

National/Regional Report – New York, USA

1. Please update the following information about your country and your organisation:

Your Country				
Country	Population	GDP	Poverty Line & Percentage of Population in Poverty	Total No. of Practicing Lawyers in the Country
United States of America	Approximately \$325M ⁱ	+4.2% in Q2 2018; +2.2% in Q1 2018 ⁱⁱ or \$19390.60B in 2017 ⁱⁱⁱ	Approximately 12.7% ^{iv}	Approximately \$1.3M ^v
Your Organisation				
Name of Legal Aid Organization(s)	Date of Establishment	Total No. of Applications Received in the Past Year	Total No. of Applications Approved in the Past Year	Total No. of Applications Rejected in the Past Year
The Legal Aid Society (New York, NY)	1876	13,760	208	13,552
Total No. of Legal Aid Lawyers (including staff and private lawyers)	Total No. of Non-Legal Professionals (e.g. social workers, counselors, community/culture workers)	Government Budget for the Legal Aid Organisation in the Past Year	Total Legal Aid Expenses in the Past Year	Proportion of Legal Aid Budget Funded by the Government
Attorneys: 1,236 Private Lawyers: 2,222 ^{vi}	805	Total: \$246,593,085 Criminal: \$157,326,190 JRP: \$43,390,990 Civil: \$45,875,905	Total: \$264,774,470 Criminal: \$158,437,265 JRP: \$45,329,075 Civil: \$60,997,180	Total: 93% Criminal: 99% JRP: 96% Civil: 75%

If you are not from any legal aid organisations of your country, please kindly assist to update the information of the main legal aid organisation(s) in your country. Thank you.

ⁱ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US#viewtop>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.bea.gov/data/gdp/gross-domestic-product>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://tradingeconomics.com/united-states/gdp>

^{iv} Please note that this statistic did not provide a poverty line. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US#viewtop>

^v

https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/market_research/Total_National_Lawyer_Population_18_78-2018.authcheckdam.pdf

^{vi} Calendar Year 2017 - Total number of attorneys from firms who worked on a pro bono case in calendar year 2017: **1,992**; Total number of attorneys who volunteered at A2B in calendar year 2017: **215**; Total number of attorneys who volunteered in a unit in the Civil Practice in calendar year 2017: **15**; Total number of attorney volunteers in calendar year 2017: **2,222**

2. Please describe the main provider(s) of legal aid services in your country:

Legal aid in the United States is different for criminal law and civil law. Criminal legal aid with legal representation is guaranteed to defendants under criminal prosecution (related to the charges) who cannot afford to hire an attorney. Civil legal aid is not guaranteed under federal law, but is provided by a variety of public interest law firms and community legal clinics for free or reduced cost.

The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) is an independent nonprofit established by Congress in 1974 to provide financial support for civil legal aid to low-income Americans. LSC promotes equal access to justice by providing funding to 133 independent non-profit legal aid programs in every state, the District of Columbia, and U.S. Territories. LSC grantees serve thousands of low-income individuals, children, families, seniors, and veterans in 813 offices in every congressional district. The Legal Aid Society is not an LSC grantee.

3. Please describe the legal aid organization and the recent business figures:

The Legal Aid Society

Who We Are

The Legal Aid Society (the Society), the nation's oldest and largest not-for-profit legal services organization, is more than a law firm for the poor. It is an indispensable component of the legal, social, and economic fabric of New York City — passionately advocating for low-income individuals and families across a variety of civil, criminal and juvenile rights matters, while also fighting for legal reform.

The Legal Aid Society has performed this role in City, State and federal courts since 1876. It does so by capitalizing on the diverse expertise, experience, and capabilities of 2,200 of the brightest legal minds, social workers, investigators, paralegals and support and administrative staff. Through a network of borough, neighborhood, and courthouse offices in 26 locations in New York City, the Society provides comprehensive legal services in all five boroughs of New York City for clients who cannot afford to pay for private counsel. The Society's legal program operates three major practices — Civil, Criminal and Juvenile Rights — and receives volunteer help from law firms, corporate law departments and expert consultants that is coordinated by the Society's Pro Bono program. Annually, the Society handles more than 300,000 cases and legal matters for clients with civil, criminal, and juvenile rights problems. The Legal Aid Society, first legal services organization in the United States, takes on more cases for more clients than any other legal services organization in the United States - and it brings a depth and breadth of perspective that is unmatched in the legal profession.

The Legal Aid Society's unique value is an ability to go beyond any one case to create more equitable outcomes for individuals and broader, more powerful systemic change for society as a whole. In addition to the annual caseload of 300,000 individual cases and legal matters, the Society's law reform work benefits some 2 million low income families and individuals in New York City and the landmark rulings in many of these cases have a statewide and national impact. Current law reform cases include federal and State court matters involving: housing and homelessness; mental and physical disabilities; health care access; public benefits and employment; domestic violence and family law; immigration; elder law; child welfare and foster care; juvenile justice; prisoners' rights; prison discharge planning, parole, and community re-entry; and criminal justice. Altogether, the Society has an active current docket of some 40 law reform matters.

