



Road Map to Impact

On Course for Access to Justice

2024
ANNUAL REPORT



MESSAGE TO OUR Friends and Supporters

At Acadiana Legal Service Corporation (ALSC), we believe that when you do what you love, it does not feel like work. Our team is dedicated to serving Louisiana communities that face legal challenges by bringing knowledge, resources, and advocacy to those who need it most. Staff development remains a core value, with training and team-building strengthening our commitment to teamwork and client-centered service.

Many of our clients face multiple legal problems and uncertainty. Our mission is to provide the guidance and support that make navigating the civil legal system possible. In 2024, we expanded access to justice through outreach and technology. Our Justice Buses traveled 13,314 miles to 37 rural and underserved communities. We hosted 227 outreach events that provided thousands with legal education, resources, and individual assistance. To further increase access, we launched an online application system available 24/7, making services more convenient and accessible.

The accurate measure of our work is in the lives changed; Disaster survivors regained their homes, families preserved safe housing; domestic violence victims obtained protection; and children gained stability through custody resolutions. Expungement clinics and veteran outreach removed barriers to jobs and housing, creating opportunities for fresh starts.

Together, these efforts demonstrate our unwavering commitment to ensuring that timely access to fairness, protection, and justice are not just ideals but realities for the communities we serve.



George D. Ernest III
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:

George D. Ernest III, President
Santrica Pope, Vice President
Anna Simmons, Secretary
Julhelene Jackson, Treasurer

Members:

Cynthia Cobb
Stacy Gulce
Sylvia Hill
Karen C. McLellan
Brannon Menard

Ann Poole
Tamara Battles
Susan E. Kutcher
Theresa Richard
Ashley Freeman

Melody Trout
Mary Winchell
Lindsay Meador Young
James E. Calhoun

Executive Staff Members:

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

Responsible

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

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.

Integrity

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

Innovation

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

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.

In Memory of Earl & Mazie Waits
In Memory of George Avent
In Memory of G.P. Raman
Eric Chatman, MD
K&J Supply LLC
USI Insurance Services
Spectrum Employee Services
Legal Services Corporation
Louisiana Bar Foundation
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
AARP (American Association of Retired Persons)
Community Foundation of North LA
Caddo Parish Commission
Louisiana Housing Commission
U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs
U.S. Department of Agriculture
NHeLP (National Health Law Program)
LA Health Care Connections
Hunt, Guillot and Associates
Humana Healthy Horizons
State of Louisiana, Office of Community Development
Louisiana Housing Corporation
FHLBank Dallas
Red River Bank
Loyola University - Gillis Long Summer Award

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

Volunteers matter to us.

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

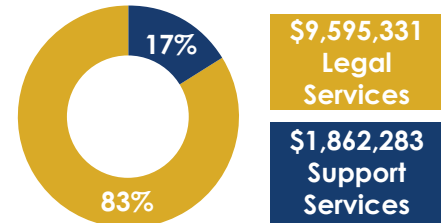
A LOOK AT OUR Financial Summary

Acadiana Legal Service Corporation's statement of activities for
twelve months ending December 31, 2024

REVENUE

Grant Revenue	\$11,843,968
Interest Earnings	\$49,947
Donations	\$3,428
Other Revenues	\$184,018

EXPENSES



In 2023, for every \$1 invested in Louisiana Legal Aid, the citizens of Louisiana received \$13.28 of immediate and long-term financial benefits.

