

LAF

2025

ANNUAL REPORT

年度報告書





年度報告書

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

PROFESSIONAL · EFFICIENT · FLEXIBLE · APPROACHABLE

CONTENTS

04 To Friends of the Legal Aid Foundation

Work Results

- 06 Annual Statistics
- 07 Annual Financial Statistics
- 08 Annual Operational Statistics
- 09 Analysis of Legal Aid Cases by Category
- 10 **LAF Case Stories** / A Call to a Disability Legal Consultation Hotline



General Legal Aid Cases

- 12 **Legal Consultation Services**
Expanding Access to Justice through Multiple Channels
- 13 **Attorney Presence During Interrogation**
Interrogated For the First Time? No Fear, A Lawyer Will Be with You!
- 14 **Legal Aid Project: Consumer Debt Clearance**
Specialist Attorneys Provide Professional Assistance in Consumer Debt Clearance Cases!

Commissioned Programs

- 15 **Legal Aid Project for Labour Disputes**
Commissioned by the Ministry of Labor
- 16 **Legal Services Project for Indigenous Peoples**
Commissioned by the Council of Indigenous Peoples
- 17 **Legal Aid Project for Residential Lease Disputes**
Commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior
- 18 **Legal Aid Project for Persons with Disabilities and for Individuals with Severe Mental Illness During Emergency Placement**
Commissioned by the Ministry of Health and Welfare
- 20 **LAF Case Stories** / Pregnancy Discrimination in the Workplace Amid Declining Birth Rates



Cases of High Social Profile: The Status in 2025

- 22 Workers Group Class Action Against RCA Taiwan for Pollution Program Dedicated to the Case of Air Pollution Caused by No. 6 Naphtha Cracking Complex of Formosa Plastics Corp.
Railway Accident: The Derailment of Taiwan Railway's Taroko Express
Human Trafficking: The Case of Ugandan Students
Kenya Human Trafficking Case
- 23 Criminal Grand Chamber Case
New Taipei Indigenous Housing (Zhongzheng and Long'enpu) Lease Renewal Case

Major Achievements of the Legal Center of Indigenous Peoples

- 24 The Hydropower Development Project Located in the Fengping River and Its Tributaries
Yuandun Tribe Consultation and Consent Case
S'yux Tribe 921 Earthquake Relocation Program
- 25 Child Abuse and Endangerment Case Involving Preschool Children in Guanshan, Taitung
- 26 **Criminal Defense office: Citizen Judge Cases**
- 28 **Protection of the Rights of Crime Victims**
- 29 **Regulatory Amendments**
- 30 **LAF Case Stories** / No More Debt, No More Dread

Continuous Improvement of Service Quality

- 32 Measures to Improve Service Quality and Staff Responsiveness
Refinement of Case Management Process
- 33 Quality Assurance Mechanism for Legal Aid Services
- 35 Staff Attorneys
Professional Training
- 36 **LAF Case Stories** / Criminal Punishment or Administrative Penalty? — The Crimes and Punishments Faced by an Indigenous Farmer

Networking and Campaigns

- 38 Organized Campaign Activities and Seminars
- 41 Films, Online Platforms and Publications
- 43 International Affairs
- 44 **LAF Case Stories** / A Mother's Final Embrace Behind a Financial Eligibility Review

People in Legal Aid

- 46 Applicant Status Distribution
- 48 Means Test Results for Approved General Legal Aid Cases
- 49 Profile of Legal Aid Providers
- 50 Organization Structure
- 51 Staff Profile of the LAF

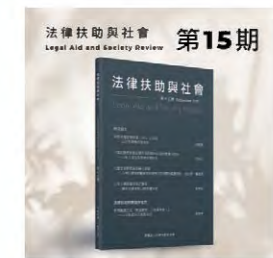
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CEO / **Han-Wei Chou**

To Friends of the Legal Aid Foundation

The Legal Aid Foundation (LAF) was established to safeguard the right to litigation and equal access to justice under the Constitution of the Republic of China (Taiwan), ensuring that underprivileged individuals can access justice through an institutionalized legal aid system. This embodies the spirit of making justice accessible to all.

In accordance with the Legal Aid Act, the LAF is mandated to provide necessary legal assistance to individuals who lack financial means or otherwise cannot access adequate legal protection. Thereupon, every year, we adjust our financial eligibility standards based on the income thresholds for middle-low-income households as defined by the Public Assistance Act, to ensure that our services remain responsive to evolving socioeconomic conditions. In 2025, we received over 230,000 applications for legal aid, and approved assistance in more than 194,000 cases (including legal consultations and commissioned cases). This reflects the significant societal demand for legal aid services.

Since the implementation of the Citizen Judges Act on 1 January 2023, the LAF assisted 179 parties (including defendants and complainants) involved in citizen judge proceedings in 2025, representing an increase of approximately 15% compared to the 155 persons assisted in 2024. In 2025, the LAF conducted eight training sessions for legal aid attorneys handling citizen judge cases, and plans to organize three regional workshops in 2026. Through hands-on case exercises, these workshops aim to further enhance the defense skills of legal aid attorneys. Together with the ongoing operation of the Criminal Defense Center, these efforts are intended to expand the capacity of legal aid attorneys to handle cases. This need is particularly pressing in light of the changes taking effect in 2026, under which offenses carrying a minimum statutory sentence of ten years' imprisonment will be subject to citizen judge proceedings, leading to a continued increase in case volume (see Article 5, Paragraph 1, Subparagraph 1, and Article 113 of the

Citizen Judges Act).

In response to the call for housing justice, and to improve the legal framework governing residential leases and strengthen legal protections for the large population of tenants in Taiwan, the LAF has, since 2024, been commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior, through an administrative contract, to implement the Legal Aid Project for Residential Lease Disputes. This project provides telephone consultations for disputes arising from residential leases or related legal issues. From the launch of the dedicated hotline on 1 August 2024 through 2025, the LAF handled a cumulative total of 7,188 consultation cases, the majority involving security deposit disputes, early termination of leases by tenants, property repairs, and early lease termination by landlords. In addition to continuing to provide legal consultation by phone, the LAF began formally accepting legal aid applications for attorney representation and legal document preparation on 30 September 2025. In October 2025, the LAF agreed to continue implementing this project in 2026 under the commission of the Ministry of the Interior. To reduce barriers for residential tenants in accessing legal aid, this project accepts rent subsidy approval letters issued by the National Land Management Agency of the Ministry of the Interior or by special municipalities, counties, and cities as proof of financial eligibility. Where case reviews determine a genuine need for assistance, legal aid under this project may be granted, thereby helping to safeguard the rights of disadvantaged tenants in residential tenancy relationships.

To safeguard the rights of crime victims, the LAF continued its collaboration with the Association for Victims Support (AVS) in 2025, operating a single-point referral mechanism (that is, crime victims who do not meet the LAF's eligibility requirements for legal aid are referred to the AVS for assistance; applicants who meet the requirements but have needs beyond legal aid are also referred to the AVS for psychological counseling and other social

support services). The LAF also continued to integrate resources from various sectors to organize training programs for legal aid attorneys handling victim assistance cases. In 2025, a total of five training sessions on different topics were conducted for such attorneys, along with one online training course for restorative justice facilitators.

To illustrate the cultural conflicts encountered by Indigenous peoples in contemporary society, and through the development of multicultural and legal education and training programs to enhance the quality of legal aid services and provide appropriate legal assistance to Indigenous peoples, the LAF in 2024 revised the definition of Indigenous cultural conflict cases within its case management system. Furthermore, the LAF secured authorization to access the video platform for legal and cultural courses on Indigenous issues developed by National Dong Hwa University. These comprehensive Indigenous cultural courses have further deepened understanding of Indigenous cultures among LAF staff, legal aid attorneys, and review committee members. In 2025, the LAF continued to promote the aforementioned video resources and related courses, resulting in a significant increase in the number of course participants.

Following the passage of the amendments to the Mental Health Act on 14 December 2022, the implementation date of the new expert-participation framework for compulsory hospitalization cases is to be determined by the Executive Yuan in consultation with the Judicial Yuan. In preparation for the implementation of this new framework, the LAF has, since 2023, been gradually developing relevant legal aid procedures and maintaining close communication and cooperation with the Judicial Yuan, the Ministry of Health and Welfare, and other agencies. In 2024, the LAF worked with the Judicial Yuan to conduct 12 sessions of mock court proceedings simulating expert-participation procedures under the Mental Health Act, and in collaboration with local bar associations, jointly nominated attorneys to participate in these simulations. These exercises were designed to replicate the procedures of the new framework and also served the function of training lead trainers.

Since 2025, the Department of Mental Health of the Ministry of Health and Welfare has commissioned the LAF, pursuant to Article 62 of the Mental Health Act, to provide legal aid services for individuals with severe mental illness during emergency placement. These responsibilities include establishing operational procedures and liaison mechanisms with designated psychiatric medical institutions; conducting training for legal aid attorneys and staff; maintaining a roster of legal aid attorneys; carrying out outreach and promotional activities; developing and maintaining the relevant case management system; and providing on-site legal consultations for hospitalized patients. As of the end of 2025, the LAF has established contact with more than 50 designated medical institutions and exchanged views regarding the implementation of the expert-participation framework under the Mental Health Act. It has also conducted six in-person training sessions and one online video-based training course for attorneys. In addition, rosters of legal aid attorney have been compiled across all 22 LAF branches nationwide. Attorneys listed on these rosters will be able

to provide immediate in-hospital legal assistance to individuals with severe mental illness during emergency placement once the expert-participation framework under the Mental Health Act takes effect. The LAF also prepared the initial set of promotional materials for the commissioned program in 2025, which have been distributed to psychiatric medical institutions nationwide with the assistance of the Ministry of Health and Welfare. The LAF branches have continued to visit community mental health centers and disability organizations to strengthen linkages between legal aid services and community resources, thereby assisting patients and legal aid attorneys in identifying optimal treatment pathways. Throughout 2025, the LAF has continued to provide in-hospital legal consultation services for hospitalized patients, assigning attorneys to meet with patients in person to safeguard their legal rights. With respect to the reporting mechanism for severely ill patients under emergency placement jointly operated by the Ministry of Health and Welfare and the LAF, and in light of new procedures and case types introduced by the amended Mental Health Act, updates to the LAF's case management system have been scheduled and are expected to be completed in 2026.

In response to the newly added Articles 18-1 to 18-8 of the Juvenile Justice Act, which set out procedures prior to the transfer of a juvenile case to the juvenile court, including investigation, notification, accompaniment, escort, and transfer, the LAF has, since 1 January 2025, implemented the Pre-Transfer Legal Accompaniment Service for Juvenile Cases. When a juvenile is subject to procedures such as notification, questioning, accompaniment, immediate accompaniment, arrest, escort, or transfer by judicial police officers or judicial police, or is brought before the juvenile court for handling, the juvenile, their family or friends, social workers, or judicial or law enforcement authorities may apply to the LAF for a lawyer to be present and provide accompaniment.

As of the end of 2025, 4,889 legal aid attorneys were engaged in the LAF's work. The LAF has adopted several mechanisms to assure its service quality, such as reasonable adjustment of attorney remuneration, regular training for lawyers (e.g., the training courses in response to the implementation of amendments to the Constitutional Court Procedure Act in 2023, and also that of other regulations), attorney specialization, review on case closure, complaint management, and attorney evaluation.

Public demand for legal aid remains strong. Despite budgetary constraints and growing workloads, the LAF continues to uphold its commitment to serve the underprivileged and to refine the delivery of legal aid.

Philosophy

Equality – to protect the right to litigation and equal access to justice pursuant to the constitution, and to facilitate the improvement of economic status of citizens
 Human Rights – to protect the human rights of the disadvantaged
 The Rule of Law – to complement the system of the rule of law

Service Principles

- Be approachable
- Be efficient
- Be flexible
- Be professional

Mission Statement

- To engage in self-reflection, innovation, and advancement of legal aid system
- To make legal aid available throughout Taiwan
- To promote the awareness of legal aid
- To enhance accessibility to legal aid for the public
- To advance the quality of legal aid services
- To encourage the participation of lawyers in legal aid and social reform
- To further promote legal education for the disadvantaged

Annual Statistics



Total of Legal Aid Cases (incl. commissioned cases)
70,987
 +5,846 vs 2024

Total of Legal Consultation Applications
123,285
 +3,738 vs 2024

Total of Legal Aid Attorneys
4,889
 +99 vs 2024

Facebook Fan Page Followers
90,256
 +4,165 vs 2024

Total of Outreach Services and Dissemination Events
1,910
 +84 vs 2024

Average Expense Per Capita
TWD73.5
 to sustain the LAF's operations

Annual Website Traffic Overview (Google Analytics)

Visits/**715,492**
 Pageviews/**3,396,988**



Annual Expenditures
 2025/**TWD1,712,705,441**
 2024/**TWD1,596,652,567**
 +TWD 116,052,874 vs 2024

Annual Financial Statistics

The accounting system of the LAF observes the calendar year. The 2025 financial report was audited by an independent local CPA firm, which issued a report without any reservation attached.



16 April 2025, Chairperson Handover Ceremony



19 June 2025, Beyond the Law Interdisciplinary Lecture Series, Session 118: "Defusing New Forms of Debt Fraud After the Shark-Loan Crisis".

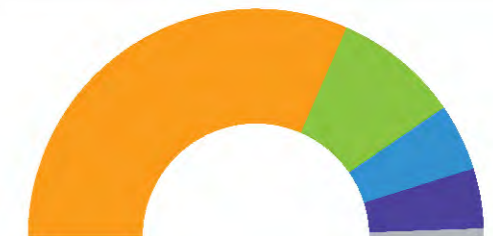


19 May 2025, legal education outreach by the New Taipei Branch at the Human Rights Fair (Photo by Jie-Xuan Chen)



LAF Total Income In 2025
TWD1,694,059,452

Government Contributions	1,478,742,810
Government Project Funding	158,210,965
Non-operating Income	31,949,764
Recoveries (of previously disbursed funds)	11,904,103
Other Operating Income	7,434,435
Private Donations and Project Funding	5,817,375



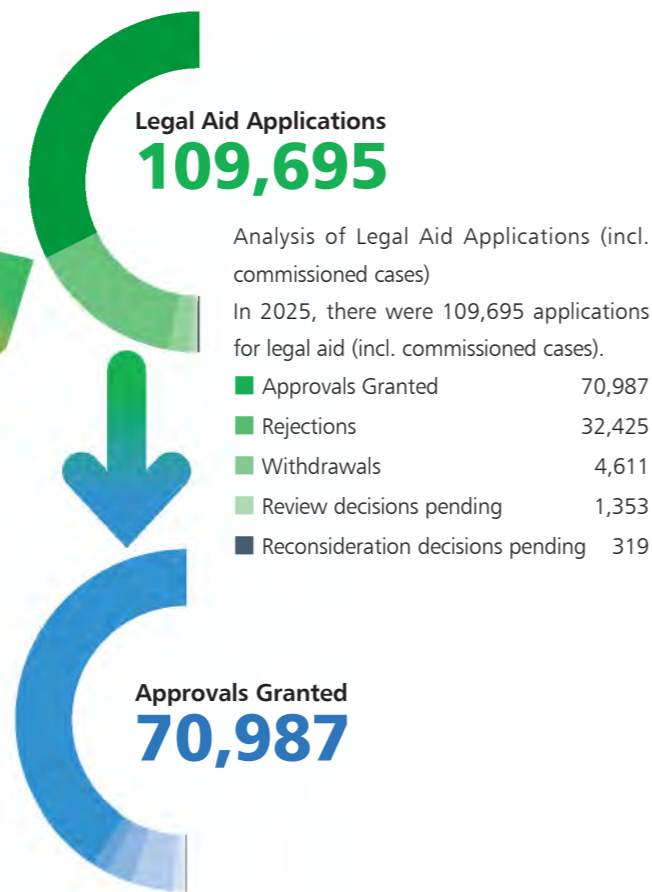
LAF Total Expenditure In 2025
TWD1,712,705,441

Legal Aid Service Costs	1,080,677,691
Operating Costs	304,763,269
Administrative and Non-operating Expenses	162,566,105
Restricted Project Costs and Expenses	145,191,360
Capital Expenditures (Capital Budget)	19,507,016



Legal aid service costs include attorneys' fees, litigation costs, and fees paid to review and appeal committee members.
 Operating costs include expenditures related to services provided to the public, as well as personnel costs for staff attorneys and LAF staff.
 Administrative and non-operating expenses include administrative personnel costs, general administrative expenses, and promotional and outreach expenses.
 Restricted project costs and expenses incurred in connection with commissioned projects from the Ministry of Labor, the Council of Indigenous Peoples, and the Ministry of Health and Welfare.