Society staff members represent clients at literally every level of the State and federal trial and appellate courts as well as in city, state and federal administrative proceedings. Based on the Society's expertise, staff is frequently asked to testify before federal, state, and City Council legislative committees, comment on administrative regulations and procedures, and speak on behalf of clients in the media. The Society also operates extensive "know your rights" community outreach programs for clients and community-based organizations as well as Continuing Legal Education programs for Society staff, pro bono volunteers, and the legal community in general. More than 1,000 volunteers from leading law firms and corporate law departments also participate each year in the Society's pro bono program to further leverage resources.

The Criminal Defense Practice is the premier public defender program in the country, the expansive reach of the Criminal Defense Practice runs from its dynamic advocacy of clients in court to its presence and partnership in communities. As the primary public defender in New York City, staff zealously and tirelessly work to protect the rights of the most marginalized and disenfranchised in society. Yet our scope, as the country's oldest and largest public defender, goes beyond any single case or client. Our community engagement, impact litigation and broader advocacy consistently strive for increased fairness and humanity in the criminal justice system, and seek to reduce the devastating permanent consequences of system involvement for our clients. The Practice includes experienced trial offices in every borough, an Appeals Bureau, a Parole Revocation Defense Unit, a Prisoners' Rights Project, a Community Justice Unit and a Special Litigation Unit. In each area, the Practice has developed innovative model projects that garner expertise and push criminal justice practice and discourse forward. In the past year, the Practice represented nearly 230,000 clients in trial, appellate and post-conviction matters.

The Juvenile Rights Practice is the voice of children in New York City Family Courts, which represents 90% of the children who appear before the New York City Family Court on child welfare, termination of parental rights, PINS (persons in need of supervision), and juvenile delinquency petitions. JRP has always sought to enhance the quality and expand the scope of its advocacy through the development of several specialized units. The Juvenile Services Unit (JSU), our social work component, was formed as a result of the pioneering work of JRP in teaming social workers with lawyers in order to adequately address the educational, social, and psychological issues that arise in Family Court proceedings. The Kathryn A. McDonald Education Advocacy Project (EAP) provide specialized legal and social work assistance in cases requiring educational advocacy. Every day in the five boroughs of New York City, JRP staff represents almost 20,000 children. This work is complicated, complex, and emotional and involves a considerable amount of in court advocacy including trials of all types. Knowing the serious and heartbreaking circumstances of our clients, JRP staff provides this representation in a holistic manner, ensuring each facet of our clients' lives is addressed appropriately by ACS, NYC DOE, a myriad of provider agencies and the courts.

The Civil Practice draws on our strengths of our practice area experts and innovators, creating models replicated and built upon throughout the country. The work of the Civil Practice improves the lives of low-income New Yorkers by helping families and individuals obtain and maintain the basic necessities of life — housing, health care, food, and subsistence income or self-sufficiency. Our legal assistance also enhances family and community stability and security by resolving a full range of legal problems. Reaching out into the neighborhoods where our help is needed most, the Civil Practice delivers services through a network of neighborhood and courthouse-based offices in all five boroughs and special city-wide projects and initiatives. The Practice helps clients with legal problems regarding housing, foreclosure and homelessness, income and economic security assistance (such as public assistance, federal disability

benefits, and food stamps), health law, employment law and low-wage worker matters, tax law, consumer law, community development opportunities to help clients move out of poverty, immigration, HIV/AIDS and chronic diseases, family law and domestic violence, elder law, prisoners' rights, and reentry and reintegration matters for clients returning to the community from correctional facilities. Typically, clients seek assistance from the Civil Practice after exhausting all other avenues for assistance. In addition to contacting us directly, clients are referred to the Society by the courts, community and social services organizations, elected officials and government agencies, or by word of mouth. Other legal services groups also refer their clients to us when they cannot provide all necessary services, have limited or no case intake capacity, or do not serve a particular community. During the past year, our Civil Practice worked on approximately 52,500 individual cases and legal matters, benefiting more than 135,000 low-income children and adults. At the same time, we combined this direct legal assistance with law reform work and advocacy that attacked the systemic barriers preventing marginalized individuals from advancing in New York. Through this law reform representation, we benefited millions of vulnerable New Yorkers, with the landmark rulings in many of these cases having a statewide and national impact.

Investment by the State and the City of New York

Substantial investment from New York State and support from the City of New York has enabled The Legal Aid Society to improve the lives of millions of vulnerable New Yorkers across New York City (NYC) – leveraging our individual representations of clients into larger scale, systemic changes to the law that remove features perpetuating cycles of poverty.

