

MICHIGAN MIGRANT LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT

2004 MMLAP Office Location: Grand Rapids

MMLAP Service Area: Statewide

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



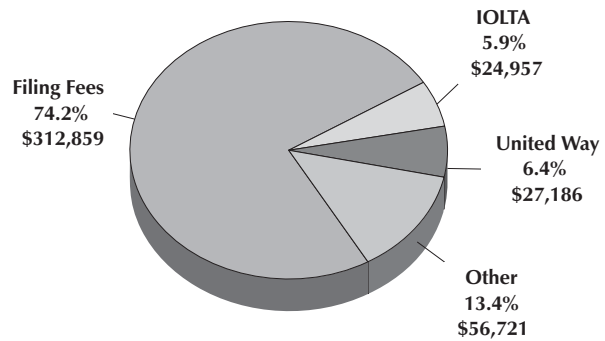
In 2004, Michigan Migrant Legal Assistance Project (MMLAP) visited 86 migrant camps and provided legal education to 1363 people. Case work and individual representation resulted in 533 cases opened in 2004. MMLAP and Farmworker Legal Services continue to work closely on joint outreach efforts and co-counsel cases when necessary so that the

services of each are not duplicated. MMLAP also continued outreach efforts to an indigenous work force of native Mexican Indians and Guatemalan Indians. MMLAP opened 75 cases involving indigenous farmworkers and identified four tribal dialects spoken among them. MMLAP's bi-lingual staff are critical to MMLAP's ability to educate and communicate with clients.

A group of indigenous farm workers was having problems at their place of employment with overtime, working conditions, work breaks, and housing. The group was afraid to approach their employer on their own. MMLAP spoke to the employer who was very receptive and addressed each of the concerns. The employer also fired an abusive supervisor and hired a bilingual supervisor in his place. MMLAP was able to negotiate on behalf of the indigenous farmworkers and work with the employer to end illegal work conditions without litigation.

Several men and a pregnant woman were recruited from Florida by a Michigan crew leader to work in the pickle fields. After expending all their money on the trip north, they worked long hours, sometimes 90 hours per week. They were illegally denied their wages by the crew leader who said payment would not be made until all the work was over. When MMLAP was notified of the situation, the workers were starving for food. MMLAP not only recovered the wages due the workers under the law but helped them secure food from a local church to sustain them while they were without income.

MMLAP Sources of Funding for 2004: \$ 421,723



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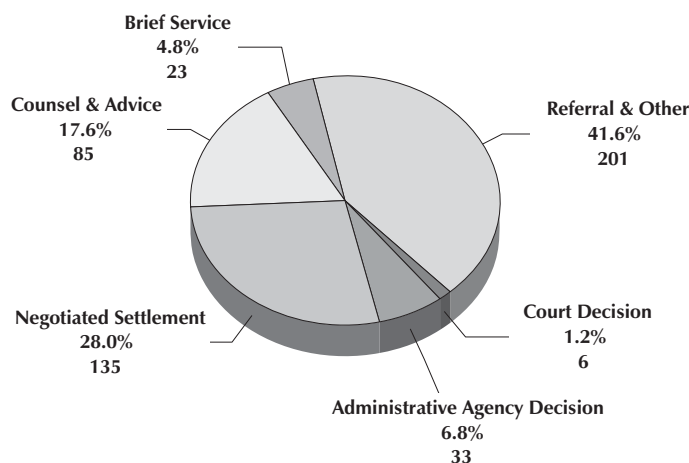
Community Outreach and Collaboration. Outreach to the migrant community is an important component of MMLAP’s services because access to legal services is often limited by many barriers including language, transportation, immigration status and others. MMLAP conducts forums and publishes materials to educate migrant workers and numerous service providers about employment, health, consumer, housing and other essential legal matters. Through regular appearances on a Spanish language radio broadcast, MMLAP staff has educated the farm worker and Hispanic population about the rights and responsibilities of living and working in Michigan. MMLAP attended monthly meetings of Migrant Resource Councils and the Pesticide Advisory Committee. MMLAP also collaborated with the Hispanic Center of Western Michigan, Farmworker Legal Services, and Immigration Assistance Program in Kalamazoo for case referrals and/or co-counseling opportunities.

Client Age	
18 & Under	14
19-59	443
60 & Over	26
Groups	0
Total	483

Pro Bono Support. MMLAP refers pro bono cases to private attorneys but often stays involved in the case as co-counsel because of the specialized nature of agricultural worker employment law and language barriers. MMLAP has co-counseling arrangements with several firms in Michigan and two additional firms in Chicago. 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 offered on a case by case basis, depending on the expertise needed. MMLAP also relies on the pro bono program of LAWM in Grand Rapids to assist qualifying clients needing help in general poverty law issues.

Client Ethnicity	
White	0
Black	8
Hispanic	460
Native American	0
Asian	1
Other	14
Total	483

MMLAP Types of Service in 2004



MMLAP Cases Closed in 2004: 483