Annual Operational Statistics



Total of Annual Applications (incl. legal consultation applications)
232,980

Total of Legal Consultation Applications
123,285

Total of Approvals (incl. commissioned and project-based cases)
70,987

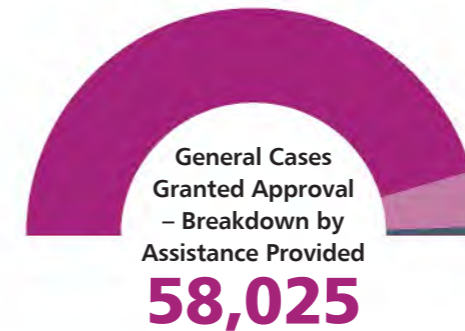
Analysis of Legal Aid Application Approvals
A total of 70,987 cases were approved for legal aid, categorized as follows:

- General Cases 58,025
- Cases commissioned by the Council of Indigenous Peoples 2,057
- Cases commissioned by the Ministry of Labor 3,503
- Interrogation-stage legal assistance 5,785
- Cases commissioned by the Ministry of Health and Welfare 1,594
- Cases commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior 3
- Cases under Habeas Corpus Act 20

Three-Year Comparison of Key Operational Data	2023	2024	2025
Total of Annual Applications	212,600	220,021 (+7,421)	232,980 (+12,959)
Total of Legal Consultations	114,551	119,547 (+4,996)	123,285 (+3,738)
Total of Approvals (incl. commissioned and project-based cases)	63,859	65,141 (+1,282)	70,987 (+5,846)
Total of General Cases	55,890	55,567 (-323)	58,025 (+2,458)

14 October 14 2025, Taitung Branch legal consultation at Taiyuan Prison

Analysis of Legal Aid Cases by Category

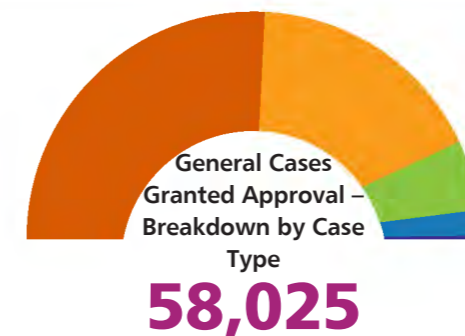


- Court Representation and Legal Defense 90.87%
- Drafting of legal documents 7.93%
- Mediation and settlement 1.20%
- Research-based legal consultation 0%

4,161 letters of guarantee issued to aid recipients
guarantee bonds over TWD 2.6 billion
as of 31 December 2025

Issuance of letter of guarantee

Should the LAF, in accordance with Article 67 of the Legal Aid Act, deem that the legal aid recipient has a clear chance of winning the lawsuit, the LAF may submit a letter of guarantee which can substitute the deposit necessary for the aforesaid recipient to apply for a court injunctive relief. In order to prevent that a legal aid recipient, after winning the lawsuit, has no way to claim the compensation due to the counterparty's disposal of property with malicious intent, the LAF, as of 31 December 2025, has issued a total of 4,161 letters of guarantee, with a total of over TWD 2.6 billion. Among them, 3,717 letters of guarantee were retrievable and 3,656 of which have been retrieved, with a retrieval rate at 98.36%.



- Criminal cases 51.58% (court representation rate: 96%)
- Civil cases 34.40% (court representation rate: 85%)
- Family cases 9.95% (court representation rate: 86%)
- Juvenile cases 3.64% (court representation rate: 97%)
- Administrative cases 0.43% (court representation rate: 62%)

General Cases Granted Approval - Top Five Causes of Action

Criminal Cases	Civil Cases	Family Cases	Juvenile Cases	Administrative Cases
Offenses of Fraudulence, Breach of Trust, Taking, and Usury 9,653	The Consumer Debt Clearance Statute 12,229	Maintenance Payment 2,774	Offenses Against Sexual Autonomy 576	Road Traffic Management and Penalty Act 18
Assault Causing Bodily Harm 3,924	Tort 4,283	Divorce 605	Assault Causing Bodily Harm ↑302	Prison Act ↑18
Narcotics Hazard Prevention Act 3,278	Loans for Consumption 753	Parental Rights 472	Offenses of Fraudulence, Breach of Trust, Taking, and Usury 295	Public Assistance Act ↓16
Offenses of Larceny ↑1,943	Salary Dispute ↑474	Succession ↑372	Narcotics Hazard Prevention Act ↑238	Employment Service Act ↑15
Offenses of Forging Documents or Seals ↑1,516	Ownership ↓288	Guardianship/Assistance Order 345	Child and Youth Sexual Exploitation Prevention Act ↓226	Labor Insurance Act ↑10

(Arrow symbols ↑↓ indicate changes in the ranking of causes of action, compared to 2024.)

A Call to a Disability Legal Consultation Hotline

By Wei-Yen Chen (Staff Attorney, LAF Tainan Branch)

In late 2018, an aid recipient, “A-Ming” (a pseudonym), called the disability legal consultation hotline jointly operated by the LAF and the Ministry of Health and Welfare. He stated that he had been involuntarily hospitalized in a hospital in Kaohsiung for over twenty years and expressed his wish to leave the hospital.

Visit to the Hospital and Interviews with A-Ming, the Attending Physician, and Social Workers

Upon receiving this information, I immediately wondered what kind of medical condition could possibly result in more than two decades of continuous hospitalization. If A-Ming did not meet the criteria for involuntary hospitalization, would he, once discharged, be capable of independent living? If his account was accurate, the case might involve the most severe form of restriction on personal liberty and human rights infringement. However, this was not merely a legal issue; it also involved the protection of persons with disabilities and post-discharge placement arrangements.

Accordingly, in addition to assigning me, as a staff attorney, to visit A-Ming, the LAF Headquarters also invited Yi-Hsiang Hsieh (then Deputy Secretary-General of the Taiwan Association for Human Rights) and Fu-Yuan Liao, Director of Eden Fountain House, to participate in the subsequent handling of the case. The aim was to bring together multidisciplinary expertise in order to make the most appropriate assessment and provide the best possible assistance for A-Ming.

After informing the hospital social worker of the purpose of the visit and following multiple rounds of communication and coordination, an appointment was arranged for a December afternoon to meet A-Ming at the hospital, with the attending physician and social worker also present to facilitate a fuller understanding of his condition.

During the interview, it was learned that A-Ming, now in his fifties, first sought treatment in 1986. He was first hospitalized in a psychiatric hospital in Pingtung in 2004, and thereafter experienced intermittent admissions and discharges. In 2014, due to special circumstances, he was admitted to the current hospital’s acute ward, where he has remained ever since. His hospitalization is covered by the National Health Insurance system and is not an involuntary hospitalization under the Mental Health Act. His father has passed away, and his mother is currently residing in a care institution. He has four siblings; he is the third child. The eldest brother’s employment status is unclear, while the second brother and youngest brother both have stable jobs.

Although there are other siblings who could potentially provide support, A-Ming’s monthly benefits are collected by his eldest brother. The other siblings therefore believe that responsibility for A-Ming’s affairs rests with the eldest brother and are unwilling to intervene. However, the eldest brother is difficult to contact and rarely shows concern for A-Ming.

Long-Term Hospitalization Without Independent Living, Yet Still Hoping to Return Home

A-Ming has long held the hope that his eldest brother would take him home. Although his eldest brother repeatedly agreed, he continued to postpone or excuse the arrangement when deadlines approached. As a result, A-Ming has remained in hospital, and the hospital itself has been uncertain how to proceed due to the family’s failure to take him home.

During the interview, A-Ming communicated clearly and responded appropriately to questions, but one could sense his anxiety and uncertainty about the future. According to the physician, when he takes his medication regularly, his condition remains stable with low risk. However, he lacks the ability to live independently. If discharged, it was recommended that he be transferred to a halfway house to prevent homelessness. He had previously been placed in such a facility once, but was later returned to the hospital due to conflicts with staff.

Joint Discussion on Transitional Arrangements Toward Independent Living

The social worker noted that prior to the meeting, A-Ming’s eldest brother had already been informed of the planned visit by the LAF and reacted with considerable anxiety, suspecting that there might be special reasons for the visit. He therefore requested that A-Ming not participate in the interview, and also stated that he would take A-Ming out of the hospital by the end of January 2019.

Accordingly, during the meeting, all participants discussed the situation with A-Ming. Since A-Ming did not wish to sever ties with his eldest brother abruptly, it was agreed that the team would first observe whether the eldest brother would fulfill his commitment to take A-Ming out of the hospital by the end of January 2019. If the eldest brother failed to do so, A-Ming agreed to transition to a halfway house, with the LAF assisting in retrieving his personal belongings from his eldest brother. This gradual approach was intended to facilitate A-Ming’s adjustment and reintegration into society while reducing the risk of homelessness.

Discharge: The First Step Back to Society

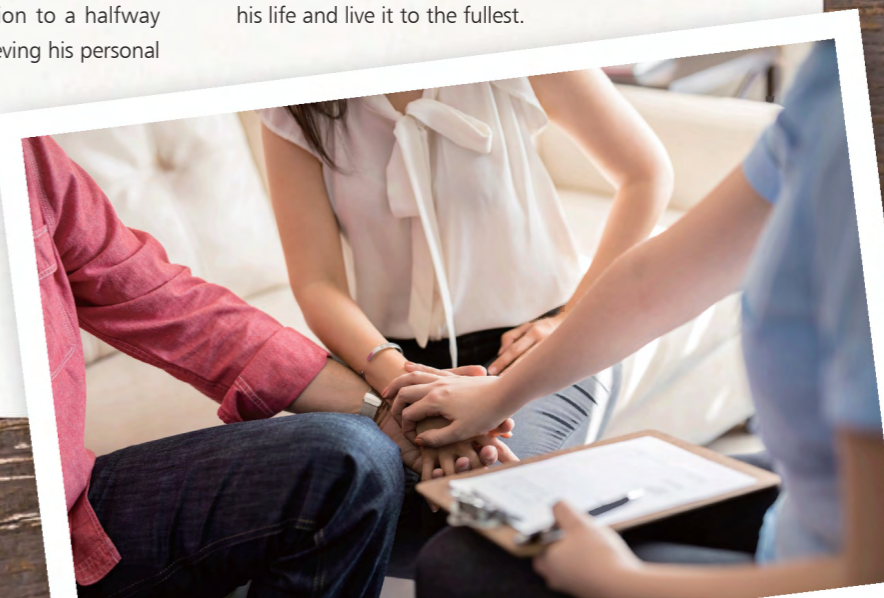
After the New Year, when I contacted the social worker, I was informed that A-Ming’s eldest brother had taken him out of the hospital on January 31, just before the Lunar New Year. This was a truly encouraging outcome.

Simple everyday activities – going out, taking a bus, having coffee at a café, walking in a park, or watching a movie – may seem ordinary, but for A-Ming, they had long been out of reach. Now, they were finally within his reach.

This case demonstrates how, through cross-sector collaboration, A-Ming – who was not under compulsory hospitalization but remained institutionalized due to family circumstances – was able to return home and regain his freedom. In reality, A-Ming had always held on to his family ties and the hope of reclaiming a sense of home.

Cases of this nature require a focus on the actual needs of the person concerned, including rebuilding the capacity for independent living, developing social reintegration skills, and strengthening interpersonal connections. Law alone plays only a supporting role. Accordingly, the integration and coordination of multidisciplinary resources are key challenges for future practice.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Deputy Secretary-General Yi-Hsiang Hsieh and Director Fu-Yuan Liao for their assistance in this case, to colleagues at LAF Headquarters for their support, and to the physicians and social workers at the hospital for their cooperation. Their joint efforts made it possible to resolve this matter in a more harmonious and satisfactory manner. I sincerely hope that A-Ming will be able to begin a new chapter in his life and live it to the fullest.



Legal Consultation Services

Expanding Access to Justice through Multiple Channels

The provision of legal consultation services constitutes an important mechanism through which the public may obtain timely access to professional legal information, enabling the early assessment of potential litigation risks and contributing to the reduction of disputes or the timely provision of legal assistance.

In 2025, the LAF provided a total of 123,285 legal consultations.

	2023	2024	2025
In-Person Legal Consultation	67,950 visits	66,944 visits	65,940 visits
Legal Consultation Helplines ◎ Helpline for General Consultation ◎ Helpline for Supporters ◎ Helpline for Crime Victims ◎ Helpline for People with Disabilities (program commissioned by the Ministry of Health and Welfare) ◎ Helpline for Tenant (program commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior)	41,828 calls	46,717 calls	51,401 calls
Video Legal Consultation	295 stations 4,773 calls	327 stations 5,886 calls	331 stations 5,944 calls



3 June 2025, Naluwan Cultural and Health Station, Xiaogang: Discussion on the differences between Indigenous customary practices and current legal regulations. (photo by staff of the Cultural and Health Station)



Taitung Branch: Daily services for persons with disabilities – video-based legal consultation



25 September 2025, Penghu Branch and the Penghu District Court held a legal aid outreach seminar in Baisha Township as part of a touring series. (photo by Yi-Ting Chen)

Top Five Types of Civil, Family, and Criminal Case Inquiries by the General Public via Telephone Legal Consultation in 2025

	Criminal Cases	Civil Cases	Family Cases	Juvenile Cases	Administrative cases
Case Categories by Percentage	22.23%	52.93%	21.68%	0.41%	1.81%
Most Frequently Inquired	Fraudulence, Breach of Trust, Taking, and Usury	The Consumer Debt Clearance Statute	Succession	Offenses of Fraudulence, Breach of Trust, Taking, and Usury↑	Road Traffic Management and Penalty Act
2 nd Most Frequently Inquired	Assault Causing Bodily Harm	Tort	Divorce	Offenses Against Sexual Autonomy↑	Labor Standards Act
3 rd Most Frequently Inquired	Offenses Against Reputation and Credit	Leasing↑	Maintenance	Assault Causing Bodily Harm↑	Public Assistance Act
4 th Most Frequently Inquired	Larceny	Loans↓	Guardianship/ Assistance Order	Child and Youth Sexual Exploitation Prevention Act↓	Prison Act
5 th Most Frequently Inquired	Offenses of Embezzlement↑	Ownership	Ordinary Protection Orders↑	Offense of Illegal Detention↑	Gender Equality in Employment Act↑

(Arrow symbols↑↓indicate changes in the ranking of causes of action, compared to 2024.)

Attorney Presence During Interrogation

Interrogated for the First Time? No Fear, A Lawyer Will Be with You!

Whom We Serve

A suspect accused of a crime punishable by not less than three years of imprisonment may apply to the LAF for the assignment of an attorney to attend the first interrogation in the case. This service is provided free of charge. (Applications may be made through the police or by directly contacting the LAF's dedicated helpline at 02-2559-2119, which operates year-round.)

Whereas the aforementioned service shall not be limited to serious offenses, should the defendant or criminal suspect meet one of the following conditions:

- is unable to make a full statement due to physical or mental disabilities;
- has Indigenous status.

If such individuals have not retained defense counsel during the investigation, the prosecutorial or police authorities are required by law to notify the LAF to assign an attorney to be present during the interrogation.

The helpline also covers cases under the Habeas Corpus Attorney Representation Program and the Legal Aid Program for Criminal Investigation and Defense in Public Interest Social Movement Cases (hereinafter referred to as "Civil Disobedience"), thereby ensuring timely protection of the public's rights.

In addition, since 1 January 2025, the LAF has implemented the Pre-Transfer Juvenile Legal Accompaniment Service. This service provides attorney presence during pre-transfer procedures for juveniles who are not Indigenous, are not unable to make a full statement due to physical or mental disabilities, and are not accused of offenses punishable by not less than three years of imprisonment, in order to safeguard their rights. Furthermore, to give effect to the Constitutional Court Judgment No. 8 of 2024, which requires that criminal proceedings in the cases specified in Paragraph 1 of the holding meet the most stringent standards of due process under the Constitution, defendants or criminal suspects in such cases may apply for attorney presence at every instance of questioning or interrogation, without being limited to the first interrogation.

Statistical Breakdown of Attorney Presence During Interrogation

Of the 5,988 applications for this service in 2025, 123 did not meet the eligibility criteria, and 80 were withdrawn after submission. A total of 5,785 cases qualified for attorney assignment. Out of these, 5,726 cases were successfully assigned an attorney by the LAF, resulting in a success rate of 98.37% for case assignments.

Attorney Presence During Interrogation Over the Past Three Years

Year	Caseload	Success Rate of Case Assignments
2023	4,007	98.57%
2024	4,639	98.37%
2025	5,726	98.98%

Compared to 2024, the number of cases eligible for attorney assignment in 2025 increased significantly by 22.66%. This growth was primarily attributable to the amendment of the Juvenile Justice Act, under which the LAF introduced a new juvenile accompaniment program and expanded coverage at the interrogation stage by prosecutorial and police authorities.

In 2025, a total of 28,190 cases involved individuals who clearly indicated at the time of initial contact that they did not require attorney accompaniment. Of these, 23,911 cases (84.82%) concerned minor offenses punishable by a minimum statutory sentence of less than three years' imprisonment. The top three categories of offenses were fraud, larceny, and public safety violations (including drunk driving, unsafe driving, and hit-and-run offenses).

The LAF continues to emphasize the importance of attorney presence during interrogations conducted by prosecutorial and police authorities, and has strengthened its communication in the attorney assignment notification form to clarify that eligible applicants are entitled to free legal assistance. It also informs applicants that the outcome of their application can be confirmed within 45 minutes, and that assigned attorneys are generally able to arrive within one to two hours depending on distance from the relevant police or investigative unit.

Legal Aid Project: Consumer Debt Clearance

Specialist Attorneys Provide Professional Assistance in Consumer Debt Clearance Cases!



22 March 2025, debtor information session



12 September 2025, training for Social Workers on Consumer Debt Clearance Cases



24 May 2025, debtor information session

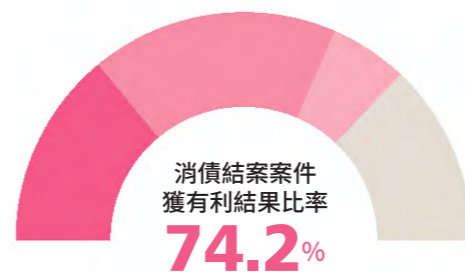
Assistance in 2025
12,229 cases

Approval Rate
87.3%

Specialist Attorneys in Consumer Debt Clearance
896 attorneys

Caseload of Legal Aid in Consumer Debt Clearance Over the Past Three Years

Year	Caseload
2023	10,142
2024	12,220
2025	12,229



- mediation or negotiation 1,760 cases 28.05%
- court-approved rehabilitation plan 2,202 cases 35.1%
- court-decreed exoneration of liquidation, and rights been restored 693 cases 11.05%
- others 1,619 cases 25.8%



Legal Aid Project for Labour Disputes

Commissioned by the Ministry of Labor

The LAF has been collaborating with the Ministry of Labor in the implementation of the Legal Aid Project for Labor Disputes since 2 March 2009. Through the integration of resources between the two organizations, this project aims to provide strong legal assistance to economically disadvantaged workers, enabling them to assert and protect their legal rights with confidence.

The cases approved by the Ministry of Labor were predominantly civil cases, accounting for as much as 98.97% of the total.

Most approved cases involved legal representation and defense, with the main issues concerning the Occupational Safety and Health Act, wage payment, employer–employee disputes over insurance coverage, severance pay, and unlawful dismissal.



