



*Annual Report of*

# **The Florida Bar Foundation's Legal Assistance for the Poor Grant Program**

# **2012**



Leadership and Funding for Justice in Florida

*The Florida Bar Foundation  
875 Concourse Parkway South, Suite 195  
Maitland, Florida 32751*



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# Annual Statewide Overview Report



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## **Providing Access to Justice for Florida's Most Vulnerable Residents.**

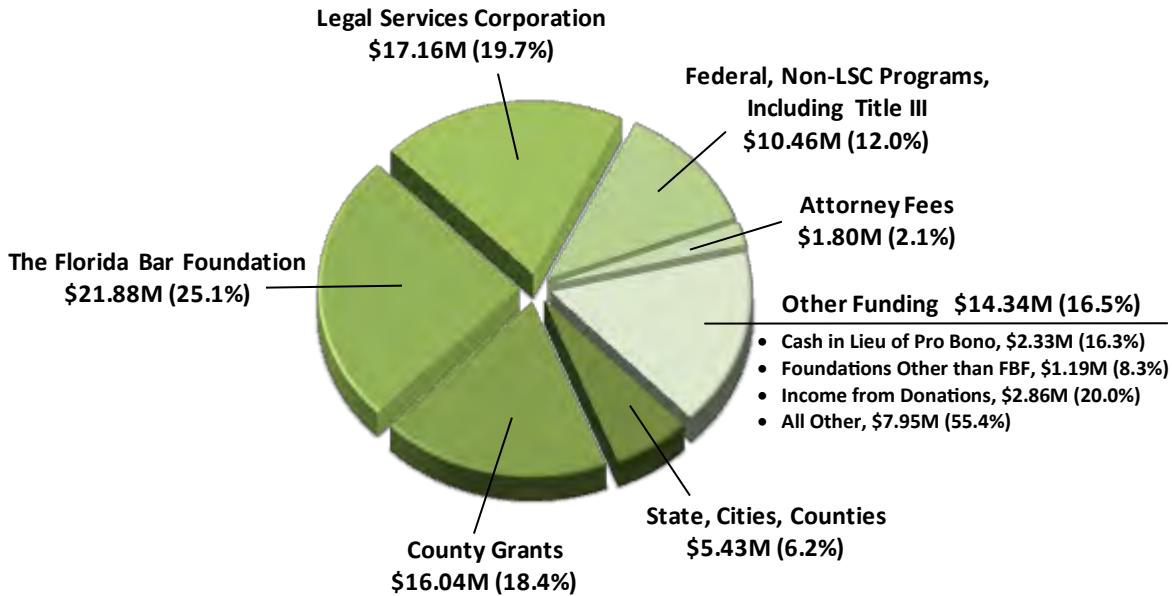
The Florida Bar Foundation (Foundation) offers an integrated, comprehensive system of grant programs and other forms of support to strengthen Florida legal services programs and increase client services. Grants for these purposes are:

### **Legal Assistance for the Poor (LAP) Grant Programs:**

- General Support
  - Children's Legal Services
  - Affordable Housing
  - Staff Attorney Salary Supplementation
  - Loan Repayment Assistance
  - Equal Justice Works Fellowships
  - Florida Attorney General Mortgage Foreclosure Defense
- 
- Of \$87.12 million received by Florida legal services organizations in 2012, \$21.88 million, or 25.1 percent, came from The Florida Bar Foundation.
  - The Foundation is the only funder linking 31 legal services programs in Florida to form a comprehensive, statewide legal services delivery system.
  - Foundation grantees documented direct dollar benefits to clients totaling more than \$65 million in 2012 from sources including child support and federal programs such as Social Security and Supplemental Security Income, which is designed to provide food, shelter and medical care to the elderly and disabled.
  - Foundation-funded providers completed 89,720 cases in 2012.

