

LEGAL AID OF SONOMA
COUNTY
144 SOUTH E STREET
SUITE 100
SANTA ROSA, CA 95404



Promoting social justice and
advancing basic human rights for
vulnerable people in our
community

2019 Annual Report



*400 People Kept
Their Homes*



*Fire Survivors
Received over
\$5.4 Million*



*Over 500 Seniors &
Children Kept Safe*



*Over 7,000
Calls Answered*



In 2019, our community faced more challenges. Another flood and another fire. Increasing housing scarcity, drove more people out of their homes and out of the County, and an aging population grappled with rising elder abuse.

Legal Aid was there to meet these challenges.

We helped hundreds of people keep their homes, recovered over \$4 million dollars for fire survivors, and helped hundreds of vulnerable seniors put an end to their abuse.

Justice is more than an idea. Justice means being safe. Justice means having a healthy home. Justice means having income to feed your family. And, Justice means that regardless of your age, race, religion, sexual orientation, or gender, you have equal opportunity to achieve these things.



We appreciate the support of our community's elected officials!



*Supervisor Susan Gorin and
Congressman Mike
Thompson*



*Former Insurance
Commissioner Dave Jones*



*Governor
Gavin Newsom*



*Senator
Mike McGuire*



*Santa Rosa City Council Members
Julie Combs, Victoria Fleming and
Mayor Tom Schwedhelm*

Thank you to those not pictured: Senator Bill Dodd, Assembly Member Jim Wood, Supervisors James Gore, Lynda Hopkins, David Rabbitt and Shirlee Zane, And the Santa Rosa City Council

Over \$79,000 in Public Benefits for Clients

\$175,584 in Client Savings via Payment Reduction

\$416,532 in Reduced/Eliminated Claimed Amounts

\$3.8 Million in Back Awards and Lump Sum Settlements

5,910
people helped
\$4,551,417
in
Client Financial
Benefits

Benefits
Client Financial
in
\$4,551,417


Legal Aid
OF SONOMA COUNTY

Disaster Relief Program

The Disaster Relief Program helps victims of the 2017 and 2019 fires. Our team provides outreach, education, fire rights clinics, and individual representation.

11,411 client contacts

We work with disaster survivors seeking to rebuild and recover by helping them with issues including insurance, Federal benefits (e.g. FEMA), mediation, housing and employment issues, and contractor and consumer issues.

Jack
is 93-years old
and lived at the
Journey's End Mobile
Home Park.

He lives on a small fixed income, receiving only SSI benefits and Medicare. Although his mobile home was not destroyed, the destruction of the park's infrastructure made his home uninhabitable. Jack's insurance company argued that no "physical damage" existed beyond loss of use, so they refused to pay his claim.

While Legal Aid worked with Jack to ensure the insurer paid his claim, Legal Aid helped Jack get \$13,000 in FEMA funds to initially support him. Then, after months of negotiating with the insurance company, Legal Aid obtained the full policy amount of **\$132,000 for Jack!**

Because of our help, Jack is housed and not homeless.

Child Abuse Prevention Program (CAPP)

We protect abused and neglected children by helping non-parental caregivers obtain guardianship of at-risk children.

Guardianships assist children with:

- Physical & emotional abuse issues
- Homelessness
- Parental abandonment
- Truancy
- Lack of medical care
- Exposure to substance abuse

Julie is a 16-year-old high school student. Her mother passed away and her father abandoned her. Julie lived alone in a converted water tower in rural Sonoma County. She had to work three jobs to buy food and other essentials. She rarely went to school.

She was barely surviving.

Julie's best friend's mother, Mary, came to Legal Aid because she wanted to care for Julie.

Legal Aid obtained a guardianship for Mary. The guardianship allowed Mary to become Julie's legal caregiver. Because of Legal Aid, Julie now has a safe, secure home and nutritious meals. She no longer works multiple jobs, and instead has the time to attend school like a normal 16-year-old.

Over 100 families and 150 at-risk children helped each year

The HOME Program

HOME helps low-income tenants with

Section 8 issues, mobile home park issues, housing quality problems and price gouging. We also assist low-income landlords who need help negotiating with tenants.

- **Helps prevent homelessness** by preventing unlawful evictions
- **Ensures** low-income people have **safe and healthy homes**
- Helps **preserve existing low-income housing**

Mara lived with her disabled husband and 11-year old son in a one-bedroom house. The house had inadequate heat, a broken stove, a leaking roof, and a termite infestation. Mara's landlord refused her repeated requests for repairs.

Legal Aid filed a lawsuit for breach of warranty of habitability. The judge awarded Mara \$14k to compensate her for having to live in such uninhabitable housing. Mara was able to use these funds to find safer, healthier housing for herself and her family.

HOME helps over 600 families and individuals stabilize their housing each year

Employment and Health Programs

EHP assists clients remove barriers to employment and health benefits

The program helps clients with:

- Criminal record expungement
- Family law issues
- Driver's license retrieval
- Traffic offenses

Sam was barred from career opportunities that would allow him to fully support his family, because of his criminal record. He was ready to give up hope.

