



ACADIANA LEGAL SERVICE CORPORATION

EQUAL JUSTICE FOR ALL

A New Trajectory

Transformation and Beyond



2023
ANNUAL REPORT

MESSAGE TO OUR Friends and Supporters,

In 2023, our focus was on reshaping our processes to create a better future for our client community. The journey began in 2022 with the transformation of our intake system, aimed at expanding access to legal services. This year, we turned inward, working to establish consistent, standardized processes that realign our organization for sustainable growth.

We also launched our 2023-2028 Strategic Plan, setting ambitious goals across all areas to foster significant growth. A key element of the plan was enhancing outreach and community engagement, which led to a marked increase in both the number of events we hosted and attended—a development we fully embraced. While our legal services saw only minor restructuring, substantial improvements were made throughout the year.

These changes are all designed to make civil legal aid more accessible, efficient, and user-friendly. As we adjust our course, we are confident in the positive impact that greater structure and order will bring. We remain committed to advancing our mission of delivering exceptional civil legal services to all.



Susan K. Jones,
Board President



Sachida R. Raman,
Executive Director



Tamiko Chatman,
Deputy Director

MISSION

We provide exceptional civil legal services by advocating for fairness, protection and justice for our disadvantaged client community.

VISION

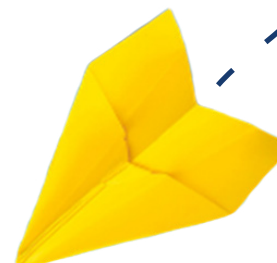
Our disadvantaged client community has easy and timely access to exceptional civil legal assistance.

A THANK YOU TO Our Board Members

Thank you to our board members for believing in our mission and supporting our vision of bringing equal justice to all marginalized Louisiana residents.

Officers:

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



Members:

Cynthia Cobb	Ann Poole	Melody Trout
Stacy Gulce	Tamara Battles	Mary Winchell
Sylvia Hill	Santricia Pope	Lindsay Meador Young
Karen C. McLellan	Theresa Richard	James E. Calhoun
Brannon Mernard	Chantell M. Smith	

Executive Staff Members:

Sachida R. Raman, Executive Director
Tamiko Chatman, Deputy Director
Thomas H. Fields, Litigation Director
Sandra Potier, Chief Financial Officer

CORE VALUES

Respect

We acknowledge and honor all individuals' inherent value, worth, dignity while embracing diversity, different perspectives, and varying experiences without prejudice or discrimination.

Compassion

We foster a culture of caring, empathy, and support while nurturing a genuine desire to serve and make a positive impact in the lives of others.

Innovation

We encourage and nurture creativity, fostering an environment where new ideas are generated, explored, and valued.

Responsible

We are accountable as stewards of resources, client services, or organizational assets in order to minimize waste.

Integrity

We are trustworthy, dependable, and honorable with actions driven by a genuine desire to do what is right, even in challenging circumstances.

A THANK YOU TO Our Supporters

Thank you to our following funders and community supporters for your generosity that supported our mission of equal justice for all.

K&J Supply LLC
Mutual of America
Department of Housing and Urban Development
AARP (American Association of Retired Persons)
Legal Services Corporation
Louisiana Bar Foundation
Community Foundation of North LA
Caddo Parish Commission
Louisiana Housing Commission
LA Health Care Connections
Hunt, Guillot and Associates
Humana Healthy Horizons
State of Louisiana, Office of Community Development
Louisiana Appleseed
Loyola University - Gillis Long Summer Award
Tulane Law School (Lutz Fellowship)

Louisiana Governor's
Office of Elderly Affairs
Beauregard Parish COA
Bienville Parish COA
Bossier Parish COA
Caddo Parish COA
Calcasieu Parish COA
Caldwell Parish COA
Cajun AAA
Cameron Parish COA
CENLA AAA
Claiborne Parish COA
DeSoto Parish COA
Jeff Davis Parish COA
Lincoln Parish COA
Morehouse Parish COA
Natchitoches Parish COA
Ouachita Parish COA
Red River Parish COA
Sabine Parish COA
Vernon Parish COA
Webster Parish COA
West Carroll Parish COA

Humana Healthy Horizons in Louisiana was our first medical legal partnership. We are grateful for their generous support.

With their help, we connected individuals with medical needs to the legal resources to overcome civil legal obstacles.



THANK YOU

Volunteers matter to us.

