

Civil Legal Aid in Michigan

2020 REPORT OF SERVICES

OUR MISSION

The Michigan State Bar Foundation provides leadership and grants to improve access for all to the justice system, including support for civil legal aid for low-income households, law-related education, and conflict resolution.

LEGAL AID SERVICE AREAS

In 2020, the Foundation disbursed approximately \$7.12M in annual operating grants to more than a dozen legal aid organizations. These include:

Northern Region

- Legal Services of Northern Michigan

Western Region

- Legal Aid of Western Michigan

Eastern Region

- Legal Services of Eastern Michigan
- Center for Civil Justice

Metro Region

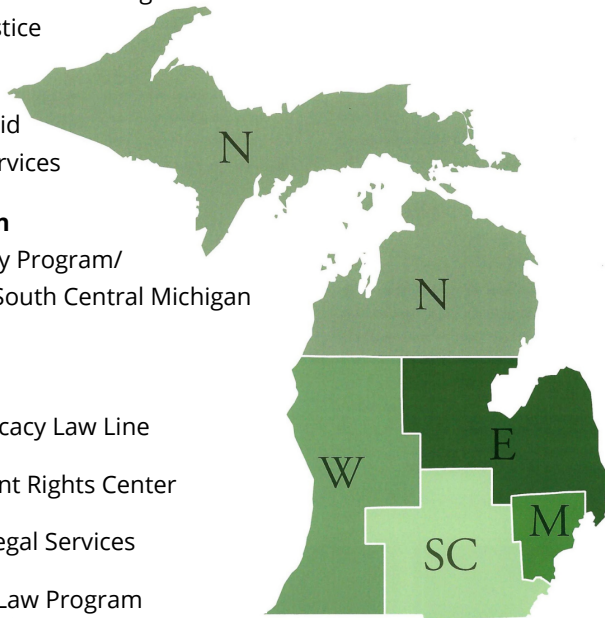
- Lakeshore Legal Aid
- Michigan Legal Services

South Central Region

- Michigan Advocacy Program/
Legal Services of South Central Michigan

Statewide Services

- Counsel and Advocacy Law Line
- Michigan Immigrant Rights Center
- Michigan Indian Legal Services
- Michigan Poverty Law Program



CIVIL LEGAL AID HELPS ASSURE FAIRNESS IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Nonprofit civil legal aid organizations provide access to legal help for low-income people to help protect their livelihoods, their health, and their families.



- Percentage of positive outcomes for **family** and stability cases that had attorney representation: **91%**
- **Housing** cases with positive outcomes when an attorney was provided: **98%**



- Veterans served by free legal services: **1,568**
- Older adults helped: **8,358**
- Consumers helped by legal aid: **3,800**
- Number of unemployment compensation cases handled: **1,290**
- Number of children in households served: **36,898**
- Number of adults in households served: **46,898**
- Number of individuals in households served: **83,796**



ENSURING HOUSING STABILITY

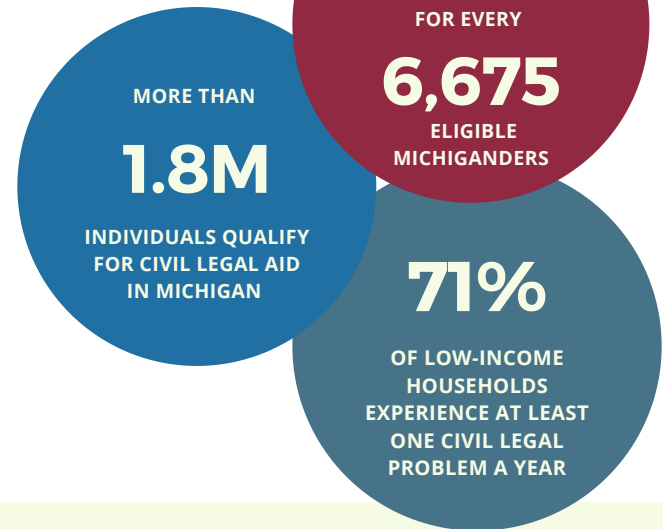
A father was laid off due to the COVID pandemic shutdown. As a result, he could not cover the monthly rent or utilities. He contacted legal aid for help when his landlord threatened to evict his family. A legal aid attorney prevented the eviction order from being entered in court and connected the family to the Eviction Diversion Program. The program was able to pay the back rent and the utilities. The family is safe in their home without the threat of being homeless.

CIVIL LEGAL AID FULFILLS A CRITICAL NEED AT A LOW COST

Michigan's nonprofit civil legal aid programs coordinate through a statewide infrastructure that provides a continuum of services - including, an informational website, a hotline staffed by attorneys to provide advice, and full representation by an attorney - so individuals can access the level of assistance they need to solve their problem. Thirty-five staffed offices provide civil legal aid in every county in the state.