Sam's prospective employer said he was willing to hire Sam but there was a catch, only if all convictions were dismissed. EHP worked with Sam and the Court dismissed **ALL his convictions!**

Because of our help, Sam got the job and was able to pursue a professional license that increased his earning potential. Sam can now provide for himself and his family.

Domestic Violence Services

SAFE prevents domestic violence and child abuse by keeping batterers away from victims and their homes.

SAFE assists victims by helping them obtain protective orders that:

- ✓ Make their housing safe
- ✓ Keep batterers away from where they work and go to school
- ✓ Give victims access to child support and medical insurance

In 2019, we helped
over 700 adults
and 1,000 children

Victoria was only 12 years-old but she was enduring constant abuse by her mother. Her mother beat her and threatened her life.

Legal aid intervened and got Victoria a restraining order. Because of that restraining order, Victoria is now able to live with her stepmother where she is safe from her mother's abuse.

Elder Law Program

The Elder Law Program serves over 500 seniors annually. Services include restraining orders, estate planning, help with public benefits, financial abuse and credit issues. Seniors can meet with us in their homes or senior centers throughout the County.

We help with elder law issues including:

- ✓ Elder Abuse
- ✓ Eviction and rental issues
- ✓ Advanced health care directives
- ✓ Powers of attorney
- ✓ Help accessing Public Benefits (Social Security Insurance, In Home Support Services, Medi-Cal, and Medicare)

Curtis is a disabled 71-year-old veteran who depends upon a caregiver for his daily needs. Curtis's caregiver took advantage of him and let abusive people onto Curtis's property. They soon vandalized his home and started using it as a drug den. Police were called to the property almost twenty times in one year. Curtis was in a state of insecurity and depression. He came to Legal Aid for help.

We obtained a restraining order for Curtis that removed all of the abusers from his home, including the delinquent caregiver. Curtis now feels safe in his home again for the first time in over a year.

Pro Bono Attorney Program

Legal Aid welcomes attorneys willing to donate their time to aid clients. Pro Bono opportunities exist in all our departments depending on your interest and availability. Pro bono attorneys are covered by our malpractice insurance. Retired attorneys may also be eligible to have their Bar dues waived.



Jack Raineault and Max Courtney were honored by the Sonoma County Bar Association in December 2019 for their incredibly generous volunteer time to bring legal services to those in need

In 2019, interns and volunteers donated over 2,500 hours of free legal services to Legal Aid clients!

Their time is worth \$199,807.00.

If interested in the Pro Bono program, please contact Linda Cooney at lcooney@legalaidsc.com.

Equal Justice Phone-a-Thon

**Our volunteer callers raised Over
\$99,000 in 2019**



Dan Galvin 2018 Top Caller!





The Justice Gala
supports all our programs



LEGAL AID THANKS OUR MAJOR DONORS

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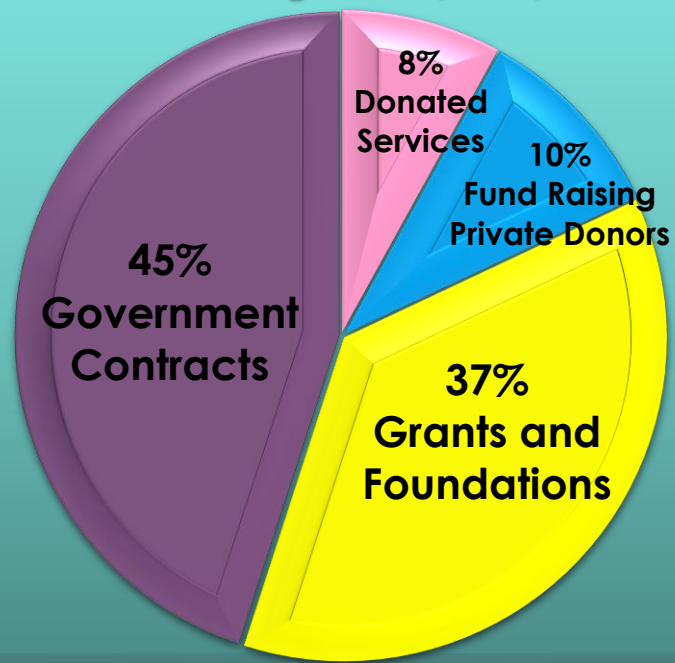
**Howard Daulton of Exchange Bank and Cindy Craig,
Board Member of Legal Aid of Sonoma County**

Become a Supporter

Legal Aid of Sonoma County welcomes support from corporations, agencies and other organizations that support the cause of equal justice.

To donate, please contact Executive Director Ronit Rubinoff, at rrubinoff@legalaidsc.com

2019 Budget \$2,333,285



Thank you to our Board members!

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