

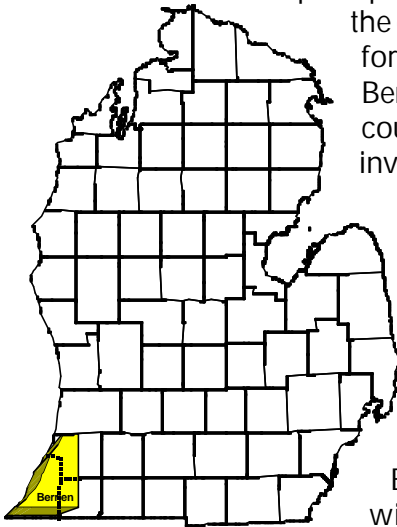
BERRIEN COUNTY LEGAL SERVICES BUREAU, INC.

BCLS Office Locations: Niles and St. Joseph

BCLS Service Area: Berrien County; Senior citizens in Cass and Van Buren Counties

Service Population: 30,241 individuals living at or below 125% of the poverty level

During 1999, BCLS closed 1,885 cases for poor people in Berrien County. Of the cases closed, 423 were cases for senior citizens living in Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties. About 50 cases involved representation of parents in child protective proceedings. In addition to court representation, BCLS assisted these clients with housing, disability, and public benefit issues to advance family reunification. Overall, BCLS provided services in a wide variety of civil matters

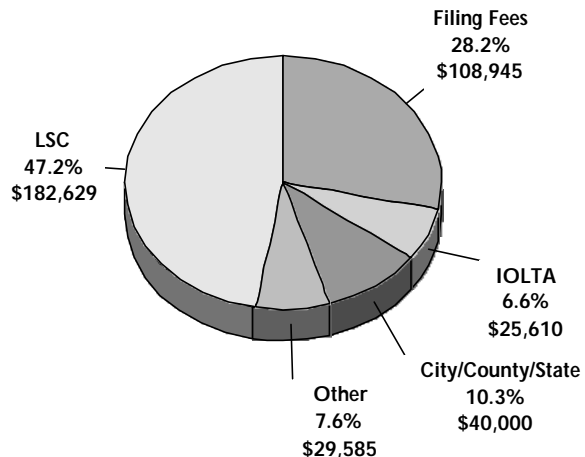


matters, and landlord-tenant cases. Many of the clients had problems related to disability and frequently needed assistance with multiple problems, including housing, education, income, and access to medical care.

An elderly couple living on Social Security was pressured into a contract for replacement windows by a salesman who came to their home uninvited. When they discovered that there was a lien against their home for nearly three times the cost of the windows (because the contract had been sold to a high-interest loan company), they refused delivery of the windows and canceled the contract in writing. BCLS helped obtain a cease and desist order against the window company from the Michigan attorney general and negotiated with the loan company to cancel the lien.

BCLS helped keep a family together. When a woman's daughter from her prior marriage was sexually molested by her stepson, her husband refused to cooperate with Child Protective Services personnel, filed for divorce, and told his wife to get out of the house with her daughter. With assistance from BCLS, the couple obtained mediation services and agreed that the boy would visit on weekends when the daughter was with her father and that everyone would participate in counseling. Both children obtained appropriate treatment, and the divorce was dismissed.

BCLS Sources of Funding for 1999: \$ 386,769



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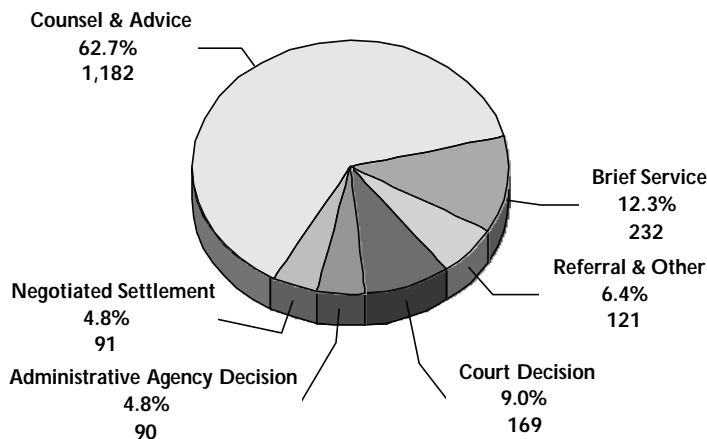
Community Outreach and Collaboration: BCLS worked to improve understanding of the problems and concerns of low-income people through continuing involvement with the courts, the bar, and other agencies serving the client community, such as the Senior Triad, the Safe Shelter, and others. Safe and affordable housing was a major concern in both the communities of Benton Harbor and Niles; the program has placed a high priority on issues of eviction from subsidized housing and mobile homes and worked with groups in both communities focusing on improving existing housing and creating new home ownership opportunities for low-income people. A staff attorney continued her work with a third grade class in Benton Harbor through the Lawyer-Teacher Partner program initiated by the Center for Civic Education and Law. She participated regularly in classroom activities to teach basic legal concepts and conflict resolution skills.

18 & Under	7
19-59	1,450
60 & Over	428
Groups	0
Total	1,885

Pro Bono Support: Almost 20 percent of the county's active bar participated in BCLS's efforts to involve private attorneys in assisting low-income people and senior citizens. In 1999, private attorneys handled cases ranging from trusts to divorces involving domestic violence. BCLS concentrated on developing pro bono attorney services in a broader range of areas, including referral of more Supplemental Security Income and landlord-tenant matters. Another focus was pro bono services for senior citizens. In order to help involve new private attorneys in pro bono work, BCLS assisted the local bar association in forming a "new lawyers" group. At the first meeting, BCLS's pro bono coordinator gave a presentation on pro bono service.

White	979
Black	840
Hispanic	27
Native American	12
Asian	3
Other	24
Total	1,885

BCLS Types of Service in 1999



BCLS Cases Closed in 1999: 1,885