- **Michigan Legal Help Program** – An online clearinghouse providing information on legal topics, links to legal forms and other self-help resources. The website also includes a triage and referral function through the Guide to Legal Help, a step by step tool connecting people to the right resources, including referrals to attorneys or a legal aid organization. **In 2020, MLH had an average of 127,706 visits per week to the website.**
- **Counsel and Advocacy Law Line** – A statewide attorney staffed hotline for low-income individuals and older adults. CALL attorneys advise on housing, public benefits, consumer law, domestic relations, unemployment benefits and other civil matters. CALL provides tailored advice to individuals who call for help and direct referrals to legal aid organizations. **In 2020, CALL helped 17,409 individuals.**
- **Nonprofit civil legal aid organizations** – When a case is more complex or an attorney is needed, legal aid organizations provide representation. The legal aid programs in Michigan are integrated within their communities and work closely with community partners to identify clients who need help. Legal aid programs also provide the infrastructure to help private lawyers provide pro bono legal assistance to low-income clients. **In 2020, pro bono attorneys provided 12,447 hours of pro bono services through the Foundation's annual grantees.**

THE NEED FOR SERVICES



ASSURING SAFETY FOR FAMILIES

"Without legal aid, I would not have known what to do while going through my custody case. As a single mother, I could not afford legal representation for myself, but legal aid guided me through the process every step of the way. My attorney was kind and patient with me and always believed in my fight. Coming from a relationship where domestic violence occurred, I never felt like I had to over explain myself. She remained sensitive to mine and my child's trauma and supportive of our recovery. Without legal aid I don't feel the outcome would have gone the way it did and I am grateful for their help."

- Legal Aid Client



ADMINISTRATIVE JUSTICE GRANTS

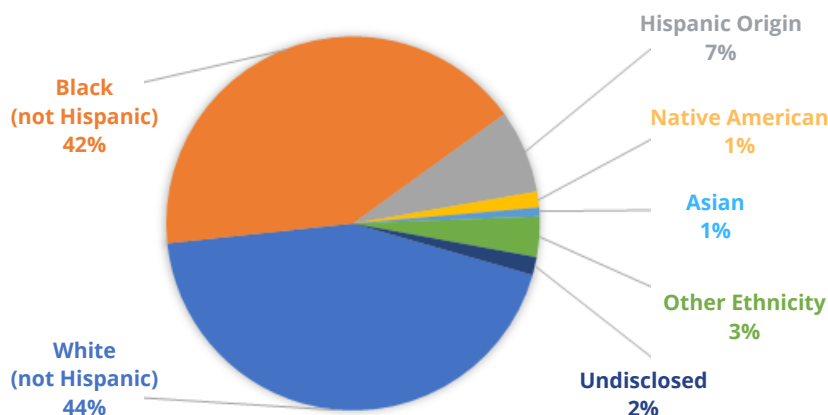
The Michigan State Bar Foundation also provides funding for innovative projects. In 2020, the Foundation issued project grants totaling almost \$110,000 to the following nonprofit organizations:

- Alliance for Housing
- Detroit Justice Center
- Justice for All Task Force
- Michigan Center for Civic Education
- Michigan Community Resources
- University of Detroit-Mercy Veteran's Law Clinic

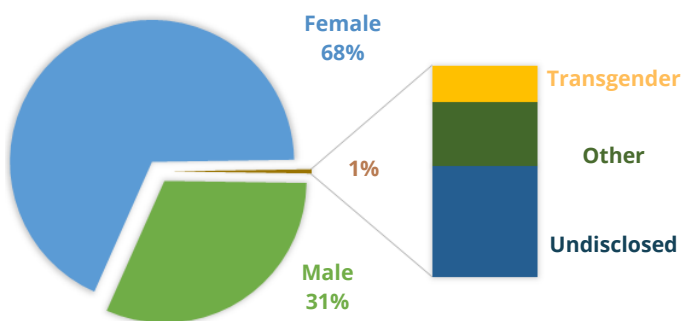
CIVIL LEGAL AID PROVIDES CRITICAL CONSTITUENT SERVICES

Michigan State Bar Foundation grantees help constituents who live in households with annual incomes at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty guidelines (\$32,750 for a family of four). Civil legal aid helps thousands of individuals each year, including veterans and military families, homeowners and renters, families with children, individuals who are ill or disabled, victims of domestic violence, and older adults.