The New York State Permanent Commission on Access to Justice

In 2010, when the New York State Permanent Commission on Access to Justice (then known as the Task Force to Expand Access to Civil Legal Services) began its work, the New York State courts faced a crisis of the unrepresented. In the wake of the financial crisis, hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers were appearing without counsel in civil matters affecting the essentials of life—housing, family matters, access to healthcare and education, and subsistence income—while having little or no understanding of court procedures or the law.¹ Since then, the Permanent Commission has worked steadfastly to close the justice gap by advocating for a reliable source of state funding for civil legal services. The Permanent Commission has also recommended a wide array of nonmonetary initiatives that enhance access to justice and bring effective legal assistance to more New Yorkers in need.

In 2016, the Permanent Commission—chaired from its inception by Helaine M. Barnett, former President of the federal Legal Services Corporation with the support of New York State Chief Judge Janet DiFiore, the Governor and the Legislature, met the initial monetary goal set in 2010 of \$100 million in dedicated annual state funding. This increase in funding and implementation of many nonmonetary initiatives have together increased the availability of civil legal services for the benefit of all New Yorkers. For example, the number of New Yorkers with incomes up to 200% of the federal poverty level who received direct legal assistance from Judiciary Civil Legal Services grantees increased by 22%, from 384,974 in 2013–2014 to 469,875 in 2016–2017,² and the percentage of legal needs of low-income New Yorkers being met has increased significantly from 20% in 2010 to 37% in 2016.

¹ See Task Force to Expand Access to Civil Legal Services in New York, Report to the Chief Judge of the State of New York 16–18 (2010) [hereinafter 2010 Annual Report], <http://www.nycourts.gov/accesstojusticecommission/PDF/CLS-TaskForceREPORT.pdf>.

² Based on information made available to the Permanent Commission by Office of Court

The City of New York

In June 2015, with the signing of New York City Council Intro 736-A into law by New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, New York City's Office of Civil Justice (OCJ) was created as a part of the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA)/Department of Social Services (DSS). For the first time, an office was created to oversee and monitor the City-supported civil legal services available to low-income New Yorkers and other residents in need, and to study the impact and effectiveness of the services that are available to New Yorkers as well as the need for such services. OCJ shares HRA's mission of fighting poverty, reducing income inequality, and addressing homelessness in New York City. The creation of the Office of Civil Justice accompanies New York City's unprecedented investment in civil legal services programs for low-income New Yorkers over the past three years. After years of limited funding for legal services in areas like assistance for low-income tenants and immigration legal services, the de Blasio Administration, as well as the City Council, have established and enhanced an array of legal services programs to meet the civil legal needs of New Yorkers involving both specific categories of assistance (e.g., housing, immigration, unemployment) and for discrete populations with specific legal needs (e.g., survivors of domestic violence, seniors). Now, in New York City's Fiscal Year 2018, City funding for civil legal services — free or low-cost assistance and advice by lawyers for people with non-criminal legal problems involving basic necessities such as housing, health care, government benefits, and immigration status— is at an all-time high of \$142.6 million, of which \$135 million is in the OCJ budget. This includes the de Blasio Administration's commitment of \$77 million for legal services for tenants, including funding for the first phase of New York City's historic Universal Access program which for the first time — and as the first city anywhere in the United States to do so — will make legal assistance available to all tenants facing eviction in Housing Court. \$48 million in Administration and Council funding supports an array of immigration legal services programs this year (from widely available legal screenings and advice to full-fledged legal representation for immigrants facing deportation) at a time when securing access to legal protections for immigrant New Yorkers has never been more urgent or important.

4. Please describe the legal aid funding arrangements of your country and your organization:

Government funds the constitutionally mandated representation of clients that the Society's Criminal Practice and Juvenile Rights Practice provide. Aside from targeted government funding for special Civil programs, the Civil Practice is largely dependent on private funding for client services. Sustaining Law Firms contribute \$600 per lawyer in their New York offices and this annual level of law firm support, as well as other private funding is essential to enable the Civil Practice to respond to the increasing legal needs of low income families and individuals in all five boroughs.

5. Please describe the legal aid service delivery models in your country (or organization):

While there is a constitutionally mandated right to legal representation in criminal or juvenile issues, this is not the case for areas of civil law. For vulnerable individuals, civil legal issues New Yorkers face, such as denials of treatment by their health insurance or not being able to access educational supports for a child who needs help in school, can be just as damaging as interactions with the criminal justice system. Our Civil Practice steps in to prevent this from happening. We act as a community resource for vulnerable

individuals across New York City's five boroughs, and collaborate closely with community based organizations (CBOs), social service providers, *Pro Bono* partners, and other members of the legal services sector. At the heart of our work, we seek to give vulnerable individuals the capacity to thrive and advance themselves and their families.