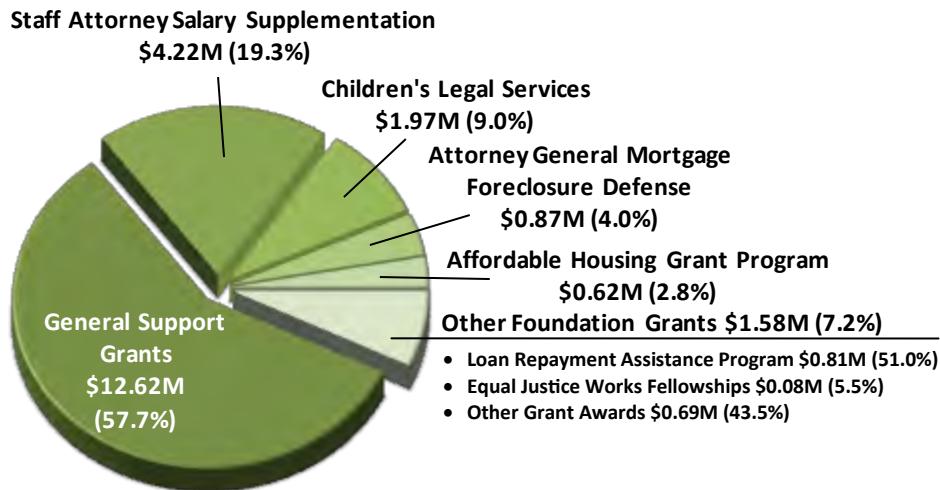
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## Total Funding Received - \$87.12M by Florida Bar Foundation Grantees, 2012



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## Total Foundation Funding - \$21.88M Provided for Calendar Year 2012



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## **General Support Grant Program**

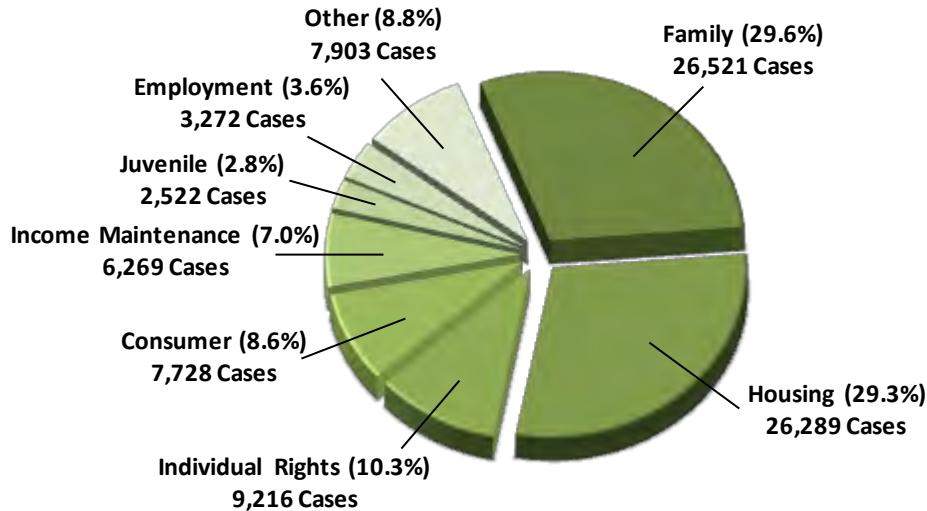
The Foundation awards annual grants to legal aid programs for the general support of the provision of free legal assistance to eligible clients within the service area of each program. The general support grants comprise approximately 60 percent of the funds provided by the Foundation for the provision of legal assistance for the poor. The general support grants provide initial institutional support to legal aid programs for the provision of general legal assistance based upon local priorities. These grants are distributed on the basis of the number of poor people in each region under Florida's legal services plan. Several statewide programs are funded on a non-per capita basis and offer statewide legal services, including legislative, administrative and statewide advocacy, and co-counseling and backup services for local legal aid programs.

For 2012, the Foundation provided a total of \$12,626,068 in general support grants which funded 31 legal aid programs providing a full range of legal services to the low-income population of Florida's 67 counties.

## **Affordable Housing Grant Program**

The Foundation has sought to make an impact on the affordable housing crisis for low-income individuals and families through the implementation of a statewide-regional affordable housing project. The goal of the project is to undertake systemic advocacy to prevent the loss of affordable housing units and to support the development of new affordable housing units. Grants support multi-form legal advocacy, including legislative advocacy, administrative advocacy, public policy advocacy and litigation on a statewide and local level in collaboration with local community groups. In March 2012, the Foundation awarded a total of \$540,000 in affordable housing grants which funded 6 affordable housing projects.

# 89,720 Cases Closed in 2012



The following examples of actual cases reflect generally the advocacy undertaken by Foundation grantees and pro bono attorneys.