Thank you to our following volunteers who walked alongside us by accepting pro bono case work, and hosting outreach and legal clinics to support our mission of providing equal justice for all.

Pamela Hall
Dyan Schnaars
Carolyn Deal
Jeremy Babes
Winnifred Sanders

*Serving 42 parishes in north,
central and southwest Louisiana!*

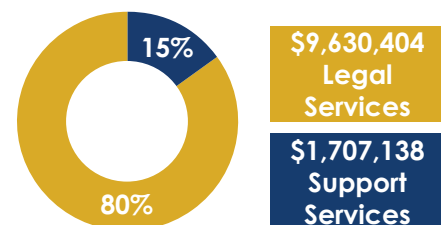
Financial Summary

Acadiana Legal Service Corporation's statement of activities for twelve months ending December 31, 2023

REVENUE

Grant Revenue	\$11,901,819
Interest Earnings	\$36,224
Donations	\$9,268
Other Revenues	\$154,330

EXPENSES



In 2022, for every \$1 invested in Louisiana Legal Aid, the citizens of Louisiana received \$17.99 of immediate and long-term benefits.

EIS Full Report 2022, Louisiana State Bar, raisingthebar.org

2023 By The Numbers

PERSONS SERVED

Total Persons Served

10,451

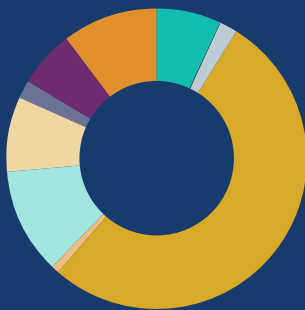
Children Served

4,981

Cases Closed

4,098

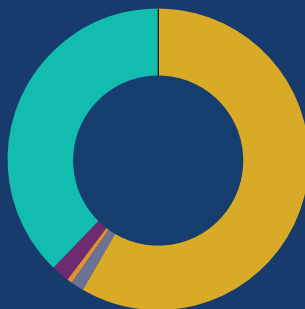
AREAS OF PRACTICE



- 52.5% Family
- 11.4% Housing
- 10.2% Miscellaneous
- 8.3% Income Maintenance
- 7% Consumer/Finance
- 6.1% Juvenile
- 1.9% Employment
- 1.7% Individual Rights
- 0.1% Education
- 0.7% Health

LSC "Our Grantees" Louisiana Acadiana Legal Service Corporation Program Profile Data , 2023

POPULATION SERVED



- 58% Black
- 37% White
- 6.1% Native American
- 1.8% Other
- 1.2% Hispanic
- .26% Asian/Pacific Islander

Race/Ethnicity, 2023 ASLC

Women 75%

Men 24%

Other .38%

Gender Identified, 2023 ASLC

SPECIAL POPULATION SERVED

Were age 60+

836

Veteran Households

152

Involved Domestic Violence

410

TOTAL FINANCIAL IMPACT

\$43,026,779.30

INNOVATION

Technology launches ALSC forward, increasing accessibility for client community.

Last year was a pivotal moment for our ALSC team. We transformed our application intake process in late 2022, leading to the implementation of a new case management system, LegalServer in August 2023. Our IT Department was instrumental in the successful integration of these innovations.

Under the leadership of Paul Senegal, IT Manager, the information technology department fulfilled its goal of ensuring that ALSC has reliable and secure systems that support ALSC's mission to provide exceptional legal service to our clients.

FILE MANAGEMENT AND THE CLOUD

Our firm's previous case management system, which had been used for over 20 years, was outdated. Change management plays a vital role in modernizing our firm. IT focused on two areas of improvement: user experience and upgrading SharePoint, our digital file system.

Since the new case management system integrated with SharePoint, change was obligatory. We used a hybrid infrastructure years, and the move to fully utilize SharePoint had allowed our firm to become more agile. This allows our attorneys, paralegals, and outreach coordinators to be in the field and away from the office with real-time access to LegalServer and files.

STREAMLINED SOLUTIONS



With the launch of the new case management system, we also made it easier for incoming applicants to navigate the eligibility process over the telephone. We saw an immediate increase in phone calls after converting to one Toll-Free number, creating a comprehensive phone tree option and allowing automatic callbacks while the caller waits in line. When you call ALSC, your call will be answered.

"Our departmental vision is to use technology to expand access to justice for low-income communities in Louisiana. We want to enhance our efficiency, effectiveness and reach."

