

Helping Those Who Have Nowhere Else To Turn

Standing For Liberty And Justice For All

Our Mission

OUR MISSION Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network, Inc. is a client-centered organization that provides leadership, funding, and support to improve the availability and quality of civil legal aid for low income people and victims of domestic violence in

Pennsylvania. **OUR VISION** We envision equal access to justice for those who have nowhere else to turn, where every low-income individual and family in Pennsylvania will have access to the full range of civil legal services and legal remedies.

OUR VALUES We take pride in our strategic vision for a coordinated and compassionate, client-centered legal aid delivery system — a Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network that is capable of obtaining fair solutions for critical civil legal problems.

OUR NETWORK The Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network (PLAN) is the state's coordinated system of organizations providing civil legal aid for those with nowhere else to turn. PLAN offers a continuum of critically needed legal information, advice and representation for low-income individuals and families who face urgent civil legal problems. These problems affect basic needs such as food, shelter, employment, consumer issues, healthcare, and family safety.

A black and white photograph of a young child with curly hair, looking upwards and holding a small American flag on a wooden stick. The child's face is partially visible, and they appear to be holding the flag with both hands. The background is plain white.

Standing
& for Liberty
Justice for
all

Equal Justice Under The Law



These are the faces of people we serve

OUR SERVICES **WHO WE ARE** We are the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network (PLAN), Inc. We help make possible the delivery of free legal services to low-income Pennsylvanians. We are the corporate entity that provides strategic leadership and coordination for ten independent, regional legal aid programs and six specialized legal resource programs that together comprise the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network.* By providing an administrative framework and strategic oversight, we help guide member legal aid programs that collectively offer free legal advice and representation in civil cases to more than 100,000 low-income clients per year, that deliver self-help information and community education services to another 400,000-plus people in need, and that provide countless referrals to other service providers and pro bono lawyers.

APPEALING FOR FAIRNESS Sometimes the bureaucracy doesn't want to listen, especially when it makes a mistake. A grandmother on limited income was notified she had received a \$1,100 overpayment in her Social Security benefits and was ordered to pay it back. At the time, the woman was struggling to pay for a new roof and furnace for the old house where she cared for her granddaughter. One of our member legal aid programs, **North Penn Legal Services**, filed an appeal for her. Ultimately it was decided the overpayment was Social Security's fault and the demand for repayment was withdrawn. Without legal aid, the woman would have been unfairly penalized.

HOW WE WORK PLAN, Inc. funds the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network of programs providing direct client services. The programs in the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network strive to make good on the promise of "Justice for All." Legal aid services are, in fact, vital, providing recourse for those who have nowhere else to turn. For example, legal aid advocates frequently represent victims of domestic violence and abused or neglected children. They may help an impoverished family win life-sustaining benefits or find a way for a low-income worker to avoid unfair eviction. They often seek system-wide change as they take on challenges to increase the availability of affordable housing, make health care more accessible to working families, or improve services to the elderly. We at PLAN, Inc. support the efforts of our member legal aid programs so they in turn can promote and protect fairness and equality for all.

* Refer to page 8 for a list of network partners and corresponding map.

Improving the Justice System for All

[1.8 Million Seniors*]

OUR PROGRAMS ADVANCING JUSTICE We are engaged in many initiatives to strengthen support for and partner with organizations throughout Pennsylvania and nationally, to improve access to justice for all, and to increase the resources available to support our mission. For example, we look for innovative and reliable sources of funding, such as the Access to Justice Act, which earmarks a portion of court filing fees for legal aid. We arrange and sponsor special training programs pertinent to legal aid practice, including statewide training. We maintain www.PALawHELP.org, a web-based guide to legal information and free civil legal services for low-income people and seniors, and www.paprobono.net, a web site that serves as a resource for legal aid attorneys, volunteer “pro bono” attorneys, and other legal advocates interested in increasing access to justice.

EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION For many seniors, the transition to the Medicare Part D prescription drug program was anything but seamless. Many disabled and elderly Medicare beneficiaries found that they were no longer able to obtain their medications. Then **Pennsylvania Health Law Project (PHLP)** and **Community Legal Services (CLS)** intervened. Through individual assistance, advocacy with government offices, and litigation, PHLP and CLS aggressively pushed to improve the system and see that seniors got the medicine they needed. Legal aid staff of regional programs across the state advised clients of Medicare Part D changes, worked with them to determine if they had coverage, helped seniors and their families choose appropriate plans, and even in some instances, coordinated temporary emergency supplies of life-sustaining medications. Sometimes legal aid can be lifesaving.