<b>Family Matters</b> 26,521 Cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption</li> <li>• Custody/Visitation</li> <li>• Dissolution of Marriage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult Guardianship/Conservatorship</li> <li>• Name Change</li> <li>• Parental Rights Termination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paternity</li> <li>• Domestic Abuse</li> <li>• Support</li> </ul>
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Clara, a Haitian woman and mother of six came to Legal Aid seeking help with a divorce. Clara put her husband through plumbing school and certification by working two jobs. She suffered severe physical abuse throughout the marriage and learned that her children were also victims of abuse when she was working. The older children were forced to hold down younger children while their father beat them. If they did not do so, they too would be beaten or have food withheld. When Clara came to Legal Aid she was facing eviction. Through a divorce action, Legal Aid attorneys obtained a court order granting Clara assistance in maintaining her home and an order for \$800 in child support each month through Income Deduction Order. Clara and the children are able to move forward and create a better life for themselves. (*Gulfcoast Legal Services - GLS*)

<b>Housing Matters</b> 26,289 Cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federally Subsidized Housing Rights</li> <li>• Homeownership/Real Property</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landlord/Tenant (Other than Public Housing)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Housing</li> <li>• Housing Discrimination</li> </ul>
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AB is an elderly disabled woman who fell behind on her mortgage payments. To try to save her home, AB spoke with a “foreclosure rescue company” who came to her door. The company promised to save her home but, in reality, she ended up giving them money and unknowingly deeded the home to them. As a result, AB lost her homestead tax exemption and her senior citizen tax discount, and fell further behind on her payments. In defending her in a foreclosure suit, Legal Aid filed a counter-suit against the foreclosure rescue company to get title to the property placed back in her name. A loan modification was negotiated with the bank and the judge dismissed the foreclosure action and title to the property was again placed in AB’s name. She is now current on her mortgage payments and her homestead tax exemption and senior citizen tax discount have been restored. (*Florida Rural Legal Services - FRLS*)

<b>Individual Rights Matters</b> 9,216 Cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immigration/Naturalization</li> <li>• Human Trafficking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil Rights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability Rights</li> </ul>
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Maria was a young lady from Ecuador who married an American citizen who was physically abusive to her. She needed legal assistance in obtaining employment authorization in order for her to be able to work and support herself and her 2-year-old daughter after separating from her husband. Legal Aid was able to represent her and obtain employment authorization for her. An initial application for permanent resident status was denied, but Legal Aid filed a request for reconsideration on her behalf and submitted additional evidence to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services and the decision was reversed. She is now a long term legal resident of the United States capable of providing a home for herself and her daughter. (*Northwest Florida Legal Services - NWFLS*)

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<b>Consumer Matters</b> <i>7,728 Cases</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Bankruptcy/Debtor Relief</i></li> <li>• <i>Collection</i></li> <li>• <i>Contracts/Warranties</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Credit Access</i></li> <li>• <i>Energy</i></li> <li>• <i>Loans/Installment Purchase</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Public Utilities</i></li> <li>• <i>Unfair Sales Practice</i></li> </ul>
A debt collector in Marion County filed a credit card collection action against an elderly Hispanic woman with limited English proficiency whose only income was Social Security. Legal Aid defended her. At trial, the debt collector failed to produce evidence to substantiate the debt, and the case was continued. The debt collector did not have enough proof to establish the validity and amount of the debt and the right to collect on an assignment by the original creditor. After a round of very aggressive litigation and difficult negotiations between the parties, the debt collector agreed to dismiss its complaint against our client with prejudice. ( <i>Legal Advocacy Center of Central Florida - LACCF</i> )			
<b>Income Maintenance Matters</b> <i>6,269 Cases</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Welfare</i></li> <li>• <i>Food Stamps</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Social Security</i></li> <li>• <i>SSI</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Unemployment Compensation</i></li> <li>• <i>Veterans Benefits</i></li> </ul>
Tory is a 4-yr-old girl suffering with cystic fibrosis and pulmonary insufficiency. Her parents needed assistance with her SSI claim. Tory's father worked in industrial mills with limited and fluctuating income due to the economy and her mother was not able to work at all, because Tory requires 24 hour supervision at home in a fairly sterile atmosphere and at least two hours a day of treatment in order for her to survive. Because Tory's condition has a lifelong diagnoses fraught with special needs, sterile environments, treatments and difficulties, Legal Aid was able to receive a favorable SSA decision to receive retroactive SSI benefits of \$12,891 and monthly SSI benefits of \$698. ( <i>Three Rivers Legal Services - TRLS</i> )			
<b>Employment Matters</b> <i>3,272 Cases</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Employment Discrimination</i></li> <li>• <i>Wage Claims</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Earned Income Tax Credit</i></li> <li>• <i>Taxes</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Employee Rights</i></li> <li>• <i>Agricultural Workers Issues</i></li> </ul>
Ms. J, a legal resident, is a single mother of four, supporting her family working at various plant nurseries. In 2009, she began work at an 80-acre nursery that specialized in hibiscus. Although Ms. J and the other workers were paid on an hourly basis and were supervised, they were not treated as employees, but as independent contractors. The arrangement saved the nursery over 15% of its payroll expenses. In November 2009, Ms. J was sprayed with a chemical mix containing a known carcinogen. She became ill and sought treatment from the emergency room. She had limited and sporadic follow-up medical care because she lacked health insurance and worker's compensation would not provide treatment. Since her exposure, Ms. J has been unable to work for sustained periods because of illness. Represented by Legal Aid, Ms. J brought suit in federal court, arguing that the nursery's disregard of federal pesticide laws violated federal laws protecting migrant workers. She also sought relief for the entire workforce under an obscure provision of the Internal Revenue Code, which provides a powerful civil remedy in instances when an employer issues a fraudulent tax document, in this case a form 1099, rather than a W-2 form. The case was resolved in mediation, with Ms. J receiving \$100,000. In addition, the nursery agreed to pay a total of \$80,000 to the workers it had misclassified as independent contractors over the past six years and began treating all persons working on its operations as employees. ( <i>Florida Legal Services Migrant Farmworker Justice Project – FLS MFJP</i> )			
<b>Health Matters</b> <i>1,650 Cases</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Medicaid/Medicare</i></li> <li>• <i>Gov't Children's Health Insurance</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Home/Community Based Care</i></li> <li>• <i>Private Health Insurance</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Long Term Care Facilities</i></li> <li>• <i>State and Local Health</i></li> </ul>
MB is a disabled client, unable to work due to a combination of service-related medical issues stemming from service in the Vietnam War. He suffered a series of wounds and head injuries resulting in migraines, hearing loss and severe tinnitus as well as suffering from hypertension, diabetes, and hepatitis - all of which are related to Agent Orange exposure. MB has attempted to live with undiagnosed and untreated post-traumatic stress disorder. The combination of his medical issues, PTSD and inability to work led MB into years of major depression resulting in a suicide attempt and involuntary commitment pursuant to the Baker Act. Legal Aid was able to help MB identify, apply for and receive additional services and benefits from the Social Security Administration and the Veterans Administration. He is now receiving sufficient assistance to be able to maintain stable housing and transportation. Through the VA and his Medicaid and Medicare eligibility, he is now able to obtain the medical and mental health services he needs. ( <i>Florida Institutional Legal Services – FILS</i> )			

