

**ACADIANA LEGAL
SERVICE CORPORATION**

ANNUAL REPORT

2020



The people of Louisiana were greatly challenged in 2020, none more so than those struggling to survive in the face of poverty. And those working to ease their pain were not excepted from those challenges.

The February news that people in the western United States were infected with Covid-19 seemed far away and unrelated to our work, but rapidly became a real issue in giving legal assistance to our clients. From the first reported Louisiana case in March through the peak of nearly 7,000 new cases per day at the end of the year, health and safety restrictions increasingly limited access to our services. Eventually, almost all of our staff were working remotely, we were only able to see clients on a limited basis, and even courts were closed.

In August, near the height of that challenge, Hurricane Laura struck southwest Louisiana, damaging or destroying many of the businesses employing our clients as well as their homes. The 22-story building housing our leased Lake Charles office space was not spared, being totally inaccessible for weeks, and remaining unsafe for occupancy to this date. Fortunately, we had just completed the July purchase of our own office on Ryan Street and we were soon able to occupy that building. Staff were just getting settled in there when in October, Hurricane Delta hit nearly the exact same area, wiping away much of the recovery work that had been going on since August.

These three extraordinary events caused immeasurable suffering for our client community. The legal fallout continues to this day and will continue for years to come. While we have seen many of the short-term effects of such disasters, such as contractor fraud, spiking disaster relief, unemployment and public benefit claims, and evictions from rental housing, others like home foreclosures still lie ahead.

But in the midst of this adversity, there were bright spots. Technology made it possible for us to continue largely uninterrupted service throughout our service area, in spite of disease and disaster. Our staff was able to continue to serve clients, from their homes, evacuation locations, and our offices. Our enforcement of new tenant protections saved tens of thousands from eviction when their livelihoods had been taken away from them. Our work with clients to secure help from FEMA, extended unemployment or food assistance enabled them to survive and begin their recoveries. New sources of funding allowed us to expand our staff to handle new disaster-related legal problems, as well as those which are always disproportionately faced by people with limited incomes.



We embarked on a multi-year strategic planning process (our first in decades), and secured grant funding so that over the next few years we can completely redesign how we engage private attorneys to deliver free services to more of those in need. Adjusting to the restrictions imposed due to COVID, we learned new ways of using technology to meet the legal needs of our clients. When in-person community outreach and education became impossible, we found new ways of delivering information through our website, social media, and distribution of printed brochures and flyers.

We join our Board of Directors in taking pride in knowing that when many other companies suspended operations, furloughed or discharged staff, or even closed permanently, the dedication of our staff allowed us to continue to serve our client communities in the face of severe challenges. Whether making an argument in a trial or hearing, showing compassion for the crying applicant on the phone, diligently preparing paperwork, scrambling to find computer equipment for remote workers, or working to assure that our bills were paid and offices were open, these dedicated workers remained steadfast. While dealing with their own displacement by storms, coping with school closures, adjusting to layoffs of family members, and suffering the loss of loved ones to COVID, they remained committed to daily serving the needs of others. Their work is in the best tradition of the legal profession to work with zeal in advocating on the client's behalf.

Through it all, the ALSC Board of Directors were valuable in offering encouragement and support to the staff as they navigated through tough times. With the Board's support we were able to celebrate many successes and continue to provide uninterrupted services to those most in need.

In 2020 we faced unprecedented and unanticipated challenges. It has left us a larger, stronger, and more capable weapon in our clients' ongoing struggle against inequity and injustice. Whatever 2021 has in store for us, bring it on, we're up for it.

Greg Landry

ALSC Executive Director



Susan K. Jones

Board President



Our Vision

We envision a state where low-income, disadvantaged and other eligible residents have access to services and resources to meet their basic needs and where they can vindicate their legal rights and be treated fairly throughout the civil justice system. We will expand our visibility and influence in the community by identifying partnerships and developing alliances to deliver services which will enhance the lives and effectively address the needs of low-income and disadvantaged people. The community will recognize us for our excellence, courage and compassion.