The Pro Bono Practice

The Pro Bono Practice partners with volunteers from the private bar, corporate legal departments and law schools to assist the Society's staff in handling matters for thousands of clients in their Civil, Criminal Defense and Juvenile Rights practices. Each year the Society works with over 3,000 volunteers in a variety of innovative projects including limited scope clinics, individual client representation and significant class action litigation on behalf of low income New Yorkers. Last year, over 280,000 volunteer hours were contributed to the Society by a total of 3244 volunteers from 59 law firms, 44 law schools, and a dozen corporations. Volunteer attorneys serve "Of Counsel" to the Society which remains the Attorney of Record. The Society screens matters, conducts Continuing Legal Education (CLE) programs, and mentors volunteers working on each assigned case. Many firms act as co-counsel on affirmative litigation matters. Through internships, clinics, and helpline opportunities, we have increased our ability to utilize volunteers.

Salaries – Private vs. the Public Bar

There is a significant gap in the average salaries between private attorneys and public interest and government attorneys. "Big Law" is an industry nickname for the nation's largest law firms. While New Yorkers have largely seen lackluster wage growth during the past year, associates at "Big Law" firms will pay starting attorneys \$190,000, while The Legal Aid Society and other public interest legal services organizations on average pay starting attorneys \$63,000.

6. Please describe the scope and types of legal aid services (e.g. legal education, information, advice, representation, advocacy and reform) provided in your country (or organization), and the types of matters aided.

To deliver our services to low-income New Yorkers, we utilize the following client service strategies:

Provision of comprehensive direct legal services to individual clients and client groups for a wide range of civil legal problems. These services are delivered by the Society staff attorneys and paralegals through our network of neighborhood and courthouse-based offices in all five boroughs, 21 citywide specialized law units and programs, and 48 satellite outreach sites.

Satellite outreach sites, evening clinics, and telephone helplines through which we increase access to legal assistance for working families and individuals, survivors of domestic violence, individuals in the shelter system and other homeless children and adults, uninsured New Yorkers, persons with managed care access problems, individuals with chronic illnesses and disabilities, immigrants, and senior citizens. These initiatives include the Homeless Rights Project Helpline, the Access to Benefits (A2B) Helpline: a live-answer, single point-of-entry telephone assistance service for clients with questions related to employment, health, government benefits, education, tax, and immigration matters; and the Society's Mobile Justice Unit (MJU), which enhances our ability to reach clients who reside in the most vulnerable and isolated communities in NYC to provide early intervention legal services.

Operation of special programs that provide direct representation, community education, training, referrals, and case consultation to meet the unique needs of underserved client groups. These include special programs for non-English speaking clients, immigrants, individuals with disabilities, and homeless children and adults.

Law Reform representation when that is the most effective way to resolve systemic issues, with the critical goal of resolving these cases as quickly as possible and benefiting the greatest number of New Yorkers.

Collaborative efforts across LAS's internal practice areas to address legal issues faced by the clients of our Criminal and Juvenile Rights Practices involving collateral civil consequences that would impede the successful resolution of their cases.

Provision of expert technical assistance, Know Your Rights trainings, community legal education, and pro se materials on a wide range of legal issues for clients and client groups, non-lawyer advocates, the constituent services staff of elected officials, CBOs, social services providers, and other legal services programs. We prioritize direct legal representation as well as providing technical assistance to the public. In addition to the dissemination of *Know Your Rights* brochures and pro se materials, we strive to engage with the community and provide them with advice and consultation based on the particular facts of their cases.

Collaboration with CBOs and non-legal entities on a range of issues to expand the availability of services offered. For example, the Community Development Project (CDP) has recently partnered with Union Settlement's East Harlem Youth Opportunity Hub – a new initiative providing social spaces with one-stop support services for at-risk children, teenagers, young adults, and their families. LAS provides wraparound supportive services and civil legal services to Hub youth participants and their families in collaboration with 28 other providers and organizations. In addition, LRU has continued its membership in

the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) monthly roundtable, co-convened by Community Service Society (CSS) and Enterprise Community Partners, Inc. (ECP). The roundtable recently produced a 40-page resident handbook to distribute to 15,000 tenants scheduled to undergo the RAD conversion process across the City, and has conducted a major program of outreach events aimed at raising further awareness among affected communities. These are just two recent examples of countless other ongoing collaborations across all 21 individual Civil Practice units.

Integration of pro bono attorneys, law students, and other volunteers into our overall delivery of civil legal services, with volunteer attorneys serving “Of Counsel” to LAS, which remains the Attorney of Record. LAS screens matters, conducts Continuing Legal Education (CLE) programs, and mentors volunteers working on each assigned case. Many firms act as co-counsel on affirmative litigation matters. Through internships, clinics, and helpline opportunities, we have increased our ability to utilize volunteers.

