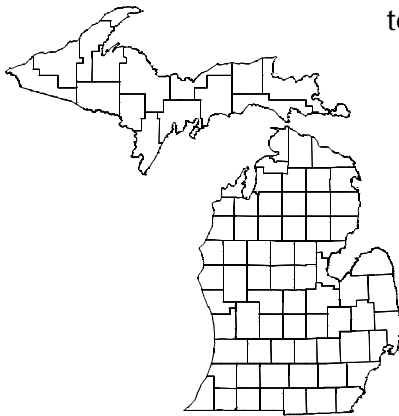


# MICHIGAN MIGRANT LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT, INC.

MMLAP Office Locations: Berrien Springs and Grand Rapids

**MMLAP Service Area:** Statewide

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



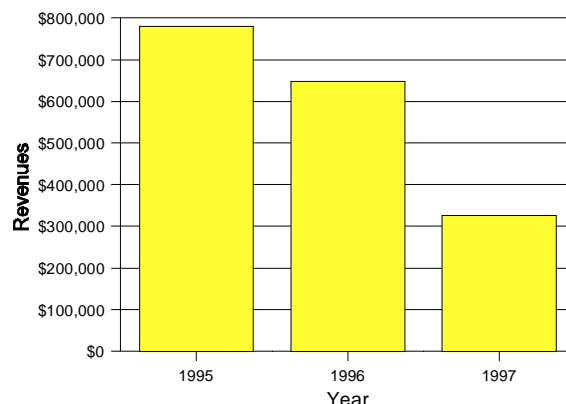
For MMLAP, 1997 was a watershed year. The transition from federal Legal Services Corporation funding was implemented. With this change came a greater range of advocacy services that MMLAP can provide but also a focus on significant litigation and advocacy. Activities included transferring MMLAP property, staff,

materials, and cases to Farmworker Legal Services of Legal Services of Southeastern Michigan, which took over the provision of federally funded legal services to migrant and seasonal workers in our state. As one of the participants in the new MPLP (Michigan Poverty Law Program), MMLAP participated in providing state support program training and other assistance to the state's legal aid programs. MMLAP concentrated its services on the geographic regions with the highest populations of migrant workers. The program provided services in the areas of employment, housing, field sanitation and pesticides, education, and consumer and civil rights, among other areas of critical legal need to the migrant farmworker communities and service providers.

MMLAP assisted in obtaining a special land use permit for a new migrant Head Start facility. Without a Head Start program in the area, families would have no safe place to put their children. At a public hearing on the permit, there was vocal local resistance, and the permit was denied. On appeal, MMLAP's attorney discussed the benefits of Head Start programs to farming communities. Experts from the departments of agriculture and transportation gave advice on the effects of traffic, runoff water, and pesticides to support the land use permit. The board granted the appeal, and the Head Start facility will soon be ready for occupancy.

A man who could not afford the price of a used car agreed to purchase it "on layaway." The seller kept the car and the title pending full payment. After the buyer missed a payment, the seller kept all the money paid and retained the car. MMLAP demonstrated the seller's violations of the consumer protection act and obtained judgment for return of the buyer's money.

**MMLAP Funding**



# MICHIGAN MIGRANT LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT, INC.

Contact: Gary N. Gershon, Executive Director • (616) 454-5055

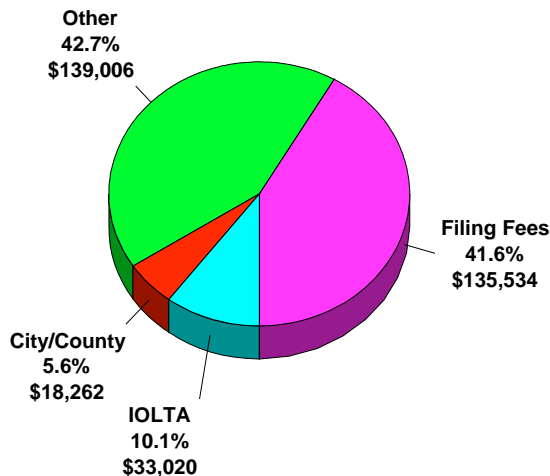
**Community Outreach and Collaboration.** MMLAP has productive relationships that include mutual referrals organizations such as the state Family Independence Agency, Michigan Employment Security Agency, Rural Opportunities Inc., the Council on Spanish Speaking Affairs, the Michigan departments of agriculture and civil rights, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. MMLAP continued legal education for farmworkers and their families at work camps covering topics such as pesticide warnings, wage problems, workplace discrimination, and consumer matters. The program also produced and distributed the newsletter "Bajo—Under the Burning Sun," which provided information to an estimated 5,000 readers including farmworkers, farmers, and agency networks of the statewide Migrant Resource Councils.

Client Age	
18 & Under	89
19-59	463
60 & Over	20
Groups	0
Total	572

**Pro Bono Support.** MMLAP and MPLP are working with the State Bar and others to implement the Michigan Litigation Assistance Partnership Program to refer complex cases to be handled pro bono by large law firms. Because MMLAP provides state-level support to other programs and does complex litigation, MMLAP does not maintain a traditional pro bono panel. However, MMLAP has traditionally received assistance from large firms on significant cases. Some large firms have donated hundreds of hours and often assisted with litigation costs.

Client Ethnicity	
White	9
Black	8
Hispanic	553
Native American	1
Asian	0
Other	1
Total	572

**MMLAP Sources of Funding for 1997: \$ 325,822**



**MMLAP Cases Closed in 1997: 572**

