

LEGAL AID ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA

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ANNUAL REPORT

LEGAL AID FIGHTS FOR JUSTICE.
WE FIGHT FOR THEM.





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FROM LAAC'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear members and friends,

In 2020, I wrote that **we were looking forward to change in 2021.**

Though we've certainly seen positive changes (mass vaccinations in California, schools re-opened for in-person instruction, a new federal government, millions of dollars in federal aid, and the promised re-launching of the Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable), not all changes were good.

As I write this and reflect on our past year, we've exceeded 800,000 people who have passed from COVID-19 in the US, and Omicron is taking hold. Many Americans have less trust in our local, state, and federal governments to take care of people in need.

What does this mean for your clients? We know there will continue to be lost wages, unlawful evictions, kids missing school and at risk of falling behind, and rising consumer and medical debt. Your work continues to be more important than ever. We believe in you and the work that you do every day to make California a better place.

LAAC's work shifted in 2021 to respond to the challenges you're facing.

We moved our popular multi-day NITA trainings for our members to an online model and will continue that into the near future. We worked with legislators to answer questions about **how the coronavirus pandemic might impact low-income Californians.** We made sure that significant sums from federal COVID relief funds and the state surplus were dedicated to legal services, including a set-aside for infrastructure and innovation grants and even more funding for homelessness prevention.

As you work tirelessly to serve your communities, LAAC will continue to support you in any way that we can. Our staff, like yours, is truly amazing. I am constantly impressed with what we are able to accomplish with such a small team. I want to make sure you see everyone's faces so you know whom to reach out to the next time you need help from LAAC. **We are always here for you!**

Legal aid in California exists because of your dedication and passion for access to justice. We recognize your hard work and will continue doing all we can to back your efforts at balancing the scales. Thank you for your support, and we look forward to working with you in 2022!

In solidarity in the fight for justice,

Salena

Salena Copeland
Executive Director



THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

FOUNDATION SUPPORT

BIGGLESWORTH FAMILY FOUNDATION
VAN LÖBEN SELS/REMBEROCK
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SILICON VALLEY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

THANK YOU CALIFORNIA ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION

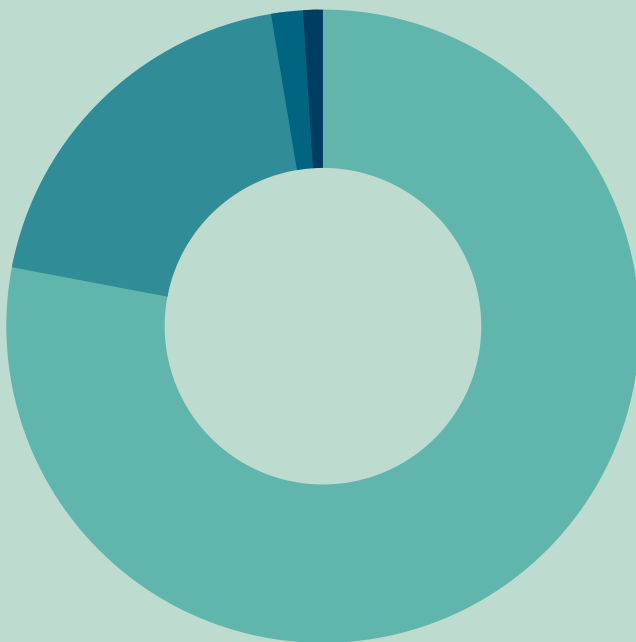
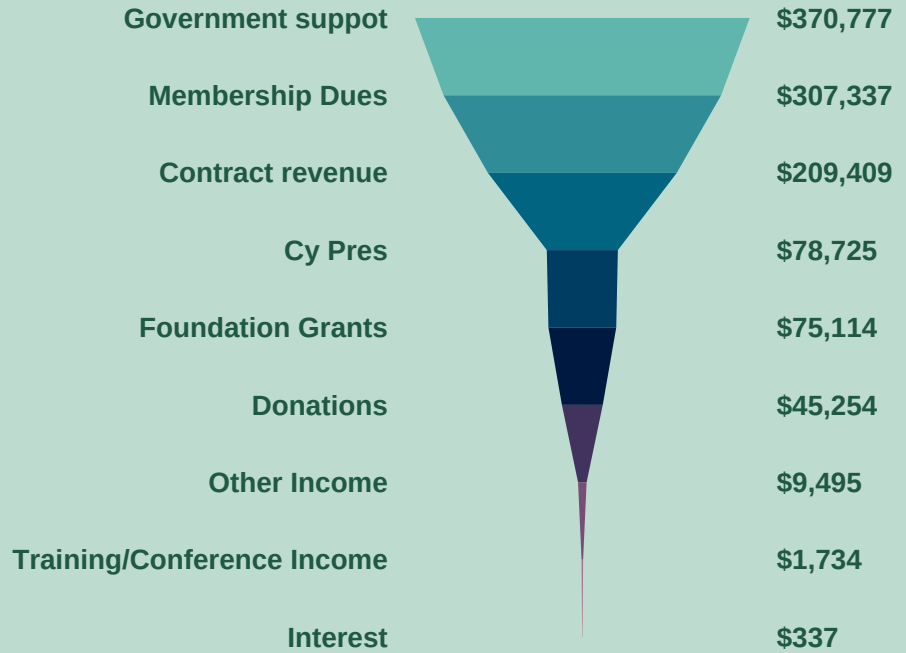
IN 2021, LAAC CONTINUED OUR COLLABORATION WITH THE CALIFORNIA ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION. A MAJOR COLLABORATIVE PROJECT IS WITH CALATJ'S RURAL ACCESS COMMITTEE. THIS YEAR, THE PROJECT FOCUSED ON PRODUCING PAPERS ON HEALTH EQUITY AND RURAL ATTORNEY DESERTS.



FINANCIALS

REVENUE

Total Revenue
\$1,098,182



EXPENSES



LAWHELPCA

In 2021, LawHelpCA focused significant efforts on providing comprehensive and accurate legal resources and referral information for housing legal issues, especially eviction issues. While California's eviction moratoriums were still in effect, our goal was to prepare users for the end of those moratoriums with information to better understand any implications and how to seek appropriate help.

Additionally, the LawHelpCA team ramped up outreach efforts, including creating a [training video](#) to inform service providers and site users how best to navigate the site.

The LawHelpCA team continued site improvements through enhanced accessibility features, such as increased color contrast, which will better ensure an equitable experience for all site users.

In 2021, LawHelpCA had 1,904,230 page views and helped 3,088 number of LiveChat users.

The LiveChat program staffed the most volunteers to date, helping at least 3,088 number of users with their legal issues. Staff conducted issue-specific trainings with volunteers to better prepare them to address hot topic issues of the moment, such as eviction, immigration, and domestic violence. We look forward to making this program more robust in 2022.

ADVOCACY

In 2021, we made big progress in advocating for more funding and better laws for legal aid at the legislature, as well as more effective policies at the State Bar and Judicial Council.

This year's state budget is a historic investment in legal aid. The budget contains \$70 million in funding for legal aid via the Equal Access Fund (EAF), \$80 million in federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Act for legal aid for homelessness prevention, and \$20 million in new funding for legal aid for seniors.

"Over 100 organizations in California depend on state and State Bar funding to sustain our legal services for the long haul. LAAC's tireless advocacy with these key funders has been invaluable to all of us, since we could never do it on our own."

-Erin Smith, Family Violence Appellate Project

The Governor signed a number of major bills we supported, including SB 498 (makes more people eligible for legal aid), SB 211 (explicitly allows legal aid to help with issues like expungements and record clearance), and SB 241 (permits remote court appearances after the expiration of the emergency orders through June 2023). Despite extensive advocacy, AB 1487 (creating a homelessness prevention fund and accompanying program for tenants facing eviction) was vetoed.

We pivoted our annual Civil Legal Aid Day in Sacramento from an in-person event to a virtual one over the course of a week, as Civil Legal Aid Week in Sacramento, coordinating and assembling over 50 attorneys and other advocates to meet with more than 50 legislators or their staffers. Relatedly, we launched Days in the District, which gives



organizations an opportunity to connect with their legislators at the district level. And we continued our Constituent Services Project, which is an ongoing resource for legislative caseworkers to connect constituents with legal services.

We worked with our legal aid community on important administrative advocacy issues.

A number of proposals arose at the State Bar this year. Most prominently, the California Paraprofessional Program Working Group's recommendations for creating a paraprofessional program galvanized our community to respond, centering the impact on our client communities. We also advocated extensively on the "rules revision" process at the Legal Services Trust Fund Commission, which administers funding to legal aid. Proposed changes have a profound impact on how our community serves clients.

We expanded our Data & Evaluation program area, published policy papers with the California Access to Justice Commission, and sustained our Justice in Government Project. We published some important data-oriented projects this year, including our report with OneJustice entitled *Social Work Practices in California Legal Aid Organizations*.

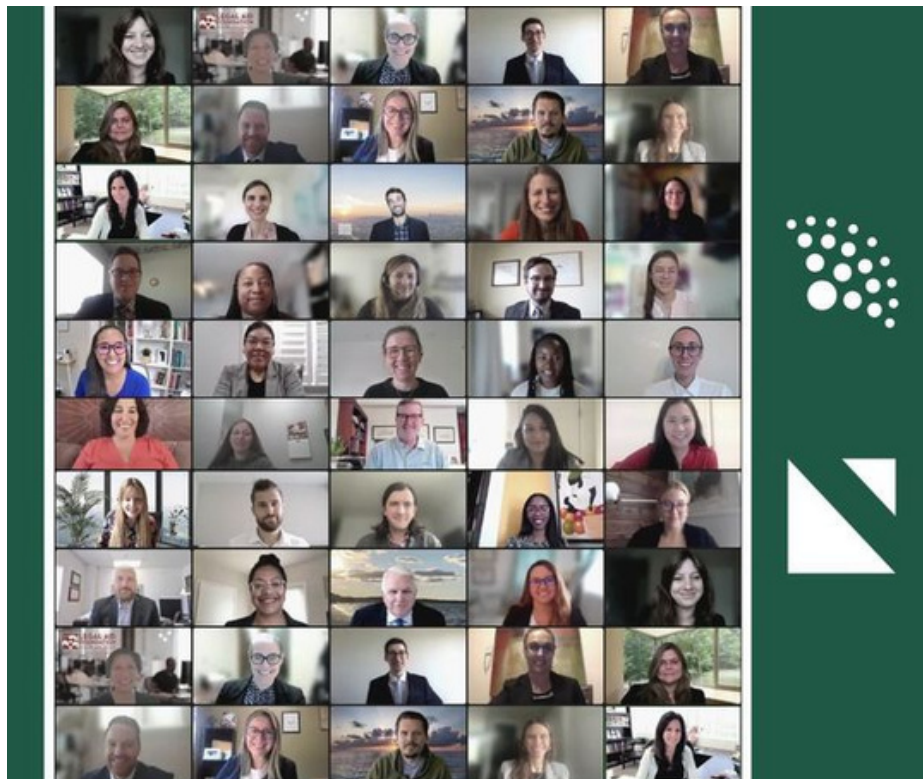
Through our Justice in Government Project this year, which seeks to educate state agencies about legal aid to improve programs and expand funding, we advocated for COVID relief funding from the CARES Act and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to be earmarked for legal services, resulting in an allocation of \$80 million for homelessness prevention legal services.

TRAININGS

This year, LAAC centered our trainings around equity, housing, and trauma-informed lawyering. Some highlights of this year’s trainings include Women’s History Month, where LAAC presented “The Gendered History of Legal Aid,” exploring the history of women’s involvement in legal aid.

Later, we teamed up with the Judicial Council of California to organize a series of trainings covering unlawful detainers and other issues impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, we are proud to have expanded our NITA program to four online trainings in 2021, with new cases focusing on unlawful detainers.



FIGURES

\$50
MILLION

NEW FUNDING
FOR LEGAL
AID IN EAF
GRANTS

104

TOTAL
MEMBERS

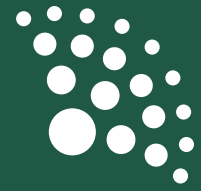
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TRAININGS &
SUMMITS

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MEMBERSHIP
BENEFITS

At the Legal Aid Association of California, we believe everyone deserves fair access to the justice system, even if you can't afford an attorney. The system, however, is not fair and accessible for everyone, especially for BIPOC, low-income, and vulnerable populations in California. So we work everyday to strengthen the legal aid safety net through advocacy, nonprofit coordination, and training.



THANK YOU TO ALL OUR 2021 MEMBERS

IOLTA MEMBERS

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