Total Applications: 4,246
Total Approvals: 3,503
Approval Rate
82.5%

Caseload of The Labor Project Over the Past Three Years

Year	Caseload
2023	1,740
2024	1,780
2025	3,503



Commissioned Programs

Legal Services Project for Indigenous Peoples

Commissioned by the Council of Indigenous Peoples

On 21 March 2013, the LAF signed an entrustment agreement with the Council of Indigenous Peoples (CIP). The LAF has been managing the Legal Services Project for Indigenous Peoples since 1 April 2013. The aim is to improve the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples and provide them with better and more comprehensive legal aid services.

The cases commissioned by the CIP predominantly concerned civil cases, accounting for 59.75% of the application total; and secondly family cases, accounting for 22.9%.

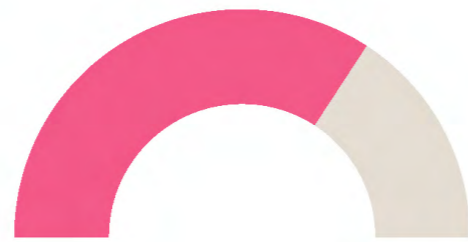
Most of these applications were granted aid in legal representation and defense.

The top four types of cases granted legal aid were torts, ownership disputes, maintenance payments, and assault causing bodily harm.

In November 2024, the LAF signed an agreement with National Dong Hwa University to obtain authorization for access to its video platform featuring legal and cultural courses on Indigenous issues. These resources are made available to legal aid attorneys, review committee members, and staff, with the aim of deepening understanding through real-world cases that illustrate the cultural conflicts Indigenous peoples face in contemporary society and thereby enhancing the quality of legal aid services. At present, 1,984 attorneys have obtained training credit certification through the online course on Indigenous issues.



22 October 2025, inter-agency coordination meeting with social welfare institutions hosted by the Indigenous Peoples Affairs Office of the Nantou County Government



Total Applications: 3,005
Total Approvals: 2,067
Approval Rate
68.45%

Caseload of The Indigenous Project Over the Past Three Years

Year	Caseload
2023	1,752
2024	1,957
2025	2,057

Indigenous Legal Aid Consultation Services
Telephone legal consultations: **2,522** calls
(extension 412-8518, press 2 then 1)
In-person legal consultations: **2,768** cases



27 September 2025, lecture on Indigenous workers' rights delivered by Attorney Sung-Hsi Liao, Taitung Branch (Taitung Beinan Visitor Center)

Commissioned Programs

Legal Aid Project for Residential Lease Disputes

Commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior

In view of the fact that tenants in current residential leasing relationships are often in a disadvantaged position during contract negotiations – due to their limited financial resources and immediate housing needs – and further recognizing that, when leasing disputes arise, tenants are frequently constrained by unfavorable lease terms and may be unable to seek timely legal assistance, resulting in the impairment of their rights, the Ministry of the Interior commissioned the LAF, through an administrative arrangement, to implement the Legal Aid Project for Residential Lease Disputes (hereinafter referred to as the “MOI Project”). The LAF agreed to undertake this project in April 2024. The project provides legal aid for common residential leasing disputes – such as early termination of leases, improper deductions from security deposits or wrongful imposition of penalties, disputes arising from property repairs, and other legal issues related to residential leases. It assists tenants who are unable to resolve disputes through administrative mediation by supporting them in court mediation, litigation, provisional remedies, payment orders, enforcement proceedings, or arbitration, in order to safeguard their lawful tenancy rights.

The MOI Project delivers legal aid through two primary forms: legal consultation, and attorney representation and legal document drafting. Implementation has proceeded in two phases. Beginning on 1 August 2024, the LAF launched the



Tenant Helpline for Lease Disputes through its Telephone Legal Consultation Center, where consulting attorneys provide real-time legal advice via telephone. Starting from 30 September 2025, the LAF formally began accepting applications for attorney representation and legal document drafting under the project.

Tenant Helpline for Lease Disputes

Operated by the LAF’s Telephone Legal Consultation Center, this helpline provides specialized legal aid services through telephone consultations. In 2025, a total of 5,043 consultations were handled. The most common issues involved disputes over security deposits, early lease termination by tenants, property repairs, and early lease termination by landlords.

Future Outlook

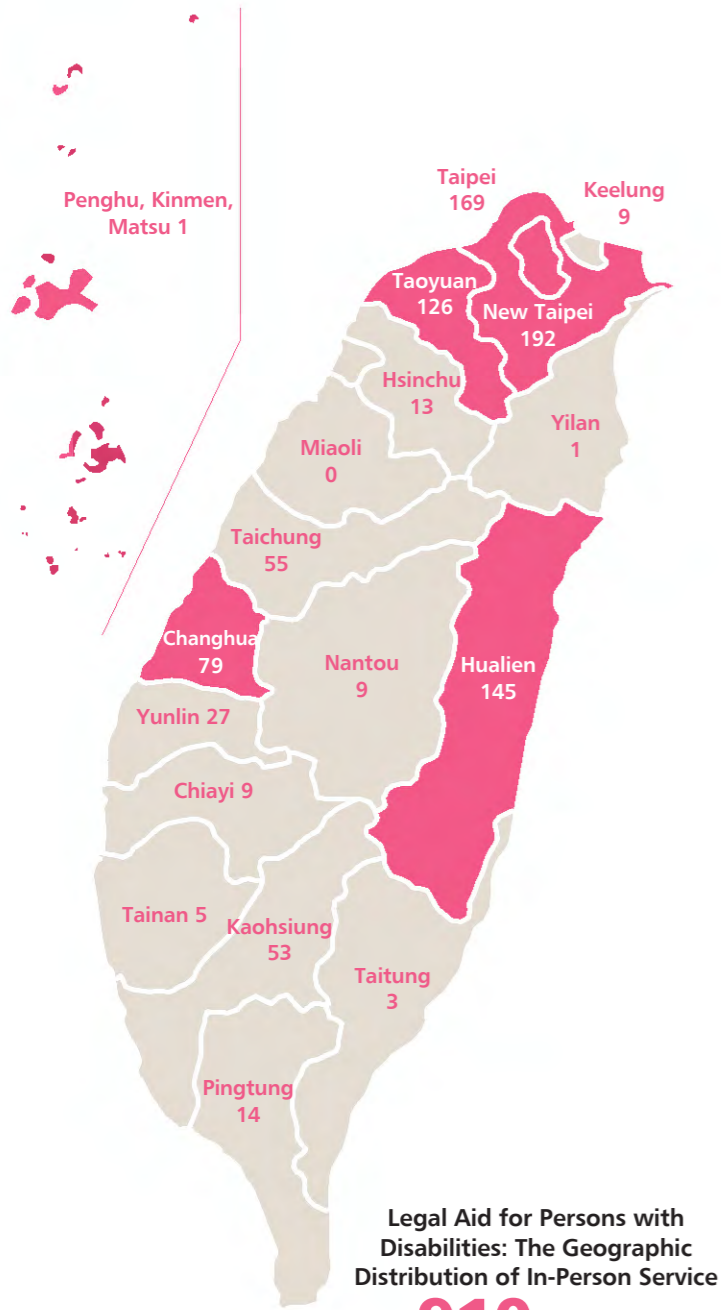
Following the commencement of applications for attorney representation and legal document drafting on 30 September 2025, a total of 6 applications were received by the end of the year, of which 3 were approved and 3 were denied. To reduce barriers for tenants in accessing legal aid resources, under this project, tenants who hold a rent subsidy approval letter issued by the competent authority are not required to submit additional documentation for means testing. Where a case is deemed eligible upon review, legal aid may be granted in accordance with the project’s criteria. Through these measures, the LAF aims to effectively safeguard tenants’ rights within residential leasing relationships and enhance access to legal aid resources.



28 August 2025, training session for legal aid attorneys under the Ministry of the Interior’s Residential Lease Disputes Project

Legal Aid Project for Persons with Disabilities and for Individuals with Severe Mental Illness During Emergency Placement

Commissioned by the Ministry of Health and Welfare



Legal Aid for Persons with Disabilities: The Geographic Distribution of In-Person Service
910 cases
 as of 14 January 2026

The LAF has been commissioned by the Ministry of Health and Welfare to implement the Legal Aid Project for Persons with Disabilities since 2018. The project was launched on 15 October 2018, and from its inception through November 2019, services were limited to legal consultations, including telephone, video, in-person consultations at designated service locations, and home-visit consultations. Beginning on 1 December 2019, the LAF was further entrusted to provide legal aid in the form of representation in litigation, legal defense, and the drafting of legal documents. Following the amendment of the Mental Health Act on 14 December 2022, the Ministry of Health and Welfare expanded the scope of its commission to include legal aid for individuals with severe mental illness during periods of emergency placement, effective from 2025.

Legal Aid for Persons with Disabilities

To enhance access to legal aid for persons with disabilities, the LAF has actively improved both its digital and physical accessibility. These efforts include enhancements to its website and promotional materials, upgrades to accessibility facilities at branch offices, provision of LINE@ services for the deaf community, and assistance in arranging sign language interpreters or real-time transcription services when applying for attorney assistance or legal consultation. In 2025, the LAF also completed and published the *Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid for Persons with Disabilities*, which set out available accessibility resources and application procedures. The Guidelines are intended to provide a systematic and user-friendly source of information to support persons with disabilities in accessing legal aid services.

Legal Consultation Services

- © **Service Helpline:** 7,296 consultations made through the helpline Helpline: 412-8518 (After connected, press “2” for Telephone Consultation, and then press “2” again for Legal Consultation for People with Disabilities.)
- © **In-Person Service:** 910 consultations in total In 2025, the LAF operated 44 in-person legal consultation sites across Taiwan that are fully accessible and provide accessible communication support for persons with disabilities,

including sign language interpretation and real-time transcription services (both subject to prior appointment).

- © **Home Visit Legal Consultation Service:** This service is provided to individuals who are unable to obtain legal consultation via telephone or video services, and who, due to mobility limitations, cannot or are clearly unable to attend in-person consultations at the LAF’s service locations. In such cases, the LAF provides legal consultation through attorney home visits.

The term “home visit” is not limited to visits to the client’s residence. Where a client is hospitalized in a psychiatric ward and is unable or clearly unable to access other forms of legal consultation, the LAF may likewise provide legal consultation through attorney home visits.

In 2025, a total of 36 cases were approved and provided with this service. Among these, 24 consultations were conducted at medical institutions, 1 at a correctional institution, and 11 at the applicants’ residences.

- © **Video Legal Consultation Service:** The LAF has established 292 video legal consultation service sites nationwide and provides an online appointment-based video legal consultation service. In 2025, a total of 370 persons with disabilities utilized the video legal consultation service. The highest number of consultations was recorded in Yilan County (97 cases), followed by Taitung (75 cases) and Taoyuan (47 cases).

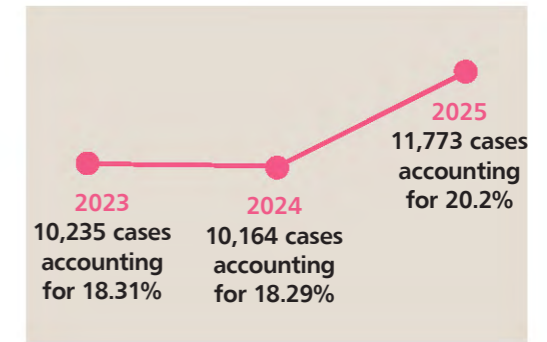
Representation in Litigation, Defense, and Legal Document Drafting Services

In 2025, a total of 2,996 applications were submitted for these services. Of these, 1,594 cases were approved for legal aid, representing an approval rate of 53.20%, an increase of 7.5 percentage points compared with the previous year (45.67%). By case type, criminal cases accounted for the largest proportion at 42.60%, followed by civil cases at 40.72%. The most common matters involved offenses of fraudulence, breach of trust, taking and usury under the Criminal Code, as well as offenses under the Money Laundering Control Act and assault causing bodily harm.

Legal Aid for Individuals with Severe Mental Illness During Emergency Placement

The LAF has been commissioned to provide legal aid for individuals with severe mental illness during periods of emergency placement. In the first phase (starting 1 January 2025), legal consultation services for such individuals at medical institutions are provided. In the second phase (expected to take effect upon the implementation of Chapter 5 of the Mental Health Act, tentatively in the second half of 2026), legal

Caseload of Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Over the Past Three Years
 (excl. the commissioned cases)



Caseload of LAF Assistance in Legal Representation, Defense and Writing for Persons with Disabilities Over the Past Three Years

Year	Caseload
2023	401
2024	1,107
2025	1,594

assistance will be extended to include attorney support during emergency placement, including attorney-client interviews during the placement period, as well as attorney representation in subsequent non-contentious court proceedings should a medical institution petition the court for an order of compulsory hospitalization.

Since 2025, the LAF has conducted 10 in-person continuing education sessions and produced one online training video for legal aid attorneys. These efforts have supported the establishment of a roster of legal aid attorneys, which comprised 259 attorneys by the end of the year. LAF staff have also participated in relevant training programs to enhance their understanding of the new expert-participation framework under the Mental Health Act. In addition, the LAF has produced informational leaflets promoting the commissioned program for distribution and reference at 104 designated psychiatric medical institutions nationwide. Furthermore, the LAF has actively coordinated with courts and designated medical institutions to establish liaison channels and exchange views on the implementation of the expert-participation framework under the Mental Health Act. These efforts aim to effectively safeguard the rights of individuals with severe mental illness during emergency placement and to strengthen their access to legal aid resources.

Pregnancy Discrimination in the Workplace Amid Declining Birth Rates

By Attorney Chien-Wei Chen (Chuang Chien International Law Firm)

Some days ago, I was assigned by the LAF to handle a pregnancy discrimination and unlawful dismissal case arising under the Gender Equality in Employment Act. From the facts of the case, the employer's hostile treatment and apparent bad faith vividly illustrated the difficulties faced by pregnant women in today's workplaces. In many respects, the case may also serve as a representative example of the social realities contributing to Taiwan's declining birth rate. I was therefore invited to share this experience with readers.

The aid recipient, "Hsiao-Mei" (a pseudonym), worked as an accountant at a company. Now in her thirties, she had been employed there for more than three years and had consistently approached her work with diligence and professionalism. However, the stable life she had built changed dramatically after she informed her employer that she was pregnant.

At first, her employer merely asked her to "think about what would happen to work in the future." Hsiao-Mei initially did not think much of it, believing that taking maternity leave after childbirth was entirely normal. Yet approximately half a month later, the employer removed from her the accounting records she had previously been responsible for handling. The employer then began falsely accusing her, as the company accountant, of maintaining unclear and improper accounts. Although Hsiao-Mei repeatedly explained that there had been no accounting irregularities, the employer had already decided to dismiss her unlawfully and deliberately sought to fabricate grounds for doing so. Unsurprisingly, her explanations were ignored.

The employer continued to make malicious and unfounded accusations concerning alleged accounting problems and ultimately dismissed Hsiao-Mei on the pretext that she was incapable of performing her duties. Even during labor dispute mediation proceedings, the employer falsely accused her of embezzlement and forgery. Although Hsiao-Mei firmly denied these allegations and understood that they had been fabricated solely because the employer wished to dismiss her due to her pregnancy, she nevertheless endured tremendous emotional distress. At the outset, lacking professional legal assistance, she was unable to fully assert that the dismissal constituted unlawful pregnancy discrimination.

Fortunately, Hsiao-Mei later learned that she was eligible for assistance under a joint program operated by the Ministry of

Labor and the LAF. After the case was assigned to me, I met with her to better understand her situation and concerns. I explained that dismissing or mistreating a female employee because of pregnancy constitutes unlawful discrimination under the Gender Equality in Employment Act. Through litigation, she could seek confirmation of the existence of the employment relationship, claim unpaid wages and labor pension contributions, and pursue compensation for the emotional distress caused by the employer's violation of the Act.

After we thoroughly presented evidence and clarified that the employer's accusations were entirely fabricated, the court ultimately ruled in Hsiao-Mei's favor. She has since safely given birth to her child. The employer was ordered not only to pay wages covering the period from the unlawful dismissal to her reinstatement, but also to compensate her for the emotional harm caused by the pregnancy discrimination and unlawful termination.

As Hsiao-Mei's legal aid attorney, beyond presenting this case, I would also like to offer several reflections on gender equality in employment.

The Long Road Toward Gender Equality

Article 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of China (Taiwan) provides that: "All citizens of the Republic of China, irrespective of sex, religion, race, class, or party affiliation, shall be equal before the law." Gender equality is not only a fundamental constitutional right, but also a universal value and one of the core aspirations embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

For many years, however, traditional social norms, cultural expectations, institutional structures, gender stereotypes, and prejudice created persistent disparities in power and status between genders across political, economic, and sociocultural spheres. As a result, the constitutional guarantee of gender equality was often not fully realized in either law or practice.

Fortunately, with Taiwan's democratization and the lifting of martial law, significant progress has gradually been achieved in implementing gender equality protections through legislation, including the enactment of the Sexual Assault Crime Prevention Act, the Domestic Violence Prevention Act, the Gender Equality in Employment Act, the Gender Equity Education Act, and



(Illustrative photo)

justice and asserting their rights, pregnant employees frequently experience deep anxiety and uncertainty.

Without professional legal assistance, the equal employment rights of pregnant workers may therefore fail to receive meaningful protection and effective enforcement. Accordingly, when workers encounter pregnancy discrimination or other unlawful treatment, seeking legal assistance from an attorney is not merely advisable, but essential.

In this regard, the legal aid services provided by the LAF constitute critically important support for workers. The LAF's contributions have played an indispensable role in advancing the protection and realization of equal employment rights.

Recognizing Women's Contributions in the Workplace and Safeguarding Their Rights

Finally, although the Gender Equality in Employment Act has been in force for many years, and although the government has implemented numerous policies and established dedicated institutions to promote equal employment rights, some employers still lack awareness regarding gender equality in employment and continue to engage in discriminatory practices in the workplace. Some even unlawfully dismiss pregnant employees under fabricated or pretextual grounds.

This phenomenon demonstrates that traditional gender roles, rigidly stereotyped divisions of labor, and gender discriminatory have not yet been fully eliminated. It also reflects a continuing failure to adequately recognize the significant contributions made by women in the workplace. As a result, resistance to genuine gender equality in employment still persists within society.