Collaboration with other legal service providers to ensure more low-income New Yorkers receive needed comprehensive legal services and expand advocacy efforts. These efforts include accepting referrals from other legal service providers that are unable to provide assistance due to restrictions and/or lack of expertise. The Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic (LITC) has recently worked closely with Queens Legal Services and other providers around the State to advocate for an amendment to the Driver’s License Suspension Law – especially as it relates to low-income New York taxpayers. As a result of this advocacy, an amendment to the law was introduced in January 2018. If passed, this law will result in many tangible changes, including: increasing the threshold for suspension from \$10,000 to \$50,000 and excluding from suspension individuals receiving public assistance, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or whose income is 135% of the poverty level. Moreover, the Tax Department will be mandated to halt the license suspension if a taxpayer’s expenses exceed the household’s income. For vulnerable New Yorkers, being able to drive is often a vital lifeline, and is central to their ability to work and care for their families.

The Civil Practice

Citywide Civil Legal Services By Borough				
FY 2018: July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018 (12 Months)				
Borough	Cases Handled		Persons Benefiting	
	Number	%	Number	%
Manhattan	7,102	13.5	17,067	12.6
Bronx	13,728	26.2	35,670	26.4
Brooklyn	20,645	39.3	52,328	38.7
Queens	9,513	18.1	26,063	19.3
Staten Island	1,528	2.9	4,143	3.0
TOTAL	52,516	100	135,271	100

Citywide Civil Legal Services By Substantive Area				
FY 2018: July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018 (12 Months)				
Type of Case	Cases Handled		Persons Benefiting	
	Number	%	Number	%
Consumer Law	445	0.9	860	0.6
Education	283	0.5	920	0.7
Employment (Excluding Unemployment Insurance Benefits)	1,405	2.7	2,600	1.9
Family Law/Domestic Violence	1,756	3.4	3,758	2.8
Health Law	621	1.2	1,091	0.8
Housing Law (excluding Foreclosure)	27,625	52.6	75,049	55.5
Foreclosure	645	1.2	2,021	1.5
Immigration	5,898	11.2	13,068	9.7
Income maintenance (Excluding Unemployment Insurance Benefits & Supplemental Security Income/Social Security Disability)	9,560	18.2	28,142	20.8
Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UIB)	414	0.8	842	0.6
Supplemental Security Income/Social Security Disability (SSI & SSD)	2,482	4.7	4,732	3.5
Individual Rights (includes Civil Rights)	16	0.0	26	0.0
Other (includes community development, tax, wills and estates, advance directives, other miscellaneous)	1,366	2.6	2,162	1.6
TOTAL	52,516	100	135,271	100

7. Please describe application procedures and the criteria for granting legal aid.

The Legal Aid Society's Civil Practice services low income individuals, free of charge, consistent with each of our funders' eligibility requirements. In general, the Society represents clients with household income of either 150 percent or 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). If a client is over the income

thresholds, the case handler is responsible for following the office protocol for over income clients and/or seeking the guidance of a supervisor. Vulnerable seniors, age 60 or older, are eligible for services regardless of income. Below is a chart of the 2018 Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines for 150 percent and 200 percent of the FPL.

FAMILY SIZE	150%	200%
1	\$18,210	\$24,280
2	\$24,690	\$32,920
3	\$31,170	\$41,560
4	\$37,650	\$50,200
5	\$44,130	\$58,840
6	\$50,610	\$67,480
7	\$57,090	\$76,120
8	\$63,570	\$84,760
FOR ADDITIONAL FAMILY MEMBER		
	\$6,480	\$8,640

8. Has your organization (or legal aid organizations in your country) developed services targeting specific underprivileged communities or other legal issues?

Rapid Response Efforts to Federal Immigration Policies – In response to the federal administration’s rapidly changing immigration policies and enforcement priorities, the Immigration Law Unit (ILU) has been on the frontline of efforts to defend New York’s immigrant communities. This has included extensive preparatory work involving staff from ILU, LRU, the Government Benefits Practice, and the Health Law Unit (HLU) in advance of recently proposed changes to “public charge” regulations for individuals and families seeking immigration relief. These changes will, if made final, severely restrict immigration relief for individuals requiring access to public benefits, such as health, nutrition, and other public assistance programs – with disastrous impacts for individuals and families in economically precarious positions, like many of our clients. More information about the outreach component of this work is provided in a later section.