THE PEOPLE WE SERVE Special legal problems affecting low-income Pennsylvanians require special solutions. Legal aid attorneys have created six specialized programs to help their clients with issue-specific problems. A complete list of Specialty Programs can be found on page 8. Responsiveness to emerging problems is also important. Here is an example of the way we can respond to emerging legal problems: when mortgage foreclosures began to increase sharply, legal aid advocates stepped up. They provided advice and representation, helped clients find emergency assistance, counseled them in negotiating with mortgage holders, and focused attention on the underlying problem of predatory lending. While legal aid advocates worked to save the homes of many low-income families, attorneys with Regional Housing Legal Services worked with state government officials to improve Pennsylvania’s Homeowner Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program.



Empowering People to Help Themselves



[1.9 Million Living in Poverty*]

PROTECTING FROM ABUSE Laurel Legal Services represented a working mother whose husband called her at work while in an intoxicated state and threatened to shoot her.

When she returned home, the husband grabbed her by the face, threatening to kill her, while smashing things in their home. In the past, he had broken her teeth and her finger and caused a head injury. The woman's legal aid advocate obtained a protective order which evicted the abuser from the home and protects her while at work.

The young woman and her children no longer live in constant fear.



OUR WORK

WE ACCOMPLISH MEASURABLE OUTCOMES Based on the number of low-income clients served on an annual basis and the average size of families in Pennsylvania, it's estimated that representation by a total of 350 legal aid lawyers and paralegals directly benefits more than 315,000 Pennsylvanians per year. Through the use of telephone helplines, self-assistance strategies, community legal education, and web-based legal information and resources, legal aid programs are able to reach and help over 500,000 more. Achieving justice for low-income Pennsylvanians is the core of the legal aid success story, but there's more. The victories won by legal aid programs also contribute to the Commonwealth's economic well-being. Intervention by legal aid to obtain benefits initially denied to clients ultimately adds nearly \$120 million a year to the state's economy—the equivalent of a 3-to-1 return on the investment in legal aid funding—and helps generate close to 3,000 jobs.

HOW OUR PARTNERS SERVE

LEGAL ADVICE Legal aid advocates give advice and offer problem-solving techniques that clients can use to resolve problems on their own. **LEGAL DOCUMENTS** Legal aid advocates prepare legal documents and write letters on behalf of clients without going to court. **REPRESENTATION** Legal aid lawyers and paralegals attend court or administrative hearings on behalf of clients. **COORDINATION** Legal aid lawyers work closely with private lawyers who provide “pro bono” services to low-income clients. **CLINICS** Group presentations provide information on specific legal problems, sometimes coupled with advice and referral. **REFERRALS** Legal aid clients receive information about other organizations that may be able to help. **COMMUNITY EDUCATION** Educational sessions provide information about legal rights and responsibilities. **WEB-BASED INFORMATION** Access at www.PALawHELP.org and www.paprobono.net provides information to clients and lawyers.

Q & A

Q | WHAT IS THE PENNSYLVANIA LEGAL AID NETWORK?

A | The Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network is a statewide consortium of independent legal aid programs that provides civil legal assistance to low-income individuals and families. (See list on page 8 of ten regional programs and six specialized legal aid programs.) The network is administered and funded by a corporate entity known as PLAN, Inc.

Q | WHAT ROLE DOES PLAN, INC. PLAY AS AN UMBRELLA AGENCY?

A | We administer funding that comes from a variety of federal, state, and local sources. We contract with individual legal aid programs for the provision of services and then monitor performance, coordinate training and technology, and help develop new resources and programs.

Q | HOW IS LEGAL AID FUNDED?

A | The sources of funding for legal aid include federal and state appropriations; grants from foundations, bar associations, United Way agencies, and other organizations; allocations from local governments; grants from the Legal Services Corporation; revenue from Pennsylvania IOLTA, a statewide program that collects and combines residual interest earnings from lawyer trust accounts; and revenue from a surcharge on court filing fees. Private lawyers also contribute with their dollars and by volunteering their services (called “pro bono”) for low-income individuals in need.

Q | WHAT IS CIVIL LEGAL AID?

A | Civil legal aid refers to the free legal services provided by some 350 legal aid attorneys and paralegals in legal aid programs throughout Pennsylvania. These professionals work through local and regional legal aid offices to help over 100,000 low-income people gain access to legal representation. Civil legal aid helps people resolve urgent, non-criminal legal problems. For example, elderly people are protected from unlawful evictions; women and children are protected from violence in their homes; and veterans get help obtaining financial benefits they have earned and need.

Q | ISN'T EVERYONE ENTITLED TO A LAWYER?