Such gender discrimination, including pregnancy discrimination, not only restricts and undermines the development of equal employment rights, but also constitutes one of the factors contributing to today's declining birth rate. This is neither beneficial to society nor conducive to the nation's long-term well-being.

Addressing this problem requires not only continued correction through judicial decisions and administrative enforcement, so that employers no longer believe they can evade accountability, but also sustained public education and advocacy concerning equal employment rights. In addition, the government must take the lead in fostering more supportive and family-friendly workplace environments.

It is my sincere hope that one day workplace gender discrimination will no longer exist, that women's contributions in the workplace will receive the recognition they deserve, and that women's equal employment rights will be fully protected, thereby achieving genuine gender equality in the right to work.

the Sexual Harassment Prevention Act. The government has also established dedicated gender equality institutions and promulgated policy guidelines aimed at fully realizing gender equality and advancing toward a more just and equitable society.

It must nevertheless be acknowledged that traditional gender roles, rigidly stereotyped divisions of labor, and gender discrimination were once pervasive in society and significantly hindered the realization of equal employment rights. In response, Taiwan enacted the Gender Equality in Employment Act in 2002, which came into force on March 8 of the same year. Article 1, Paragraph 1 of the Act expressly states its purpose: "The Act is enacted to protect gender equality in the workplace, implement thoroughly the constitutional mandate of eliminating gender discrimination, and promote the spirit of substantial gender equality." The enactment of the Act therefore marked a new chapter in the protection of equal employment rights.

Indeed, through legislative reform, effective implementation by government agencies, and evolving social attitudes, Taiwan has made remarkable progress toward gender equality. Nevertheless, more than twenty years after the implementation of the Gender Equality in Employment Act, important questions remain regarding the actual realization of equal employment rights and whether workers subjected to gender discrimination in the workplace are truly able to obtain meaningful protection. In particular, the association between Taiwan's declining birth rate and the pregnancy discrimination faced by female workers in the workplace remains an issue warranting continued reflection and discussion.

Professional Legal Assistance Provides Greater Protection in Asserting Rights

One of the important lessons from the case described above is that, even more than twenty years after the implementation of the Gender Equality in Employment Act, many members of the public still do not fully understand the scope of the equal employment rights protected under the Act. Some employers continue to take chances by disguising pregnancy discrimination under various pretexts, or even by fabricating false allegations.

At the same time, female workers seeking to assert their rights often face employers willing to resort to character attacks, defamation, and other harmful tactics because of the employee's pregnancy. Such conduct places tremendous emotional and psychological strain on workers. Moreover, throughout the long process of seeking



Workers Group Class Action Against RCA Taiwan for Pollution

Status in 2025

In the second remand proceedings, the Taiwan High Court rendered its judgment on 15 January 2025. The court recognized that, in addition to exposure to the original 31 chemical substances at issue, the designated plaintiffs in this case had also been exposed to lead. The Court further found a causal relationship between exposure to the 32 chemical substances at issue and the 18 diseases additionally asserted by the plaintiffs. For designated plaintiffs who did not exhibit manifest physical illnesses associated with the disputed substances, the Court nevertheless recognized infringement of their bodily rights. The Court awarded total compensation of TWD170.7 million, representing an increase of TWD25.81 million over the prior judgment. However, the Court dismissed the additional claims raised by the plaintiffs during the successive stages of the proceedings. Both parties appealed the unfavorable portions of the judgment to the Supreme Court.

Caused by No. 6 Naphtha Cracking Complex of Formosa Plastics Corp.

Status in 2025

The LAF represented 68 aid recipients in a civil action seeking damages from Formosa Plastics. On 29 November 2024, the Taiwan Yunlin District Court rendered its judgment in Civil Case No. 104-Gong-Zi-1, dismissing the plaintiffs' claims. The legal team has assisted the aid recipients in filing an appeal, and the case is currently pending before the Taiwan High Court Tainan Branch Court as Case No. 114-Gong-Shang-Zi-1. The Tainan Branch Court has commissioned the Institute of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences at National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University to conduct an expert evaluation, and further hearings for adversarial proceedings between the parties have been scheduled.

Railway Accident: The Derailment of Taiwan Railway's Taroko Express

Status in 2025

In the second-instance criminal proceedings, judgments regarding the construction contractor and the foreign migrant worker were rendered on 29 May 2025. The contractor's sentence was revised to 12 years and 6 months' imprisonment, while the acquittal of the foreign migrant worker was upheld. The second-instance proceedings against the remaining defendants are still pending before the Taiwan High Court Hualien Branch Court. LAF staff attorneys will continue to assist the victims throughout the litigation process by advancing arguments challenging the portions

of the original judgment adverse to the victims, with a view to safeguarding their rights and interests. In addition, with respect to certain defendants for whom motions for reconsideration of the original non-prosecution dispositions had been filed, the Hualien Branch of the Taiwan High Prosecutors Office remanded the cases for further investigation. After continuing its investigation, the Taiwan Hualien District Prosecutors Office again issued non-prosecution dispositions. The LAF also assisted the victims in filing further motions for reconsideration; however, those motions were dismissed, and the non-prosecution dispositions became final. With regard to the civil compensation claims, all parties assisted by the LAF have reached settlements with Taiwan Railway and received compensation.

Human Trafficking: The Case of Ugandan Students

Status in 2025

The criminal proceedings are currently pending before the Taiwan High Court Taichung Branch Court. In the civil proceedings, staff attorneys are also representing the Ugandan students who are victims of trafficking in seeking compensation for non-pecuniary damages arising from labor exploitation. The case is currently pending before the Taiwan Changhua District Court.

Kenya Human Trafficking Case

Status in 2025

In regard to the criminal proceedings, the Taiwan Taoyuan District Prosecutors Office previously indicted certain defendants for offenses including human trafficking. The case is now pending before the Taiwan Taoyuan District Court. The LAF has assigned three staff attorneys to act as legal representatives for the complainants and as representatives for victims' participation in the criminal proceedings.

With respect to the civil claims, the staff attorneys filed wage payment lawsuits on behalf of some of the aid recipients with the Taiwan Taoyuan District Court. A settlement was reached through mediation with the defendants in October 2024. However, as the defendants failed to perform in accordance with the mediation record, the LAF assisted the aid recipients in applying for compulsory enforcement. During enforcement proceedings, one of the defendants reached a settlement with the aid recipients and fully performed the agreed obligations.

In addition, Aid Recipient D, whose workplace differed from that of the other aid recipients, filed a separate civil action. This case resulted in a court-mediated settlement. However, as the defendant failed to comply with the settlement terms, an application for compulsory enforcement was filed, and the case is currently pending enforcement before the Taiwan Taoyuan District Court.

Criminal Grand Chamber Case

Case Overview

The aid recipient was involved in fraud-related offenses as a front-line member of a fraudulent criminal organization. He confessed throughout the investigation stage and subsequent trials. He was indicted by the prosecutor and found guilty by the trial courts. However, there had been divergent interpretations in prior Supreme Court judgments regarding the legal meaning of "criminal proceeds" under the first sentence of Article 47 of the Fraud Crime Hazard Prevention Act applicable in this case. Accordingly, after deliberation, the panel of the Supreme Court hearing this case referred the matter to the Criminal Grand Chamber pursuant to Article 51-2 of the Court Organization Act. The Court also formally requested the LAF to appoint defense counsel.

Status of Legal Aid Assistance and Outcome

The case was jointly handled by LAF staff attorneys and contract legal aid attorneys. With respect to the legal issue referred to the Grand Chamber, the legal team collected and analyzed relevant judicial precedents and academic literature, and presented arguments before the Grand Chamber from perspectives including legal characterization, legislative history, textual interpretation, criminal policy considerations, and systemic interpretation. The Grand Chamber of the Supreme Court held oral arguments on 16 April 2025, and invited Professors Yun-Hua Yang and Shih-Hsuan Huang to provide expert opinions on the legal issues involved. In its Grand Chamber Ruling 113-Tai-Shang-Da-Zi-1096, the Supreme Court issued its judgment on 29 May 2025, partially quashing the original decision and remanding the case for further proceedings.

New Taipei Indigenous Housing (Zhongzheng and Longenpu) Lease Renewal Case

Case Overview

The aid recipients are Indigenous people, most of whom are Amis. In the 1960s and 1970s, as Taiwan underwent rapid economic development, many of them left their ancestral homelands in Taitung and Hualien to seek employment in northern urban areas. Due to difficulties adapting to urban life and the high cost of rent, they searched for riverbank areas similar to their places of origin and constructed housing using materials such as corrugated metal sheets and wood. Over time, these settlements developed into communities resembling tribal villages (e.g., Cinemnemay and Xiaobitan Settlement). Because these dwellings were located along riverbanks, mostly on state-owned land within designated river management zones, they were deemed unauthorized structures.

The Taipei County Government (now the New Taipei City Government) later carried out forced removals of these settlements pursuant to government policy and relocated the

residents to the Zhongzheng Public Housing in Xindian. At the time, the Government assured the residents that they would enjoy permanent residency rights and would eventually be able to acquire ownership of the housing through a rent-to-own arrangement. Relying on these representations, the aid recipients relocated to the Housing at issue. However, following changes in government and policy shifts, the New Taipei City Government unilaterally amended the Indigenous housing regulations without prior consultation with the residents, introducing additional eligibility requirements. As a result, the aid recipients were no longer able to meet the criteria for lease renewal, and some were even ordered to vacate the premises. In 2024, enforcement proceedings were carried out against certain residents. The aid recipients argue that they have long established their lives in the Housing at issue and request that the New Taipei City Government uphold its original commitments, allowing them to continue residing there so as to avoid displacement and homelessness.

In recent years, cases involving government-ordered relocation of Indigenous settlements in urban areas have been widespread, such as the Ljavek Tribe in Kaohsiung, and Cinemnemay and the Sanying Tribe in New Taipei City. These cases reflect that the protection of adequate housing rights for Indigenous peoples, as enshrined in the International Covenants on Human Rights and the Indigenous Peoples Basic Law, has not been fully implemented. According to statistics from the Council of Indigenous Peoples in 2018, nearly 50% of the Indigenous population resides in urban areas, underscoring that housing rights for Indigenous peoples in cities constitute a critical issue. This case is therefore a significant benchmark in the development of Indigenous peoples' right to adequate housing, with substantial implications for Indigenous rights as a whole.

Status of Legal Aid Assistance and Outcome

This case was jointly handled by a team consisting of LAF staff attorneys and contract legal aid attorneys. After review and research, the legal team concluded that the matter involved the State's implementation of Indigenous resettlement policy pursuant to a lease agreement, and therefore concerned both civil and administrative legal relationships. It was thus recommended that the aid recipients pursue both civil and administrative remedies in parallel to adequately protect their rights. Legal aid was subsequently provided for representation in civil actions for debtor's objection at both first and second instance (simplified proceedings), as well as for administrative appeal proceedings. At present, all first-instance civil judgments in the debtor's objection actions were unfavorable, and appeals have been filed, with the cases currently pending before the second instance court. In the administrative proceedings, the New Taipei City Government issued decisions partially dismissing and partially rejecting the appeals. The aid recipients have further filed administrative litigation, which is currently pending before the Taipei High Administrative Court.

Major Achievements of the Legal Center of Indigenous Peoples

On 12 March 2018, the LAF established its Legal Center of Indigenous Peoples in Hualien. The Center's staff attorneys provide culturally sensitive and professionally sound legal aid in cases involving Indigenous cultures, customary practices, and traditional territories. Beginning 1 January 2021, the Center's Western Office in Hsinchu also officially opened to the public. In 2025, the major achievements of the Center are as follows.

Fengping River and Its Tributaries

Status of Legal Aid

Regarding the environmental impact assessment litigation, although Shih Fong Power submitted an Environmental Impact Assessment in 2009, no development activities have been undertaken to date, and the three-year period prescribed under Article 16-1 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Act has already elapsed. Accordingly, a legal team jointly formed by the LAF's staff attorneys and contract legal aid attorneys assisted the aid recipients in filing a citizen suit with the Taipei High Administrative Court, seeking an order requiring the Ministry of Environment to direct Shih Fong Power to resubmit an Environmental Impact Assessment. The Taipei High Administrative Court dismissed the action in Judgment No. 110-Su-Zi-913. The legal team subsequently assisted the aid recipients in filing an appeal with the Supreme Administrative Court, where the case remains pending.

Regarding the administrative appeals and litigation related to the construction permits, the legal team not only assisted the aid recipients in seeking administrative remedies against the construction permit decisions, but also helped them file motions for injunctive relief with the Executive Yuan and the Taipei High Administrative Court. The first-instance administrative proceedings in both cases concerning the construction permits are currently pending.

Yuandun Tribe Consultation and Consent Case

Status of Legal Aid

The administrative revocation lawsuits concerning the two development projects involving the Yuandun Tribe are currently pending before the Taichung High Administrative Court. The parties are in intensive dispute over issues including whether the plaintiffs have standing, whether the two development sites fall within the Yuandun Tribe's traditional territory, and whether there are procedural defects in the consultation and consent process. The Court has also encouraged the parties to attempt settlement. Following discussions between the staff attorneys and the legal aid recipients, a settlement is not ruled out in principle. However, any settlement would require not only the participation of the administrative authority but also the involvement and consent of the project developers, namely Tai'an Shanhejing Co., Ltd.

and WenShui Spring Development Co. Ltd. The Court has therefore ordered both developers to join the proceedings. The staff attorneys continue to serve as a bridge for communication and dialogue between the Yuandun Tribe and the developers. Mediation sessions were conducted on 9 June, 17 July, and 20 October 2025 among the Yuandun Tribe, the county government, the township office, and the developers. The parties reached a consensus on the benefit-sharing arrangements under the consultation and consent framework. Nevertheless, the agreement remains subject to approval by a tribal assembly vote. Accordingly, the mediation consensus provides that the Yuandun Tribe will convene a tribal assembly to vote on the consultation and consent matters; if approved by vote, both parties will sign a formal settlement record.

The tribal assembly has already received notification from the township office to convene a meeting. The case is expected to be decided at the tribal assembly scheduled for 5 April 2026.

S'yux Tribe 921 Earthquake Relocation Program

Case Overview

The 1999 Jiji (921) Earthquake caused severe devastation to S'yux Tribe in Ziyou Village, Heping District, Taichung City. Nearly all houses in the community were destroyed, forcing residents to temporarily reside in tents. In the same year, the S'yux settlement was designated as a hazardous area and included in the list of communities requiring relocation. The Council of Indigenous Peoples of the Executive Yuan included the settlement in the "Indigenous Community Reconstruction Plan" covering 23 villages (including S'yux), which was subsequently approved by the Executive Yuan.

Under the then-applicable provisions of the Provisional Statute for Disaster Recovery of the September 21 Earthquake, the Operational Guidelines for the Reconstruction of Rural Townships, Rural Settlements, and Indigenous Settlements Affected by the 921 Earthquake, and the Indigenous Community Reconstruction Plan approved by the Executive Yuan, land for relocated Indigenous settlements (including public facilities) and for settlement expansion was to be acquired and provided by the government. Accordingly, the Taichung City Heping District Office at the time allocated a budget for "compensation for land and fixtures" for S'yux Tribe under the Reconstruction Plan and allocated the reconstruction housing sites through a public draw among 45 affected households. The affected Indigenous residents then rebuilt their homes on the allocated sites using self-raised funds in accordance with the Reconstruction Plan and the public draw results. Through the District Office, they obtained consent letters from the original landowners for use of the land and applied for building permits from the Taichung County Government. The reconstructed housing was completed on 30 September 2005, and residents have lived there since obtaining lawful occupancy permits issued through the District Office on 17

October 2005.

However, the District Office did not subsequently undertake any land title regularization for the reconstruction housing sites. In addition, some of the sites were later subject to compulsory auction, and the successful purchasers brought litigation against the affected residents, seriously affecting their rights. The residents therefore sought legal aid from the LAF for related civil and administrative proceedings.

Status of Legal Aid

In May 2022, a legal team was formed to assist the Indigenous residents in both litigation and non-litigation advocacy. The litigation matters include: administrative litigation seeking an order requiring the Taichung City Dongshi Land Office to issue a public notice regarding the acquisition of superficies by prescription; actions against landowners for removal of structures and return of land; and actions seeking confirmation of the acquisition of superficies rights by prescription. Non-litigation efforts include communication with central and local administrative authorities and legislative bodies, as well as assisting the residents in articulating their needs regarding the reconstruction plan. The status of the relevant cases is as follows:

(1) Civil cases concerning removal of structures and return of land, and the acquisition of superficies by prescription

With assistance from the legal team, the affected residents applied in 2022 to the Taichung City Dongshi Land Office for registration of the acquisition of superficies by prescription over the reconstruction housing sites. The application was rejected. During this period, the landowners separately brought civil actions seeking removal of structures and return of land. The legal team has been assisting in defending those actions and has also assisted the residents in filing civil actions seeking confirmation of prescription-based acquisition of rights against the landowners. A total of three civil cases is currently pending before the court.

(2) Administrative litigation concerning the request for the Taichung City Dongshi Land Office to issue a public notice regarding the acquisition of superficies by prescription

As noted above, following the rejection of the residents' application for registration of the acquisition of superficies by prescription, the legal team assisted in filing administrative appeals and litigation seeking an order requiring the Dongshi Land Office to issue an administrative disposition publishing the recognition of such rights over the reconstruction housing sites. However, on 16 July 2025, the Taichung High Administrative Court dismissed the claim. The residents disagreed with the judgment, and in order to protect their rights, the legal team assisted in filing an appeal. The case is currently pending before the Supreme Administrative Court.

Preschool Children in Guanshan, Taitung

Case Overview

In January 2025, allegations emerged that preschool children enrolled in a special education class for young children with disabilities at an elementary school in Taitung County had been subjected to inappropriate treatment by school personnel. Investigation revealed that there were six child victims, most of whom had intellectual disabilities and were unable to speak or otherwise communicate effectively. Beginning on 8 January 2025, parents noticed signs including unexplained injuries, nighttime crying, and symptoms of fear and distress. The elementary school subsequently reported a suspected case of inappropriate treatment by teachers to the Department of Education of the Taitung County Government. Following an investigation, the Department issued a report concluding that the special education teachers and teaching assistants involved had engaged in inappropriate treatment of the children in violation of the Early Childhood Education and Care Act, and imposed administrative sanctions accordingly.

