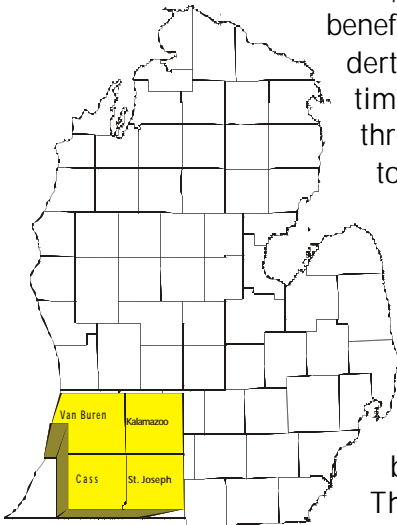


LEGAL AID BUREAU OF SOUTHWESTERN MICHIGAN, INC.

LABSWM Office Location: Kalamazoo

LABSWM Service Area: Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties

Service Population: 68,230 individuals living at or below 125% of the poverty level



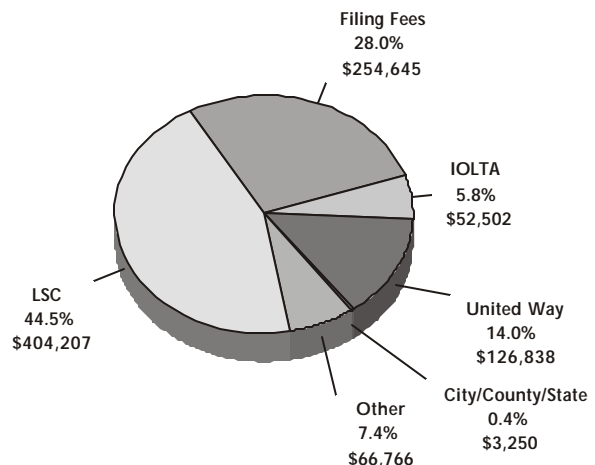
In 2000, LABSWM experienced the benefits of office consolidation undertaken in 1999. For the first time, staff members from the three former locations worked together in one office. Service for clients improved as more experienced attorneys mentored newer ones, staff members learned about client needs in other counties, and more resources were brought to bear on clients' problems. The program added bankruptcy to the services available for

After 37 years of marriage, the husband of a 60-year-old woman filed for divorce and asked his wife to leave their house. She was so devastated by the news that she had to be hospitalized. LABSWM represented her in the divorce, and the woman left the hospital under the care of the mental health department. The department helped her find housing, and LABSWM negotiated a settlement so that she would have some income to support her needs.

clients to assist families facing issues such as catastrophic medical expenses and mortgage foreclosures. LABSWM obtained laptop computers and portable printers to conduct outreach visits in space donated by three county courts, allowing LABSWM to continue a local presence in all the counties it serves. LABSWM continued to operate its hotline, which answered more than 23,000 calls and provided assistance to approximately 4,000 eligible new clients.

A senior woman on a fixed income joined a health club to be able to swim. After trying the pool a few times, she never returned because the pool was cold and crowded. Although she thought her membership expired, she continued to receive statements and late charges. A LABSWM attorney reviewed the contract and found it was automatically renewable unless the club received written notice. This requirement was never explained to the woman, even though she emphatically stated she did not want to renew. The LABSWM attorney informed the club that their deceptive practice violated the Michigan Consumer Protection Act. The club agreed to cancel the woman's contract and cease billing her.

LABSWM Sources of Funding for 2000: \$ 908,208



LEGAL AID BUREAU OF SOUTHWESTERN MICHIGAN, INC.

Contact: Richard C. Kupferschmidt • (616) 344-8113

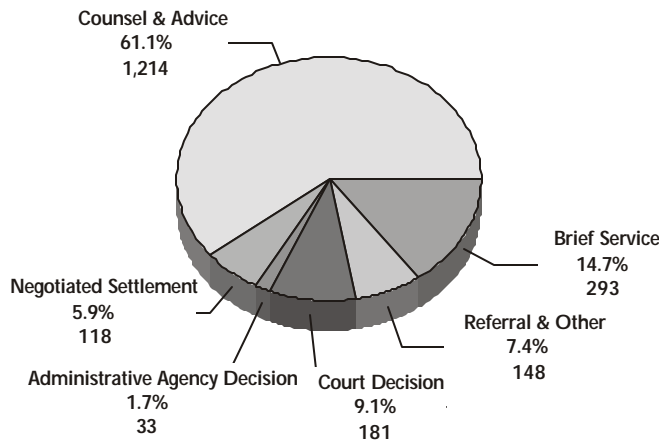
Community Outreach and Collaboration. LABSWM collaborated with a variety of community organizations to improve services to clients. For example, two LABSWM attorneys became board members for local domestic assault centers with the goal of building a safe shelter in each of LABSWM's counties. LABSWM also met with the directors and staff of the domestic assault centers to establish a referral process so that victims were first sent to the domestic assault center for screening and assistance and then referred to LABSWM for legal assistance with divorce, custody, or property matters. LABSWM established a referral process with Dispute Resolution Center in Kalamazoo and Citizens Mediation Service in Van Buren County so that matters were referred to the centers for free or sliding-scale alternative dispute resolution services. One LABSWM attorney routinely volunteered as a mediator at the centers.

Client Age	
18 & Under	14
19-59	1,809
60 & Over	164
Groups	0
Total	1,987

Pro Bono Support. In 2000, individuals with varied legal problems were served by a variety of pro bono methods including advice and counsel, clinics, outreach, and educational seminars. The pro bono coordinator worked closely with local bar leaders to develop innovative ways to get attorneys involved. One example was sponsoring seminars by pro bono attorneys on various topics such as wills and estates, employment law, and grandparents' rights for nonprofit agencies which serve low-income people. Another example was evening walk-in legal advice clinics in all four counties. The weekly Kalamazoo clinics served approximately 300 clients. Rural county clinics served approximately 50 clients.

Client Ethnicity	
White	1,168
Black	436
Hispanic	43
Native American	12
Asian	7
Other	321
Total	1,987

LABSWM Types of Service in 2000



LABSWM Cases Closed in 2000: 1,987