Our Mission

Acadiana Legal Service Corporation makes hope, dignity, and justice available primarily to low-income, disadvantaged, and other eligible residents through high quality and aggressive civil legal assistance and education.

Our Leadership

Acadiana Legal Service Corporation is guided by an 18 member Board of Directors, representing low-income clients, the 4th Judicial District Bar Association, the Alexandria Bar Association, the Avoyelles Parish Head Start, the Bossier Council on Aging, the Domestic Abuse Resistance Team (TEAM), the Families Helping Families, the Lafayette Bar Association, the Louisiana State Bar Association, the NAACP, the Region 4 Chapter, the Natchitoches Parish Bar Association, the St. Landry Bar Association, the St. Mary/Vermilion Community Action Agency, the Shreveport Bar Association and the Southwest Louisiana Bar Association.

2020 Board of Directors

Officers:

Susan K. Jones - President
George D. Ernest, III - Vice-President
Anna Simmons - Secretary
Julhelene Jackson - Treasurer

Board Members:

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WHO WE ARE

Acadiana Legal Service Corporation (ALSC) is a non-profit organization, funded primarily by the Legal Services Corporation (LSC), to provide free legal assistance in civil matters to economically disadvantaged persons in forty-two parishes throughout Louisiana.

ALSC began operations in 1978 servicing a six parish area and expanded to serve eight parishes in 1981. In 1992, by virtue of a merger with the former LSC-funded provider for three central Louisiana parishes, we expanded to an eleven parish service area. The year 2001 brought further expansion to sixteen parishes to serve southwest Louisiana and finally in 2017, with LSC funding, ALSC expanded to its current forty-two parishes to serve central and north Louisiana.

ALSC's main office is located in Lafayette with branch offices located in Alexandria, Franklin, Lake Charles, Monroe, Natchitoches and Shreveport. The organization utilizes a specialized approach to delivery of services, with separate law units handling specific substantive legal areas.

At any point in time, the caseload is approximately 6,000. Services include, but are not limited to: matters ranging from simple counsel and advice; brief services; representation in administrative proceedings; negotiation; and representation in one hundred and forty justice of the peace courts, thirty-four city courts, twenty-eight state district courts, three state appellate courts, the five U.S. District Courts for the Western District of Louisiana, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.





Alexandria Office

1808 Jackson Street
Alexandria, LA. 71301
(318) 443-7281

Franklin Office

1407 Barrow St., Suite H-1
Franklin, LA. 70538
(337) 346-5702

Lafayette Office

1020 Surrey Street
Lafayette, LA. 70501
(337) 237-4320

Lake Charles Office

2911 Ryan Street
Lake Charles, LA 70601
(337) 439-0377

Monroe Office

3016 Cameron Street
Monroe, LA. 71201
(318) 699-0889

Natchitoches Office

134 St. Denis Street
Natchitoches, LA. 71457
(318) 352-7220

Shreveport Office

720 Travis Street
Shreveport, LA. 71101
(318) 222-7186

ALSC provides legal aid services through three regional divisions:

- Acadiana Legal Service Corporation, (ALSC)
- Legal Aid of North Louisiana, (LANL)
- Legal Services of Central Louisiana (LSCL)

ALSC provides free civil legal services to indigent and other vulnerable individuals who cannot afford a lawyer and experience issues in the following priority areas:

**Preservation
of the Home**

- Landlord/Tenant Issues
- Fair Housing Rights
- Foreclosures

**Preservation
&
Maintenance
of the
Family**

- Divorce
- Custody
- Domestic Abuse

**Preservation
of Individual
Rights**

- Disability Rights
- Elder Rights
- Disaster Survivors

**Maintenance
of Economic
Stability**

- Employment Law
- Public Benefits
- Consumer Rights

**Maintenance
of Safety &
Health**

- Children in Need of Care
- Domestic Violence
- Medicaid, Medicare, Disability, etc.



Acadiana Legal Service Corporation provides access to legal help for people to protect their livelihoods, their health, and their families. The need for civil legal assistance has never been greater. Today, low-income Louisianans continue to struggle to keep their jobs, stay in their homes, and provide basic necessities for their families.

