

MICHIGAN MIGRANT LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT, INC.

MMLAP Office Locations: Grand Rapids

MMLAP Service Area: Statewide

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

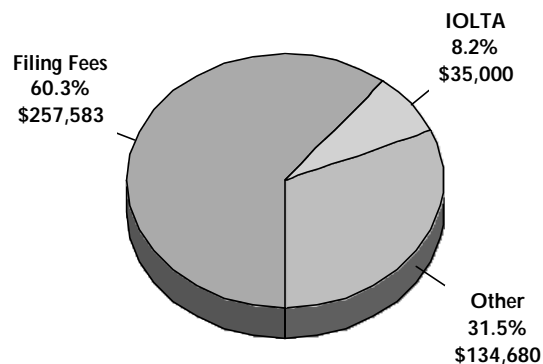


In 1999, MMLAP experienced a number of changes. The addition of a highly qualified paralegal helped MMLAP serve more clients through case work and community legal education. In addition to increased cases, MMLAP also noted increased participation by farmworkers across the state interested in educating themselves about their rights in information sessions provided by MMLAP on topics identified by the farmworkers themselves. A Skadden Arps fellowship attorney also helped improve services in eastern Michigan. MMLAP moved into larger and better-designed, but still affordable, office space in order to improve service to clients and working conditions for the staff. The move was made possible largely through a grant from the Grand Rapids Foundation.

The state denied a woman unemployment compensation because she could not prove she was a permanent, legal U.S. resident. She only had an Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) letter stating she was authorized to work. Due to an administrative backlog, INS had not issued her a new green card, which documented her permanent legal residency in the United States. MMLAP worked with an unemployment compensation advocate and Congressman Vern Ehler's office to prepare information to show the woman's status at a referee hearing. As a result of the hearing, the woman recovered the unemployment compensation to which she was legally entitled.

A group of farmworkers contacted MMLAP when they had worked for little or no pay for more than a month. The workers and their families were suffering from hunger because they could not afford food. Also, there was no cooking gas available in the camp, and there were violations of sanitation standards. MMLAP worked with other agencies and local churches to ensure that emergency food was delivered and cooking gas supplied. MMLAP also filed a lawsuit to collect the wages and fix the sanitation problems.

MMLAP Sources of Funding for 1999: \$ 427,263



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Community Outreach and Collaboration: From June 15 to September 15, 1999, MMLAP visited approximately 63 camps and distributed information to an estimated 2,833 migrant workers. The visits covered 12 counties: Allegan, Antrim, Bay, Berrien, Grand Traverse, Gratiot, Kent, Leelanau, Oceana, Ottawa, Van Buren, and Washtenaw Counties. The most widely distributed outreach materials were MMLAP's newsletter "Under the Burning Sun," Bienvenido (Welcome) letter, business cards, and information about federal worker protection standards. The newsletter reached approximately 5,000 people and delivered information not only to farmworkers, but also to farmers and agencies. In addition, MMLAP's relationships with other organizations included mutual referrals to the state Family Independence Agency, Michigan Department of Career Development, Telamon Inc., the Council on Spanish-Speaking Affairs, the state Departments of Agriculture and Civil Rights, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Client Age

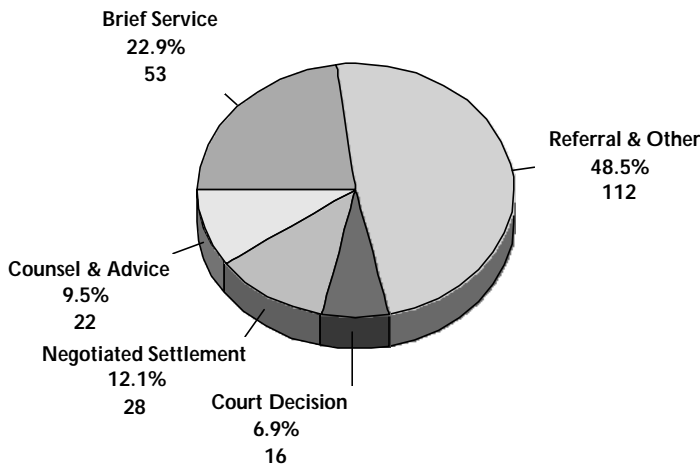
18 & Under	1
19-59	224
60 & Over	6
Groups	0
Total	231

Pro Bono Support: MMLAP has used the American Bar Association's Litigation Section and large-firm pro bono placement project to secure pro bono representation for migrant farmworkers in certain key cases. One case involved post-judgment relief in a suit against the federal Rural Housing Service on behalf of farmworkers who overpaid for their housing. Beveridge and Diamond of Washington, D.C., is providing significant assistance. MMLAP also has undertaken two cases with assistance from Miner, Barnhill and Galland of Chicago involving violations of the federal guestworker statutes.

Client Ethnicity

White	11
Black	2
Hispanic	200
Native American	1
Asian	0
Other	17
Total	231

MMLAP Types of Service in 1999



MMLAP Cases Closed in 1999: 231