Most recently, ILU has been working closely with families forcibly separated at the southern border. In April 2018, a new “zero tolerance” policy to unlawful entry into the U.S. saw anyone crossing the border aggressively prosecuted and sent to federal prison rather than immigration detention. In practice, the policy

targeted families coming to the U.S. to seek humanitarian relief. As children cannot be held in federal prison, over 3,000 noncitizen children of all ages were forcibly separated from their parents and sent to Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) facilities across the country. Thousands of families were separated in a matter of weeks without a clear timeline or means by which they would be reunited, and without any communication between the parents and children. Hundreds of these children, including infants, were placed in ORR shelters in New York. Society staff and our partners in the Immigrant Children Advocates' Response Effort (ICARE) coalition responded immediately, advocating on behalf of more than 300 children. ILU staff worked with ICARE partners to provide legal representation to these children, many of whom were experiencing extreme traumatic stress. In mid-July 2018, the Society filed a class action lawsuit in federal district court in Manhattan, obtaining a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) preventing the administration from moving our minor clients out of ORR custody without 48 hours' notice and allowing legal consultation with the child/family to enable informed decisions about their legal rights and potential claims. The Legal Aid Society won the stay and effectively obtained relief for all separated children in NYS. The case has now been transferred to federal district court in San Diego, to be litigated in the context of a class action brought by the ACLU on behalf of separated parents. In total, we represented 75 children in what were often extremely complex cases, many involving significant communication barriers and abuse or neglect. The Legal Aid and our partners continue to represent approximately 100 children separated from their parents during this crisis, with LAS advocating with government attorneys on behalf of our child-clients and those of our ICARE partners, including representation in court in San Diego.

Preventing Homelessness through Preserving Subsidies and Advocacy – The Society takes a multi-pronged approach to advocating for the rights of homeless and low-income tenants. We recently filed a class action law suit against two Brooklyn landlords for violations of the Fair Housing Act in *Tejada v. Littlecity Realty*. The landlords, who managed two adjacent buildings with a total of 78 apartments, used a variety of tactics to harass tenants with the aim of displacing those perceived as Latino, African American, or Asian over a decade-long period. This included repeatedly harassing Latino tenants to provide proof of immigration status when renewing leases, bringing frivolous eviction proceedings, and deliberately targeting tenants who complained about repair issues. The landlords also imposed unlawful rental increases and misrepresented the rent regulatory status of the apartments in attempts to unlawfully deregulate rent-stabilized apartments. In May 2018, the lawsuit was settled and the landlord agreed to re-regulate all of the previously unregulated apartments, in addition to giving the tenants a 4% rent reduction. Further, the named plaintiffs will receive a 20% rent reduction and the landlords also agreed to a prospective rent freeze for three years – benefiting new residents in addition to the original members of the community.

Increasing Services for a Growing Aging Population – In response to an increasing aging population across the City, the Society is working to expand its provision of specialist legal services aimed at resolving legal issues most commonly experienced by vulnerable older adults. Our elder law services are provided by a team of lawyers, paralegals, and social workers sensitive to the special needs of senior citizens. Eviction prevention is a priority, and staff successfully resolve numerous eviction proceedings brought against older residents of Brooklyn. Our lawyers also litigate other issues such as loss of government rent subsidies; rent overcharges; breach of the warranty of habitability; remaining family member succession rights to regulated apartments; chronic rent delinquency; and allegations of non-primary residence or nuisance-type behavior. In response to the increasing legal needs of the aging population, we are exploring expanding its provision of specialist legal services targeted at specific neighborhoods experiencing gentrification in collaboration with community partners. In addition, the Society staff currently serves on several external taskforces pertaining to vulnerable older adults and their legal-social needs. This includes

serving as Chair of the New York State Working Interdisciplinary Networks of Guardianship Stakeholders (WINGS), on the advisory board of New York City Elder Abuse Center (NYCEAC), and as members of an Adult Protective Services (APS) working group and the Kings County Elder Abuse Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT). In addition, LAS serves on the New York State Judicial Committee on Elder Justice, chaired by Justice Kaplan, focused on developing programs and protocols to improve the handling of the growing number of legal cases involving the aging population. This is in addition to work conducted by individual LAS units such as HLU, which works closely with aging members of the community and recently brought a class action lawsuit against a Managed Long Term Care (MLTC) plan on behalf of older adults and those with disabilities denied medically necessary home care.

9. Please introduce the quality assurance mechanisms in your organization/country (if any):

The Legal Aid Society employs an internal quality control system to ensure that each client receives the highest quality legal assistance. The primary strategy for monitoring and evaluating civil legal service program results consists of regular meetings between case handlers and supervisors and cross/intra-unit supervisors meetings; case management and outcome tracking; and staff performance evaluations.

