

# Annual Report

## 2021-2022



LEGAL AID  
FOUNDATION  
*of*  
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

## OUR MISSION

Our mission is to provide high-quality civil legal services to low-income and other vulnerable residents in order to ensure equal access to justice. We change lives through direct representation, legal advice and information, and community education. Our vision is a community where low-income people and other vulnerable residents are empowered to thrive and where all residents have meaningful access to the civil justice system. Since 1959, Legal Aid has provided legal services to those most in need in our community.



## FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Legal Aid team continued to provide critical legal services as our community moved through the worst of the COVID pandemic period, but the lingering impacts are still being felt by many of our clients across the county. Despite these challenges, we successfully moved our Lompoc office to a new location, welcomed new staff members, and continued to be a key point of expertise for the legal issues related to emergency COVID relief. It's amazing to think that what began with a few dedicated volunteers in 1959 is now a countywide organization with twenty employees.

Your support is more critical than ever. The State Bar Justice Gap study found that an additional 9,000 full-time legal aid attorneys would be needed to fully resolve all civil legal problems experienced by low-income Californians. Thank you for making a difference in the lives of our clients and community.

Jennifer R. Smith  
Executive Director



# FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Through this program, attorneys advise and represent victims of intimate partner violence, elder abuse and neglect, sexual assault, and human trafficking. Services include temporary and permanent restraining orders. Attorneys may also provide legal representation family law matters related to the violence.

**Immigration Remedies for Victims of Crime:** Once emergent issues are handled, clients who have been victims of certain crimes may be screened for potential immigration remedies, typically a U-VISA or T-VISA. The purpose of these visa programs is to promote the investigation and prosecution of serious crimes and to protect victims of serious crimes.

*Client: "The team at Legal Aid Foundation took my case and handled it expertly. Working with them reduced my stress and made me feel supported during a stressful time."*



A woman was referred to Legal Aid by law enforcement for assistance with a domestic violence restraining order (DVRO). She speaks Spanish and has two minor children. Incidents had been building up over several months, until one day the abuser struck her and left a bruise. The criminal investigation was still pending. The abuser had been sending the client threatening text messages and our client was fearful about what would happen if he returned to the house. The Legal Aid attorney filed a request for a temporary and permanent restraining order. The attorney also helped the client understand the pending criminal investigation and connected the client to community resources for victim's compensation, counseling, and more. The Legal Aid attorney successfully secured a permanent DVRO for the client. Our client was very relieved she did not have to go through the court process alone, and she and her children can move forward in safety.

# FORECLOSURE PREVENTION & CONSUMER PROTECTION

*Client: "Words can't express how grateful I am to your professionalism, ethics, and ability to be a humanitarian. You're highly appreciated."*

This program provides legal representation to homeowners at risk of foreclosure and to senior victims of consumer scams, fraudulent and deceptive business practices, predatory lending, and other forms of financial elder abuse and exploitation.

## **Consumer Protection & Bankruptcy**

**Clinic:** With the assistance of a dedicated volunteer attorney, Legal Aid oversees an all-volunteer clinic for unrepresented debtors who reside in the service area of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Santa Barbara. The volunteer attorneys assist unrepresented debtors with Chapter 7 bankruptcy, bankruptcy forms, and referrals for other consumer debt issues. The clinic currently operates remotely by phone most Friday mornings.



Our client was a senior and disabled veteran. His partner always handled their finances since it was difficult for him due to his disabilities. When his partner died of pancreatic cancer, he struggled to manage and also experienced depression. This caused the client to fall behind on his bills, including his homeowners' association dues. He came to us after his HOA recorded a lien on his property and gave him formal notice that the board had voted to proceed with foreclosure. We represented him in this matter by seeking a dispute resolution session with the HOA board. At the session with their attorney, Legal Aid successfully negotiated an agreement whereby the HOA agreed to stop foreclosure, provide the client with an affordable payment plan on the arrearage, and stop the accrual of interest or late fees on the past due amount. The client was very relieved that he would not be displaced, especially during the pandemic.

# HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

In this program, attorneys advise and represent low-income individuals, families, and seniors at risk of eviction, housing instability, and homelessness. Attorneys assist tenants with eviction defense and prevention, preservation of federal housing subsidies (Section 8), and other landlord-tenant issues. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, clients received assistance with the changing landscape of emergency eviction rules and rental relief. Other laws have also changed since the start of the pandemic, which created a more complex legal landscape for tenants over time.

*Client: "I would just like to thank [the attorney] for helping save my home. Because of them my kids and I are not homeless."*

**Fair Housing:** Legal Aid serves at the Fair Housing provider for residents of the City of Lompoc, City of Santa Maria, and the County of Santa Barbara. Program services may include outreach and education, legal advice and representation, review of advertisements for housing, or fair housing testing.



*Client: "I am extremely appreciative of the help I received from Legal Aid Foundation. There were thorough, assuring, and knowledgeable during a very uncertain time where I lacked the resources to otherwise receive a reasonable outcome with the housing crisis I faced. Thank you, Legal Aid Foundation!"*



# SARGENT SHRIVER CIVIL COUNSEL PROGRAM

Pursuant to funding provided by the Sargent Shriver Civil Counsel Act, attorneys provide representation to low-income individuals and families (200% FPL or below) for residents of Northern Santa Barbara County in unlawful detainers (evictions), guardianships of minor children, and conservatorships. Legal Aid partners with the Santa Barbara Superior Court on the project. The program serves a dual purpose: 1) to provide effective legal representation to low-income individuals on critical legal issues affecting basic human needs and 2) to improve efficiency, fairness, and timely dispute resolution for self-represented litigants in the courts.



Our client came to Legal Aid for help after falling ill with COVID-19 and losing his job. The client applied for rent relief, and it was granted in full. However, the day after the full rent relief was approved, the property manager served an eviction notice and immediately began to intimidate and threaten the client and his family. The Legal Aid attorney represented our client in court, successfully advocated for a protective order barring the landlord from further intimidation, and prevailed at trial in the eviction case. Our client and his family remained safe and sheltered.

Our client was a frail, elderly woman who was at risk of eviction because she allegedly kept her neighbors awake at night with television noise. Our client insisted that she was not a nuisance to her neighbors because she did not even own a television. However, she did not want to be involved in a court case nor stay in an apartment where she was not wanted. Due to her disability and low income, relocating was difficult. Once she found a place to live with an old friend, the Legal Aid attorney negotiated for her to have over two months to move and to receive two months' rent for relocation funds. Our client was very pleased that we helped her avoid going to court, obtain enough time to relocate, and have some extra funds to pay for moving costs.



## LEGAL RESOURCE CENTERS



The Legal Resource Centers (LRCs) are located in the Superior Courthouses of Santa Barbara, Santa Maria, and Lompoc. The centers are staffed by three full-time attorneys, a part-time assistant, and occasionally assisted by volunteers. The LRCs are self-help clinics available to any Santa Barbara County resident. The assistance provided includes various civil matters and infractions including small claims, debt collection, unlawful detainers, guardianship, restraining orders and responses, landlord/tenant issues, and name changes. Throughout the year, LRCs continued to provide services in-person, by email, and by phone to accommodate the ever-changing needs resulting from the pandemic.



## PROJECT OUTREACH

Through this program, volunteer attorneys provide “advice only” services that may include civil matters, family law, and other areas of law to residents who may not be eligible for our regular services or who need assistance with other legal issues.



## OUR IMPACT

### CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS



76% of clients had incomes at or below 200% the Federal Poverty Level  
\*at or below \$55,500 for a family of four



75% Gender: Female



26% Seniors age 60 and over



17% People with Disabilities

### BY THE NUMBERS

Legal Aid attorneys advised or represented **602** individuals and families with critical civil legal matters, impacting over 1500 household members. Our volunteer attorneys and law students assisted another **240** individuals and families, and our Legal Resource Centers assisted **6,859** self-represented litigants. In all, Legal Aid services reached **7,701** community residents.