- Paul Senegal, IT Manager

ALWAYS INNOVATING

"We wanted to be very responsive to staff questions and concerns," says Paul. Since the system was new, staff members needed time to adjust to the transition from an old case management platform.

In response to this need, IT created a recurring live stream called **IT OFFICE HOURS**. This forum is available to all staff needing technical support and wanting to share suggestions for improvements to LegalServer.

CAN WE AUTOMATE THIS?

A glimpse into the future; our IT Department is all about automation! "Every chance we get, we will find ways to automate a process. We concentrate on client experiences like client portals and other self-help technologies," says Paul. ALSC's flight into the future is one of growth and innovation.



INTEGRITY

Legal protocol and management shifts focus to standardization and systemic advocacy.

Acadiana Legal Service Corporation (ALSC) strives to constantly improve our services to better assist our clients in the community.

An important component of delivering these services includes ensuring the attorneys and staff in our substantive law Units possess the requisite knowledge, skills and experience needed to perform in the legal profession.

STANDARDIZING LEGAL WORK

To this effect, the ALSC management team has implemented program-wide legal work management and supervision protocols to ensure consistent supervisory standards and professional development across all of our law units, such as:

1. Providing regular legal training to all staff utilizing our learning management system to improve their knowledge and experience related to the legal matters and issues for which ALSC offers services. This consists of in-person, written and audio-visual training courses and materials used during new hire onboarding and as annual refresher training for current attorneys and staff members.
2. Our attorneys and staff members are encouraged and required to join and participate in our state's task force and advocacy groups that also serve our client base and to attend professional development training programs to further enhance their abilities to deliver services to our clients.
3. Conducting annual staff assessment surveys to monitor and gauge knowledge levels and professional skills, as well as compliance with

federal, state and LSBA regulations governing our program.

4. Updates to ALSC's Litigation and Advocacy manual. This is used as a guidance tool for our unit managing attorneys while training our new attorneys on matters such as ALSC policy/procedure, conducting client interviews, case management, introduction to courtroom environment and the procedural rules to be followed in appearances before the court.

5. Conducting annual review of the Case acceptance guidelines for each of ALSC's substantive law units, making sure these comply with LSC regulations and reflect the services we offer

6. The recent addition of our new Intake Unit and reconfiguration of our client application intake system will allow the attorneys in our law units to focus more on extended representation matters and assist our clients with more complex litigation proceedings.

FOCUS ON SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY

ALSC also focuses on "systemic advocacy," seeking opportunities to identify legal issues and matters that adversely impact large numbers of our client community. These might include newly enacted laws and regulations, court rulings, or corporate policies and business practices that cause wide spread harm.

We hope you'll stay in touch for future updates on our continuing efforts for professional development for our staff members. Please don't hesitate to direct those needing legal assistance to reach out to us.

Expungements enter the arena for ALSC.

In 2023, the Pro Bono Unit began accepting expungement cases across our 42-parish service area. Expungements are particularly meaningful because of the immense impact it can have on the communities across our service area. Expungement is a key component in breaking the cycle of recidivism and obtaining access to social and economic opportunities for thousands of Louisiana residents seeing the collateral consequences of having a criminal record.

BENEFITS OF EXPUNGEMENTS

- ✓ Better employment opportunities
- ✓ Better educational opportunities
- ✓ Better housing options
- ✓ Removal of the stigma of having a criminal record
- ✓ Lower insurance premiums
- ✓ Restored civil rights
- ✓ Reduced recidivism

Expungements can provide a sense of closure and relief, allowing individuals to move forward with their lives. The Pro Bono Unit continues to seek ways to expand thier expungement services to our eligible client community.



COMPASSION

ALSC collaborates with key partners to sustain a family legacy.



Ms. Carmelita Payte* is a 66-year-old divorced woman who requires oxygen to supplement her natural breathing and is unable to work. Ms. Payte, along with her two sisters, needed legal assistance to probate their mother's will to obtain RESTORE LA grant funds that would enable them to repair their family home, which was damaged by Hurricanes Laura and Delta. The will was drafted in Louisiana, and the client's mother had her entire estate in the state. Since her sisters resided out of state, our ALSC attorneys coordinated with

Ms. Payte and her sisters to sign the documents necessary to probate the will in a Louisiana court. The will was deemed valid and probated successfully, and Ms. Payte and her sisters received the repairs funds in a timely manner. Moreover, the title to the property is now cleared for future generations, ensuring that the sisters have full autonomy over the home, in accordance with their mother's will.