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## **Children's Legal Services Grant Program**

In March 2012, the Foundation continued to recognize the special legal needs of children by awarding \$1,879,247 to fund 22 children's legal assistance projects. This funding included a total of \$223,530 in contributions from the Trial Lawyers Section of the Florida Bar, the Family Law Section of the Florida Bar, and the Real Property Probate and Trust Law Section of the Florida Bar. Other contributions totaling \$257,592 included contributions from The Florida Bar's Annual Lawyers Challenge for Children, The Florida Bar Foundation's Kids Deserve Justice License plate campaign, individual contributions from John and Pam Noland, and individual contributions from the Executive Council members of the Real Property Probate and Trust Law Section of the Florida Bar.

These grants reach rural and urban areas throughout Florida and address children's legal needs through staff attorney and private pro bono attorney services. Among the children reached are the following:

- Children who are disabled or have learning disabilities and were being denied special education services required by law;
- Foster care children whose time in foster care could be shortened;
- Children, including foster care children, who need access to medical, mental and other health related services;
- Children seeking benefits so that they might be cared for by loving relatives rather than being placed in the state foster care system; and
- Children aging out of foster care who need transitional assistance and access to their Social Security funds held by the state.

### **Programs receiving grants in 2012:**

- Americans for Immigrant Justice
- Bay Area Legal Services
- Brevard County Legal Aid
- Community Law Program
- Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida
- Dade County Bar Association Legal Aid Society
- Florida's Children First
- Florida Equal Justice Center
- Florida Institutional Legal Services
- Florida International University College of Law
- Florida Legal Services
- Florida State University College of Law
- Gulfcoast Legal Services
- Jacksonville Area Legal Aid
- Lawyers for Children America
- Legal Aid Service of Broward County
- Legal Aid Society of the Orange County Bar Association
- Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County
- Legal Services of Greater Miami
- Legal Services of North Florida
- Southern Legal Counsel
- University of Miami School of Law (Children and Youth Law Clinic)

