

MICHIGAN POVERTY LAW PROGRAM

MPLP Office Location: Ann Arbor, Lansing

Service Area: Statewide

Service Population: Legal services programs in Michigan



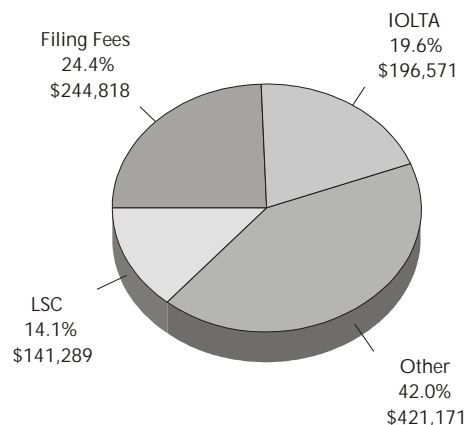
In 2002, MPLP continued efforts to provide strong support for the state's field programs, visiting each field program and other statewide programs to coordinate statewide advocacy and to determine how best MPLP could provide support to each program. Each visit generated various requests--from

assistance with cases or projects to holding trainings. For example, in July, 2002 MPLP held joint taskforce meetings in St. Ignace at Legal Services of Northern Michigan's (LSNM) program-wide staff meeting and MPLP's consumer attorney also conducted a training on payday lending for LSNM. Requests for service from the field remained very high (more than 1,000). MPLP provided 17 days of training (including mini-seminars) with 551 individuals attending and MPLP convened and staffed 18 taskforce meetings that attracted 263 attendees. MPLP also continued its systemic advocacy work with the third year of the Michigan Advocacy Project (MAP) formed by MPLP and Michigan League for Human Service. During 2002, MAP provided legislative advocacy on issues affecting the elderly, predatory mortgage lending, and family law.

An elderly woman was overwhelmed by caring 24 hours a day for her husband who had suffered a devastating stroke. She tried unsuccessfully to represent herself at a hearing regarding medical assistance where the judge suddenly raised a new legal issue. On rehearing, MPLP successfully argued that the judge erred and that the family was indeed eligible under the law for help. Assistance was awarded, providing help for the wife and permitting the husband to receive needed care and remain in his home.

MPLP worked with Western Michigan Legal Services on three payday loan cases involving the same lender who preyed upon elderly people. The borrowers had difficulty meeting the loan's onerous terms, and the company sued them anytime they could not pay in full. MPLP and WMLS successfully defended these seniors and extricated them from this illegal arrangement which charged 720% interest, much higher than the 25% allowed by the Michigan Credit Reform Act.

MPLP Sources of Funding for 2002: \$ 1,003,849



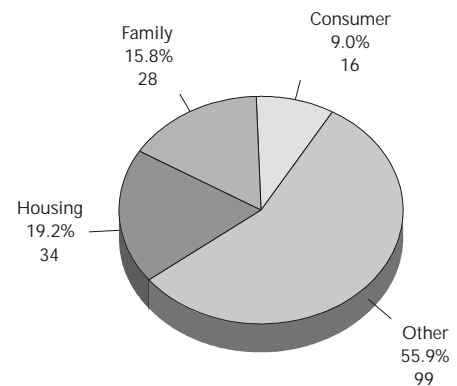
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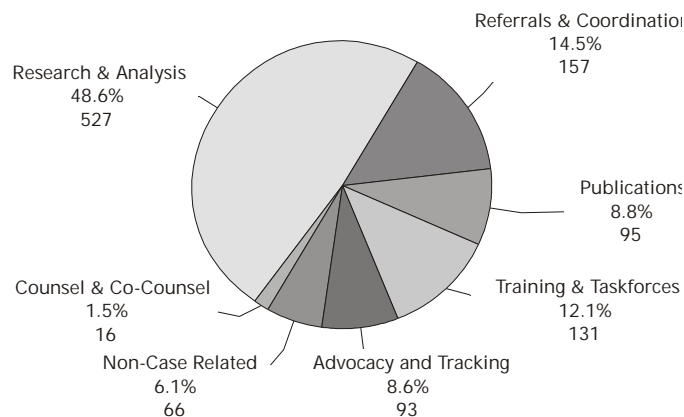
Community Outreach and Collaboration. In 2002, MPLP continued to play a significant role in staffing statewide technology initiatives, including piloting a new statewide case management system (PIKA); gathering, updating and posting community legal education materials from around the state; developing the new statewide website, MI LawHelp; and developing on-line pro se materials. MPLP's web site recorded over 2.2 million hits and more than 120,000 user sessions. MPLP is also developing a forms generation module to be integrated into the pro se channel on the MI LawHelp website. It presents an ordered list of questions to users to screen their eligibility for assistance and to modify the path each user takes through the question sets. Taking the users' answers, the module fills out standard court forms for the user. It is designed to provide pleadings for relatively simple or nonadversarial proceedings that the user can file in court. In May 2002, MPLP worked with the Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence in sponsoring a Domestic Violence Civil Legal Assistance Training to assist court referees and shelter advocates. Much of MPLP's outreach is to other legal aid providers who ask MPLP's specialists for assistance or through presentations by MPLP staff at other legal aid program offices.

Pro Bono Support. In partnership with the State Bar of Michigan, MPLP helps to support the Michigan Litigation Assistance Partnership Program (MI-LAPP), which links the resources of large law firms and corporate law departments with complex cases and representation of organizations. Through another MPLP/MI-LAPP partner, Community Legal Resources, volunteer law firms are recruited to help nonprofit agencies with transactional and corporate needs. In 2002, MI-LAPP referred 149 new cases to the private bar. In 2002, MPLP and MI-LAPP also reached out to community agencies and bar groups to expand pro bono resources in three areas: QDRO resources for family law cases with pension issues; education and special education issues; and immigration issues.

MPLP Cases Closed in 2002: 177



MPLP Types of Activity in 2002



MPLP Completed Activities in 2002: 1,085