**Client has granted permission to use name and image.*

ALSC makes home restoration a reality.

John needed to repair his storm-damaged home but faced a legal roadblock with his parents' estate. To qualify for the RESTORE LA program, John had to prove ownership of his property. John's parents passed away 28 years prior, and a succession had never been opened on their estate. ALSC worked closely with John, guiding him through the process and as a result was able to apply for RESTORE LA and finally begin restoring his storm-damaged home.

**Name has been changed to protect the identity of client.*



Kay receives increased benefits.

Having an advocate can help you discover social security benefits you may qualify for. *Kay was originally awarded \$583 in monthly SSA benefits instead of the full amount of \$841 in 2020 because she was living in the household of another individual. Our senior paralegal advocate assisted Kay proving to the SSA that our client was paying her “fair share” of household expenses. This fact made Kay eligible for almost \$12,000 in past due benefits. As a result, Kay’s monthly Social Security benefits increase to the full amount of \$841!

**Name has been changed to protect the identity of client.*



Jeri’s given the gift of legitimacy.

*Jeri was born at a home in rural St. Martin Parish, but her birth was not registered with the state of Louisiana, which was not uncommon at that time. Interestingly, Jeri was able to obtain a social security card, driver’s license, and marriage license and attend school despite not having received a birth certificate. Jeri obtained a copy of her baptismal certificate from the Catholic church.

YEARS OF FRUSTRATION

After years of trying to obtain her birth certificate, Jeri sought help from ALSC in November 2019 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our ALSC attorney submitted the application and supporting documents on Jeri’s behalf numerous times. To keep the client’s file active, Jeri’s application with Louisiana Vital Records had to be “revived” every six months with the Louisiana Department of Health, State Registrar, and Vital Records.

For over three years, we were told that we needed specific documentation from the Social Security Administration, which we could not get despite repeated tries. ALSC contacted Vital Records over 20 times during the years it took us to get Ms. Hawkins’ birth certificate.

FINALLY

ALSC informed Vital Records of our intent to file a petition. In December of 2023, Vital Records sent the final document, which we promptly notarized and returned to Vital Records. Jeri received her birth certificate in the mail just in time for Christmas. After a long three-year battle, ALSC was able to help Jeri obtain her birth certificate. Thanks to the work of our attorney, Jeri received a gift of legitimacy.

**Name has been changed to protect the identity of client.*

Dedication and persistence is key to survival.

For Heather, a judgment of divorce, custody of her children, and permanent protection from abuse was elusive for almost three years. In January 2022, Heather sought a divorce and custody of her three minor children but was not successful because of manipulation by her children's father (James). He had fled to another state with the children, and Heather had to go through the ordeal of getting her children back to Louisiana.

FINDING SAFETY FROM DOMESTIC ABUSE

Due to a domestic abuse incident that occurred before applying with ALSC, Heather was able to obtain a criminal protective order with bail restriction. She also obtained a civil protective order that granted her temporary custody of her children. James did not pay child support despite the court order. He was jailed for domestic abuse, child endangerment, simple battery & unauthorized entry. Eventually, he was able to bond out and flee the state.

The safety of her and her children was a genuine concern. However, no witnesses would agree to testify on her behalf. Although they empathized with her, Heather's family and James' family also feared James and did not want to be seen in court with her. Her biggest fear was that without a judgment of custody, he would take the children out of state again, and she would have no way of locating them.

**Client has granted permission to use name and image.*

FIGHTING THE UPHILL BATTLE

In 2023, Our ALSC attorney petitioned the court for divorce, custody, and a permanent protective order under the Post Separation Family Violence Relief Act (PSFVRA). James was served under the long-arm statute. A year and a half after ALSC accepted this case, Heather was finally granted a judgment of divorce based on procedure alone. But custody and protection remained elusive. James would not attend the hearings because of warrants for his arrest. His attorney requested and was granted four continuances at the last minute. Through it all, Heather remained fearful for herself and her children.

FREEDOM AND PROTECTION

At the fifth court hearing, his attorney stated that James would be in court at 10:00 a.m. At 10:00 a.m., he did not appear. The judge proceeded with the hearing and rendered a judgment of sole custody to Heather, with no visitation to James. The judge also granted a permanent protective order from abuse, an additional security measure for our client. Lastly, the judge ordered James to pay all costs. Heather could finally enjoy a sense of freedom and protection.