## **Children's Legal Services Grants - Protecting Children, Providing Better Futures**

Darius is a 10-year old African-American male in 3rd grade. Legal Aid was court-appointed to represent him in a diverted delinquency case brought by the school principal. Darius was experiencing academic and behavioral difficulties at school and had already been retained in 2nd grade. Rather than evaluating him for possible disabilities, the elementary school suspended him for 28 school days by February 2012, and had him arrested. In response to Legal Aid's representation, the School District completed an evaluation and found Darius eligible for special education for both an emotional and behavioral disability, as well as a specific learning disability. He was placed at a different elementary school that is closer to his home. He is receiving special education and related services, including group counseling. Also, in response to Legal Aid's advocacy, the school district agreed to provide Darius with 108 hours of compensatory education in a summer camp setting to work with mentors and tutors. (*Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County – LASPBC*)

When an earthquake struck Haiti, Katherine a young teenager, was trapped under the rubble of her collapsed home. Her injuries were so extensive, that she was evacuated from Haiti by US authorities and admitted into a medical facility in the US where she remained hospitalized for almost two months. While receiving medical treatment in this facility, one of Katherine's nurses became close with her and offered to adopt her. A few months later, the federal government authorized Katherine's placement with the nurse and her family, and Katherine started her new life with hopes that she would grow up in a loving home. Shortly thereafter, her new family told Katherine they were taking her on a vacation to New York. However, they drove her to a facility in Miami for unaccompanied immigrant minors where they surrendered her to federal authorities because they would no longer care for her. Katherine was then served with a notice to appear before an immigration judge for removal proceedings and placed in detention where she remained for 10 months. Legal Aid met with Katherine and agreed to represent her in her immigration case. Legal Aid discovered that her father had passed away when she was very young and Katherine had been raised by her godmother who was now deceased and her mother was living on the streets in Haiti. If Katherine was forced to return to Haiti, she would not have anyone to care for her nor would she receive the medical attention that she still required for her injuries. Legal Aid obtained Temporary Protected Status, Special Immigrant Juvenile Visa, and Lawful Permanent Residence for Katherine. Now that she is a lawful permanent resident, Katherine has been placed with a foster family with the goal of someday becoming their adoptive child. Katherine is happy for a chance at a new life. (*Americans for Immigrant Justice – AI Justice*)

Legal Aid represented Dana who came into the dependency system at age 15 due to the death of her mother and no legal father. Dana was placed with her adult sister. She had never been enrolled in a school setting prior to her dependency case and had begun dating an adult male. Her sister allowed the adult male to move into their home, and Dana began testing positive for drugs. She also became pregnant by the adult male. Legal Aid advocated for Dana to be removed from her sister's care, receive pre-natal care, and enroll in school. Legal Aid's advocacy resulted in Dana being placed in a foster home with wonderful, supportive foster parents where she remains with her baby. Dana's life has been stabilized and she is enrolled in school, receives individual therapy, and has been testing negative for all drugs. (*Dade County Bar Association Legal Aid Society – DCBALAS*)

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## **Staff Attorney Salary Supplementation Grant Program**

In September 2007 the Foundation released the results of an in-depth study titled, “The Quest for the Best: Attorney Recruitment and Retention Challenges for Florida Civil Legal Aid.” Eighty-eight percent of the state’s legal aid attorneys participated in the study through Web-based surveys, personal and telephone interviews and focus groups. The study found that the median starting salary for a licensed attorney in a Florida legal aid program was \$38,500 and that staff attorneys do not reach a median salary of \$50,000 until nine years after law school graduation.

Common measures of a middle class lifestyle, such as home ownership, proved beyond the reach of legal aid attorneys in spite of their highly specialized and marketable skills. The study also found that “financial pressure due to low salary” was the number one reason former legal aid attorneys left their jobs. In accordance with the recommendations of the study, The Florida Bar Foundation initiated a Staff Attorney Salary Supplementation Grant Program in 2008 to increase staff attorney starting salaries beginning Jan. 1, 2008 to a minimum of \$43,500 and to a minimum of \$46,000 by Jan. 1, 2010. It also established goals that attorneys with three, six, and ten years of experience would be earning a minimum salary of \$50,000, \$60,000 and \$70,000 respectively by 2010. For 2012, the Foundation provided a total of \$4,219,710 to 29 of the Foundation's general support legal aid programs to assist them in achieving these goals and to improve professional development measures, including supervision, training, etc.

## **Loan Repayment Assistance Program**

The Foundation continued its Loan Repayment Assistance Program in 2012 by providing one-year loans totaling \$808,544 to 182 legal aid lawyers at 27 different legal assistance programs. Law school debt burdens are an increasing barrier to the ability of highly qualified law graduates to seek and maintain a career in legal aid. The Foundation’s loan repayment assistance program for legal aid lawyers can provide up to \$7,500 or 80 percent of annual law school loan debt payments, whichever is lower, on an annual basis for up to ten years. Participating lawyers are eligible for forgiveness of their loans upon completion of a preceding year in qualified employment in legal aid.