Legal Aid attorneys are increasingly taking on more complex legal cases. Clients had over **\$557,000** in amounts recovered or debt eliminated during their legal proceedings.



# FINANCIAL STATEMENT

## Fiscal Year 2021-2022

THANK YOU TO THE  
AGENCIES, FOUNDATIONS,  
COMMUNITY PARTNERS,  
VOLUNTEERS, BUSINESSES,  
AND DONORS FOR YOUR  
ONGOING AND GENEROUS  
SUPPORT!



### Revenue:

Donations	\$105,217
Government grants	\$1,417,991
Private grants	\$136,628
State Bar of CA grants	\$797,760
Interest	\$634
Sub-total	\$2,458,230
In-kind revenue	\$123,373
Total Revenue	\$2,581,603

### Expenses:

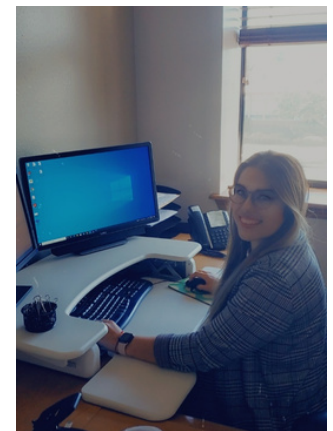
Program Services	\$1,958,235
General & Administrative	\$270,011
Fundraising	\$16,206
Total Expenses	\$2,244,452

06/30/2022 Donor restricted funds  
for future use: \$578,098

*\*From audited financial statements  
for the fiscal year ending  
June 30, 2022.*

The complete report is available upon  
request.

# LEGAL AID FOUNDATION OF SANTA BARBARA COUNTY



## NEW LOMPOC OFFICE



## IN MEMORIAM

D. William "Bill" Wagner  
Board of Directors 2012-2021



Photo: Courtesy of Susan Wagner

Louis J. Renga  
Legal Aid's First Attorney



Photo: Santa Barbara News Press

Owen Bailey  
Richard Goldman  
Frank Michaelson  
Sheri Montgomery  
Jaimey Raney  
Phil Wilcox  
Karen Woosley



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2021-2022

Becky Steiger, President  
Susan Thompson, Treasurer  
Julianna Malis, Secretary  
Jena Acos  
Alan Blakeboro  
William L.F. Felstiner  
Crystal Forsher  
Saji D. Gunawardane  
Alexander E. Saunders  
Garry M. Tetelman  
Michael Vidal  
D. William Wagner (In  
Memoriam)

### **North County Advisory Committee**

Amy R. Lopez  
Tim Harrington  
Maria Martino

### STAFF 2021-2022

Jennifer R. Smith, Executive Director  
Trisha Geyer, Finance Director  
Alex Lambrous, Director of Litigation

### FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Elizabeth Diaz, Managing Attorney  
Stacy Robinson, Staff Attorney  
Luer Yin, Staff Attorney

### HOUSING & CONSUMER PROTECTION

Alex Entrekin, Staff Attorney  
Joan Vignocchi, Staff Attorney  
Kate Lee, Staff Attorney

### SARGENT SHRIVER PROGRAM

Mike St. Denis, Managing Attorney  
Mayra Marin, Staff Attorney  
Christina Gonzalez, Staff Attorney

### INTAKE & SUPPORT STAFF

Monica Cortez, Legal Assistant  
Marilu Leer, Intake Coordinator  
Danny Navarro, Legal Assistant/Intake  
Coordinator  
Anna Rounds, Intake Coordinator  
Liliana Uribe, Intake Coordinator

### COURTHOUSE

### LEGAL RESOURCE CENTERS

Lynn Goebel, Managing Attorney  
Angel Castro, Staff Attorney  
Juancarlos Reyes, Staff Attorney  
Adriana Avila, LRC Assistant

Santa Barbara Office	Santa Maria Office	Lompoc Office
301 E. Canon Perdido St	201 S. Miller St, Ste 210	102 E. Ocean Ave
Santa Barbara, CA 93101	Santa Maria, CA 93454	Lompoc, CA 93436
(805) 963-6754	(805) 922-9909	(805) 736-6582