

LEGAL AID OF WESTERN MICHIGAN

2004 LAWM Office Locations: Big Rapids, Grand Rapids, Holland, Kalamazoo, Muskegon, Niles, and St. Joseph

LAWM Service Area: Allegan, Berrien, Cass, Ionia, Kalamazoo, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, Ottawa, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties

Service Population: 261,773 individuals living at or below 125% of the poverty level



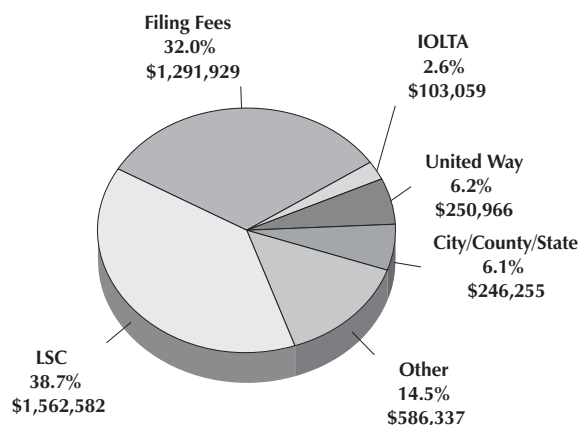
Legal Aid of Western Michigan (LAWM) helped families avoid homelessness in many of the 1869 housing cases closed in 2004. LAWM also provided much-needed security to families in 728 family law cases involving spouse abuse, child abuse, or the defense of a custody matter. LAWM assisted with approximately 200 hearings before the Social Security Administration for disabled persons, often helping these clients receive or maintain critical health care and provide stable income maintenance.

In 2004, LAWM partnered with the Counsel & Advocacy Law Line (CALL) and increased client access to attorneys with more advice and counsel and extended legal services available to Western Michigan low-income residents. Also in 2004, a LAWM attorney received a State Bar Champion of Justice Award for outstanding efforts to provide legal services to the poor.

A husband repeatedly abused his wife, on one occasion twisting her arm so violently that the three spiral breaks required surgery. He constantly followed her and kept threatening to take their child to his native country. The husband was convicted for the domestic assaults. LAWM not only obtained a divorce for the woman, but also an order allowing police to retrieve the child's passport from the father and preventing him from obtaining a replacement so he could not illegally take the child out of the country. Now the mother and child are safe from harm and no longer need to fear that the child will be taken from the home and the parent that he has known his entire life.

Low-income senior tenants in subsidized housing were sent notices that they must provide the name of in-home health care services. Management then used this information to interview home health care providers to identify and evict any senior deemed incapable of independent living. LAWM helped file a complaint with the Department of Housing and Urban Development about this illegal lease provision. As a result a new lease was created that now allows residents to live without fear of eviction if help is needed to maintain their independence.

LAWM Sources of Funding for 2004: \$ 4,041,128



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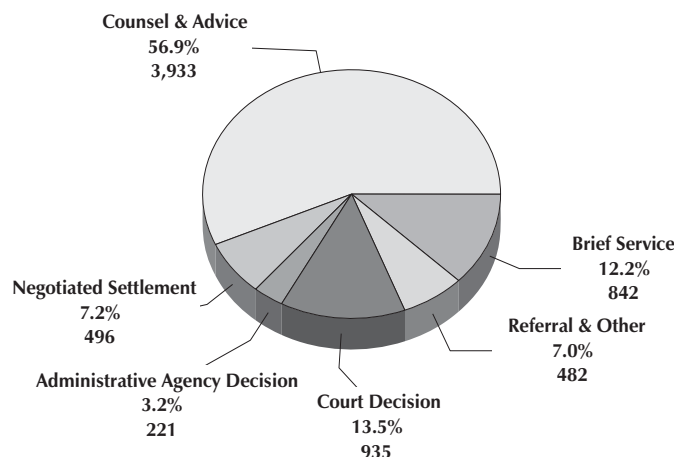
Community Outreach and Collaboration. In 2004, LAWM continued to use many outreach avenues to contact clients in Western Michigan. These included meeting clients at courthouses, and domestic violence and homeless shelters, community action agencies or senior centers and continues to expand opportunities to provide clients with access to legal services. Also in 2004, LAWM worked with a community group in Grand Rapids that rehabilitates homes in deteriorating neighborhoods and helps low-income families purchase these homes after contributing “sweat equity” and attending educational sessions at which LAWM attorneys provide legal education on consumer and debt issues better preparing families for home ownership. LAWM staff also continued to assist staff of the Kent County Legal Assistance Center which provides pro se help and legal information to the community.

Client Age	
18 & Under	115
19-59	6,128
60 & Over	666
Groups	0
Total	6,909

Pro Bono Support. In 2004, the pro bono program at LAWM raised over \$200,000 in donations, most of which was contributed through the Access to Justice Fund. Also, pro bono attorneys volunteered their time to close 210 individual cases. Seventy-eight percent of closed pro bono cases were resolved after litigation in court or before an administrative agency. LAWM also continues to support the Kalamazoo County Bar Association pro bono clinics which occur several times a month. Pro bono attorneys give advice and counsel and conduct evening intake for LAWM at various Kalamazoo community centers. In recognition of the generous donations of time and financial resources to help low-income people in West Michigan, in 2004, LAWM held pro bono events in Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo honoring the top pro bono lawyers in each community.

Client Ethnicity	
White	4,466
Black	1,779
Hispanic	353
Native American	116
Asian	37
Other	158
Total	6,909

LAWM Types of Service in 2004



LAWM Cases Closed in 2004: 6,909

