

# 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



With improved management and fiscal responsibility, 2001 was marked by expanding outreach to clients, better coordination of cases, trainings and outreach with Farmworker Legal Services, holding office hours off-site, and giving presentations to large audiences throughout the state on farmworker law issues. The number of closed

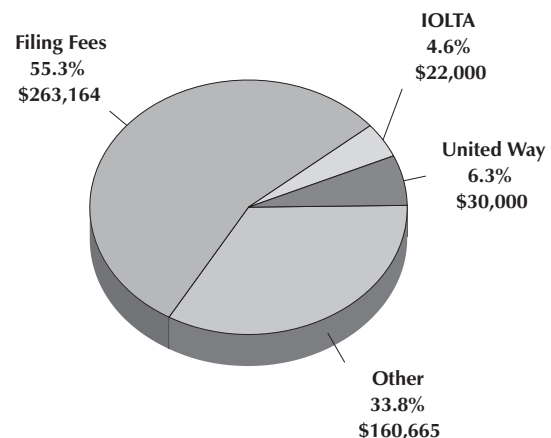
cases grew from 333 in 2000 to 595 in 2001, including cases recovering money for workers' unpaid wages

and securing injunctive relief against wage law and worker housing violations. A National Association of Public Interest Fellow was secured to begin the Michigan Immigration Counseling and Advocacy project which assisted 58 clients in its first three months with information about immigration eligibility and related legal advice. The project coordinates with numerous other local agencies as well as with the Arch Diocese and Freedom House in Detroit. MMLAP also updated its technology to further automate functions which make the most of its small staff and increase case work. MMLAP also conducted a process to review its mission and case priorities for the future.

A young woman went to a notary who advertised in a Spanish newspaper as doing "immigration" and "taxes." Using money that had taken her years to save, she paid him for help in petitioning for lawful status. She later learned he was not qualified to give legal advice or file that petition and also discovered that he changed her money order to make it payable to himself instead of INS. MMLAP intervened and obtained the return of her money without litigation.

MMLAP often helps farmworkers obtain wages to which they are entitled. MMLAP contacted a farm which did not pay a bonus it promised for each apple crate filled during the season and obtained payment of the amount owed to a farmworker couple. In another case, a group of six farmworkers worked for an abusive crew leader who refused to pay the workers. MMLAP advocated on behalf of the workers and obtained the unpaid wages to which the workers were entitled under law.

**MMLAP Sources of Funding for 2001: \$ 475,829**



# MICHIGAN MIGRANT LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT, INC.

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

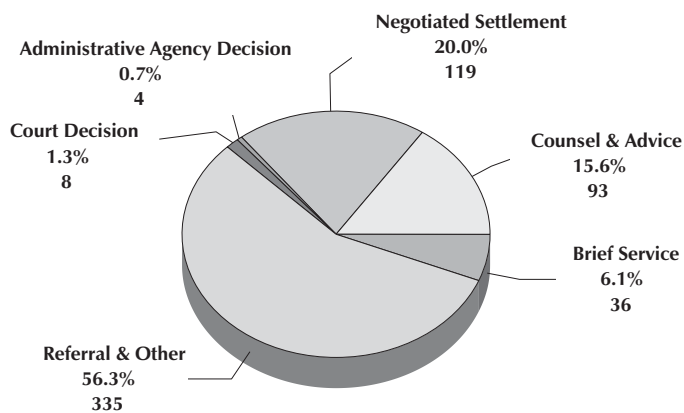
**Community Outreach and Collaboration.** MMLAP's community is statewide, so staff attend the 11 Migrant Resource Council meetings throughout Michigan, as well as participate with the Interagency Migrant Services Committee. MMLAP also works with local bar associations, the Hispanic Center of Western Michigan, Farmworker Legal Services, and the Hispanic Professionals Group, among others, to improve services to clients. These organizations all referred clients to MMLAP in 2001, including many persons who were defrauded out of money by immigration malpractice. MMLAP provided information about immigration in an effort to reduce the number of migrants losing money to immigration assistance scams. During the 2001, MMLAP met with workers and distributed program brochures and newsletters at work camps. MMLAP also held office hours at other agencies that serve the Hispanic community, including in Fennville, Michigan, an area populated densely with seasonal farmworkers. MMLAP rewrote its client education materials to achieve better comprehension by clients on topics such as wages, health and safety, and warnings about notary abuse.

Client Age	
18 & Under	5
19-59	512
60 & Over	78
Groups	0
Total	595

**Pro Bono Support.** MMLAP currently refers clients needing pro bono assistance to the private attorney panel maintained by the Hispanic Center of Western Michigan and if eligible, to Western Michigan Legal Services' pro bono program. An MMLAP Board committee is studying how best to develop an MMLAP private attorney list. MMLAP also uses the Michigan Litigation Assistance Project (MI-LAPP) for case referral as well as the ABA's LAPP program. Private firms who have assisted with complex cases in the past also remain willing sources of help.

Client Ethnicity	
White	1
Black	2
Hispanic	566
Native American	0
Asian	0
Other	26
Total	595

MMLAP Types of Service in 2001



MMLAP Cases Closed in 2001: 595