After receiving legal aid from the LAF, the parents of the child victims filed criminal complaints with the Taiwan Taitung District Prosecutors Office, alleging offenses including causing bodily harm and endangering the healthy development of children. Following investigation, the Taiwan Taitung District Prosecutors Office determined that the defendants had engaged in acts against the six children in the special education preschool class including grabbing the children by the hair, throwing them, forcefully slamming them down, and compelling them to run, thereby constituting the offenses of causing bodily harm, endangering the healthy development of children, and coercion under the Criminal Code, committed as joint offenders. Following the indictment, the parents of five of the child victims applied to the LAF for legal aid.

As all of the child victims have disabilities and face difficulty verbally describing the abuse they suffered and its physical and psychological impact, reliance solely on the public prosecutor's presentation of the case would likely be insufficient. It is therefore necessary to assist in collecting evidence, clarifying the line between inappropriate treatment and professional educational judgment, and supplementing legal arguments regarding the offense of endangering the healthy development of children and joint liability by omission.

Status of Legal Aid

The LAF granted legal aid for representation as attorneys ad litem in the first-instance ordinary criminal proceedings, as well as representation in the first-instance ancillary civil action attached to the criminal proceedings. The case is being handled by LAF staff attorneys. The matter is currently pending before the Taiwan Taitung District Court. Preparatory proceedings were held on 26 and 27 November 2025, and the case is currently awaiting further proceedings.



Since the introduction of the Citizen Judge system in 2023, the adjudication of major criminal cases in Taiwan has shifted from a system decided solely by professional judges to one incorporating citizen participation in criminal trials. Because the Citizen Judge system incorporates an adversarial model, the success of the system depends not only on whether citizen judges are able to participate effectively in trial proceedings, but also on whether both the prosecution and the defense have the professional competence necessary to support the operation of the system, particularly with respect to ensuring the quality of legal representation in criminal proceedings. Accordingly, the LAF established the Criminal Defense Office in 2025. The purposes of the Center and its principal achievements are briefly outlined below:

Implementing “Substantive and Effective Defense” in Accordance with No. 113-Xian-Pan-Zi-8

To comply with the principles set forth by the Judicial Yuan Justices in No. 113-Xian-Pan-Zi-8, which held that capital cases must be adjudicated through “the most rigorous legal procedures,” the LAF recognized that such procedural requirements extend beyond mere formal compliance and must ensure that defendants receive adequate, professional, and effective legal representation throughout the proceedings. Articles 13 and 15 of the Enforcement Rules of the Citizen Judges Act further expressly require courts and the LAF, when appointing defense counsel or assigning legal aid attorneys, to take into account the purposes of the Citizen Judge system and

to ensure defendants receive meaningful and effective legal representation by selecting competent counsel. These provisions underscore that the professional competence of defense counsel is itself an indispensable component of the institutional design.

Against this constitutional and legal backdrop, the LAF established the Criminal Defense Office in March 2025 and assigned staff attorneys to centralize the handling of Citizen Judge cases, thereby addressing the institutional demand for “meaningful and effective legal representation.”

Safeguarding Procedural Justice for Vulnerable Defendants

At present, the Criminal Defense Office primarily handles Citizen Judge cases involving defendants with mental or physical disabilities, homeless individuals, long-term unemployed persons, and defendants lacking family support networks, while also assisting in the defense of high-profile cases. Such cases frequently involve highly specialized and interdisciplinary issues, including psychiatric evaluations, sentencing evaluations, questions regarding criminal responsibility, social functioning assessments, and the review of long-term medical or social welfare records. Defense work in these matters extends far beyond courtroom advocacy and includes the advance structuring of trial proceedings, strategic planning for the presentation of evidence, and overall procedural arrangements designed to avoid misunderstandings or disparities in comprehension among citizen judges.

In this regard, many defendants represented by the Criminal Defense Office are socially vulnerable individuals who lack family support and often with disabilities or impaired social functioning, making it difficult for them to navigate complex criminal proceedings without professional assistance. In the absence of a specialized defense framework, such defendants would face disproportionately high procedural risks under the Citizen Judge system, thereby undermining the legitimacy of the citizen participation framework itself.

The role of the Criminal Defense Office, therefore, is to ensure that even in the most serious criminal cases, the State applies the same rigorous, fair, and publicly accountable trial procedures to all individuals, thereby meeting legitimate public expectations regarding judicial fairness and the professional role of defense counsel.

Integrating Defense Capacity Across Regions, Building a Dedicated Defense Team for Citizen Judge Cases, and Maintaining Continuous Training and Simulation Exercises

Since its establishment, the Criminal Defense Office has adopted team-based defense as a core operational principle. Before formal trial proceedings commence, staff attorney teams collaborate with legal aid attorneys to form dedicated Citizen Judge defense teams for each case. All Citizen Judge cases handled by the Center undergo collective procedural rehearsals and full-scale simulations, during which defense teams repeatedly review and refine every stage of the proceedings, including evidentiary examination, cross-examination, expert witness questioning, and closing arguments.

The institutional significance of this operational model lies in transforming the quality of legal representation in criminal proceedings, which has traditionally depended on the experience and performance of individual attorneys, into an organizational capability that can be collectively reviewed, refined, and progressively developed by a team. In doing so, the model reduces the extent to which the outcomes of major cases depend on the individual performance of a single attorney at trial. Through these mechanisms, the Criminal Defense Office seeks to transform the concept of “meaningful and effective legal representation” from an abstract constitutional principle into an operational standard, while gradually developing a defense framework tailored to the characteristics of the Citizen Judge system.

Passing On Defense Experience and Preparing the Citizen Judge Defense Practice Manual

Building upon the Center’s experience in collaborative defense representation, the Criminal Defense Office and contract legal

aid attorneys plan to complete the *Citizen Judge Defense Practice Manual* in 2026 as a practical reference tool for legal aid attorneys handling Citizen Judge cases. The Manual is intended not merely as a procedural guide, but as a systematic compilation of key issues arising in Citizen Judge cases and practical approaches to addressing commonly encountered disputes, with the aim of enhancing consistent and predictable standards of legal representation.

At the same time, the Criminal Defense Office also collaborates with contract legal aid attorneys through team-based representation, guided by the principle of senior attorneys leading and mentoring junior counsel, in order to facilitate experience-sharing and professional development. In addition to expanding the pool of qualified defense counsel, this collaborative model also helps disseminate professional expertise in Citizen Judge defense work throughout the broader legal aid attorney network, rather than concentrating such expertise solely among a limited number of staff attorneys.

Incorporating Practical Experience and Refining Trial Practice

The Criminal Defense Office was established to address the question of whether the State has truly provided sufficient dedicated personnel, institutional support, and defense quality assurance mechanisms to satisfy the demands of “the most rigorous legal procedures” in serious criminal cases.

Given the reality that the Center primarily represents vulnerable defendants in highly complex cases, it seeks to preserve the legitimacy and public trust underlying the Citizen Judge system through the deployment of dedicated staff attorneys, team-based procedural simulations, peer review mechanisms, systematic knowledge development, and extensive collaboration with contract defense counsel. Drawing on its practical experience in handling Citizen Judge cases, the Criminal Defense Office has also progressively identified a number of systemic issues, including standards governing the admissibility of evidence, the implementation of sentencing evaluations, and the application of the three-stage sentencing framework. The Center has continued to monitor these issues and has raised them in internal meetings and professional forums as foundational materials for future institutional reform discussions.

Now entering the third year since the implementation of the Citizen Judges Act, practical experience has demonstrated that defense work in Citizen Judge cases requires a high degree of specialization and institutionalization. Sustained deployment of dedicated staff attorneys will therefore remain necessary in order to meet the institutional demand for meaningful and effective defense.

Protection of the Rights of Crime Victims



① 2 September 2025, outreach session on crime victim protection and rights of crime victims, jointly conducted by the Taichung Branch and the AVS
② 16 December 2025, Visit by the AVS to the Ciaotou Branch



To implement the resolutions of the National Conference on Judicial Reform regarding “Building A Criminal Justice System that Upholds Victims’ Dignity,” and to ensure that crime victims receive meaningful and practical protection, the LAF’s efforts to assist crime victims in 2025 are outlined as follows:

1. Continued Collaboration with the Association for Victims Support to Operate a One-Stop Service and Referral Mechanism

To safeguard the rights and interests of crime victims, the LAF has, since 2021, collaborated with the Association for Victims Support (AVS) to operate a one-stop service and referral mechanism. Under this mechanism, crime victims who do not meet the LAF’s eligibility criteria for legal aid are referred to the AVS for assistance; applicants who qualify for legal aid but require support beyond legal services are also referred to the AVS for access to other forms of social support and assistance, such as psychological counseling and living assistance. In 2025, the AVS referred a total of 86 cases to the LAF, while the LAF referred 35 cases to the AVS.

2. Joint Planning and Organization of Continuing Legal Education Programs with the AVS

(1) To enhance legal aid attorneys’ understanding and application of restorative justice, the LAF co-organized one continuing legal education program on restorative justice with the Taiwan Bar Association and the AVS.

(2) In response to the rapidly evolving forms of digital sexual violence, the growing demand for victim participation following the implementation of the citizen judge system, and the practical challenges involved in providing legal assistance to victims in major criminal cases and cases involving juvenile offenders, the LAF organized five continuing legal education programs for attorneys. These programs addressed a wide range of topics, including the prevention of digital sexual violence, cooperation between prosecutors and victim representatives in citizen judge cases, the practical operation of victim impact statements, and the role of victims in juvenile proceedings and the protection of their rights. Through institutional analysis and the sharing of practical experience, these programs sought to strengthen legal aid attorneys’ understanding of and capacity to handle such cases, enhance their professional performance in assisting victims through legal proceedings, communication and coordination, and practical case management, thereby enhancing the overall quality of victim rights protection.

3. Since 1 February 2023, the LAF has operated the Legal Consultation Helpline for Crime Victims. Victims of crimes and their family members, regardless of status or background, may access legal consultation services through the helpline, with the aim to help address the legal issues they face. In 2025, the helpline handled a total of 4,109 cases.

Regulatory Amendments

In 2025, the LAF enacted or amended a total of seven internal regulations. These revisions primarily focused on four key areas: improving the quality of legal aid services provided by attorneys, adjusting the LAF’s review procedures, modifying the LAF’s personnel management system, and refining the LAF’s financial and accounting system. A brief summary is as follows.

1. Improving the Quality of Legal Aid Services Provided by Attorneys

Pursuant to a resolution adopted by the Board of Directors on 29 August 2025, the Regulations Governing Payment of Legal Aid Remuneration (hereinafter “the Regulations”) were amended and subsequently ratified by the Judicial Yuan on 27 November of the same year. The key amendments are summarized as follows:

(1) To address the practical needs arising from the implementation of Article 5, Paragraph 1, Subparagraph 1 of the Citizen Judges Act on 1 January 2026, and to streamline the LAF’s administrative procedures for case assignment, where a citizen participation trial case is significant and complex such that it cannot reasonably be handled by a single attorney, up to three legal aid attorneys may be jointly assigned by the branch office director to handle the case during the investigation, first-instance, and appellate proceedings. Where assignment to a staff attorney is deemed necessary, such appointment shall be made by the CEO.

(2) To reflect practical needs arising in court proceedings and reasonably compensate legal aid attorneys for their efforts, the Regulations now expressly provide that, in defense cases during investigation proceedings, after prosecution has been initiated, or in trial-stage defense cases after judgment has been rendered, attorneys who appear in court to assist in detention hearings, custody transfer hearings, or provisional placement hearings may receive a discretionary increase of up to three additional pay points.

(3) The Regulations were amended to provide that, where circumstances set forth in Article 11 apply to a legal aid attorney handling a legal aid case, the matter “shall” be referred to the Review Committee, which may reduce, revoke, or maintain the original remuneration based on the extent of the attorney’s completed work.

(4) The remuneration rates for attorney accompaniment during police and prosecutorial interrogations were adjusted, and a minimum remuneration threshold for such cases was newly established.

(5) Corresponding pay point values and reasonable work hours were newly established for retrial proceedings in administrative litigation cases.

(6) For exceptionally complex cases before the Supreme Court, Supreme Administrative Court, Grand Chamber, or Constitutional Court involving oral argument proceedings, discretionary remuneration may now be increased by up to 20 pay points to reasonably reflect the attorney’s efforts.

(7) The standards governing discretionary remuneration increases in citizen participation trial cases were revised and further refined to better align with developments in judicial practice and to more accurately reflect the time and effort expended by legal aid attorneys.

2. Adjusting the LAF’s Review Procedures

(1) Amendments to the Regulations Governing Legal Aid Cases Exempt from Review by the Review Committee

Pursuant to a resolution adopted by the Board of Directors on 26 September 2025, the above-mentioned Regulations were amended, with the key revisions summarized as follows:

1. In response to Article 5, Paragraph 1, Subparagraph 1 of the Citizen Judges Act, which covers cases involving offenses punishable by a minimum term of imprisonment of not less than ten years, and in light of the needs of judicial practice and to streamline administrative procedures, citizen participation trial cases

have been added as categories of legal aid cases exempt from review by the Review Committee.

2. To align with the intent of Constitutional Court Judgment No. 113-Hsien-Pan-Zi No. 8, cases involving homicide or related offenses carrying the most severe penalty of death, where the offense results in death, have been newly designated as legal aid cases exempt from review by the Review Committee.

3. To safeguard the procedural rights of disadvantaged individuals, cases in which judges of the Criminal or Civil Divisions of the Supreme Court, through rulings or referrals, request the LAF to appoint attorneys shall also be eligible for exemption from Review Committee review in proceedings before the third instance and in extraordinary remedies.

(2) Amendments to the Regulations for the Scope of Legal Aid Implementation

Pursuant to a resolution adopted by the Board of Directors on 26 September 2025, the above-mentioned Regulations were amended and subsequently approved by the Judicial Yuan on 27 November 2025. This amendment was made to address the needs of judicial practice and to safeguard the procedural rights of disadvantaged individuals. Specifically, in cases where judges of the Criminal or Civil Divisions of the Supreme Court, through rulings or referrals, request the LAF to appoint attorneys, the provisions of Article 15, Paragraph 2 of the Legal Aid Act shall apply in proceedings at the third instance.

3. Modifying the LAF’s Personnel Management System

(1) Amendments to the Regulations for the Appointment and Evaluation of Staff Attorneys

Pursuant to a resolution adopted by the Board of Directors on 23 May 2025, the above-mentioned Regulations were amended and subsequently ratified by the Judicial Yuan on 9 October 2025.

(2) Amendments to the LAF Regulations for Personnel Management Pursuant to resolutions adopted by the Board of Directors on 23 May 2025 and 31 October 2025, the above-mentioned Regulations were amended and subsequently ratified by the Judicial Yuan on 22 October 2025 and 27 November 2025.

The above adjustments to the LAF’s personnel management system were made primarily with reference to the Executive Yuan’s 2025 Adjustment Measures for Compensation of Military, Civil, and Teaching Personnel, as well as factors including recent economic growth and increases in the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Accordingly, adjustments were made to the pay points for full-time staff and staff attorneys, as well as to supervisory allowances and domestic travel expense reimbursement rates.

4. Refining the LAF’s Financial and Accounting System

(1) Amendments to the LAF Regulations for Fund Management and Utilization

Pursuant to resolutions adopted by the Board of Directors on 23 May 2025 and 20 June 2025, the above-mentioned Regulations were amended and subsequently ratified by the Judicial Yuan on 9 October 2025. The amendments primarily expanded the scope of the LAF’s fund management and utilization to include “financial bonds” and “publicly offered secured corporate bonds,” thereby enabling greater flexibility and diversification in fund management and utilization, and supporting the sustainable operation and long-term development of the LAF.

(2) Adoption of the LAF Directions on Risk Control and Management for Investments in Financial Instruments

Pursuant to a resolution adopted by the Board of Directors on 28 November 2025, the above-mentioned Directions were enacted to ensure the safety, liquidity, profitability, and diversification of the LAF’s fund investments in financial instruments, and to establish a comprehensive risk control mechanism.

No More Debt, No More Dread

By Attorney Yi-Chen Kuo (Staff Attorney, LAF Taipei Branch)

A Mother Carrying the Weight of Her Family

I still vividly remember my first meeting with this aid recipient. Even before entering the conference room, I could hear her playing with a child inside.

"I'm sorry," she said. "There was no one available to help watch my child, so I had to bring him with me."

Her spouse had been bedridden for more than a year due to severe complications arising from COVID-19. In order to cover overwhelming medical expenses and support their two young children, the aid recipient had single-handedly taken on the responsibility of supporting the family. As a result, she had accumulated debts exceeding NT\$1 million before eventually seeking assistance from the LAF.

As I reviewed the materials I had asked her to prepare in advance, one particular loan caught my attention: a NT\$500,000 auto loan obtained from a financing company. I asked her, "Is the vehicle used as collateral the same vehicle listed on your National Taxation Bureau property records?" She nodded.

I then asked, "A car that is nearly fifteen years old can still be used to secure a NT\$500,000 loan?"

She replied, "The car is very old. I don't know how they were willing to lend me that much money. After deducting various handling fees and service charges, I only actually received around NT\$400,000. I still don't know exactly what those deductions were for."

Excessive lending and unclear loan terms and disclosures are among the many problems arising from these newer forms of lending.

Emerging Forms of Lending

The most common causes of debt are often problematic spending habits. In other cases, debt arises from failed investments, unsuccessful business ventures, or

sudden emergencies requiring immediate funds. For a period of time, fraudulent schemes were rampant, and many individuals accumulated debt after falling victim to scams. Over the past two years, however, many debtors have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, borrowing money simply to maintain their livelihoods after the pandemic disrupted their income and financial stability.

