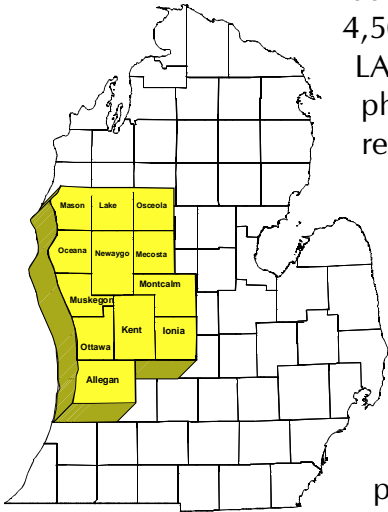


LEGAL AID OF WESTERN MICHIGAN

LAWM Office Locations: Big Rapids, Grand Rapids, and Muskegon

LAWM Service Area: Allegan, Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Ottawa Counties

Service Population: 173,861 individuals living at or below 125% of the poverty level



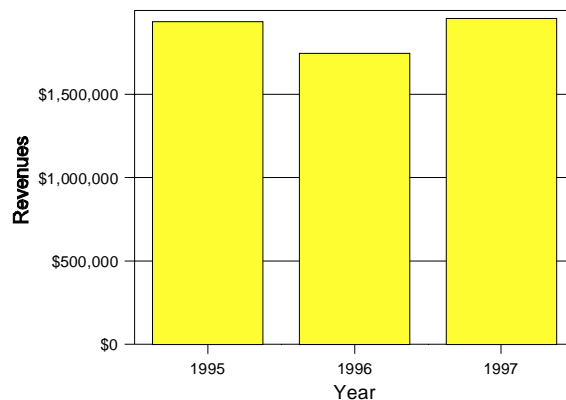
In 1997, LAWM closed more than 4,500 cases. Clients contacted LAWM through its toll-free telephone number and through referrals from a variety of human and social service agencies. In addition to handling case intake at its three offices, LAWM conducted client intake at various satellite locations, and emergency intakes were conducted by telephone for clients in rural

A woman who had suffered with cerebral palsy since birth needed durable crutches and a leg brace to walk. Occasionally, she needed a wheelchair. She was denied assistance to obtain equipment until LAWM was able to show that she was eligible for help available to people who were disabled as children. She was provided with the medical equipment she needed for ambulation.

counties. Twenty percent of LAWM's cases were resolved through administrative hearings or court proceedings. Funds from the Grand Rapids Bar Association and increased filing fees allowed LAWM to add staff and services. A new computer network was installed in the Grand Rapids office with 19 Pentium computers and four additional monitors to complete the upgrade of the information management system. Steelcase Corporation made a significant contribution of desk chairs worth \$27,000. LAWM adopted a comprehensive accounting manual delineating management responsibilities in several different areas.

A middle-aged man with mental health problems was about to lose his home through a property tax foreclosure. The property also was encumbered by Internal Revenue Service liens. The man's sole source of income was wages he received from delivering three newspaper routes. LAWM petitioned for bankruptcy reorganization, and the man eventually paid back all of his creditors. While the bankruptcy plan was in effect, LAWM also worked with a local community organization to obtain needed home improvements.

LAWM Funding



LEGAL AID OF WESTERN MICHIGAN

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

Community Outreach and Collaboration. LAWM attorneys visited community centers, senior citizen centers, transitional housing shelters, and domestic violence shelters to advise and counsel clients in a variety of legal matters: foster care, family law, landlord-tenant law, estate planning, elder law, and domestic violence. By keeping close contacts with social service agencies such as the Grand Rapids Urban League's Housing Assistance Center, United Way's First Call for Help, and Every Woman's Place in Muskegon, LAWM nurtured its relationship with the community by advising and training professionals in poverty law issues and accepting case referrals. Staff members furthered this relationship by serving on the boards of numerous local and state agencies. LAWM services were spread throughout its 12-county service area, providing crucial legal services to remote rural areas. As a result of its extensive outreach efforts and advertising, rural counties received a level of service commensurate with their percentage of the eligible client population.

Client Age	
18 & Under	53
19-59	4,374
60 & Over	529
Groups	0
Total	4,956

Pro Bono Support. LAWM's 1997 pro bono program exceeded the 1996 record for contributions by receiving more than \$150,000 in pledges from private attorneys. Pro bono attorneys closed 310 cases in 1997, and 300 new cases were referred to the growing list of private attorneys recruited to accept referrals through LAWM. The Grand Rapids Bar Association took a major step forward by creating a standing pro bono committee whose members are appointed jointly by the bar association and LAWM. The committee is surveying area firms about their pro bono policies and encouraging firms without policies to adopt one.

Client Ethnicity	
White	3,367
Black	1,280
Hispanic	240
Native American	34
Asian	35
Other	0
Total	4,956

LAWM Cases Closed in 1997: 4,956