We work with clients to remove legal obstacles that trap families in cycles of poverty, violence and instability. Our practice areas help clients fulfill their basic needs, support their economic security, and ensure their safety and stability.

OUR PRACTICE AREAS:

Administrative Law – handles cases involving TANF, Social Security, SSI, disability, food stamps, unemployment compensation, veteran’s benefits, Medicaid, Medicare, etc.

Litigation Unit – handles cases involving bankruptcy/ debtor relief, collection, contracts, unfair/deceptive sales and practices, landlord/ tenant issues, discrimination, predatory lending, wage claims, wills, estates or successions, etc.

Family Law Unit – handles cases involving divorce, child support, intra-family adoptions, visitation, domestic violence, name change, etc.

Children in Need of Care Unit (CINC) – handles court appointed cases involving abuse and/or neglect of children.

Disaster Unit – handles cases for disaster survivors involving landlord-tenant problems, public benefits denials, contractor fraud, insurance disputes, etc.

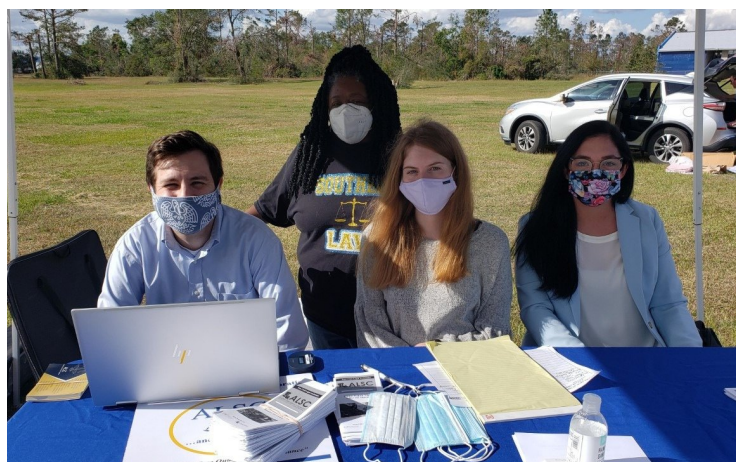
Pro Bono Engagement

ALSC works closely with private attorneys through partnerships with **Central Louisiana Pro Bono Project, Lafayette Volunteer Lawyer Program, Shreveport Bar Foundation Pro Bono Project and Southwest Louisiana Bar Foundation Pro Bono Project** to provide legal assistance to low-income and vulnerable individuals. The Pro Bono benefits in 2020 include:

310 Cases
1,395 Hours of Service
\$104,625 in Legal Services Provided

Community Education

Providing legal education and information through community events is vital to keeping our clients and communities informed of their rights, as well as the legal aid that is available to them. Thirty of the forty-two parishes we serve are rural and these educational events are important to reaching community members. In "normal" years, we conduct regularly scheduled Know Your Rights workshops and outreach information sessions throughout our service area which are hosted by local community centers, libraries, senior centers and others.

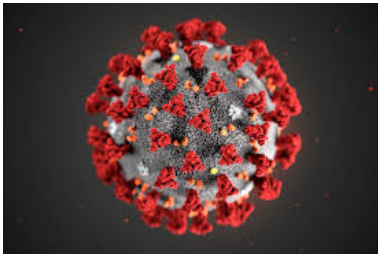


In 2020 we were faced with multiple challenges which prevented us from using these usual means of outreach. First COVID-19 restrictions were imposed, then followed a series of devastating hurricanes. Thousands of the those most in need of our services were no longer in their local communities but were sheltered elsewhere to escape the effects of the storms.

To replace in-person presentations, we developed and distributed new, short flyers on COVID and disaster related legal issues and solutions to those issues. We greatly increased the frequency and volume of our website and social media postings. New links and downloadable materials dealing with eviction moratoriums, disaster public benefits and other relevant legal topics were developed. These were featured prominently in new sections at the top of our website home page.



Through these efforts we were able to reach over **6,400** individuals.



