not the only ones who benefit from such resolutions. Our neighborhoods and communities are strengthened by maintaining properties and stable neighborhoods.

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Consumer Law - Sheriff's Sale

In the last fiscal year, NPLS represented over 280 clients whose homes were at risk due to mortgage foreclosure or tax sales. We helped many clients remain in their homes with negotiation, litigation, and assistance obtaining Pennsylvania Housing Assistance Funds (PAHAF). In cases where the homeowner decided to move, they sometimes needed legal help.



Carl and Sue were trying to sell their home, which was scheduled for Sheriff's sale in a few weeks. They filed a request for a postponement of the sale on their own, but it was denied. NPLS's attorney stepped in and prepared an emergency motion to postpone the Sheriff's sale which articulated the reasons for the continuance and allowed us to engage with counsel for the lender. The sale was postponed long enough to allow the private sale to go through and recover some trapped equity in the home. The client has some money to assist with their transition from the home and avoided a foreclosure sale.



1974

Central Susquehanna Valley Legal Services, located in Sunbury, expanded to include Lycoming County, opening an office in Williamsport. It was renamed *Susquehanna Legal Services* in 1975 and served seven counties.

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July 1, 1974

After extensive negotiations in 1974, the legal aid societies of Northampton County and the Lehigh County Bar Association merged to form Lehigh Valley Legal Services (LVLS) and began operations on July 1, 1974. The program began establishing offices in Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton to serve the Lehigh Valley.

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

Allentown Outreach Site

1627 West Chew Street, Allentown, PA 18102

Fax to Main Office: 610-317-8778

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 & MONTGOMERY 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

Scranton Outreach Site

321 Spruce Street, Suite 600, Scranton, PA 18503

Fax to Main Office: 570-824-0001

Tunkhannock Outreach Site

114-2 Warren Street, Tunkhannock, PA 18657

P: 877-515-7739 F: 579-836-7815

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 6/30/24)

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Lehigh County

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Luzerne County

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Bradford County

Northern Pennsylvania Legal Services, Inc., provided legal services in Lackawanna, Wayne, Susquehanna, Wyoming, Bradford, and Sullivan Counties, and in the early years was one of 24 LSC funded programs in Pennsylvania.

Encouraged to consolidate resources, in 2001 Northern, Northeastern, Lehigh Valley and Susquehanna Legal Services merged to create the regional program known as **North Penn Legal Services**. There are now seven regional legal aid programs in Pennsylvania.

Serving 20 Counties in **NORTHEAST PENNSYLVANIA**

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



North Penn LEGAL SERVICES

NPLSPA.ORG
877-953-4250

