

MICHIGAN MIGRANT LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT

2003 MMLAP Office Location: Grand Rapids

MMLAP Service Area: Statewide

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



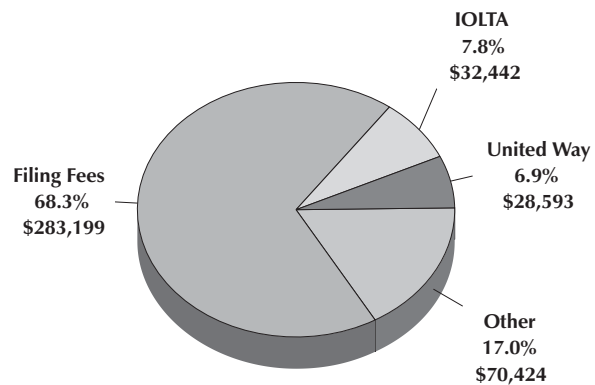
MMLAP and Farmworker Legal Services collaborated on joint outreach and also co-counseled cases to assist clients. Outreach to clients in their own language is a very important component of MMLAP's work because of the unique language and cultural barriers affecting migrant populations. All staff attorneys are proficient in Spanish, the predominant

A farmworker wife fled her abusive husband. To be safer, she went to stay with relatives temporarily. The abuser was eventually put in jail. However, while the woman was gone from her home, her landlord sold her trailer and belongings without authority. MMLAP intervened and obtained a settlement sufficient to replace her property and help her relocate.

language of MMLAP's clients. In 2003, MMLAP visited 85 migrant camps and provided legal education to 919 people. MMLAP also did outreach resulting in unprecedented access to an indigenous work force of native Guatemalan Indians and Native Mexican Indians. MMLAP opened 104 cases involving indigenous farmworkers and identified four tribal dialects spoken among them. Case work and individual representation resulted in opening a record number of 1036 total cases in 2003. MMLAP used the second year of its New Voices Fellowship (from the Academy for Educational Development) to sponsor the work of a farmworker-turned-attorney who identified clients who could help themselves and gave them more education, authority and responsibility toward resolution of their own case.

A group of farmworkers heard about MMLAP's legal services and visited MMLAP's office. They were not allowed to take breaks on the job and asked questions about whether bathroom breaks and eating lunch during their 15-hour workday was permissible. After receiving legal educational information from MMLAP, the group was able to successfully negotiate two paid 15-minute breaks and a one-half hour unpaid lunch break.

MMLAP Sources of Funding for 2003: \$ 414,658



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

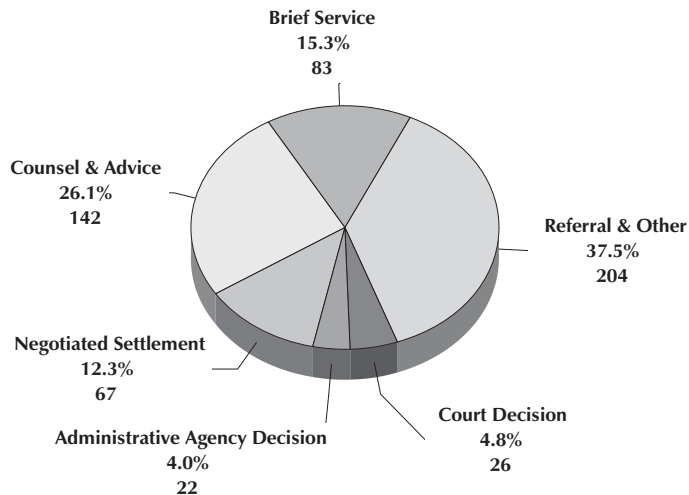
Community Outreach and Collaboration. MMLAP summer staff and attorneys conducted statewide outreach in various forms where staff spoke with farmworkers and distributed educational material. Outreach to migrant service providers included attendance and leadership at monthly meetings of farmworker service agencies to educate them regarding employment, health, consumer, housing information and more. MMLAP also made presentations on employment rights and responsibilities to large audiences that included employers. MMLAP collaborated with the Hispanic Center of Western Michigan, Farmworker Legal Services, and Immigration Assistance Program in Kalamazoo for case referrals and/or co-counseling arrangements. MMLAP distributed its legal education booklet in English and Spanish to work sites and agencies for distribution to farmworkers. Each year, MMLAP also fields hundreds of calls and makes legal and other referrals for the Spanish speaking population requesting help outside MMLAP's purpose and priorities.

Client Age	
18 & Under	21
19-59	472
60 & Over	51
Groups	0
Total	544

Pro Bono Support. Given the specialized nature of agricultural worker employment law, and language barriers, MMLAP has had to co-counsel (rather than just refer) cases to private attorneys. MMLAP received 300 private attorney hours in 2003, with a value of \$90,000, through co-counseling cases with private firms in Grand Rapids and elsewhere. MMLAP has also received help from the U.S. Department of Justice Unfair Employment Practices Office and has referred cases to the federal and state Labor Department's Wage and Hour Divisions. Pro bono services are reviewed on a case by case basis, depending on the expertise needed for the case. For general practice referrals, MMLAP relies on the pro bono program of Western Michigan Legal Services in Grand Rapids for qualifying clients.

Client Ethnicity	
White	3
Black	0
Hispanic	520
Native American	0
Asian	0
Other	21
Total	544

MMLAP Types of Service in 2003



MMLAP Cases Closed in 2003: 544