Supervisory oversight is critical in ensuring the quality and effectiveness of the Society's civil legal services. Supervisors conduct regular intake and case review meetings with their case handling staff. These meetings allow supervisors and staff to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues most affecting clients and to identify areas where staff or supervised volunteers require assistance or technical support from more senior attorneys. Reports on different types of cases allow analysis of types of cases handled and the status of such cases over designated periods of time. These reports enable supervisors to monitor the performance of their offices in terms of meeting the Society goals, the quality and quantity of client assistance, and the requirements of grants. These are also used by the Attorney-in-Charge of the Civil Practice to monitor the performance of the various offices and at monthly supervisors' meetings. On a broader scale, close monitoring of client issues helps the Society make informed decisions about whether emerging trends would be more effectively addressed via systemic legal advocacy, policy advocacy, or community outreach, and education as opposed to individual representation.

Case management and outcome tracking through the Civil Practice's case management database allows us to analyze client information (including demographic), problem types, and legal outcomes to measure success in resolving clients' civil legal issues, including cases closed reason, benefits to clients, direct dollar benefits to clients, and dollar savings. Reason closed codes reflect both the level of service provided — counsel and advice or court or administrative agency representation — as well as the "win rate". Our case management system, LawManager, includes security measures to ensure that the Society protects client confidentiality, and all staff members are trained to maintain the appropriate level of client confidentiality.

Finally, we recognize the importance of taking a step back from everyday obligations to articulate goals, vision, and mission for the future. Regular staff performance evaluations are integral to this. For staff attorneys, these evaluations examine a range of criteria, including case preparation, legal research and writing, courtroom skills, negotiation and settlement skills, and office and institutional responsibilities. These evaluations assess not only the qualities necessary for success in the courtroom, but also qualities that the Society specifically values: such as being responsive to client needs and collaborating with CBOs and our other units.

External Evaluations

In addition to engaging in myriad forms of internal evaluation, the Society recognizes the necessity of soliciting feedback and evaluations from external sources. Funders regularly evaluate the quality of the work of LAS's Civil Practice through formal program audits, analysis of data, and periodic site visits. NYC agencies that contract with LAS to provide legal services evaluate our program quality and performance and fiscal administration and accountability in PASSport Contractor Performance Evaluations submitted to the Mayor's Office of Contract Services on an annual basis. We consistently receive favorable ratings from funders.

Training & Professional Development

The Legal Aid Society has a robust training program aimed at developing the advocacy skills of our paralegals, attorneys, and supervisors. Staff have the opportunity to learn best practice tips from seasoned advocates in the areas of client interviewing, legal research, motion writing, negotiations, trial advocacy, vicarious/secondary trauma, and self-care. Our Immigration and Housing practice areas have targeted content-specific training programs that run for several weeks and build on introductory material as the programs progress. Supervisors are offered opportunities to convene and share ideas with other leaders with training modules focusing on the importance of effective delegation, constructive feedback, teambuilding, leadership, and professional development plans. Additionally, preparing staff to interrupt bias in the workplace and in the courts is central to our mission. As such, staff and supervisors attend anti-bias and EEO trainings in addition to our mandatory training program entitled Professional Obligations and Practice Tips for Working with LGBTQ+ Clients.

10. How does your organization (or legal aid organizations in your country) make legal aid resources known to the potential clients in need and improve their legal awareness so they may seek timely assistance? Do you use any different approaches to reach people in remote areas or groups with special legal needs?

Outreach

We spread awareness of the Society's services through neighborhood forums, clinics, and community legal education workshops; the posting of *Know Your Rights*³ self-help materials on LAS's website; and through using LawHelp and Pro Bono Net to increase awareness of our services. A substantial number of clients are also referred to us by the judiciary, government agencies, CBOs, social services programs, legal service providers, and elected officials. Utilizing the language skills of bilingual staff members, we are able to provide services in 19 different languages in addition to English. When there is no in-house proficiency, we use LanguageLine, which provides interpreters instantaneously in over 240 languages.

Clients can access our programs and services throughout the five boroughs via intake hours at neighborhood-based and courthouse-based locations, our helplines, evening and weekend clinics, and 48 outreach sites. We ensure that our services are accessible to clients through conducting intake at various community-based outreach sites and during expanded hours. All of our Civil Practice offices are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and are accessible to clients with disabilities. In addition, we provide outreach through our Mobile Justice Unit to meet clients who live in remote areas without easy access to public transportation. Our staff also visits clients with physical or mental disabilities in their homes to ensure they can access legal assistance.

³ LAS's *Know Your Rights* program includes a series of brochures, videos, and trainings created by LAS staff to help inform and educate New Yorkers about various important legal matters such as eviction, family law, consumer rights, and what to do if you are stopped by the police.

Our online community education and self-help materials provide brief advice and assistance to clients without the need for them to travel to our offices. Our Civil Practice also operates six helplines assisting clients who may otherwise be unable to access our services, especially homebound residents and those unable to access our centralized citywide units. In addition to clients with special physical and mental health needs, we also accommodate those unable to visit our offices due to incarceration and homelessness.