On March 22, 2020 Governor Edwards issued Proclamation 33 JBE 2020, which imposed a stay-at-home order restricting the ability of our staff to work in our offices. To comply, all offices were forced to close to protect our staff and clients from further spreading of the COVID-19 virus.

When it became apparent that the COVID-19 crisis would eventually close our offices, through a Telework Capacity Building Grant from Legal Services Corporation, we began to take necessary steps to ensure 100% of our staff in all offices were equipped with telework capacity to continue to provide services to those most in need.

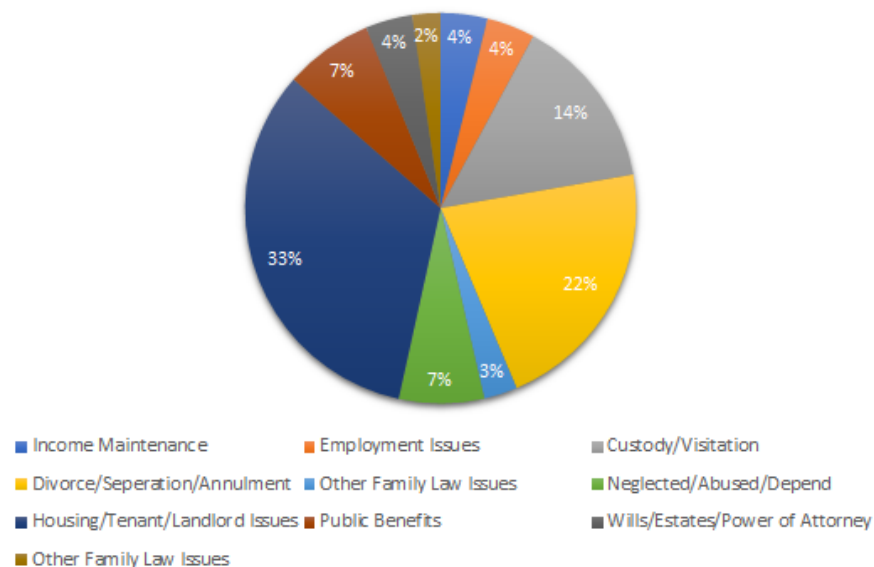
Work for our existing clients continued more or less as usual after we were forced to close our offices. But the phones continued to ring and ring with increasing volume from the rising tide of people desperate for legal help with new situations they were encountering.

The Governor's order closed many businesses employing low-income people eligible for our services. Thousands of others faced layoffs and for the first time in their lives became unemployed and in need of legal help they could not afford. His order prevented evictions but did not stop some landlords from intimidating newly impoverished tenants, causing them to panic when receiving threatening notices demanding that rent be paid on time and in full.

In 2020 we assisted **724** individuals with COVID-19 related issues, with 33% of the cases relating to housing issues and divorce, separation or annulment issues following at 22%. We also experienced a growth in cases relating to child custody and visitation.

With generous support from **Legal Services Corporation, Hancock Whitney Bank** and **Humana Medicaid COVID-19 Relief Funds**, we were able to increase services for those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

2020 COVID RELATED CASES





In the early pre-dawn hours of Thursday, August 27, 2020, Hurricane Laura made landfall in Southwest Louisiana as a Category 4 storm with storm surges of over 10' in places and winds up to 140 mph.

Twenty-one parishes of our 42-parish service area were declared federal disaster areas from this storm. Most of this area was without electrical power for weeks. Our Lake Charles offices located in the Capital One high-rise office building were damaged and inaccessible.

Six weeks later Hurricane Delta delivered yet another assault of damage on Lake Lake Charles bringing significantly more flooding. Hundreds of homes already battered by Hurricane Laura took on water.

The damage from Hurricanes Laura and Delta exacerbated existing underlying issues including high poverty rates and limited available and affordable housing. The impact on the communities will be long lasting and it was imperative that ALSC met the needs of those struggling to survive the devastation. Providing disaster recovery legal advice and/or education on consumer, housing, public benefits and other areas is instrumental to low-income and vulnerable people recovering.

Although Calcasieu Parish was hardest hit, the damages from the hurricanes reached far into other parishes and communities, leaving many individuals and families in dire need of disaster recovery resources and legal services.

To reach those most in need, we implemented a Disaster Recovery Resource page on our website where users could obtain legal direction and valuable information from short flyers on disaster recovery. We also participated in community resource events and created short video presentations on high-demand topics on our social media platforms and website which allowed users or website visitors to watch on demand.

Thanks to the support of **AARP**, we were able to expand legal services to older adults, 50 years and older, that were affected by Hurricane Laura and lived in one of the 21 parishes declared eligible for FEMA disaster assistance.





6,453

CASES OPENED



6,244

CASES CLOSED



6,459

PEOPLE RECEIVED
LEGAL INFORMATION
THROUGH COMMUNITY
EDUCATION



738

PEOPLE REFERRED TO
OTHER PROVIDERS AND
SERVICES



3,300

WOMEN CLIENTS



1,123

MEN CLIENTS



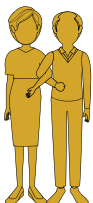
5,304

JUVENILE CLIENTS



182

VETERAN CLIENTS



794

CLIENTS 60+ YEARS
OLD



11,469

INDIVIDUALS ASSISTED



23,308

UNIQUE VISITORS TO
ALSC WEBSITE



111,995

PEOPLE REACHED
THROUGH ALL SOCIAL
MEDIA PLATFORMS



675,000

LOUISIANIANS ELIGIBLE FOR
ALSC LEGAL ASSISTANCE



\$1.5 Million

DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ALSC'S
WORK FOR OUR CLIENTS

For every \$1 invested in civil legal aid in Louisiana, there is a
\$9.13 Social Return on Investment (SROI)

**Names have been altered to protect the identity and confidentiality of our clients.*

HELPING DOMESTIC ABUSE SURVIVORS OVERCOME



Mary and her daughter were living with an abusive husband and father. As the abuser began to target her daughter, Mary realized it was time to get out. Leaving in the middle of the night they ran to gain help, eventually moving into a homeless shelter.

With the help of an ALSC attorney, Mary was granted a divorce and awarded the use of her family home, vehicle and sole-custody and child support.

Today, Mary attends college with the hope to become a lawyer.



PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

Theresa, a single mother of three small children, faced homelessness having received a Notice to Vacate from her landlord.

Working with her ALSC attorney, the eviction was dismissed by a judge on the grounds that the notice to vacate was illegal as the federal CARES Act barred evictions for non-payment.

Theresa has been able to pay her landlord and continues to live in their home without fear of eviction and homelessness.



BRINGING LIGHT TO DARKNESS

Steve and his son lived in their home without electricity for nearly a year. After losing his job due to the COVID pandemic, Steve struggled to make ends meet and had to make difficult decisions to support his son. Falling behind on his electrical bill, his electricity was shut off, even after making several attempts to work out a payment plan with the company.

With the help of his ALSC attorney, they were able to have his electricity reconnected and worked out a payment plan and bring back light to their dark world.



REUNITING FAMILIES

Ten-year-old Carrie's case was placed with our Child in Need of Care (CINC) Unit after she was removed from her mother's care by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), due to abuse from both her mother and her mother's boyfriend.

Her ALSC CINC attorney discovered that Carrie had been living with her father in Texas and was taken to Louisiana by her mother for a visit and a family reunion and was never returned to her father. Carrie informed her attorney that she had been kept from her father against her will, there was never a family reunion and she wanted to return to live with her father. In collaboration with the DCFS and Carrie's attorney her father was located. Working with Texas officials, a home study was conducted to determine possible placement with the father. The father's home was cleared and he was granted full custody.

Carrie was returned to her father and is now enrolled in school and doing well.

ALSC is grateful for the many local and national government entities, agencies and grantors who have embraced our mission by supporting our work. On behalf of all we serve, we **THANK** our funding partners!

AARP
AmazonSmile
Beauregard Council on Aging
Bienville Council on Aging
Bossier Council on Aging
CENLA Area Agency on Aging
Caddo Council on Aging
Caddo Parish Commission
Cajun Area Agency on Aging
Calcasieu Council on Aging
Caldwell Council on Aging
Cameron Council on Aging
Claiborne Council on Aging
Community Foundation of North Louisiana
DeSoto Council on Aging
Hancock Whitney Bank

Humana Healthy Horizons in Louisiana
Jefferson Davis Council on Aging
Legal Services Corporation
Lincoln Parish Council on Aging
Louisiana Bar Foundation
Loyola University
Morehouse Parish Council on Aging
Natchitoches Council on Aging
Ouachita Council on Aging
Red River Council on Aging
Sabine Parish Council on Aging
State of Louisiana Appropriation Funds
Vernon Council on Aging
Webster Council on Aging
West Carroll Council on Aging



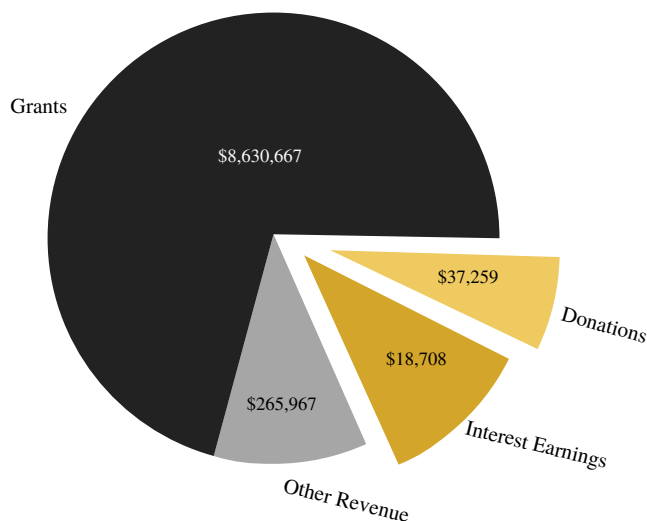
Our **LEAGUE OF JUSTICE** members help ALSC increase access to justice for thousands of vulnerable people in Louisiana. 19% of residents live in poverty and cannot afford basic needs. Everyday these hardworking families face difficult problems and unlike criminal court, civil court litigants do not have the right to a court appointed attorney. By becoming a League of Justice member, they commit to fighting for equal justice for all through their support. On behalf of all we serve, we **THANK** our League of Justice members!

Anonymous Donors - 24
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 Tiffany Augustine
 Lorraine Baer
 In memory of John “Mal” Banks
 Law Offices of Allan Berger & Associates
 Vandana Chaturvedi
 Cathy Davis
 Margaret Derise
 Jessica Elliott
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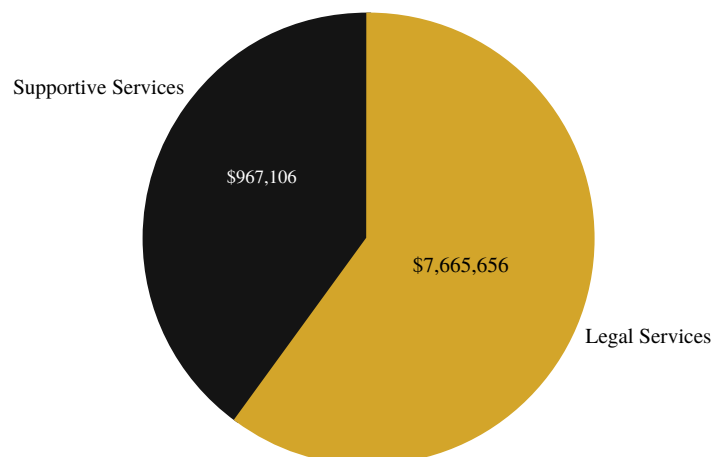
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FINANCIAL SUMMARY

2020 TOTAL REVENUE



2020 TOTAL EXPENSES



visit us at www.la-law.org



Alexandria Office

1808 Jackson Street
Alexandria, LA. 71301
(318) 443-7281

Franklin Office

1407 Barrow St., Suite H-1
Franklin, LA. 70538
(337) 346-5702

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