The pandemic lasted far longer than most people anticipated, and many debtors eventually exhausted the credit available to them through traditional financial institutions. As a result, they began turning to leasing companies and financing companies, using automobiles or motorcycles as collateral for loans. In even newer lending arrangements, some debtors have reportedly used their mobile phones as collateral. In every case, people were desperately searching for ways to borrow just a little more money in order to survive immediate financial hardship and sustain daily life.

Debt Can Be Resolved

In principle, the Consumer Debt Clearance Statute applies only to unsecured and non-priority debts. Secured debts generally cannot be included in debt clearance proceedings. This is precisely why many leasing companies and financing companies require debtors to provide collateral when extending loans. Whether the collateral is a vehicle, or even merely a mobile phone, these companies believe that the existence of collateral allows them to avoid the application of debt clearance procedures.

However, the protections afforded to debtors under the Statute are not so limited in scope. Article 16, Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Enforcement Rules of the Consumer Debt Clearance Statute provide:

"A secured creditor may not exercise rights with respect to any portion of a claim remaining unsatisfied after enforcement of the security interest, except through rehabilitation or liquidation proceedings."

"Claims referred to in the preceding paragraph shall, in rehabilitation proceedings, be included in the rehabilitation plan to the extent they remain unsatisfied following enforcement of the security interest."

With respect to the aid recipient's NT\$500,000 auto loan, I argued before the court that, although the debt appeared on its face to be secured, the loan involved excessive lending and therefore the portion exceeding the value of the collateral should still be incorporated into the debt clearance proceedings. The court subsequently requested that the financing company assess the value of the collateral, and ordered that any portion of the debt exceeding the value of the collateral be included in the debt clearance process.

What was truly astonishing was that the financing company ultimately informed the court that, in its assessment, the vehicle had a residual value of only NT\$100,000. In other words, the financing company had extended a loan worth five times the value of the vehicle, while attempting to rely on the designation of a "secured debt" to avoid the application of the Consumer Debt Clearance Statute.

Fortunately, the Enforcement Rules of the Consumer Debt Clearance Statute had already contemplated precisely such a situation. The law seeks not only to provide debtors with a comprehensive resolution to their debts, but also to deter creditors from engaging in reckless over-lending practices.

Ultimately, the NT\$400,000 portion of the loan attributable to excessive lending was successfully incorporated into the debt clearance proceedings. The aid recipient subsequently proposed a rehabilitation plan consistent with the statutory "best efforts" repayment standard. I sincerely hope that, during the six-year period required to complete the rehabilitation plan, everything proceeds smoothly for her and that

she will no longer live under the constant burden of debt.

No More Debt, No More Dread

When handling debt clearance cases, I often ask aid recipients: "How did these debts arise?"

The purpose of this question is not to determine whether their hardships were severe enough to deserve assistance. Rather, I hope that by asking this question, they can pause to reflect on what exactly went wrong, so that once their debts are resolved, they will not fall back into the cycle of debt again.

Toward the conclusion of many legal aid cases, aid recipients often express heartfelt gratitude, thanking their attorneys for helping them resolve debts that had troubled them for years and for finally freeing them from a life spent constantly being pursued by creditors.

Yet, I believe the people most deserving of gratitude are the aid recipients themselves. They chose to face their debts directly rather than avoid them. Despite the long and exhausting journey of indebtedness, and despite the complexity of debt clearance proceedings, they persevered until the very end – finally: no more debt, no more dread.



Continuous Improvement of Service Quality

Measures to Improve Service Quality and Staff Responsiveness

Promoting a Service-Oriented Approach and Flexible Service Delivery

Since 2018, the LAF has continued to conduct annual mystery shopper inspections to evaluate service quality. The inspections cover two main areas: in-person services (including the internal and external environments of branch offices, service procedures, value-added services, and facilities) and telephone services. According to the 2025 evaluation results (based on a total score of 100), the overall average score for in-person services was 90.59, representing a slight decrease from 92.25 in 2024. The overall average score for telephone services was 89.92, reflecting an improvement from 85.35 in 2024. The LAF has continued to provide guidance and supervision to departments and branch offices to ensure consistent implementation of standard operating procedures for service delivery, with the aim of providing comprehensive services to disadvantaged individuals.

Disclosure of Satisfaction Survey Results

Beginning in July 2024, the LAF launched a pilot program using business text messaging services to distribute satisfaction survey questionnaires to applicants' mobile phones. Starting in 2025, the survey process was fully transitioned to SMS-based distribution. In August 2025, Chunghwa Telecom adjusted its text messaging policies in support of the government's anti-fraud initiatives, prompting the LAF to shift from its previous business messaging system to SMS broadcasting services. Satisfaction survey messages are now distributed twice monthly on a regular basis, resulting in a stable collection of survey responses. According to the 2025 survey results, all branch offices received scores above 85.6 across the various evaluation categories, with only minor variations between reporting periods, reflecting stable overall performance. The LAF will continue to review and refine survey items to ensure the effectiveness and practical value of the satisfaction survey process.

Interpretation Services and Multilingual Documents for Application Review

Since 2018, the LAF has provided interpretation services for legal aid application review procedures. Interpretation assistance may be arranged during application intake, case review, reconsideration proceedings, and related procedures, with service fees covered by the LAF. The service also includes Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) services for

applicants with hearing or speech impairments. As of the end of 2025, the LAF's interpreter roster included 153 interpreters for Southeast Asian languages, 21 Indigenous language interpreters, 64 sign language interpreters, and 53 CART service providers. Since 2023, in order to facilitate broader public access to interpretation resources, the LAF has published on its official website the contact information of interpreters who have consented to such disclosure.

Refinement of Case Management Process

Coordination and Harmonization of Operational Issues Between the Head Office and Branch Offices

The LAF continues to develop and revise standard operating procedures for the application of relevant regulations and regularly convenes nationwide operational meetings to discuss and exchange views on common or complex issues. These efforts aim to reduce inconsistencies or errors in operational practices across branch offices and to ensure consistent resolution of similar or comparable issues.

Strengthening Case Follow-Up and Management Mechanisms

Since the launch of the LAF Legal Aid Attorney Online Portal in 2019, attorneys have been able to log into the platform to submit updates and manage follow-up procedures for their assigned cases. The LAF is also able to access platform data in real time to monitor case progress and track follow-up outcomes.

Case Closure Management for Legal Aid Attorneys

Case closure management at branch offices is included as part of the branch office performance evaluation framework. Annual random audits are conducted to review implementation, including attorneys' document uploads, compliance with case closure deadlines, and the accuracy of case closure information.

Establishing an Information Security Environment in Compliance with Cybersecurity Policy

All core information systems of the LAF – including the Online Legal Aid Appointment System, Case Management System, Attorney Billing Reconciliation System, and Legal Aid Attorney Online Portal – have fully implemented the ISO/IEC 27001 Information Security Management System standard, completed independent third-party certification, and obtained certification. In 2025, the systems successfully completed the transition to the ISO/IEC 27001:2022 version.

Understanding Applicants' Help-Seeking Behavior and Technology Use to Optimize Legal Aid Service Processes

In 2024, the LAF conducted planning and pilot testing for a qualitative study on the behavioral profiles and help-seeking journeys of aid recipients, beginning with consumer debt clearance and labor dispute cases, which account for a relatively high proportion of its caseload. In 2025, the LAF completed the "Qualitative Study on Legal Aid Recipients' Behavioral Profiles and Help-Seeking Journeys." The study analyzed the help-seeking processes of labor and debt-related aid recipients, focusing on how individuals seek advice, interact with service providers, engage with legal professionals, and utilize available resources. It also paid particular attention to recipients' digital literacy and preferences, emotional dynamics, and perceptions of legal aid and the justice system. A total of 30 aid recipients were interviewed. The findings show that while significant differences exist between debt-related and labor-related cases in terms of help-seeking trajectories, there are also notable similarities. Building on these findings, and integrating administrative data analysis with interview insights, the LAF produced a report entitled "From Footsteps to Systems: Rethinking and Reshaping Legal Aid Service Systems Through Customer Journey Research," which was presented at the International Legal Aid Group conference.

Quality Assurance Mechanism for Legal Aid Services

Policy Framework for Maintaining the Quality of Legal Aid Services

■ Eligibility Criteria and Relaxation of Requirements for Legal Aid Attorneys

With effect from 12 June 2025, the LAF introduced an additional application option for salaried lawyers, allowing them to apply to serve as legal aid attorneys exclusively for cases jointly handled with their supervising principal attorneys. This measure is intended to encourage branch offices to actively recruit newly qualified and salaried lawyers to join the legal aid panel.

■ Specialist Attorney Assignment System and Other Optimization Measures for Case Assignment

The LAF first launched a pilot Specialist Attorney Assignment System on 1 August 2005. During the pilot period, key indicators of quality of case handling – such as the proportion of remuneration reductions due to attorneys' failure to fulfil their obligations in specialist cases, and the proportion of attorney substitutions not attributable to the aid recipient –

showed significant improvement. Accordingly, the system was fully implemented on 11 June 2021. As of the end of 2025, the number of accredited specialist attorneys in each category, compared with the previous two years, is set out in the table below.

Category	2023	2024	2025
Labor Law Specialist Lawyers	404	405	392
Family Law Specialist Lawyers	1,041	1,041	1,007
Consumer Debt Clearance Specialist Lawyers	852	851	896

Specialist Assignment Rates Over the Past Three Years

Case Type	2023	2024	2025
Labor Cases	95.88%	97.62%	98.77%
Family Cases	93.62%	94.59%	95.44%
Consumer Debt Clearance Cases	99.99%	99.92%	99.96%

The LAF has also continued to develop and implement optimization measures for case assignment across different disadvantaged groups and case types. For example, in cases involving persons with disabilities, priority is given to attorneys who have completed training on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The LAF has also promoted online training videos on Indigenous rights and culture, and prioritizes assignment of cases involving Indigenous aid recipients to attorneys who have completed such training. In addition, a comprehensive training course on the Juvenile Justice Act has been produced for legal aid attorneys, and priority is given to attorneys who have completed the course when assigning juvenile cases.

■ Enhancing the Quality of Legal Aid in Citizen Judge Cases

In 2025, the LAF established the Staff Attorney Criminal Defense Office to handle criminal legal aid cases involving disadvantaged individuals, including citizen judge cases. The Office provides assistance from the investigation stage onwards, thereby ensuring effective defense throughout subsequent trial proceedings. To further enhance overall service quality and integrate defense resources across different regions, the Office's staff attorneys collaborate with experienced legal aid attorneys and law firms outside the LAF, who serve as lead trainers. Efforts focus on the planning of attorney training programs, the development of specialist knowledge in citizen judge cases, and the training of legal aid attorneys with both the willingness and

potential to handle such cases, thereby building a substantial talent pool. This also facilitates the rapid development of litigation experience through the sharing of practice insights, and strengthens the defense rights of criminal defendants. In addition, the LAF provides a range of training programs – including foundational courses, case study seminars, and hands-on workshops – to enhance legal aid attorneys’ capacity to handle cases under the Citizen Judge Act and to expand the pool of attorneys capable of undertaking such cases. In 2025, a total of eight related training sessions were held.

Complaint Management System

In 2025, a total of 256 complaint cases were received. As of 2 January 2026, 20 cases remain under investigation, while 236 cases have been concluded.

Among the concluded cases, 37 were closed without further action due to inadmissibility, consolidation with other cases, or withdrawal of the complaint.

The remaining 199 cases underwent substantive investigation and were accepted for review. The outcomes are as follows:

Disciplinary Action	Number of Cases
Yes	74
No	125
Subtotal	199

Among the 74 cases in which disciplinary action was imposed, 1 involved a complaint against a member of the Review Committee, and 3 involved LAF full-time project staff. In the remaining 70 cases, the subjects of the complaints were legal aid attorneys (including consultation attorneys). The measures imposed are as follows:

Disciplinary Measures	Number of Cases
suspension of case assignments and referral to the disciplinary committee	8
suspension of case assignments	24
guidance, mediation, and corrective measures	38
temporary suspension from legal consultation services	0
subtotal	70

Where legal aid attorneys are found to have violated LAF regulations, the LAF has established separate performance indicators to assess (i) whether branch offices conduct investigations through the complaint mechanism or refer cases for attorney disciplinary review, and (ii) the implementation of attorney training programs. These measures are designed to enhance the overall quality of legal aid services.

Legal Aid Case Issue Reporting Form (For Courts and Prosecutors)

To assess and address concerns regarding the litigation performance of legal aid attorneys, the LAF has developed the Legal Aid Case Issue Reporting Form (For Courts and Prosecutors). Where courts or prosecutors’ offices consider that a legal aid attorney may have violated the Attorney Regulation Act or that the quality of representation in a legal aid case gives cause for concern, they may download the form directly from the LAF website under “Downloads / For Courts and Prosecutors”, complete it with relevant details, and submit it to the LAF.

In 2025, no reports contained positive evaluations, while two reports contained negative evaluations, all of which have been fully investigated.

Attorney Performance Evaluation

■ Evaluation Outcomes

Since 2007, the LAF has conducted attorney performance evaluations in accordance with the Directions for Evaluating the Performance of Legal Aid Attorneys (now revised and renamed the Regulations on the Evaluation of Legal Aid Attorneys and Service Quality Assurance). Over the past three years, the number of final disciplinary actions imposed by the Legal Aid Attorney Evaluation Committee and the Review Committee is as follows:

Year	2023	2024	2025
Written Request for Improvement	0	4	1
Reduction of Case Assignments	0	0	0
Suspension of Case Assignments	22	11	11
Removal from Legal Aid Services	5	10	5
Referral to the Attorney Disciplinary Committee	11	7	8

The conduct resulting in disciplinary action through the attorney evaluation process primarily includes: concerns regarding the quality of legal aid services (such as failure to submit pleadings, submission of inadequate pleadings, failure to appear at hearings, or failure to provide substantive defense); violations of professional ethics rules for attorneys (such as missing appeal deadlines, failing to submit grounds of appeal, exceeding court-imposed deadlines, or unjustified delays in handling cases); violations of the LAF’s Guidelines Governing the Handling of Legal Aid Cases by Attorneys (such as appointing non-lawyers

as sub-agents, failing to meet with clients, or failing to advise clients regarding preservation procedures); and non-compliance with the attorney evaluation process, including failure to provide case files or related materials.

Peer Review of Legal Aid Attorneys

Beginning in 2024, the LAF introduced a peer review program for legal aid attorneys, drawing on legal aid systems and practices from other countries. Under this program, selected attorneys are subject to case file reviews conducted by senior attorneys with expertise in the relevant area of law. In 2025, the LAF selected ordinary criminal cases, ordinary civil cases, and consumer debt clearance cases as the categories for peer review sampling. The review covered 20 attorneys handling ordinary criminal cases, 15 attorneys handling ordinary civil cases, and 8 attorneys handling consumer debt clearance cases, with three cases reviewed for each attorney. The LAF expects to consolidate and analyze all review results in the first quarter of 2026 and to develop corresponding quality indicators. These findings will serve as a reference for the future establishment of attorney performance evaluation mechanisms and for enhancing the overall quality of legal aid representation provided by legal aid attorneys.

Staff Attorneys

The LAF employs staff attorneys and has established dedicated staff attorney centers to handle cases involving specialized expertise, significant public interest, or major social impact – areas that general practitioners may encounter less frequently in their legal practice, such as environmental litigation, death penalty defense, and class actions.

As of the end of 2025, the LAF employed a total of 25 staff attorneys, stationed as follows:

Taipei Branch	4 attorneys
Kinmen Branch	1 attorney
New Taipei Branch	2 attorneys
Tainan Branch	4 attorneys
Staff Attorney Center (Northern Region)	6 attorneys
Legal Center of Indigenous Peoples	4 attorneys
Staff Attorney Criminal Defense Office	4 attorneys

Professional Training

Enhancing Staff Competencies

To ensure the effective implementation of legal aid services and to continuously maintain and improve service quality, the LAF actively conducts professional and service training programs for its staff. In 2025, training programs were categorized into four main areas: Professional Competence, Legal Regulations and Policy Requirements, General Education, and Indigenous Affairs. To better integrate training resources, courses were organized regionally according to local characteristics.

Attorney Training

In 2025, continuing education for attorneys was conducted through various modes of delivery, including online sessions, in-person workshops, and recorded lectures, covering a wide range of topics. A total of 106 sessions were conducted, addressing issues such as the Constitutional Court Procedure Act; general civil law topics (emerging forms of consumer debt, practice under the Consumer Debt Clearance Statute, housing lease disputes, and review of enforceable instruments); various labor disputes; family law (rights of minor children, claims for division of marital property, and inheritance); criminal law (substantive and procedural sentencing, fraud, and money laundering); defense practice in Citizen Judge cases (procedural stages, sentencing assessments, and evidentiary presentation); juvenile justice practice; victims’ rights (digital sexual violence, coordination between victim representatives and prosecutors in Citizen Judge cases, victim impact statements, victims in juvenile cases, and restorative justice); rights of persons with disabilities (guardianship declarations and the new expert lay participation framework under the Mental Health Act); Indigenous cultural conflicts (Indigenous reserved lands, tribal consultation and consent procedures, and “tribal classrooms” initiatives); human rights in places of detention (common types of litigation and correctional treatment); and refugee and asylum-related issues.



3 October 2025, Hualien Branch Legal Aid Attorney Training: New Lay Judge System under the Mental Health Act (photo by Tzu-Chi Wang)

Criminal Punishment or Administrative Penalty? — The Crimes and Punishments Faced by an Indigenous Farmer

By Attorney Wei-Han Lin (Wei-Han Lin Law Office)

Mr. Wang, a member of the Bunun Tribe from the Yuli area, made his living cultivating rice. After cutting down several miscellaneous trees near his rice field, he was reported by the Yuli Work Station of the Forestry and Nature Conservation Agency for violating Article 52, Paragraph 1 of the Forest Act, namely the offense of aggravated theft of forest produce. After being assigned to the case through the LAF, I arranged to meet Mr. Wang at the site of the incident to better understand the circumstances as his defense counsel during the investigation stage.

It was just before the Mid-Autumn Festival. In the Yuli area, rice is harvested twice a year. The seedlings planted during the summer had already reached waist height but had not yet begun to produce grain. The north wind swept along the eastern mountain range, turning the sunlit rice fields into rolling waves of green.