ETHNICITY OF CLIENTS SERVED



GENDER OF CLIENTS SERVED



PROTECTING VETERANS' RIGHTS



A veteran with a disability lost his job due to health reasons and had fallen behind on his condominium association fees. He attended a mediation, without the assistance of a lawyer, and agreed to enter a repayment agreement and transferred the deed to his home

to the condo association. After making payments, he mistakenly sent in a check that was returned as non-sufficient funds. Though he quickly issued a new repayment, the condominium association filed an eviction case against him. He requested help and Legal Aid was able to help negotiate a settlement to restore ownership of his condo. The veteran was able to catch up on his past due fees and keep his home.

NUMBER OF CASES COMPLETED BY TYPE OF CASE

PROTECTING HOUSEHOLD INCOME FROM UNSCRUPULOUS CREDITORS THROUGH CASES RELATED TO CONSUMER ISSUES

3,800

REMOVING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT AND PROTECTING INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

3,021

ASSURING SAFETY FOR FAMILIES, PRIMARILY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS, IN DOMESTIC RELATIONS MATTERS

8,477

PROTECTING RIGHTS, INCLUDING OLDER ADULTS' ESTATE PLANNING

2,111

ENSURING HOUSING STABILITY AND PREVENTING LOSS OF HOME

18,683

HELPING INDIVIDUALS, PRIMARILY INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, SECURE FEDERAL BENEFITS AND OTHER INCOME ASSISTANCE

3,051

PROTECTING RIGHTS AND ASSURING FAIRNESS ON OTHER MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

1,108

NUMBER OF CASES COMPLETED BY LEVEL OF SERVICE

Counsel and advice
22,665

Brief assistance
7,297

Negotiated settlement pre-court filing
1,065

Negotiated settlement after case filed in court
3,896

Administrative and court decisions
4,741

Other and extended services
587

TOTAL CASES CLOSED
40,251

FUNDING SOURCES

- **Interest on Lawyers’ Trust Accounts (IOLTA)** – Attorneys are required to hold deposits made on behalf of clients in a trust account and when that amount is short-term or nominal, they pool it into one account. The interest generated by these accounts is remitted to the Foundation to help with grantmaking.
- **Filing Fees** – The state legislature assigned MSBF the responsibility of administering filing-fee funds for distribution to legal aid programs (MCLA 600.1485).
- **Access to Justice Campaign** – A collaborative centralized campaign, in partnership with the State Bar of Michigan, administered by the Foundation, to raise money from the legal community for 15 civil legal aid organizations throughout Michigan.
- **Other** – The Foundation also receives and manages other donations, such as a Fellows program, cy pres awards, and special projects in partnership with state agencies, such as the Eviction Diversion Program.

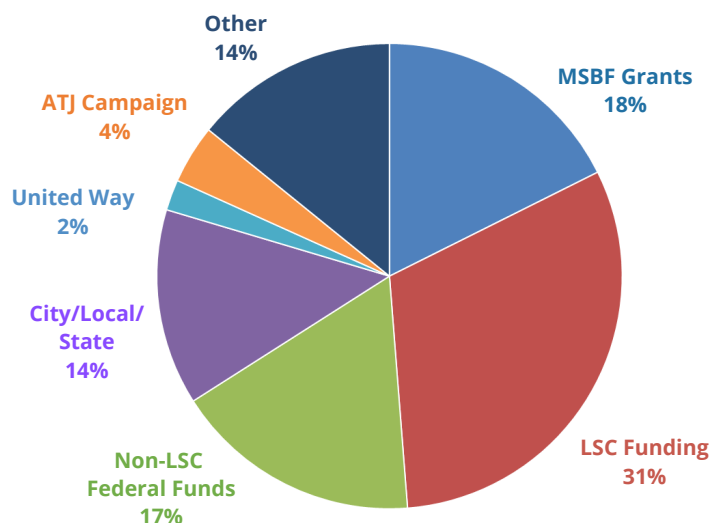


PROTECTING RIGHTS & ASSURING FAIRNESS

A woman came to Legal Aid after being denied unemployment benefits. She worked at a restaurant and lost her job in March of 2020, due to the pandemic. The legal aid attorney determined that although the denial of state unemployment benefits was proper, she was eligible for federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). With the help of legal aid, she was able to complete a successful PUA application.

LEGAL AID REVENUE IN MICHIGAN

MSBF ANNUAL GRANTEES LEVERAGE ADDITIONAL FUNDING AND ARE SUPPORTED BY A VARIETY OF SOURCES THAT SUPPORT ACCESS TO JUSTICE. LEGAL AID ORGANIZATIONS NEED ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO MEET THE NEED IN MICHIGAN.



FOR ASSISTANCE WITH CIVIL LEGAL MATTERS, PLEASE CONTACT:

Michigan Legal Help: michiganlegalhelp.org or in Spanish at michiganlegalhelp.org/es
Counsel and Advocacy Law Line: 888-783-8190

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