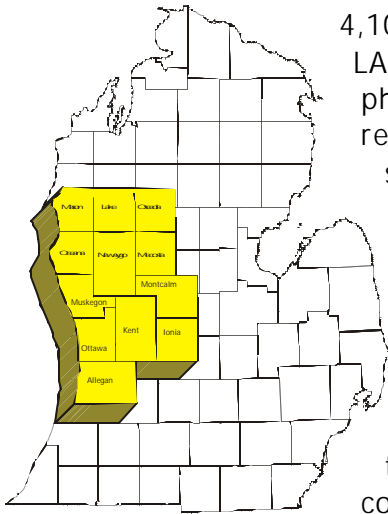


# LEGAL AID OF WESTERN MICHIGAN

LAWM Office Locations: Big Rapids, Grand Rapids, Holland, and Muskegon

**LAWM Service Area:** Allegan, Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Ottawa Counties

**Service Population:** 173,861 individuals living at or below 125% of the poverty level



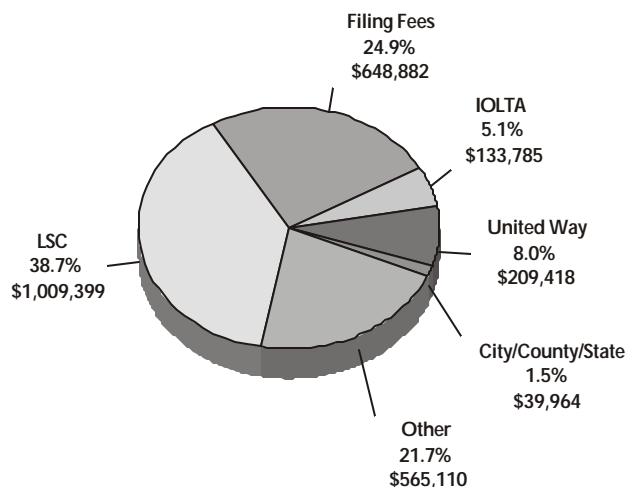
In 2000, LAWM closed more than 4,100 cases. Clients contacted LAWM through toll-free telephone numbers and through referrals from human and social service agencies. LAWM conducted client intake at its four offices and at additional satellite locations such as local courthouses and welfare offices. Emergency intakes were done by telephone for clients in rural counties. The managing attorneys from LAWM's Holland and Muskegon offices cosponsored an Elder Abuse training with Adult Protective Services, the state police, and the sheriff's and prosecutor's offices in Ottawa and Muskegon Counties that was attended

by 75 senior network staff members. An attorney in Big Rapids started a food stamp awareness initiative to help eligible clients get benefits.

The mother of an eight year-old child was hospitalized for mental illness in 1997. LAWM's attorney helped the mother work with the child's guardian to maintain regular contact with her child while the mother's successful mental health treatment continued and developed a family reintegration plan that was approved by the court. By 2000, the child was back with her mother full-time, doing well, and the court ended the guardianship. LAWM also obtained orders from the circuit court to increase and enforce child support payments and establish a parenting time schedule with the child's father.

A 57-year-old Lake County woman's husband died of a heart attack during a tornado. The widow filed a claim with the mortgage credit life insurance, but her claim was denied on the basis that her husband had a preexisting heart condition he had failed to disclose. The woman earned only \$6 per hour and was in danger of losing her home. A pro bono attorney filed suit against the insurance company after negotiations failed. A local doctor testified about the lack of any preexisting condition, and the insurance company settled for enough money to pay off the mortgage, allowing the woman to keep her modest home.

LAWM Sources of Funding for 2000: \$ 2,606,558



# LEGAL AID OF WESTERN MICHIGAN

Contact: Michael C. Chielens, Executive Director • (616) 774-0672

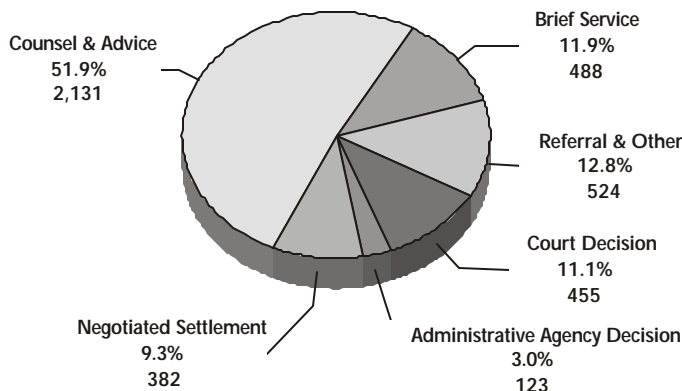
**Community Outreach and Collaboration.** LAWM attorneys visited community centers, senior citizen centers, transitional housing shelters, and domestic violence shelters to advise clients in various legal matters: foster care, family law, landlord-tenant law, estate planning, elder law, and domestic violence. By keeping close contacts with social service agencies such as the Grand Rapids Urban League's Housing Assistance Center, United Way's First Call for Help, and Every Woman's Place, LAWM nurtured its relationship with the community. LAWM staff members trained agency professionals in poverty law issues, accepted case referrals, and served on the boards of local and state agencies. Thanks to additional funds from a federal Violence Against Women Act grant, LAWM was able to provide additional services to domestic violence victims and staff at seven shelters and transitional housing programs. LAWM and the Grand Rapids Bar Association cosponsored a conference to plan for the new Legal Assistance Center scheduled to open in 2001 in the new Kent County Courthouse.

Client Age	
18 & Under	27
19-59	3,590
60 & Over	486
Groups	0
Total	4,103

**Pro Bono Support.** LAWM's pro bono program attorneys closed 211 cases in 2000, and 255 new cases were referred to volunteer attorneys. LAWM sent a six-page report to every attorney in west Michigan highlighting a decade of pro bono involvement that has produced more than \$5 million worth of time and money donated to LAWM and its clients. In addition, the program raised \$183,000 in contributions to the statewide Access to Justice Fund for LAWM. The Grand Rapids Bar Association and LAWM have partnered to start the Legal Assistance Center in the new Kent County Courthouse. Both organizations will staff the center, which will offer information and referral, self-help services, and selected case intake.

Client Ethnicity	
White	2,621
Black	1,055
Hispanic	227
Native American	70
Asian	32
Other	98
Total	4,103

LAWM Types of Service in 2000



LAWM Cases Closed in 2000: 4,103