“We’re here,” Mr. Wang said as he stopped his vehicle and pointed toward the hillside and the rice field opposite it. “This is where the monkeys come down to play and feed on the rice.”

I stepped out of the car to photograph the scene and collect evidence. Mr. Wang’s rice field was a long, narrow diamond shape running north to south. A river lay to the west, while a small hillside bordered the east. Beyond the hillside rose the Central Mountain Range—the cultural homeland of the Bunun people and, at the same time, the natural habitat of Formosan macaques. Along the edge of the hillside was a conspicuous depression in the rice field, where the stalks appeared to have been flattened by animals.

“There are two other spots just like this one,” Mr. Wang explained. “The monkeys jump down from the trees, play in the field, eat the rice, and then jump back into the trees and disappear into the mountains. That’s why I cut down the nearby trees.”

“Couldn’t you drive them away with firecrackers or warning shots? What about installing electric fencing?” I asked, mentioning several methods I had heard other Indigenous farmers discuss.

“At first, they’re afraid of gunshots, but after a while they learn that the gunshots are only blank rounds and stop running away. As for electric fencing, the area that would need to be enclosed is simply too large. I checked the cost, and I just can’t afford it.” Mr. Wang spread his hands helplessly.

His circumstances were indeed difficult. The farmland was leased from the River Management Office, and even the rice transplanters and harvesting machines had to be rented from other tribal members. Installing hundreds of meters of electric fencing would likely require years of harvests before the cost could be recovered.

“After I cleared the trees along the hillside earlier this year, the monkeys really did come less often. They don’t dare venture as far because, if we run over, they won’t have enough time to escape. My father taught me this. It’s how we’ve always done things. Look over there—my youngest son is sitting right there now. Every year when the rice begins to head, our entire family takes turns guarding the field during the day to keep the monkeys from eating it.” After speaking, Mr. Wang signaled for his son to head home while he took over the watch himself.

As I photographed the site and gathered evidence, my principal defense strategy quickly took shape. Mr. Wang had merely cut down the trees; he had not removed them from the site. If anything, the conduct could constitute property damage rather than theft, since there was no intent to unlawfully appropriate the trees. Moreover, he had cut the trees in order to prevent recurring monkey-related crop damage. The more than thirty miscellaneous trees involved were worth less than NT\$2,000 in total. Under the circumstances, a defense of necessity appeared available.

However, during a mediation session convened by the township office upon referral from the District Prosecutors Office, an employee of the Yuli Work Station (i.e. the complainant in the case) presented proposed settlement terms and then unexpectedly remarked:

“Compensating for the value of the trees and replanting them only resolves the civil aspect of the matter. Even if the case ends with a non-prosecution disposition or a deferred prosecution disposition, our office can still impose an administrative fine under Article 56 of the Forest Act. The fine ranges from NT\$120,000 to NT\$600,000.”

The color drained from Mr. Wang’s face. I informed the mediator that we would need time to discuss the matter before responding.

After the mediation concluded, I explained to Mr. Wang the principle of mutual exclusivity between criminal punishment and administrative penalties and discussed the practical consequences of each. Given the value involved and the circumstances of the case, even if he were convicted of property damage, the most likely outcome would be a short-term custodial sentence convertible into a fine, with the amount payable in lieu of imprisonment unlikely to exceed NT\$60,000.

Mr. Wang asked what course of action he should take. As I often do, I offered the advice I believed best protected his interests:

“You have no prior criminal record, and there is still a viable basis for arguing that you committed no offense. You should not feel compelled to admit guilt and accept a criminal conviction simply because you fear an administrative fine. My recommendation is still to maintain a plea of not guilty. If an administrative penalty is imposed later, we can seek remedies through the appropriate procedures.”

The Forest Act, the Soil and Water Conservation Act, the Water Act... because state laws often differ substantially from traditional Indigenous customs and understandings, Indigenous peoples frequently encounter legal risks when using and managing land. Like the recurring monkey damage that plagued Mr. Wang’s rice fields, these conflicts arise repeatedly and are difficult to anticipate. Even when one form of punishment can be avoided, another often remains. Much like Taiwan’s tax laws before reform, administrative fines can sometimes exceed the amount of a criminal fine or a fine imposed in lieu of

imprisonment.

To my surprise, however, even after two weeks of repeated discussions, Mr. Wang remained steadfast. No matter how many times I explained the legal issues, he hoped that I could secure a short custodial sentence for property damage rather than pursue a full defense. He did not want the proceedings to become protracted. He did not want to make repeated trips to Hualien for hearings. He did not want to go through additional legal aid applications. Most of all, he feared being subjected to an administrative fine far beyond his ability to pay. For legal aid clients facing economic hardship, establishing their innocence often comes at a far greater cost than it does for most people.

Ultimately, I had to rely on the principle that admitting the facts does not necessarily constitute an admission of guilt. On one level, I argued that Mr. Wang’s conduct was justified by necessity, and requested that any non-prosecution disposition expressly state this finding so that he could benefit from the exemption from administrative penalties under the Administrative Penalty Act. At the same time, borrowing a favorite tactic of lawyers—arguing in the alternative—I submitted that, based on Mr. Wang’s admission that he had damaged the trees, the prosecutor should seek summary judgment proceedings with a sentence of twenty days’ detention.

In the end, however, the prosecutor issued a non-prosecution disposition. In a decision spanning only two pages, the prosecutor concluded that Mr. Wang did not know the land in question constituted forest land owned by another party and therefore lacked the requisite criminal intent.

“The authority to impose an administrative penalty expires after three years,” I explained to Mr. Wang. “So, if two more years pass and you still haven’t received a penalty notice, then you can finally be confident that the matter is over.” Despite receiving a non-prosecution disposition, Mr. Wang looked as though he had just received a conviction. He managed only a faint, uneasy smile.

“Can I come back to LAF if something happens later?”

“Of course,” I replied.



Organized Campaign Activities and Seminars

Organized and Co-Hosted Campaign Activities

In 2025, the LAF branches across the country independently organized or collaborated with other organizations in a total of 1,910 events (including those held in correctional facilities).



- 31 March 2025, rule of law education session at Tainan Municipal Wunsian Junior High School, organized by the Tainan Branch; lecture delivered by Attorney Han-Wen Chiu (photo by Wen-Yan Zheng).
- 22 February 2025, outreach activity at a picnic event held at Nanxing Park, Beitun District, Taichung, organized by SFANG MindDevelopment Center.
- 16 June 2025, coordination meeting held by the Sinyi Indigenous Family Center, Nantou County.
- 8 November 2025, outreach activity at the year-end event organized by the Pingtung Branch and Taiwan Fund for Children and Families in Chaozhou.
- 26 April 2025, outreach booth at the Weiwuying Health Walk event (photo by Hsiang-Chun Kuo).

Interdisciplinary Seminar Series *Beyond the Law*

A total of 10 sessions of the *Beyond the Law* seminar series were held in 2025, bringing the cumulative total to 123 sessions to date. All 10 sessions were held as in-person lectures and simultaneously recorded. The recordings were subsequently produced into episodes of the podcast *FAFU – Beyond the Law* and released on major podcast platforms to broaden public outreach. Each episode received an average of approximately 662 unique downloads.

- 20 March 2025, *Beyond the Law* Interdisciplinary Lecture Series, Session 116: "Spring Blossoms Bring Hope! Social Movements and Their Participants".
- 17 July 2025, Session 119: "Creation and Society: Distance and the Possibility of Engagement".
- 21 August 2025, *Beyond the Law* Lecture Series, Session 120: "Between Geothermal Energy and Indigenous Communities: A Dialogue on Energy Development and the Right to Informed Consent".
- 18 December 2025, *Beyond the Law* Lecture Series, Session 123: "The Boundary Between Privacy and Press Freedom".



Dissemination of the Rule of Law in Correctional Facilities

Since 2016, the LAF has expanded its provision of services in correctional facilities through its nationwide branches, and has promoted awareness of the availability of written applications for legal aid among inmates. In 2025, all branches continued to work closely with correctional institutions, conducting a total of 613 sessions in detention centers and correctional facilities, including case intake, rule of law education, legal aid outreach, and legal consultation activities.

- 21 February 2025, rule of law education session at a correctional facility organized by the Hualien Branch (photo courtesy of Hualien Detention Center).
- 16 May 2025, legal consultation service at Penghu Prison (photo courtesy of the Education Section, Penghu Prison).
- 22 October 2025, rule of law education session at a correctional facility organized by the Hualien Branch (photo courtesy of Ziqiang Minimum-Security Prison).



LAF 21st Anniversary Commemorative Event

The LAF has now reached its 21st year since establishment. Over the past two decades, as social needs have continued to grow, the scale and capacity of legal aid services have steadily expanded. Frontline staff have long carried significant professional responsibilities and work pressures, placing considerable strain on their physical and mental well-being. Against this backdrop, this year's anniversary event was held under the theme "Listening to One Another, Finding Strength Together," with an emphasis on connection, emotional well-being, and collegial support. It sought to foster an environment in which staff members could support one another through sincere dialogue amid the demands of daily work. (Staff reflections from the anniversary event are available on the LAF website: https://www.laf.org.tw/edu/1?tag_id=73)



- 17 September 2025, Legal Aid Day rule of law education outreach by the New Taipei Branch (photo courtesy of New Taipei Special School).
- 9 August 2025, Legal Aid Day event organized by the Tainan Branch (photo by Chung-Fu Hsueh).
- 25 July 2025, Legal Aid Day outreach activity at Jingho Hospital, organized by the Taichung Branch.
- 21 July 2025, National Legal Aid Day activity organized by the Qiaotou Branch.
- 30 July 2025, Legal Aid Day activity organized by the Hualien Branch, Session 3 at Sun Care Farm (photo courtesy of Sun Care Farm).



2025 National Legal Aid Day

To strengthen public awareness of legal aid system and enhance understanding of available legal aid resources, the LAF has designated the second Saturday of July each year as “National Legal Aid Day” since 2006. Each year, the LAF’s branches nationwide and the Legal Center of Indigenous Peoples organize a diverse range of outreach activities under a shared theme, while incorporating local characteristics and needs. Through these coordinated efforts, the LAF seeks to promote the visibility of legal aid services and strengthen rule of law education at the community level.

The 2025 Legal Aid Day centered on the theme “If You’ve Been Scammed, Don’t Give Up – Legal Aid Is Here for You!” in light of the continued rise in fraud cases in recent years and their widespread impact across different segments of society. Through collaboration with local government agencies, judicial authorities, and civil society organizations, the LAF’s branches and the Legal Center of Indigenous Peoples organized thematic lectures, outreach activities, and legal consultation services. These efforts aimed to enhance public awareness of common fraud tactics and improve the ability to identify fraudulent schemes, thereby strengthening self-protection awareness and reducing the risk of victimization.

In addition, the campaign also focused on the dissemination of relevant legal knowledge, including explanations of the legal liabilities arising from fraudulent conduct, and reminders to the public to avoid inadvertently violating the law or even becoming complicit in fraudulent schemes due to insufficient information or momentary negligence. Through the integration of public legal education and practical guidance, the LAF aims to ensure that individuals who encounter fraud cases can promptly seek legal aid resources and receive appropriate assistance and support.

Films, Online Platforms and Publications



Production of Short Videos and Animated Content to Promote LAF Policies

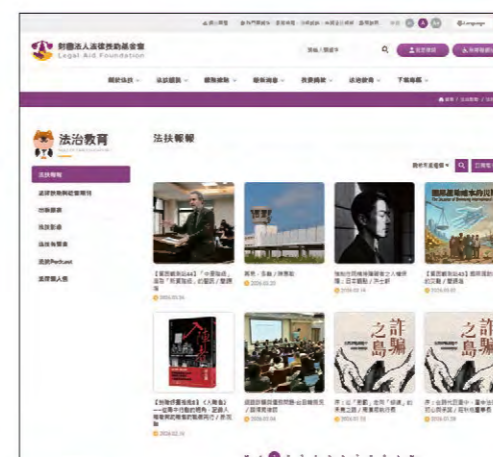
To align with current media consumption trends, the LAF produced a series of short videos on legal aid-related topics. The content covered issues including attorney accompaniment services during police and prosecutorial interrogations, the Consumer Debt Clearance Statute, public awareness on identifying the LAF and avoiding fraudulent organizations posing as the LAF, promotional campaigns for LAF fundraising merchandise, teaser trailers for case documentaries, telephone legal consultation services, and key amendments to the Occupational Safety and Health Act. These videos were disseminated through social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook.

Media Relations

In 2025, the LAF continued to engage proactively with the public through media interviews, press releases, and public commentary on significant legal issues, in order to communicate legal aid policies, major operational achievements, and the LAF’s views on important legal matters. Through these efforts, the LAF sought to raise public awareness of legal aid services and strengthen public confidence in legal aid. A total of 39 media appearances nationwide were recorded during the year.

Case Documentary

Production of the latest case documentary project began in 2025. The featured themes include the renewal lease dispute involving the Zhongzheng Public Housing Complex and cases involving persons with disabilities. The documentaries will be promoted and distributed through social media and online video platforms such as YouTube, with the aim of reaching a wider audience and helping the public understand that legal aid can serve as an important and accessible source of support when facing legal issues.



e-Newsletter: Give You a Hug

Individuals may subscribe to the *Give You a Hug* e-newsletter by email. The content includes commissioned feature articles, as well as updates on LAF news and activities. The newsletter also contains a dedicated section on the LAF’s official website featuring commissioned articles. In 2025, a total of 28 new articles were published. The newsletter currently maintains 3,099 active unique subscribers.



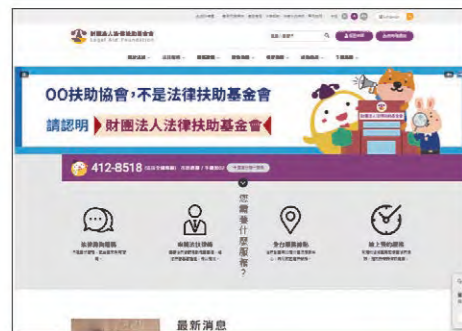
2024 Annual Report

A record of the LAF's activities and operations in 2024 was published in both Chinese and English editions. The English edition was made available online only, with no printed copies issued.



The LAF on YouTube

As viewing habits among younger generations have increasingly shifted from traditional television to online video platforms, the LAF established its YouTube channel in 2010 to expand and modernize its outreach efforts. The channel features a variety of public legal education and informational videos aimed at increasing public understanding of the LAF's services and diverse areas of work. In 2025, the channel recorded 273,654 views and more than 1.07 million impressions, while the number of subscribers increased to 13,179.



Official Website: www.LAF.org.tw

According to Google Analytics, the LAF's official website recorded 715,492 users and 3,396,988 page views in 2025.

The LAF on Facebook

As of the end of 2025, the LAF's Facebook page had attracted 90,256 followers and recorded 7,851,055 views.

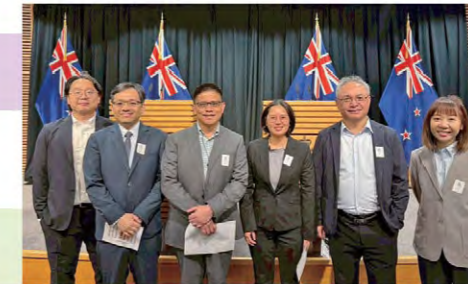
The LAF on Instagram

The LAF launched its official Instagram account on 16 October 2020, with the aim of engaging more closely with the public through one of Taiwan's most widely used social media platforms. As of the end of 2025, the LAF's Instagram account had 4,494 followers and recorded 368,394 views.

International Affairs

Study Visit to Māori Legal Aid Organizations and Māori Courts in New Zealand

In order to draw on the extensive experience from other jurisdictions with specialized expertise in key areas of justice systems, and thereby enhance access to justice and the protection of fundamental rights for Indigenous peoples in Taiwan, a study visit to New Zealand was organized from 6 to 14 April 2025. The delegation visited Māori legal aid organizations, Māori courts, and related institutions. The visit highlighted how New Zealand's justice system has undertaken systemic reforms to integrate Tikanga Māori into legal practice, demonstrating a high degree of cultural sensitivity and institutional innovation.



Participation in the 2025 International Legal Aid Group (ILAG) Conference

Since 2007, the LAF has been invited to participate in the ILAG Conference. The 2025 conference was held from 25 to 27 June in Cologne, Germany, under the theme "Affording Legal Aid", and was jointly organized by the ILAG and the Faculty of Law, University of Cologne.

The conference addressed a range of topics: (1) Germany – Access to Justice; (2) Managing Resources for Access to Justice; (3) The Importance of Representation for Access to Justice; (4) Client-Centred Solutions; (5) Thinking Strategically About Access to Justice; (6) Where Legal Aid Lawyers Will Come from In the Future; (7A) Overcoming Access to Justice Challenges; (7B) Renvisioning a People-Centred Access to Justice Research Agenda; (8) Legal Aid and Mass Harm; (9) AI - Solution or Problem.

Hosting the 14th East Asia Consumer Credit Debt Symposium and Financial Victims' Exchange Forum

The East Asia Financial Victims' Exchange Forum was first initiated in 2010 by Japan's National Association of Financial Victim, with a focus on protecting the rights and interests of individuals affected by debt-related harm. The meeting has been held annually since its inception. In 2025, the LAF hosted the 14th East Asia Financial Victims' Exchange Forum. Upholding the spirit of cross-border collaboration, the event was co-organized with the Taipei Bar Association, Debtors' Union,

and legal and civil society organizations from Japan, Korea, and other regions, with the aim of further deepening the exchange of experience and expertise in assisting victims of financial harm across East Asia.

The Forum focused on three emerging forms of debt-related problems, with in-depth discussion and exchange on the following issues:

- (1) the legal regulation of financing companies and moneylenders;
- (2) support systems and social inclusion mechanisms for debtors; and
- (3) debt issues arising from online fraud.

The prevention of financial victimization and support for indebted individuals is not only a legal issue, but also a key indicator of a society's commitment to social inclusion and human rights protection. Through this 14th Exchange Forum, the LAF seeks not only to bring together professional insights from across East Asia, but also to foster a shared international understanding, improve legal frameworks, and offer renewed hope to individuals facing financial hardship.