EIS Full Report 2023, Louisiana State Bar, raisingthebar.org

2024 Impact Report

Total Persons Served

10,242

Children Served

4,774

Cases Closed

4,011

Were age 60
and older

808

Veteran
Households

148

Involved
Domestic Violence

347

Community
Outreach Events

227

Persons Reached
During Outreach

17,466

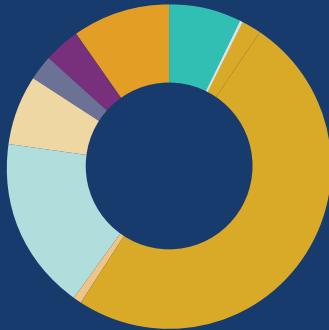
Online Community
Engagement

158,822

2024

Population Served by Legal Issue

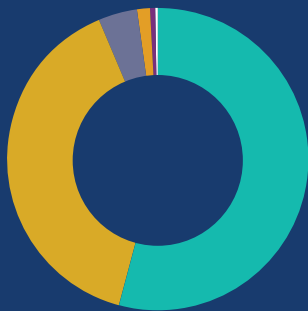
AREAS OF PRACTICE



- 49.8% Family
- 11.4% Housing
- 9.5% Miscellaneous
- 6.8% Income Maintenance
- 7.5% Consumer/Finance
- 3.7% Juvenile
- 2.0% Individual Rights
- 2.6% Employment
- 0.8% Health
- 0.1% Education

LSC "Our Grantees" Louisiana Acadiana Legal Service Corporation Program Profile Data, 2024

POPULATION SERVED



- 54.33% Black
- 39.49% White
- 4.01% Other
- 1.35% Hispanic
- .60% Native American
- .20% Asian/Pacific Islander

Race/Ethnicity, 2024 ALSC

Women	76.2%
Men	23.6%
Other	.2%

Gender Identified, 2024 ALSC



COMPASSION

Keeping Families Together, Building Futures



Our Family Law unit continues to grow its reach, stepping into new outreach efforts to better understand and meet the needs of our clients. Even as we underwent a period of transition, our team remains steadfast in our mission, providing high-quality services to as many clients and applicants as possible.

The commitment is reflected in the lives we impact every day. One story is Sasha*, a 21-year-old college student who stepped up in an extraordinary way. After the death of her father and abandonment by her mother, Sasha became the caregiver for her two younger brothers, ages 13 and 14. Determined to give them a safe and stable future, she turned to us for help. With our support, Sasha was granted sole custody of her brothers without the burden of costly fees. Together, they now have the security and stability every family deserves. Our team has

also been active in community outreach. In Vermilion Parish, the Justice Bus traveled to the Abbeville Library to accept on-site applications, drawing the attention of a local media group in Acadiana. In Caddo Parish, paralegal Shannon collaborated with our Pro Bono team during an ALSC Pro Se Divorce Clinic, helping clients navigate the process of beginning anew.

Beyond legal services, our team shows up in solidarity with the communities we serve. This year, we participated in the Chez Hope Annual Vigil to honor victims of domestic violence. Partnering with Chez Hope, a local women's shelter, we stood together to support survivors and raise awareness. We are more than legal representation; we are about strengthening families, protecting survivors, and creating hope for a better future for our communities.

**Name changed to protect client identity.*

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Showing Up When It Matters.



The Louisiana State Bar Association annually recognizes outstanding contributions to access to justice through its Legal Service Innovation Award. In 2024, our Disaster Unit received this distinction for its groundbreaking initiative – the Justice Bus, Louisiana's first fully functional mobile legal office.

JUSTICE ON WHEELS

To close the justice gap in Louisiana's 42-parish service area, where more than 75% of parishes are considered legal deserts, we acquired the Justice Buses. In these regions, residents often travel over 45 minutes to reach the nearest civil legal aid office, an obstacle that leaves disaster survivors without timely support.

To address this challenge, we deployed two fully equipped Justice Buses. Outfitted with generators, internet, charging stations, laptops, and workspaces, the buses provide direct legal assistance to rural and disaster-stricken communities. Since their launch, the buses have

traveled 13,314 miles, visiting 21 parishes, attending 37 outreach events, and reaching more than 1,100 individuals.

The buses have been deployed after Hurricane Beryl and Hurricane Francine, raising awareness of our mission while assisting survivors still grappling with legal issues from Hurricanes Laura, Delta, and Ida. They have also supported local city courts by providing eviction defense, housing resources, and other civil legal services, including public benefits, family law, and consumer issues.

PARTNERING WITH FEMA AFTER HURRICANE FRANCINE

After Hurricane Francine struck in September 2024, we partnered with FEMA Region 6 to deliver legal services in St. Mary Parish. From September 23 to November 7, 2024, the Justice Bus deployed to the FEMA Disaster Recovery Center in Morgan City, providing essential assistance to those affected by the disaster.

