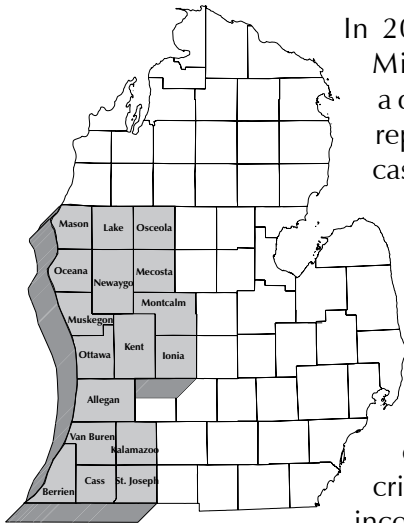


# LEGAL AID OF WESTERN MICHIGAN

2006 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



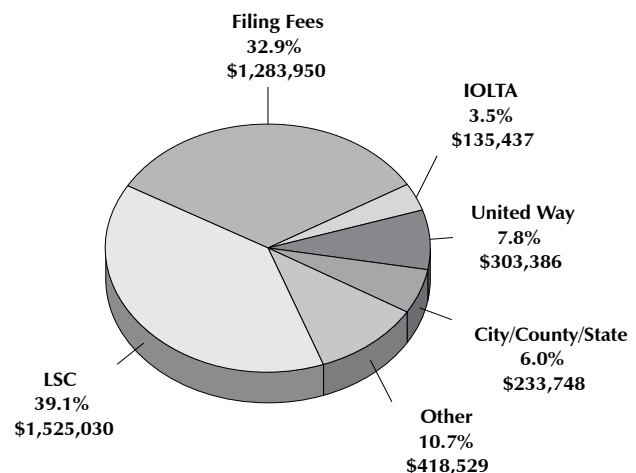
In 2006, Legal Aid of Western Michigan (LAWM) provided advice, counsel, and representation to 2,317 housing cases so that families avoided homelessness, 621 family law cases involving spouse abuse, child abuse, or the defense of a custody matter to provide security for families and 180 hearings for disabled persons, helping clients receive or maintain critical health care and stable income maintenance. LAWM also partnered with the Counsel &

A woman was told by a nursing home where she had previously been employed and done good work that the law prevented them from rehiring her. The home incorrectly believed they could not hire her because of an old, minor criminal record. Due to unemployment, the client and her children became homeless. After LAWM was able to prove that the client is legally eligible to work in long-term care, the nursing home gladly hired her, giving her stable employment so she can support her family.

Advocacy Law Line (CALL) for western Michigan low-income residents to receive advice and counsel from attorneys over the phone. Special projects in 2006 included LAWM's Reentry Law Project attorney working with the State Police to significantly reduce erroneous criminal records related to mistaken identity convictions or identity theft and include new language to require employers to provide a copy of the record to the affected person which helps people discover errors. Corrections to the criminal records will have an impact on many people's ability to obtain a job, rent housing, and obtain favorable financing for a home or transportation.

A mother and her two young children were the victims of severe domestic violence. After one child was found unconscious due to apparent abuse from the father, the mother asked for help from LAWM. LAWM obtained a Personal Protection Order, a divorce, sole custody for the mother and very limited supervised parenting time for the husband. LAWM also helped the mother sell her modest home from which the proceeds allowed her and the children to start over and move to a new safe location.

**LAWM Sources of Funding for 2006: \$ 3,900,080**



# LEGAL AID OF WESTERN MICHIGAN

Contact: Michael C. Chielens, Executive Director • (616) 774-0672

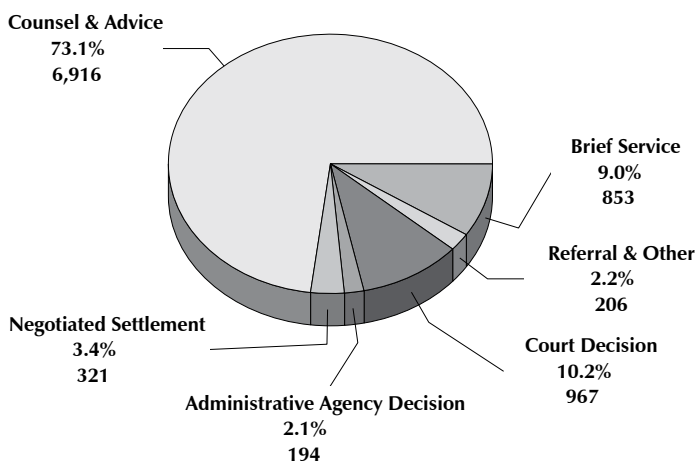
**Community Outreach and Collaboration.** In 2006, LAWM continued to use many outreach avenues to contact clients to expand opportunities to provide clients with access to legal services, including meeting clients at courthouses, domestic violence and homeless shelters, community action agencies or senior centers. To broaden outreach to rural populations, LAWM conducted an all-day community legal education event in Van Buren County attended by over 100 human service agency staff who learned how to recognize civil legal problems and make appropriate referrals. LAWM staff also continued to assist and support the staff of the Kent County Legal Assistance Center (LAC) which provides pro se help and legal information assisting nearly 1,000 patrons a month on a variety of legal forms and procedures. LAWM attorneys also provided law-related education at classes held by a number of transitional housing shelters for formally homeless women on consumer, housing and family law matters to help them become aware of their legal rights and responsibilities to prevent similar situations from occurring that contributed to their previous homelessness.

Client Age	
18 & Under	98
19-59	8,578
60 & Over	781
Groups	0
Total	9,457

**Pro Bono Support.** In 2006, pro bono attorneys volunteered their time to close 189 individual cases in which seventy-nine percent were resolved after litigation in court or before an administrative agency. The pro bono program also raised over \$215,000 in donations with 80% contributed through the Access to Justice Fund. LAWM also continues to support the Kalamazoo County Bar Association pro bono clinics which occur several times a month, where pro bono attorneys give advice and counsel and conduct evening intake at area community centers. LAWM held pro bono events in Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo honoring the top pro bono lawyers in each community. Additionally, a LAWM pro bono attorney received the State Bar's John W. Cumiskey Award for outstanding volunteer services to provide civil legal aid to the poor.

Client Ethnicity	
White	6,509
Black	2,190
Hispanic	437
Native American	132
Asian	35
Other	154
Total	9,457

LAWM Types of Service in 2006



LAWM Cases Closed in 2006: 9,457

