

LEGAL AID BUREAU OF SOUTHWESTERN MICHIGAN, INC.

LABSWM Office Locations: Kalamazoo

LABSWM Service Area: Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties

Service Population: 68,230 individuals living at or below 125% of the poverty level



To improve services to clients, in 1999 LABSWM closed its three branch offices in Paw Paw, Cassopolis, and Centreville, and all staff members moved into the Kalamazoo main office. The relocation has provided for a better managed and more efficient program. Each staff member has a better understanding of all four counties that LABSWM serves, and staff members continued to meet clients at various locations throughout the region

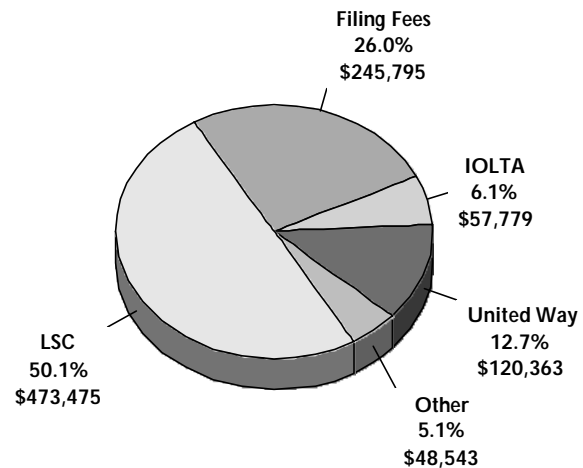
To obtain financial assistance with the repair of a hole in his roof from the city of Kalamazoo and a senior services agency, a 93-year-old man needed to show title to his house. However, a title search revealed that he did not have title even though his land contract had been paid for years. He still had all of the receipts for his payments. An LABSWM pro bono attorney helped the client obtain title to his house, and the roof was repaired just before the onset of winter.

including donated offices in Paw Paw, Centreville, and Cassopolis. The consolidation produced a more cohesive and supportive program in which

staff members more easily exchange ideas based on their areas of speciality. LABSWM started a new centralized telephone intake and service system, which allowed potential clients from LABSWM's four counties to call the program toll-free and receive more prompt and convenient service. Also as part of the move, LABSWM installed new computer systems to make client service and legal research more efficient.

Two roommates who were mentally disabled sought LABSWM's help when their landlord, who had rented them a condemned apartment, threatened to throw them out. Working with a program that assists the developmentally disabled, LABSWM helped secure a new place for the roommates to live. Through court action, LABSWM retrieved all of the money paid to the landlord for the condemned apartment so that the roommates could pay the rent on their new home.

LABSWM Sources of Funding for 1999: \$ 945,955



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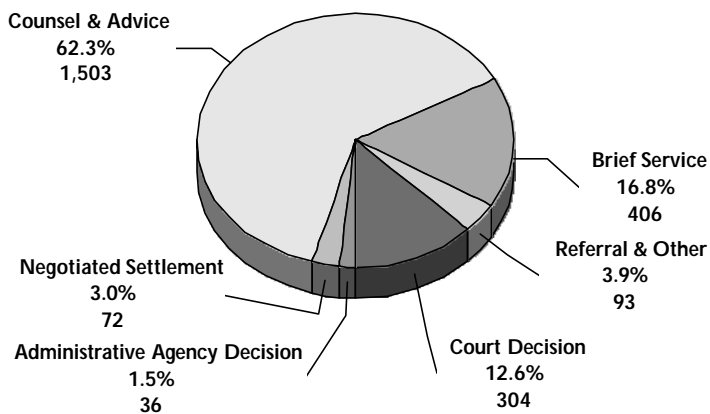
Community Outreach and Collaboration: LABSWM's work in 1999 had a direct impact on disadvantaged individuals in the communities it served. LABSWM, in collaboration with private attorneys and community agencies, assisted more than 2,000 poor people throughout the region. A LABSWM attorney appeared before a local board of education when the board denied special education classes for a hearing-impaired student who had been expelled. Many senior citizens received assistance because LABSWM attorneys routinely visited senior centers. LABSWM partnered with a housing task force to restore utilities to tenants in Kalamazoo. Clients found legal protection from domestic violence because of LABSWM's close connection with domestic violence shelters. LABSWM clients learned about alternative ways to resolve disputes as LABSWM provided education and made referrals to community dispute resolution centers.

Client Age	
18 & Under	31
19-59	2,186
60 & Over	197
Groups	0
Total	2,414

Pro Bono Support: In 1999, more individuals with varied legal problems were served by a variety of pro bono methods including advice and counsel, clinics, outreach, and educational seminars. The pro bono coordinator worked closely with local bar leaders to develop innovative ways to get attorneys involved. One example was sponsoring seminars on various topics of interest to nonprofit agencies that serve low-income people. The first seminar was on labor and employment issues. Another example was evening walk-in clinics in all four counties. The weekly Kalamazoo clinics served approximately 300 clients. Rural county clinics served approximately 50 clients.

Client Ethnicity	
White	1,625
Black	492
Hispanic	47
Native American	11
Asian	8
Other	231
Total	2,414

LABSWM Types of Service in 1999



LABSWM Cases Closed in 1999: 2,414