RESPONSIBILITY

ALSC implements 2023-2028 Strategic Plan to clearly align its goals for the future.

ALSC is proud to report significant progress on our 2023-2028 Strategic Plan, which continues to shape the organization's vision for providing easy and timely access to exception civil assistance to our disadvantaged client communities. In the first year, we successfully implemented key initiatives aimed at enhancing service delivery, expanding outreach, and fostering organizational sustainability.

FOCUSED ON OUTREACH

We have focused on increasing access to justice in underserved communities by leveraging our Justice Buses and expanding partnerships with community-based organizations. The plan's emphasis on technology-driven solutions has allowed us to streamline intake processes, offer 24/7 access via an online application process, improve client communication, and

maintain a high standard of exceptional legal service through virtual platforms.



"Our aim for the future was intentionally designed to outline a clear path forward that aligns our values, ensuring our client community receives direct access to exceptional civil legal assistance."

- Margaret Derise, Project Manager

COMMITTED TO STAFF

Our commitment to staff development has led to expanded training opportunities, ensuring our team is well-equipped to address emerging industry challenges. Despite challenges, we continue to refine our internal processes and optimize resource allocation, to drive meaningful impact and align with our long-term goals.

PROJECTING INTO THE FUTURE

We remain dedicated to achieving the strategic objectives laid out in the plan and look forward to continued progress in the coming years as we strive to serve Louisiana's most vulnerable populations.

Standing from left to right: Sachida Raman, Gregory Hopkins, Nina Coleman, Sandra Potier, Margaret Derise, Thomas Fields, Paul Senegal, Franchesca Hamilton Acker, Walter McClatchy, and LaToya Peters
Sitting from left to right: Hailey Barnett, Vandana Chaturvedi, Jane Grainer, Taylor Robinson, Tamiko Chatman



Making the inside support the outside.

During 2023, the Administration Department (Department) began laying the groundwork to advance ALSC's key focus areas of an integrated and aligned organization, client services, engagement and outreach, committed and unified team, and financial health and stability, all aimed at contributing to exceptional legal service and positively impacting our client communities.

REALIGNMENT

The Department played a pivotal role in advancing the formation of an integrated and aligned organization in 2023. Our proposal for realigning ALSC's organizational structure and highlighting available career paths was approved by the board of directors in December 2023. We updated job descriptions, paved the way for the new structure that would foster highly effective business operations through collaborative leadership the following year.

ENHANCED CLIENT SERVICES

To improve client services, the Department started on its trajectory to enhance its services to exceed our clients'

expectations. In 2023, the Department began the enhancement of our front desk services with regular meetings and ongoing training of our receptionists and administrative assistants. We also made quick, accurate, and reliable interpretation and translation services available to all limited English-speaking applicants and clients through our partnership with Language-Line.

ADVANCED RECRUITING EFFORTS

To improve engagement and outreach, the Department strategized ways to recruit and hire talented and diverse staff and increase outreach to our client community. In 2023, we expanded our recruitment efforts to target law schools, colleges, bar associations, and other businesses. We participated in job fairs in Lake Charles and Lafayette and conducted on-campus interviews in Louisiana, Texas, and Mississippi. ALSC hosted two interns from Southern University Law Center and three from Loyola Law School during the summer of 2023.

The Department also endeavored to increase ALSC's outreach and educational efforts in our service area, particularly in our underserved communities, by keeping units informed of



outreach opportunities and encouraging their participation. The Department assisted the substantive units with producing and printing outreach materials. In 2023, ALSC staff conducted 50 outreach events. To build a committed and unified team, the Department was committed to making ALSC a great workplace.

The Department encouraged staff morale-boosting activities and made strides in collaborating across units and departments. During 2023, the Department planned regular quarterly meetings to improve organizational communication and collaboration. Two in-person and two virtual meetings were held in 2023. Also, HR released several newsletters, and the communications manager posted announcements on Yammer to keep staff informed. The Department encouraged Thanksgiving potlucks to be held at all locations and hosted a holiday social at our 4th quarter meeting in Alexandria. Additionally, the Department established plans and started implementing plans to enhance our workspace to create a more welcoming and productive environment for the ALSC team.

A TOUCH OF COMFORT

Our facilities' beautification and maintenance projects were a core part of our aim to improve client services and build a committed and unified team in 2023; we completed and started many projects. We completed the purchase of and put into use our disaster vehicle, cargo van, and second disaster RV. A large parking cage was also built at the Lafayette offices to house these vehicles. Our Monroe and Alexandria offices were outfitted with generators so that we could continue to serve clients despite power outages.

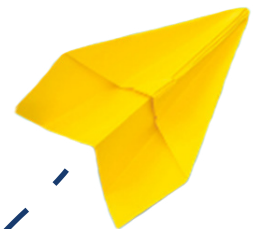
We replaced AC units at our Lafayette and Lake Charles locations. We constructed three additional office spaces in Lafayette to house our growing staff. The bathrooms and breakroom in our Lafayette office were renovated. Restoration

of the main floor of our Natchitoches office began after a running toilet flooded the building. New gutters were installed in Lake Charles. Defibrillator and CPR training was held for all our staff. Internal lights were updated to LED lights at all locations.

Doorbells were installed at all offices. New water fountains were installed at the Lafayette office. To increase safety, flood lights were installed around our Lafayette and Lake Charles offices, and camera systems were installed at our Alexandria, Lake Charles, Shreveport, and Monroe offices. Also, for safety reasons, we removed and trimmed trees at our Lake Charles and Lafayette locations, installed new fencing at our Alexandria and Lake Charles locations, and repaired fencing in Lafayette. The facilities help desk was rolled out.

UPDATES INSIDE OUT

Concerning the financial health and stability of ALSC, the Department contributed to the development of a fair, responsible, and transparent sustainable financial model. The Department worked to provide the staff with necessary supplies and equipment and maintain and improve our physical assets sustainably and cost-effectively. The Department was pivotal in updating and implementing policies, procedures, and forms and leveraging technology to streamline operations.



Brand Awareness and community education soars past local office locations.



We recognized that ALSC needed to shift our focus not only internally but also in our community education and engagement. To improve legal education and accessibility in underserved areas of Louisiana, we shifted our focus to extend outreach beyond our main office locations, particularly targeting smaller communities and parishes. A key strategy involved enhancing brand recognition and updating our image in northern regions, achieved through modernizing signage at our Shreveport, Monroe, and Alexandria offices with the updated logo and a unified name. Additionally, we implemented a comprehensive campaign using email, social media, and direct mail to communicate our unified identity to relevant organizations. Collaborating with Access to Justice, we participated in ribbon-cutting ceremonies at legal kiosk locations in Catahoula Parish and Beauregard Parish, thereby strengthening our disaster unit outreach initiatives in Beauregard and Vernon Parish. To streamline communication, we established a single toll-free number branded as “Ask ALSC,” promoting it through banners, signage and social media channels to raise awareness about our expertise in providing legal education services within the community. Our website, www.la-law.org, underwent a redesign, prioritizing service clarity and featuring a robust content marketing hub with current legal information, guidance on accessing pro bono programs, and application procedures.

In 2023, our primary focus revolved around promoting legal services and education for both the Disaster Unit and Housing Units. Our efforts were particularly concentrated on areas within Louisiana facing legal deserts. We actively engaged with a variety of organizations including Council on Aging, Community Action Agencies, home coalitions, local community colleges, churches and parish libraries. To enhance accessibility, we distributed brochures and flyers throughout the northern and westernmost parishes. Furthermore, in 2023, we fostered additional partnerships and collaborations with non-profit organizations sharing our mission and objectives.

OUTREACH EFFORTS By The Numbers

Community
Outreach Events

30

Persons Served
During Outreach

14,137

Online Community
Engagement

45,823



Join our League of Justice

Acadiana Legal Service Corporation (ALSC) works to provide free legal services to our marginalized client community in civil matters for over 65% of the total parishes in Louisiana. Our mission is to provide exceptional civil legal services by advocating for fairness, protection, and justice and our vision for the State, is for these services to be easy and timely accessible.

DONATE



Local organizations and individuals like you make ALSC's work possible. Contribute to the fight for justice by making a tax-deductible gift today.

VOLUNTEER



ALSC's volunteers help us to expand our services and help our clients receive the justice they deserve. Learn more about how to volunteer today.

Get Connected!



LSC America's Partner
for Equal Justice
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LOUISIANA BAR
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FUNDING JUSTICE FOR ALL



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[acadianalegalservice](https://www.instagram.com/acadianalegalservice)

Acadiana Legal Service Corporation offers legal services to low-income and elderly individuals through a streamlined intake process and specialized law units to deliver high-quality legal representation.