A | The courts provide public defenders in criminal cases if a defendant cannot afford a lawyer, but there is not yet a similar established legal guarantee in civil cases.

Q | HOW MUCH NEED IS THERE FOR CIVIL LEGAL AID?

A | Nearly 1.9 million Pennsylvanians financially qualify for legal aid.* A recent study indicated that nationally one in every two individuals who qualify for and actually seek assistance from legal aid programs is turned away because of a lack of resources. The study also verified that at least 80 percent of the legal needs of the poor go unmet.

Q | WHO QUALIFIES FOR LEGAL AID?

A | Eligibility is based on governmental guidelines and local program priorities. Generally, income eligibility is pegged at 125 percent of the poverty level.* Contact your local legal aid program for further information. Or visit www.PALawHELP.org on the Internet or call 1-800-322-7572.

Q | WHAT IS PALAWHELP.ORG?

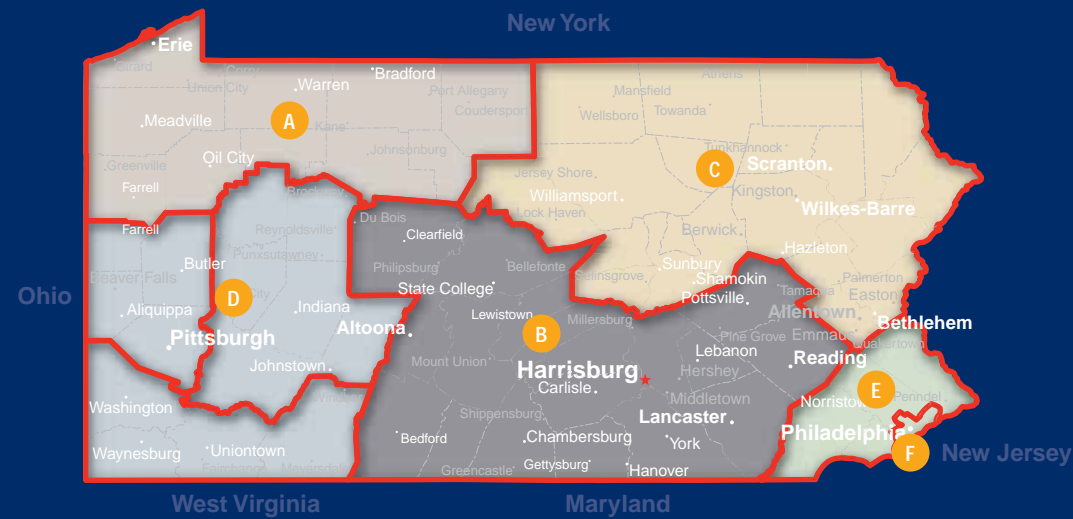
A | PALawHelp.org is a single, easy to navigate web site that contains current and accurate legal information that people experiencing legal problems need to have. PALawHELP.org provides:

- Information on free legal aid programs and other legal service providers
- Court Information
- Legal education and self help information
- Information about and links to social services and government agencies.

Q | HOW DO I FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL LEGAL AID PROGRAMS?

A | If you have internet access, simply visit www.PALawHELP.org. This web site provides referral information to legal aid programs in Pennsylvania and provides current information on a variety of legal topics. Otherwise, please call 1-800-322-7572 for referral information.

* In addition to those who financially qualify for legal aid, thousands of victims of domestic violence are served regardless of income.



- A. Northwestern Legal Services**
- B. MidPenn Legal Services**
- C. North Penn Legal Services**
- D. Southwestern PA Legal Services Consortium**
- E. Southeastern Pennsylvania**
- F. Philadelphia**

NETWORK PARTNERS

REGIONAL PROGRAMS

- Northwestern Legal Services**
- MidPenn Legal Services**
- North Penn Legal Services**
- Southwestern PA Legal Services Consortium**
- Neighborhood Legal Services Association
- Southwestern PA Legal Services
- Laurel Legal Services
- Southeastern Pennsylvania**
- Legal Aid of Southeastern PA
- Community Impact Legal Services*
- Philadelphia**
- Community Legal Services
- Philadelphia Legal Assistance Center*

SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS

- Community Justice Project
- Friends of Farmworkers
- Pennsylvania Health Law Project
- Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project
- Pennsylvania Utility Law Project
- Regional Housing Legal Services

FUNDERS & PARTNERS

- The Governor and General Assembly
- The Pennsylvania Bar Association
- Local Bar Associations
- The Courts
- PA IOLTA
- PA Department of Public Welfare

Equal Justice Under the Law:
www.palegalaid.net

* Non Plan, Inc. funded Programs

This publication underwritten in part through the generous support of:

