



**LEGAL AID**  
**FOUNDATION**  
OF LOS ANGELES

## **2017 ANNUAL REPORT**







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FOUNDATION**  
OF LOS ANGELES

## WHAT WE DO



### EVICTIION DEFENSE CENTER

Provides free direct representation for low-income individuals and families facing eviction

Prepares pleadings for tenants to avoid a default in an eviction action and prepares tenants for trial

Defends residents of public housing and Section 8 voucher holders against losing their housing or housing subsidy

Helps clients living in uninhabitable conditions to get reductions in rent and get necessary repairs made through outreach, advocacy, and litigation

Preserves Rent Stabilized Ordinance tenancies and prevents Rent Stabilization Ordinance violations

### ECONOMIC STABILITY

Assists vulnerable populations in getting benefits to fulfill basic needs: food, shelter, medical care and services to attain self-sufficiency

Fights wage theft, wrongful terminations and discriminatory employment practices

Removes barriers to employment by expunging criminal convictions and reducing sentences post-conviction, so that individuals can become or stay employed and gain access to housing

Discharges student loans based on disability or school fraud

### HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

Works toward systems change through litigation, policy and education aimed at creating and preserving quality affordable housing and homeownership opportunities

Protects civil rights

Seeks environmental justice on behalf of poor and low-income residents

Partners with community-based organizations to build healthy, economically vibrant neighborhoods

### SUPPORTING FAMILIES

Helps survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault get restraining orders, divorces, child custody, visitation and support

Secures the return of concealed and abducted children

Represents survivors of domestic violence, human trafficking, sexual assaults and other serious crimes to obtain protection and permanent residency

Supports torture victims seeking asylum and other immigration relief in the United States with the immigration process

Provides comprehensive case management to survivors of torture

Represents children and adults who are in removal proceedings to obtain immigration relief

### VETERANS JUSTICE CENTER

Obtains life-sustaining income, health, and housing benefits so veterans can thrive

Prevents veteran homelessness by fighting wrongful evictions and preserving housing vouchers

Removes barriers to employment to promote self-sufficiency

Advocates to upgrade unjust less-than-honorable military discharges

Works with hundreds of pro bono legal volunteers annually to hold large-scale legal clinics for homeless veterans



**32,414** CALLS  
HANDLED THROUGH  
LAFLA'S CALL CENTER

### ASIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROJECT

Advocates for language services in civil courts, administrative proceedings, and other government agencies for limited-English proficient clients

Provides linguistically and culturally appropriate services on all substantive areas LAFLA handles in Korean, Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese, Khmer, Vietnamese, Thai, Tagalog and other requested languages

## MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIPS

Offering two MLPs in Long Beach at The Children's Clinic and in Los Angeles at Martin Luther King Jr. Outpatient Center

Provides clients with access to legal services as they seek medical attention from their trusted health care provider

Enables lawyers to address systemic barriers to healthcare for those who are low-income

## PROJECT IMPACT – REENTRY ASSISTANCE

Provide legal assistance to individuals with criminal justice involvement to remove legal barriers to employment through a partnership with employment service and behavioral health providers.

Assists individuals in obtaining resources such as public benefits.

## HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION (MEASURE H)

Provides legal services to individuals living in the South Bay/ Harbor area and Southeast areas of Los Angeles County

Provides legal representation to those households facing eviction and are in imminent risk of homelessness

Assists homeless individuals by removing legal barriers for housing and income benefits

## SANTA MONICA COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Serving the needs of this client community, especially in the areas of housing and homelessness, employment and tenant harassment

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CLINICS

(Downtown LA, Santa Monica and Long Beach)

Provides holistic help to survivors of domestic violence, including restraining orders, custody arrangements and property control orders

## SELF-HELP LEGAL ACCESS CENTERS

(Inglewood, Torrance, Santa Monica and Long Beach)

Assists self-represented litigants regardless of income or immigration status by completing and reviewing court forms with issues involving family law, evictions and a limited range of other civil legal matters

Provides legal referrals for other areas of law

Provides legal education workshops on family law, evictions and other civil matters

## PRO BONO

Coordinates volunteers to provide comprehensive, free legal services to low-income clients through direct representation, legal projects and clinics

Provides legal training to volunteer attorneys, law students, law school graduates, paralegals, undergraduate students, social workers and translators to assist in providing legal services to expand the number of clients that can be helped



OVER  
100,000  
PEOPLE  
ASSISTED  
IN 2017, THIS  
INCLUDES  
OVER 7,700  
CHILDREN.

