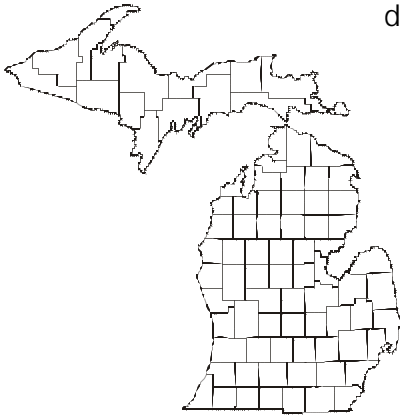


# MICHIGAN MIGRANT LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT, INC.

MMLAP Office Location: Grand Rapids

**MMLAP Service Area:** Statewide

**Service Population:** 160,000 individuals living at or below 125% of the poverty level



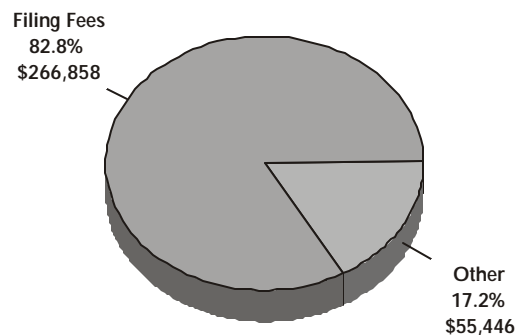
MMLAP hired a new executive director in 2000 and continued to improve its outreach, legal education, and client service to migrant farmworkers. MMLAP received new grants from the National Association for Public Interest Law, the Michigan State Bar Foundation, El Vocero Hispano newspaper, the Hispanic Center of Western Michigan,

the Michigan Department of Agriculture, and United Way. This program supports an additional attorney for MMLAP who specializes in providing immigration related services and in identifying and addressing the legal needs of so-called indigenous farmworkers, who come from southern Mexico and Central America and speak little or no Spanish. These workers are even more subject to exploitation than most migrant workers. In addition, MMLAP obtained private donations of equipment and recruited volunteer assistance. The program updated its technology to make the most of its small staff and automated several office functions to improve and increase case work. MMLAP also conducted a study of its mission to focus on its case priorities for the future.

A car dealership preyed on migrant farmworkers by selling them vehicles with high-interest loans and packing them with unneeded credit, health, life, and disability insurance with English-only sales documents. When MMLAP's client could not pay the unusually high loan payments, the car was repossessed and sold without public notice, in violation of Michigan law. MMLAP sued the car dealer for violations of Truth in Lending, the Consumer Protection Act and common law and obtained a settlement in the client's favor.

A grower promised a group of migrant farmworkers a bonus if they worked for the entire apple season. They received a ticket for every apple crate they filled. With two weeks remaining in the season, the workers were fired and the grower refused to pay the bonuses, even though the workers were not at fault for not finishing the season. MMLAP obtained the bonuses so the families could return to Florida in time for the citrus crop.

**MMLAP Sources of Funding for 2000: \$ 322,304**



# MICHIGAN MIGRANT LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT, INC.

Contact: Teresa Hendricks, Executive Director • (616) 454-5055

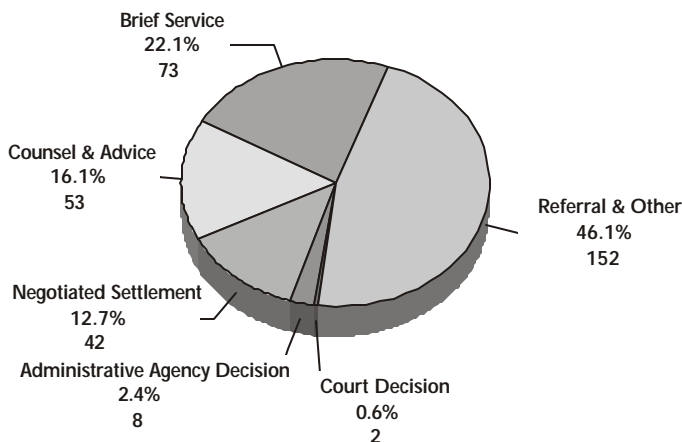
**Community Outreach and Collaboration.** MMLAP has participated with local bar association committees, the Hispanic Center of Western Michigan, Farmworker Legal Services, and the Hispanic Professionals Group, among others, to improve services to clients. These organizations all referred clients to MMLAP in 2000. Most of MMLAP's clients came from outreach site visits to labor camps, which averaged about 12 per month during the growing season. MMLAP coordinated these visits with Farmworker Legal Services, based in Berrien Springs, to make the most of both organizations' limited resources. During the 2000 visits, MMLAP met with workers and distributed program brochures and newsletters at more than 50 camps in 15 counties. MMLAP also held office hours at other agencies that serve the Hispanic community. In 2000, MMLAP publicized information about immigration eligibility and individuals engaging in immigration law malpractice to try to reduce the number of migrants losing money to bogus immigration schemes. MMLAP also funded a speaker at a regional training session to address the dangers of pesticide exposure for farmworkers.

Client Age	
18 & Under	7
19-59	177
60 & Over	146
Groups	0
Total	330

**Pro Bono Support.** MMLAP has used the American Bar Association's Litigation Section and large-firm pro bono placement project to secure pro bono representation for migrant farmworkers in certain key cases. One case involved post-judgment relief in a suit against the federal Rural Housing Service on behalf of farmworkers who overpaid for their housing. Beveridge and Diamond of Washington, D.C., is providing significant assistance. MMLAP also has undertaken two cases with assistance from Miner, Barnhill and Galland of Chicago involving violations of the federal guestworker statutes.

Client Ethnicity	
White	6
Black	1
Hispanic	296
Native American	0
Asian	0
Other	27
Total	330

MMLAP Types of Service in 2000



MMLAP Cases Closed in 2000: 330