Francine left widespread wind and

flood damage, displacing families and leaving many without the documents required to access FEMA assistance. Some residents were still facing unresolved legal challenges from Hurricane Ida (2021). We made an immediate impact. Survivors received assistance with succession planning, wills, replacement identification documents, insurance claims, and on-site mediation with FEMA and RestoreLA. These services cut resolution timelines while connecting families to critical housing and food resources.

During the 41-day deployment, more than 1,750 residents visited the FEMA center. Our team supported 43 survivors, with 27 applications accepted and opened as cases. Survivors expressed a renewed sense of hope, underscoring the vital role of legal services during recovery.

EXPUNGEMENT CLINICS: FRESH STARTS IN RURAL LOUISIANA

Beyond disaster relief, we work to break down barriers for individuals seeking a second chance. In 2024, through its Pro Bono Bridge the Gap initiative, we hosted expungement clinics in Northwest Louisiana, including a standout event in Natchitoches in partnership with Goodwill and other community organizations.

The clinic served more than 30 attendees and accepted 29 cases for representation. Pre-registration allowed staff to assess eligibility in advance and help participants gather required documents, easing the expungement process.

By eliminating the prohibitive costs of filing and processing. We make expungement attainable for low-income individuals. These efforts extend far beyond paperwork. Expungements restore opportunities for employment, housing, and education, empowering individuals to begin again.

ADVANCING EQUAL JUSTICE

Whether rolling into disaster zones with the Justice Bus or offering life-changing relief at an expungement clinic, ALSC is advancing its mission of equal justice for all. By meeting people where they are, whether in storm-damaged towns or rural parishes, we deliver more than legal aid. We restore dignity, stability, and opportunity for Louisiana's most vulnerable residents.



Continuing the Road to Access: Driving Intake Efficiency

This year has not only been a testing phase for efficiency but also a driver of continuous improvement, expanding access to justice. With each project, we conduct a lessons learned review and celebrate successes to maintain momentum for further developments in legal aid.

Through the implementation of LegalServer and the redesign of intake processes, our organization has strengthened efficiency, expanded access, and leveraged data-driven improvements to deliver higher-quality legal services across our 42-parish service area.

SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS

We successfully transitioned from the PRIME system to LegalServer while also undertaking a significant redesign of our intake process and unit. From these simultaneous transformations, two key lessons surfaced. First, we learned the importance of pacing change - taking on two large initiatives at once was challenging, but it revealed our organization's capacity for growth and adaptation.

Second, we reaffirmed that change, though often difficult, is necessary to strengthen our services and better meet the needs of our communities. By embracing these changes, we are positioning ourselves to improve efficiency, enhance client access, and deliver higher-quality legal services. Without these advancements, we would risk falling short of the evolving needs of the people who rely on us.

ONLINE APPLICATIONS

***“This tool allows our advocates and attorneys to perform with efficiency, utilizing templates, streamlined case notes, and better time management.”
- Litigation Director Thomas Fields.***

In February 2024, we launched the LegalServer online application module to capture a wider audience, includ-

ing individuals aged 25-45 years. These users may be more likely to apply online for their convenience than to utilize the telephone option for application. The online application system provides 24/7 access, allowing users to access the application for legal services at their convenience. Opening this access increased overall applications by 43% in the first three months of operating.

ADVANCING CLIENT SERVICES

LegalServer, used in conjunction with SharePoint, has opened up multiple

benefits for the firm, which have a direct impact on our clients. Communication lines have been the most significant improvement for our clients. We are utilizing email addresses to communicate forms and resources directly, delivering services in all capacities with ease and efficiency. LegalServer has become the ultimate collaboration tool not only across units but also among office locations.

"This tool allows our advocates and attorneys to perform with efficiency, utilizing templates, streamlined case notes, and better time management," states Litigation Director Thomas Fields. "There is no comparison - this platform is user-friendly, easy to train new employees, and provides a capture with accurate data that helps us make informed decisions on cases and the firm as a whole."