39,249  
# OF PEOPLE  
HELPED

AT SELF-HELP  
CENTERS AND  
COMMUNITY  
CLINICS





## SUPPORTING FAMILIES: HOPE FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

1,595  
SURVIVORS



HELPED AT OUR  
THREE DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE CLINICS

They met and fell in love in high school.

In 2010, shortly before the birth of their child, the couple married.

Soon after, he began physically abusing his wife, Jazmin de la Cruz.

The couple lived in a house behind Jazmin parents' home with their daughter, Zoey. Sometimes her husband's temper subsided. When he was mad, however, he shoved Jazmin, who is now 27, up against a wall or grabbed her and threw her to the ground. Jazmin would ask her husband to leave and he would, and then return asking for forgiveness. This cycle continued--and grew worse--when Jazmin was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma in 2014.

After Jazmin successfully fought Hodgkin's lymphoma, she vowed to live a healthier life for her and her daughter. She distanced herself from Zach. She realized Zach, a U.S. citizen, would never help her adjust her immigration status.

One day in 2015, Zach began physically abusing Jazmin accusing her of cheating. Zach grabbed Jazmin by the

neck and pinned her to the floor. Zach let go of Jazmin only after he heard their daughter cry. Jazmin reported the incident to the police and pursued a restraining order with the help of LAFLA.

"Without this help, I would have struggled," Jazmin said. "I was under a lot of stress. It was helpful to have someone guide me."

Because Jazmin's spouse was a U.S. citizen, Jazmin qualified to self-petition for legal permanent residency through the Violence Against Women Act. LAFLA filed her petition and accompanied Jazmin to her immigration interview in December 2017. A week later, Jazmin was approved to become a permanent resident.

Jazmin has enrolled at East Los Angeles College to become a registered nurse. She wants to give her daughter a better life.





## HOUSING: TENANTS FIGHTS FOR JUSTICE

Madison Hotel tenant Edwin Linwood and other fellow tenants felt the abrupt change when real estate mogul Kameron Segal bought the single-room occupancy hotel in 2015. The new property management began harassing and intimidating tenants to drive them out of the building.

"It was a nightmare," said Linwood, 66.

Management let trash pile up, spoke abusively to tenants, turned off heat on cold winter nights, allowed bedbug and roach infestations to fester and refused to repair the building's elevator, which trapped disabled residents in their rooms for days at a time. Many of the Madison's low-income residents are elderly, disabled and military veterans who have lived in the rent-controlled building for years.

In November 2015, 15 long-term residents of the Madison Hotel, at 423 E. 7th St., and a tenant-organizing group, the Los Angeles community Action Network (LA CAN), sued the residential hotel's owners, alleging they engaged in a concerted effort to violate tenants' civil rights and deprive residents of safe and habitable conditions in the 220-room building. LAFLA represented plaintiffs along with Inner City Law Center, and pro bono counsel from Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom.

Prior to legal intervention, Segal managed to vacate about half of the units in the Madison, which is situated in LA's Skid Row—the area with the highest concentration of residential hotels in Los Angeles County. Segal was named in the lawsuit.

In April 2017, tenants settled their lawsuit for \$610,000 in damages plus attorneys' fees and the owners were required to make building repairs.

"Because of Legal Aid and Inner City Law, the building is not as dirty. It's not as much of a health hazard," said Edwin, who was one of the residents who sued. "Legal Aid made things a whole lot better."



**58,000**  
ESTIMATED NUMBER OF  
HOMELESS PEOPLE IN  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY





## STUDENT LOANS: DEBT FORGIVENESS LIFTS HEAVY BURDEN

When Elodia Carrillo read an advertisement in a Spanish-language community newspaper touting a job-training program that would help her “realize her dreams” in a “stable career with better earnings,” she wanted to enroll.

Elodia visited CIT College of Information Technology, a for-profit college in Fullerton. After she told a school recruiter that she did not speak English and that her highest level of education was the sixth grade in her native country of Mexico, the recruiter assured her this would not be a problem. The recruiter had her take an online exam to earn a diploma from Jefferson High School. Elodia enrolled in the medical assistant program and took out student loans in the fall of 2008 after believing she earned a diploma from Jefferson High School.

When she graduated in June 2009, with the help from other students because she couldn’t read or speak English, Elodia owed nearly \$10,000 in student loans. After applying for multiple medical assistant positions, Elodia discovered her CIT diploma was worthless and never found a job as a medical assistant.

Eventually, Elodia and 20 other former CIT students sought help with their defaulted student loans from the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles. LAFLA filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education, based on CIT’s targeting

of Spanish-speaking individuals who had not finished high school in their countries of origin. The college falsely promised these students high-paying jobs, English classes, clinical experience, and job placement assistance; and gave them fake high school diplomas. The students did not know their high school diplomas were phony. The for-profit college gave the students fake high school diplomas in order to falsely certify their eligibility for financial aid. CIT shut down after the Department conducted an investigation of these illegal practices.

“CIT College was a scam school that preyed on Spanish-speaking individuals by deceptively promising them bountiful employment opportunities after they graduated,” Senior Attorney Robyn Smith said. “This type of fraud is outrageous and harms the economic well-being of vulnerable students, their children and their communities.”

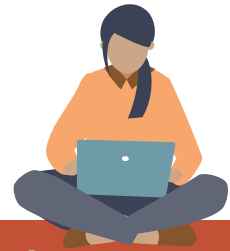
Robyn and LAFLA staff attorney Josephine Lee submitted false certification discharge applications on behalf of Elodia and 20 other former CIT students. All 21 were granted discharges—the last in 2017—resulting in over \$162,000 in student loan discharges and refunds of \$33,225. Elodia got a loan forgiveness her student loans. “This was a huge victory,” said Elodia, who now works cleaning a retirement community. “I’m very satisfied and very pleased with the help I received from Legal Aid.”



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LANGUAGES SPOKEN  
BY LAFLA STAFF

# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW 2017



**89566**  
USERS ON  
LAFLA WEBSITE

## SUPPORT & REVENUE

## TOTAL

Income: \$15,870,220

Government Contracts: \$10,975,804

Grants and Contributions: \$2,783,197

Special Events: \$528,321

Misc. Income: \$1,582,898

Expenses: \$14,155,100

Program Services: \$11,500,401

Support Services: \$2,276,295

Fundraising Services \$378,404

**51,311**  
# OF HOURS

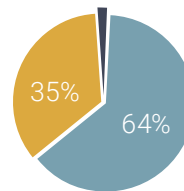
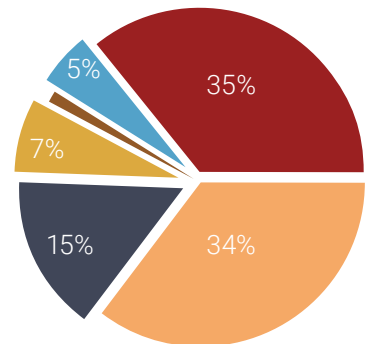
DONATED BY  
VOLUNTEERS



LAFLA HAS  
OVER 1,341  
VOLUNTEERS  
AND FIVE  
COMMUNITY  
OFFICES

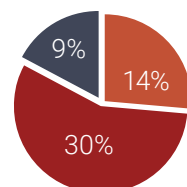


- 35% Latino
- 34% African American
- 15% White
- 7% Asian
- 5% Other
- 1% Native American



- 64% Female
- 35% Male
- 1% Gay/Lesbian/Transgender

- 30% Disabled
- 14% Seniors
- 9% Veterans



**pbt**i

**75**

PRO BONO TRAININGS  
AVAILABLE THROUGH  
PRO BONO TRAINING  
INSTITUTE



## ADMINISTRATION AND COMMUNITY OFFICE LOCATIONS

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### **Ron Olson Justice Center**

1550 W. 8th Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90017  
Tel: 800-399-4529

### **East Los Angeles**

5228 Whittier Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90022  
Tel: 800-399-4529

### **Long Beach**

601 Pacific Ave.  
Long Beach, CA 90802  
Tel: 800-399-4529

### **Santa Monica**

1640 5th St., Suite 124  
Santa Monica, CA 90401  
Tel: 800-399-4529

### **South Los Angeles**

7000 S. Broadway  
Los Angeles, CA 90003  
Tel: 800-399-4529



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[WWW.LAFLA.ORG](http://WWW.LAFLA.ORG)