A Mother's Final Embrace Behind a Financial Eligibility Review

By Attorney Tsung-Ting Liu (Executive Secretary, LAF Yilan Branch)

She walked toward me slowly, step by step. It was an ordinary workday at the LAF reception area, where people came and went, and I was sorting through case materials. When I looked up, she was standing in front of me, head slightly bowed. In her eyes was a familiar sadness, but also a trace of quiet determination.

"Do you remember me? I've been to the LAF office before... I've kept what you told me in my heart all this time."

Her eyes were red-rimmed, and in that moment, I froze. The image of her quickly rewound in my mind—I knew exactly who she was.

A few months earlier, I had met her for the first time in the assessment room.

That day, she had come with her child, sitting quietly in a corner. Frail in build and hollow-eyed, she looked as though life itself had weighed her down. Head lowered, she said nothing, holding her child tightly in her arms. We were reviewing a divorce case involving domestic violence. She wanted to leave a long-standing abusive marriage and raise her child in safety, but she also knew that the road ahead would be extremely difficult.

During the financial eligibility review, we noticed an unusual transaction: NT\$1 million had been deposited into her account and then transferred out shortly thereafter. Under the regulations, we needed to clarify the source and use of this amount in order to determine her eligibility for legal aid.

She produced a remittance record and said, in an almost inaudible voice, "That was money transferred to me by my mother before she passed away... she said that if I couldn't carry on, this money would at least allow me to secure housing..."

We fell silent. This was not merely a sum of money, but a mother's wordless love and protection.

"But what happened after that?" a committee member asked gently.

She bit her lip, finally lifting her head. Her eyes were already filled with tears.

"After my mother passed away, my brother said the money wasn't mine and told me to return it... I didn't want to argue anymore, so I transferred it back..."

At that moment, the room fell completely silent. The documents were still in front of us, but our hearts had already grown heavy. We all understood that this was not just a deposit in a bank account, but a mother's final effort to leave her daughter a way forward. It is also a silent form of support: even if the world does not stand with you, I still do.

When the assessment ended, she stood up to leave. I couldn't help but catch up to her and hand her a tissue. I knew I could not shield her from all injustice, but I could at least let her know she was not alone.

I said to her, "That one million dollars is not just



(Illustrative photo)

money, but your mother's love for you. She knew your path would be difficult, so she tried to leave you a way forward. You are also a mother now, and you must remember this: to your child, you are the one who cannot fall."

She listened, tears streaming down her face.

"You can cry, you can be afraid, but you cannot give up," I continued. "Your mother's love has never left you. Let's be brave together, alright?"

She nodded through her sobs. "I will remember what you said. Thank you. I will keep going."

I have never forgotten that moment. I did not expect to see her again so soon.

This time, she came because her divorce litigation had taken a turn: the opposing party had filed a counterclaim for damages against her. The case had become far more complex, with ongoing legal battles. Yet she herself was completely different from a few months earlier.

"I am scared, truly scared..." she admitted. "Yet, I won't run away anymore, because I know someone once believed in me and encouraged me. I have kept what you said that day in my heart."

She had begun to learn how to court proceedings, how to communicate with her lawyer, and how to protect herself.

"I want my child to know," she said, "that Mom did not fall apart. She is still trying to move forward, and she is learning to be brave."

I looked at her. Her eyes were still tearful, but they were different now. There was light in them.

At that moment, my own eyes welled up.

At the LAF, what we confront each day is not merely a stack of cold and lifeless legal statutes, but with real people who are desperate to be understood and craving a fresh start. They are trapped in hardship, uncertain and helpless, yet they still choose to come through our doors. That, in itself, is an extraordinary act of courage.

We cannot walk every step for them, but we can walk with them through the hardest ones. We can let them know: you are not alone. We are here not only to provide legal assistance, but also to see your wounds, your pain, and the courage with which you hold yourself together.

Law is not only about winning cases. Sometimes, it is about ensuring that people are not defeated.

If you ask me what matters most in this work, is it expertise? Is it systems? Of course those matter. But on the front line, what matters most is respect and empathy for people—the willingness to listen to imperfect lives and say: *it's alright, we will find a way together.*

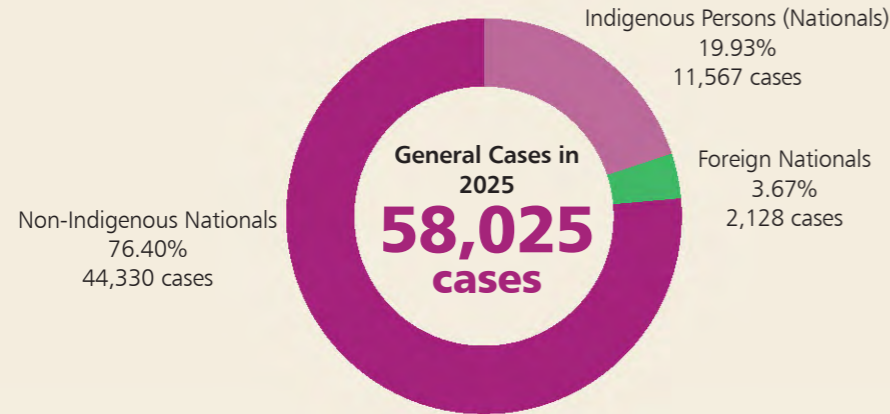
The day that mother walked into the LAF office was the lowest point of her life. And, the reason she was willing to come back here again was that she felt not only supported, but also a sense of warmth.

That is why I continue to work at the LAF.

We cannot guarantee that we will change everyone's circumstances. But if we can let even one person feel a small glimmer of light in their darkest moment, it is worth it.

Applicant Status Distribution

The following analysis presents the distribution of applicant status across 58,025 general cases in 2025.



Assistance to Persons with Disabilities

In 2025, among the general cases, there were 11,773 cases involving applicants with disabilities, accounting for 20.29% (excluding legal consultations, legal representation during police or prosecutorial interrogation, and commissioned project cases)

Cases Involving Persons with Disabilities 20.29%
11,773 cases



Top Five Case Types for Persons with Disabilities

- 1 Criminal – cases of fraudulence, breach of trust, taking and usury
- 2 Criminal – larceny cases
- 3 Criminal – cases of assault causing bodily harm
- 4 Civil – tort cases
- 5 Civil – cases under The Consumer Debt Clearance Statute

Assistance to Foreign Nationals

In 2025, among the general cases, a total of 2,128 applications from foreign nationals were approved for legal aid after review. The majority of foreign nationals were Vietnamese (27.30%), Filipino (22.32%), Indonesian (19.69%), Thai (7.47%), Chinese (6.39%), and Malaysian (5.87%), accounting for 89.04% of all foreign nationals assisted by the LAF.

Foreign Nationals 3.67%
2,128 cases



Top five case types for foreign nationals receiving legal representation and defense

- 1 Criminal – cases of fraudulence, breach of trust, taking and usury
- 2 Civil – salary dispute
- 3 Civil – tort cases
- 4 Criminal – cases of assault causing bodily harm
- 5 Criminal – cases under the Narcotics Hazard Prevention Act



Male 54.29%
31,500 cases

Domestic Applicants in General Cases Top Five Case Types by Gender

Male	
1	Civil – cases under The Consumer Debt Clearance Statute
2	Criminal – cases of fraudulence, breach of trust, taking and usury
3	Criminal – cases under the Narcotics Hazard Prevention Act
4	Criminal – cases of assault causing bodily harm
5	Civil – tort cases



Female 45.71%
26,525 cases

Domestic Applicants in General Cases Top Five Case Types by Gender

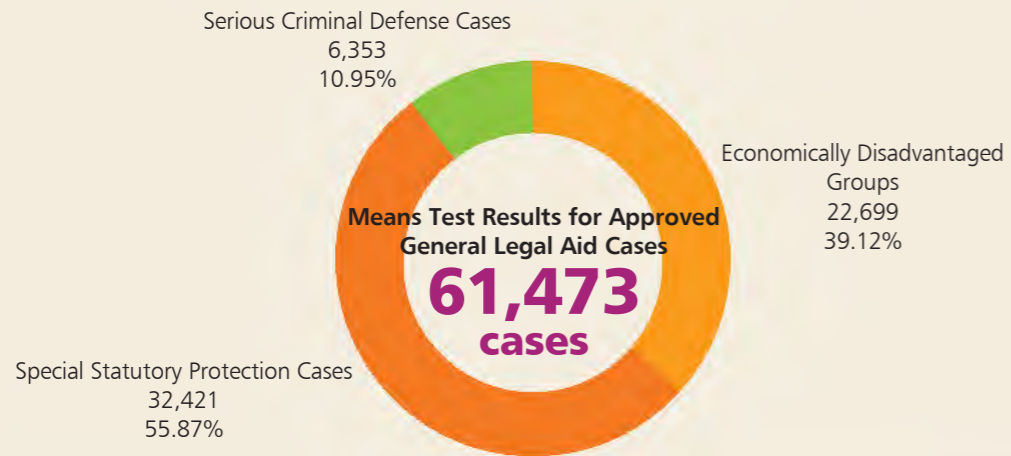
Female	
1	Civil – cases under The Consumer Debt Clearance Statute
2	Criminal – cases of fraudulence, breach of trust, taking and usury
3	Civil – tort cases
4	Family – cases of maintenance payments
5	Criminal – cases of assault causing bodily harm

Gender and Case Type Distribution



Among the general cases, when classified into five case types – criminal, juvenile, civil, family, and administrative – the gender distribution of applicants is as follows:
 Family cases: females accounted for 66%, while males accounted for 34%.
 Criminal cases: males accounted for 63%, while females accounted for 37%.
 Juvenile cases: males accounted for 69%, while females accounted for 31%.
 Civil cases: females accounted for 55%, while males accounted for 45%.
 Administrative cases: males accounted for 58%, while females accounted for 42%.

Means Test Results for Approved General Legal Aid Cases



Category	Number of Cases	Percentage
Means test conducted based on the LAF's financial eligibility criteria	12,507	
Applicants with government-issued social assistance eligibility certification – Low-income households	5,504	Economically Disadvantaged Groups 22,699 39.12%
Applicants with government-issued social assistance eligibility certification – Lower-middle-income households	4,197	
Applicants with government-issued social assistance eligibility certification – Families in special hardship circumstances	491	
Foreign migrant workers (exempt from means testing)	951	
Economically disadvantaged foreign spouses (exempt from means testing)	102	Special Statutory Protection Cases 32,421 55.87%
Consumer debt clearance cases (statutorily exempt)	12,229	
Statutory situations where adequate legal protection cannot be ensured – Mandatory defense or representation for persons with mental disabilities	6,808	
Statutory situations where adequate legal protection cannot be ensured – Mandatory defense for Indigenous peoples	8,838	
Statutory situations where adequate legal protection cannot be ensured – Mandatory legal assistance for juveniles	1,004	
Statutory situations where adequate legal protection cannot be ensured – Cases referred by presiding judges	2,450	
Statutory situations where adequate legal protection cannot be ensured – High-profile cases	39	
Statutory situations where adequate legal protection cannot be ensured – Mandatory defense for serious criminal offenses	6,353	Serious Criminal Defense Cases 6,353 10.95%

Note: As multiple economic vulnerability categories may be selected for a single case, the sum of individual categories may exceed the total number of assisted cases (58,025 cases).

Profile of Legal Aid Providers

As of 31 December 2025, a total of 4,889 lawyers were registered as legal aid lawyers of the LAF nationwide.

Year	Registered Legal Aid Lawyers	Active Case-taking Lawyers
2023	4,750	3,841
2024	4,790	3,891
2025	4,889	3,941

Gender Distribution



Male: 3,312 (68%)



Female: 1,577 (32%)

Age Distribution



Age Group	Number of Attorneys	Percentage
30 and under	167	3.42%
31–40	1,518	31.05%
41–50	1,650	33.75%
51–60	976	19.96%
61–70	354	7.24%
71 and above	224	4.58%

Years of Professional Practice

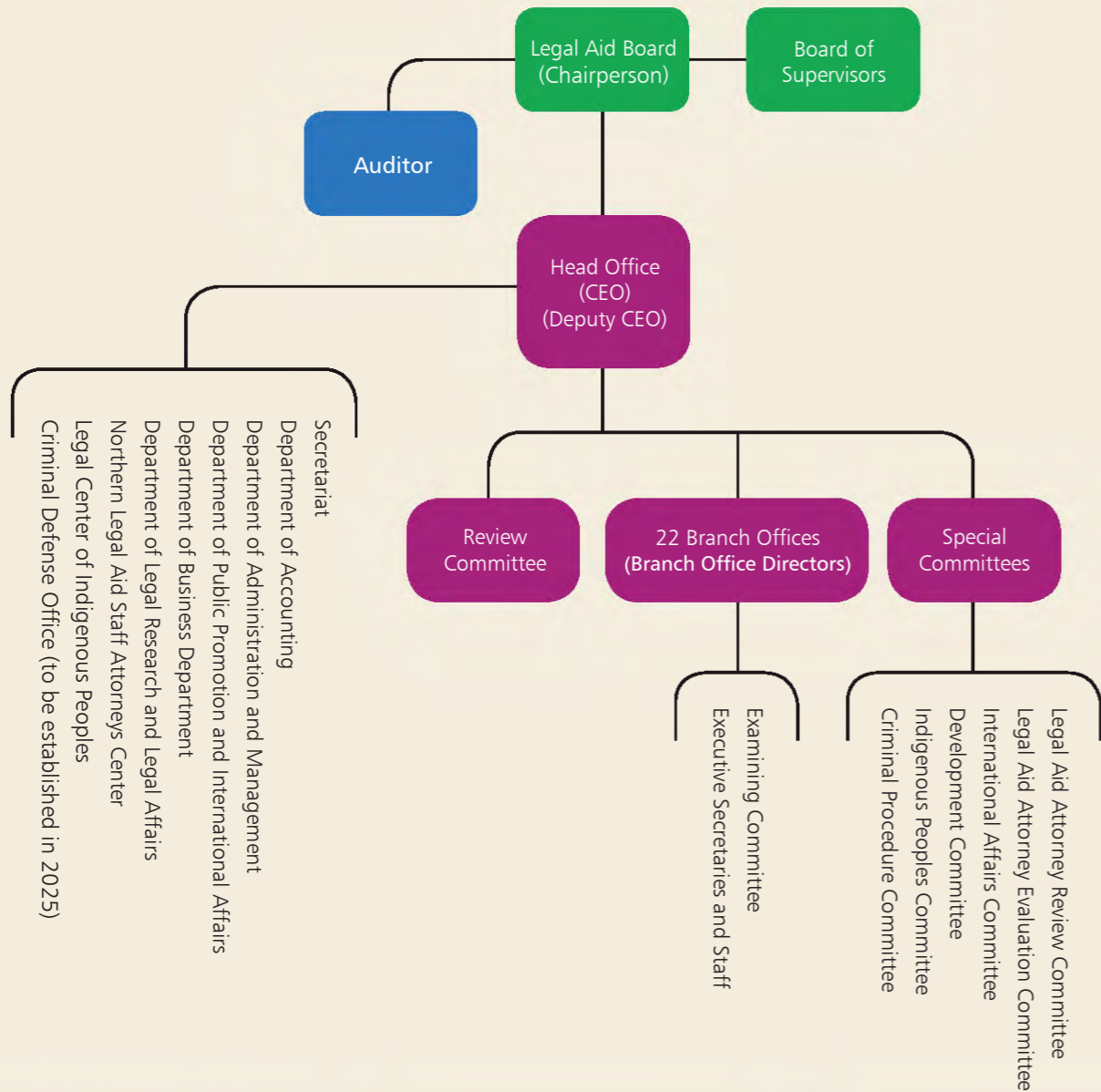


Years of Practice	Number of Attorneys	Percentage
Less than 2 years	31	0.63%
2–5 years	534	10.92%
6–10 years	1,321	27.02%
11–20 years	1,667	34.10%
21 years and above	1,336	27.33%

Organization Structure

As of 31 December 2025, the LAF employs 302 staff members (including 25 staff attorneys), 54 project personnel, 5 hourly project personnel, and 407 volunteers.

The current LAF organizational structure is shown in the diagram below:



16 April 2025, Chairperson Handover Ceremony



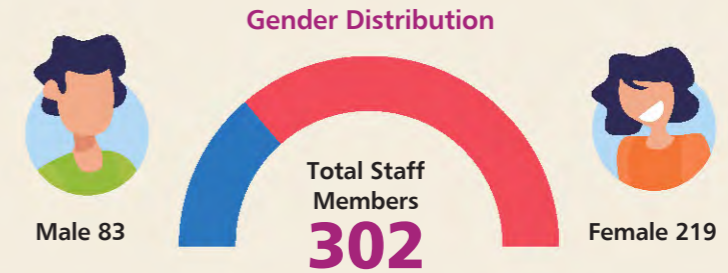
2 April 2025, Judicial Apprenticeship Training Program



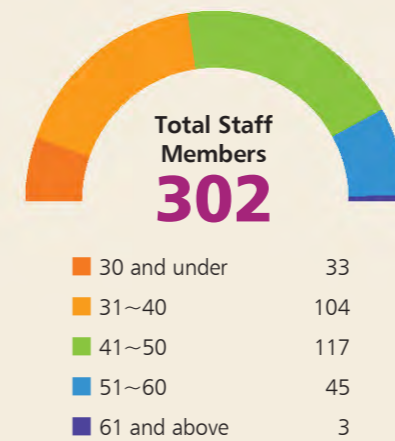
5 December 2025, Inauguration Press Conference for Mental Health Act Expert Lay Judge Courts

Staff Profile of the LAF

As of 31 December 2025, the LAF employed a total of 302 staff members (including staff attorneys).



Age Distribution



Years of Service at the LAF



Job Categories



Educational Background of Management, Staff Attorneys, and Legal Staff



Bar Admission Status of Management, Staff Attorneys, and Legal Staff

Of the staff members, 50 are licensed attorneys, and 182 are non-licensed staff. (25 staff attorneys, 9 managerial or administrative lawyers, and 16 executive secretaries)



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