REMOVING ROAD BLOCKS

Out of the clients we serve, a majority of our cases involve legal services related to family law, such as divorce and custody. After identifying and analyzing a trend in applications for these family law matters, we increased the eligibility limit from 125% to 200% of the federal poverty guidelines. Visit www.la-law.org/eligibility to see the latest income charts to determine eligibility. We saw an increase in eligible applications by implementing these changes, along with using better data.

Accurate data has a direct impact on providing resources directly to clients and potential clients. We are now able to track and monitor the effectiveness of our outreach campaigns, as well as

track our application trends to capture our customers' needs better. This process helps us identify our strengths and weaknesses, allowing us to address both and continue to provide solutions that improve access for our communities.

This year has shown that innovation in intake and case management is not simply about adopting new systems, but about transforming how we serve our communities. By transitioning to LegalServer, redesigning the intake process, and removing barriers to eligibility, we have expanded access for thousands of individuals who may otherwise go unserved.

The measurable increase in applications, improved communication, and better use of data demonstrate that these changes are more than internal upgrades, they are steps toward a more responsive, client-centered model of legal aid. As we continue to learn from each project, refine our processes, and embrace change, we remain committed to advancing access to justice and ensuring that we meet the evolving needs of our communities with both efficiency and compassion.

RESPONSIBILITY

Professional growth within ALSC.



Our company's 2024 Staff Retreat, themed "Mission: Exceptional Legal Service - Driven by Values, United by Teamwork," was a dynamic and inspiring event focused on strengthening our dedication to our mission, core values, client-centered services, and teamwork. Through engaging presenters, team-building activities, and collaborative discussions, we reinforced our commitment to respect, compassion, innovation, responsibility, and integrity in providing exceptional civil legal services to our clients. Interactive team exercises encouraged collaboration and problem-solving, reinforcing the importance of working together to achieve justice for our community.

The Honorable Judge Davidson, former judge of the 9th JDC, motivated and encouraged staff. A panel discussion featuring Greg Landry, former Executive Director, and Sharon Jones, former Administrative Director, served as a source of reflection and inspiration to continue our commitment to justice for our client community. The retreat provided opportunities for colleagues to connect in a relaxed setting, deepening relationships and reinforcing a culture of support and shared purpose.

Our tagline, "Advocating for Justice - Together, we thrive, with values that drive us to advocate for justice!" resonated throughout the event, reminding us of our collective commitment to making a difference in the communities we serve. By the end of the retreat, participants departed with renewed motivation, practical insights, and a stronger sense of unity, and were ready to advance our mission with passion and purpose.

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCES

In the summer, ALSC hosted four interns: Grace Herring (Loyola Law School), Emma Chaikin (Southern University LA Center), Abigail Kilgore (Loyola Law School), and Tracey Ford (Loyola Law School). They were intricately involved

with client services and networking opportunities. The internship provided hands-on experience in client services, courtroom preparation, and networking, fostering the next generation of public interest attorneys. Each intern was assigned to two substantive units to gain hands-on experience in the diverse areas of law while shadowing the unit's attorneys. The interns enjoyed working with staff on collaborative projects and independent legal research. They developed a deeper understanding of the legal system and processes, improved their legal analysis, research and reasoning skills, and established a deeper understanding of proper client communications. They were introduced to different areas of law, which helped them narrow down potential specializations and even discover new passions. The interns were able to observe six dockets and be personally introduced to the judges. They attended the 2024 Disaster Summit, several outreach initiatives, and other local attorneys.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Several ALSC attorneys participated in the National Institute for Trial Advocacy (NITA) training course, which adopts a "learn by doing" approach to enhance courtroom skills. Classes were held virtually and culminated with the simulated practice at Southern University Law Center in Baton Rouge, LA.

According to NITA, "Learning by doing" trumps "learning by listening" every time. Participants were on their feet from day one in a simulated courtroom setting, where they received constructive and collegial feedback on their performances from faculty. Practitioner-instructors drew from their experience to help spare participants from unkind courtroom lessons. Our attorneys refined their basic trial skills, including direct/cross-examination, exhibits and impeachment, opening statements and closing arguments, among others. The artistry of advocacy lies in infusing tested skills with one's own personality.



LSBA CAREER PUBLIC INTEREST AWARD

The 2024 LSBA *Career Public Interest Award* recipient was Lewis Gladney. He was honored for over 45 years of service in civil legal aid, representing thousands of clients in matters involving family law, housing, disability, and elder law. Lewis Gladney, Staff Attorney, has over 40 years of experience in legal services. Lewis was born and raised in Baton Rouge. He attended the LSU Law School and moved to Natchitoches, Louisiana, upon graduation. Starting in 1979, he worked with Kisatchie Legal Services Corporation, which later merged with Legal Services of North Louisiana. He presently works in ALSC's Intake Unit.



Throughout his 45-year career in legal services, he has represented thousands of clients, including those in family law, housing and consumer law, disability law, elder law, and other areas of law. He coordinated pro bono activities for several years. His career has been dedicated to helping the poor and giving a voice to those who would otherwise be silenced. We are grateful for his continued work and for providing quality services to our client community.

LSBA YOUNG LAWYERS DIVISION TOP 40 UNDER 40

Hailey Barnett, Disaster Law Managing Attorney, has a passion for disaster recovery and helping others to regain their homes and a sense of normalcy. Hailey was awarded the LSBA award for *Young Lawyers Division Top 40 under 40!* Hailey says, "I wanted to use my law degree to advocate for those [who] may not have the resources or means to access justice on their own, and I find [that] the civil legal aid work we do at ALSC is incredibly satisfying. I am honored to have received this award."

A Tulane Law School graduate, Hailey has been practicing law for 4 years and has led the ALSC Disaster Unit for 3 years. Her in-depth knowledge and connections with community partners have paved the way for a better outreach program within our disaster unit. Based in our Lake Charles office, Hailey conducts legal education presentations and outreach events throughout our 42-parish service area. She is truly committed to providing exceptional legal services and education to our client community.





When Help Arrives, Everything Changes.

Behind every case is a story of strength, hope, and justice. Whether it's standing up to an unlawful eviction, securing a long-overdue birth certificate, or helping a mother rebuild her family in safety - our work changes lives every day.



Our Impact, Their Voices

CLEARING THE PATH

Imagine that \$20 could prevent you from being hired for a job, moving into a home, or entering a trade program that could change your life. Nicole unknowingly used counterfeit money, received from a friend, to pay a bill, and the incident left her with a felony arrest that turned her life upside down.

After completing probation, she should have received a First Offender Pardon, but an oversight left the arrest on her record. When she sought legal help, our attorneys discovered the problem was an unpaid \$14.20 fee that blocked the pardon. With persistent advocacy, the issue was resolved, the arrest was removed, and Nicole

avoided hundreds of dollars in court costs. Her story shows how legal aid helps people overcome barriers and restore their ability to contribute to their community.

RESTORING SERVICES

Steve lost his job due to COVID-19. After no income to pay his bills, Steve lived almost a year without electricity. Through legal services, our advocates negotiated the reconnection of his electricity, helped Steve develop a payment plan, and provided essential resources to get him back on track.

FINDING LIGHT IN DARKNESS

After Hurricane Laura, Betty's inherited home was severely damaged, but legal succes-

sion - costing \$3,000 to \$5,000 - stood in the way of repairs. With no job or savings, rebuilding seemed impossible. Through our assistance, she received legal help to complete succession, clear her title, and secure her home.

PROVIDING A FUTURE

Charles, a gunshot victim filed for disability after being shot three times. While in the hospital, he suffered a stroke and was in a coma for a week. Charles was devastated when his disability request was denied. ALSC secured life-changing disability benefits and peace of mind by helping Charles file for reconsideration. Awarded over \$20,000 and benefits each month, Charles can live without worrying about his future.

The Road to Impact Starts With You!

Acadiana Legal Service Corporation (ALSC) provides free civil legal services to low-income individuals and families in over 65% of Louisiana's parishes. We are committed to ensuring fairness, protection, and justice are within reach for those who face the greatest challenges.

DONATE



Local organizations and individuals like you make our work possible. Contribute to the fight for justice by making a gift today.

VOLUNTEER



Our 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!



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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.