11. How does your organization help to reduce the number of disputes that resort to the courts?

The Legal Aid Society is increasing the use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) and simplification of the legal process by fostering cooperative relationships with city and state agencies in order to resolve problems quickly and efficiently to best serve our clients. For example, the Society's Consumer Law Project (CLP) and the Housing Practice have recently proposed exploring the use of ADR in Housing Part (HP) actions to the recently formed New York State ADR Advisory Committee, on which the Society serves. The use of mediation or early neutral evaluation in housing repair-related disputes has the potential to avoid numerous court appearances and obtain prompt and satisfactory resolution of issues for all parties involved. Additionally, our Education Law Project (ELP) increasingly uses special education mediation services when representing students receiving services under an Individualized Education Program (IEP) rather than filing a due process complaint. Mediation often helps resolve communication problems and open the door to better collaboration between families and schools.

12. Please describe any modern technology initiatives or self-help services developed by your organization (or legal aid organizations in your country) (if any), and comment on their effectiveness.

The Society was a founding member of the LawHelpNY Consortium, which joined with Pro Bono Net to create LHNY in 2000. LawHelpNY.org | AyudaLegalNY.org is New York's leading legal information and referral resource helping low-income New Yorkers find solutions to their legal programs. LHNY provides comprehensive referral information to connect individuals to with direct service providers in their local area, and is used every day by intake, hotline and other Society staff to help refer income eligible clients seeking help with civil legal problems involving the "essentials of life" whom we are unable to represent. It also allows us to provide clients and other low income New Yorkers we cannot represent with plain language English and Spanish legal rights resources to help them learn about their rights and make more informed decisions about how to prevent or resolve legal issues on their own. LawHelpNY.org provides access to self-help resources, including D-I-Y court forms, and easy to understand written and video guides that enable unrepresented litigants to use these resources to advocate for themselves.

LHNY also supports one of the most successful LiveHelp programs in the country, which engages law student volunteers, trained and supervised by an LHNY staff attorney, to provide chat-based legal information and referral assistance to more than 5,500 individuals each year in English and Spanish. This service is now available on both the LawHelpNY.org and NYCourtHelp.org websites. In 2017, LHNY will introduce new tools to support issue-spotting, triage and referral activities by non-attorney navigators. These include a new housing "portal" with resources specifically designed to bolster the assistance provided by court and community-based navigators such as those at Legal Hand, and the Debt and Eviction Navigator (DEN), a tablet-based screening app used by social workers to conduct "legal health check-ups" for the homebound elderly. LHNY Staff conduct live trainings and webinars for court employees, librarians, constituent services staff and legal services advocates to equip them with the information needed to maximize their efficacy in the use of these tools.

- 13. In the past decade, have there been any surveys done in your country on legal needs and legal assistance seeking behaviors of the general public or any specific underprivileged groups? Or have there been any research studies of your service data? If yes, please kindly provide the files or URLs of the research results.**

[https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hra/downloads/pdf/services/civiljustice/OCJ Annual Report 2017.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hra/downloads/pdf/services/civiljustice/OCJ%20Annual%20Report%202017.pdf)

- 14. Please describe the challenges to delivering legal aid encountered in your country (or your organization) in recent years, and the strategies for responding to those difficulties.**

At the heart of our work, we seek to stabilize vulnerable individuals' and families' situations and remove the systemic barriers preventing them from advancing in New York. We focus both on assisting individuals through direct legal services while simultaneously working to improve and change the prevailing environment for marginalized communities; we are unrivaled in our ability to go beyond any one case to effect systemic change through litigation and advocacy. We are nimble in our approach and work to resolve macro issues while also mitigating their impacts at the micro level. Our Law Reform Unit's (LRU) work through class action litigation and legislative advocacy impacts the lives of millions of low-income New Yorkers and the landmark rulings in its cases have an impact statewide and nationally. Through changing laws and establishing new precedents, we lay the foundation for continued efforts to fight for marginalized communities in NYC, New York State, and the U.S. No other civil legal services program in New York State has the breadth and depth of services, nor works on as many cases and benefits more individuals and families than LAS.

Sustained and increased funding will enable us to continue this mission, and deepen our efforts to improve the lives of members of at-risk communities across New York City. Lower-income New Yorkers currently experience unprecedented difficulties and civil legal issues, whether this is the result of aggressive immigration enforcement activities or changes to the public assistance landscape. Increased funding ensures that we remain agile in our approach and responsive to the complex, ever-changing needs of marginalized communities.

- 15. Has your country (or organization) established any mechanisms of co-operation with legal aid organizations abroad?**

N/A

- 16. To what extent have the UN Principles and Guidelines on Access to Justice and UN human rights conventions regarding access to justice for specific disadvantaged groups been implemented in your country and complied by your organization? Have you met any challenges during implementation?**

N/A