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## **Equal Justice Works Fellowships**

The Foundation continues its initiative of placing two-year Equal Justice Works Fellowships at Florida legal assistance programs through the provision of matching fellowship funds. Equal Justice Works provides two-year fellowships to law graduates to work on specific projects at legal assistance programs. Through a national recruitment effort the pool of applicants for fellowships includes some of the most highly qualified, committed and energetic law students interested in public interest law. In 2012, two Equal Justice Works fellows were placed at legal aid programs to undertake special projects. The two fellows serve their fellowships at Legal Aid of Manasota in Sarasota, and Florida's Children First in Miami. The fellows projects consist of: 1) representing parents and students to gain access to Exceptional Student Education (ESE) services for which they qualify; and 2) representing youth who are involved in both the dependency and delinquency systems to provide holistic direct representation. A significant number of prior fellows become staff attorneys at their host programs after completion of their fellowships.

## **Florida Attorney General Mortgage Foreclosure Defense Grant Program**

The Attorney General of Florida along with other attorney generals in other states, obtained a class action consent judgment against Countrywide Financial Corporation which, in part, provided \$4,061,497 in funding for up to two years for legal assistance and representation to single family occupant homeowners in Florida who are in foreclosure proceedings or in danger of facing foreclosure. In May 2009, the Florida Attorney General contracted with The Florida Bar Foundation to have the Foundation administer a grantmaking process for the distribution of these funds. In August 2010, the second year of the Florida Attorney General Mortgage Foreclosure Defense grants were awarded in the amount of \$2,105,651 to fund 18 projects from October 1, 2010 through September 30, 2011. In August 2011, the third year of Florida Attorney General Mortgage Foreclosure grants were awarded in the amount of \$1,000,000 to fund 18 projects from October 1, 2011 to September 30, 2012. As a result of the Florida Attorney General obtaining a judgment in 2012 against a process service management company, an additional \$462,630 was granted that continued funding for 17 projects from October 1, 2012 through September 30, 2013.

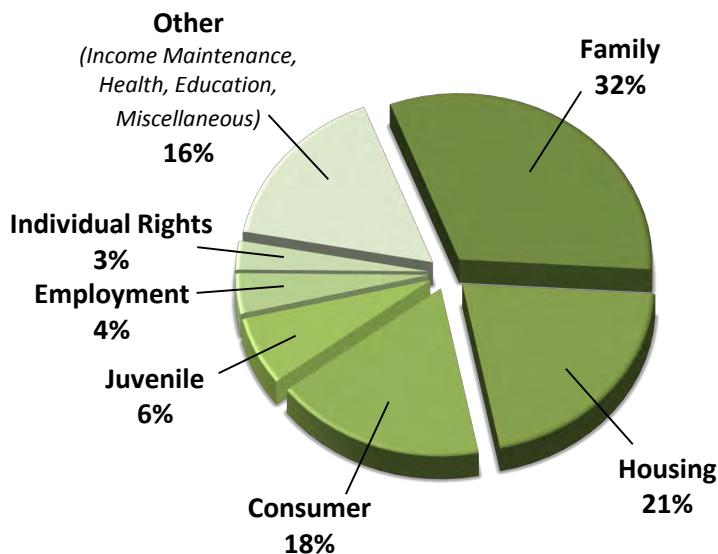
## Pro Bono Participation

With implementation of the Florida Supreme Court's pro bono plan in 1993, attorney participation in Foundation-funded pro bono projects surged in 1994, then reached a peak in 1998 before tapering off from 1999-2007. In September 2008, the Statewide Standing Committee on Pro Bono completed its groundbreaking study on pro bono titled, "Pro bono: Looking Back, Moving Forward". The study, sponsored by Foundation funding, examined the stagnation of pro bono, and decline in pro bono through organized programs. The study also made recommendations as to how to reinvigorate pro bono in Florida through prospective partnerships among the courts, The Florida Bar, the Foundation, local bar associations, law firms, individual attorneys, and pro bono programs which administer pro bono projects.

In the years since 2008, the Standing Pro Bono Committee, with the continuing support and guidance of the Foundation, has undertaken several successful initiatives to engage additional private attorneys in the provision of pro bono legal services to low-income families and to improve the pro bono delivery system. One of those initiatives, the One Campaign, continues to engage pro bono attorneys who work with their local Legal Aid office where they can utilize their unique skills to help regular citizens navigate the law.

A total of 6,547 private lawyers provided direct legal assistance to clients and closed 13,444 pro bono cases in 2012, approximately 15 percent of the total of 89,720 cases closed by Foundation grantees. Over 5,700 private lawyers provided cash contributions of over \$2.3 million. Florida's lawyers donated 105,079 hours through organized pro bono programs in 2012. At an *average* hourly rate of \$120, this represents a significant private-sector contribution: \$12.6 million worth of free assistance to low income people across the state.

## Cases Completed by Private Attorneys



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## Foundation-Funded Programs are a Good Investment.

**Legal Services advocacy produces millions of dollars in benefits for low income Floridians.**

From the purely economic perspective of dollars generated per dollar invested, the performance of Florida's Legal Aid advocates is outstanding. In 2012, for example, they won an estimated \$66.0 million in direct benefits for their clients, including child support payments, Social Security Disability benefits and worker's compensation insurance payments -- benefits to which clients were legally entitled.

### Foundation-Funded Programs bring dollars into local economies.

Federal benefits such as Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families and Medicaid are vital strands of the safety net. These Federal income support benefits not only help the direct recipients, but also flow immediately into local economies, generating income and jobs for working Floridians that otherwise would be lost to our state.

In 2012, Legal Aid advocates obtained \$40.1 million in Federal client benefits flowing into Florida communities. These benefits, together with \$27.6 million\* in Federal grant funds for Foundation-funded programs' own operating support, represented a total of \$67.7 million flowing directly into local communities in the form of salaries, rent and goods, and services purchased from local businesses. Applying a standard economic activity multiplier of 1.54 produces a reliable estimate of \$104.3 million in new economic activity and 2,557 jobs resulting from these benefits and grants.

### Economic Impact...

<b>\$67.7 Million</b> in Federal grants & benefits obtained for clients...	<b>1.54 times</b> ...Circulates in local economies...	<b>\$104.3 million</b> ...providing income for working Floridians.
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\*\$27.6 million total includes \$17.2 million in Federal Legal Services Corporation (LSC) grants and \$10.4 million in other Federal grants.

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## **Foundation-funded legal services are cost-effective.**

Legal Aid lawyers provide services in a compassionate manner, but strive to serve as many clients as they can with limited resources. In 2012, they handled 10 cases for every \$10,000 in funding they received.

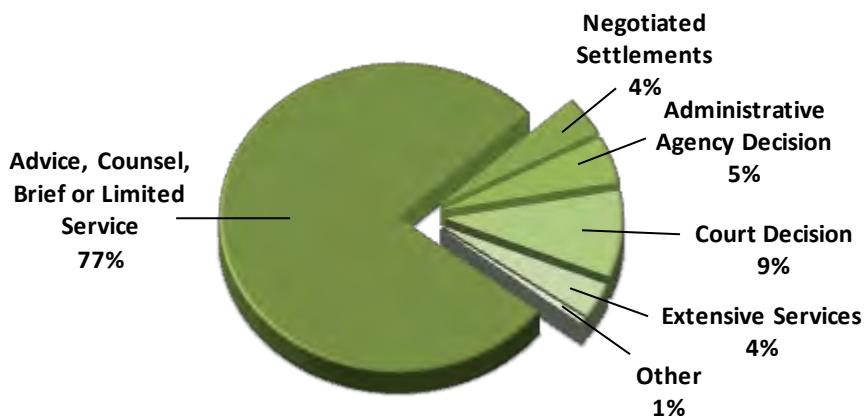
- **A high proportion of cases are resolved without litigation.**

As the graph below indicates, 77 percent of the problems handled in 2012 were resolved by advising the client about steps he or she could take, or by providing non-litigation services such as drafting a letter or making phone calls on the client's behalf.

- **Pro bono efforts of the private bar leverage the investment of dollars in Foundation-funded programs.**

Private lawyers closed 13,444 cases on a pro bono basis in 2012. They donated 105,079 hours of services, valued at \$12.6 million.

**Total: 89,720 Cases**



## **Legal Aid Promotes and Strengthens Families, Communities and the Futures of Children.**

Further, and probably most important, the legal advocacy of legal aid lawyers and paralegals protects low income families from the unlawful loss of their homes and transportation to work, the unfair denial of medical benefits and services and the unjust deprivation of educational services to disabled children. Legal aid lifts the despair of poverty and provides opportunity and justice. This strengthens families, lessens violence in homes and communities and helps to ensure a stronger society, a society which honors its ideals.

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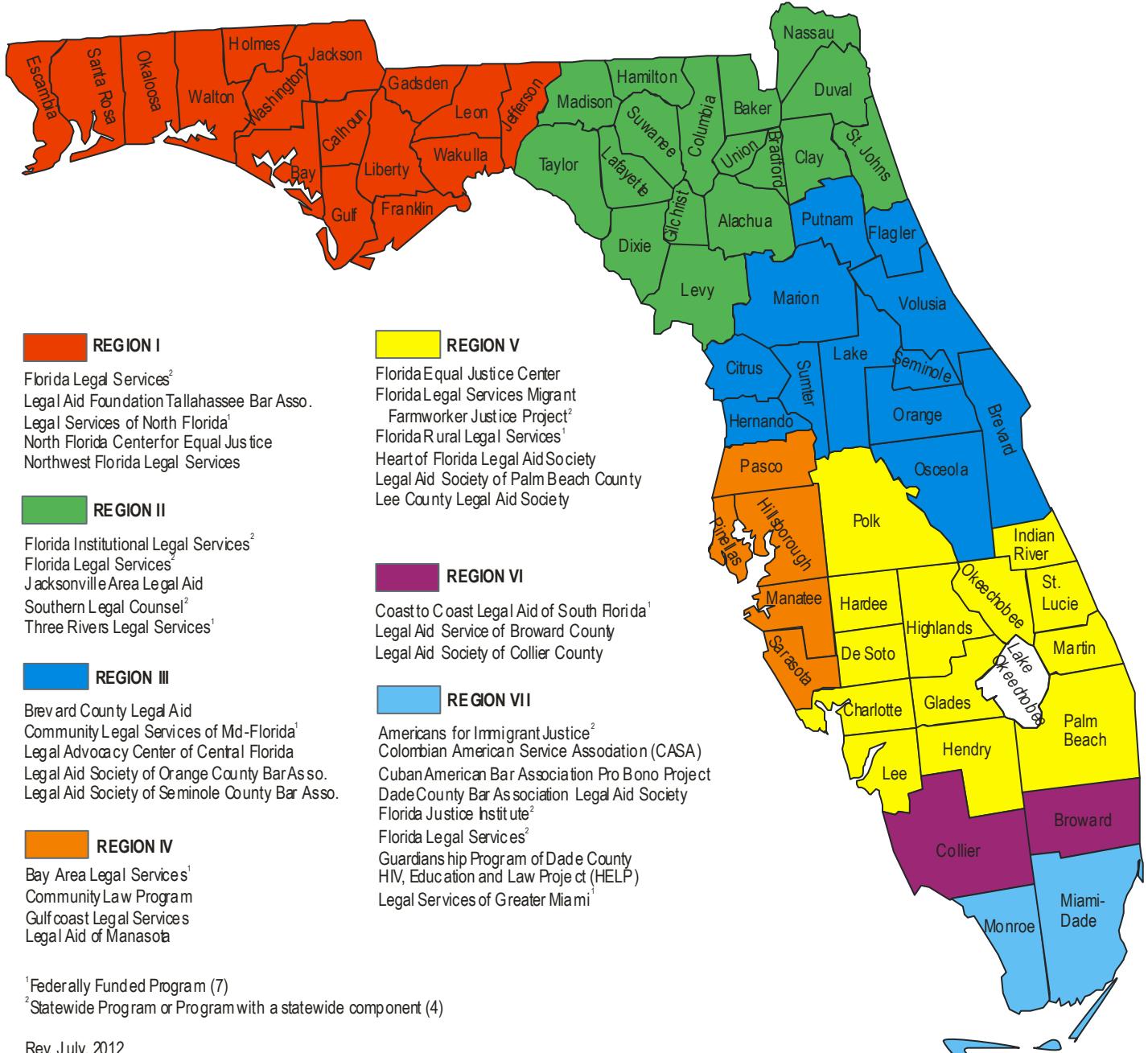
## **Foundation-funded programs apply technology as a strategy for improving productivity and accessibility of their services.**

- A computerized case management system (Legal Server) supplied by the Foundation to 28 general support grantees supports the day-to-day casework of program lawyers and paralegals. This case management system provides grantees the data and communication needed to manage cases, track outcomes and report efficiently to funding sources. The system was installed and operational by September 2009 in grantee programs. The Foundation continues to assist grantees with support through a help desk, additional training and further development of the case management system.
- Local websites provide 24-hour access to legal education and self-help materials for low income clients, and for professionals who pass this information on to their low income clients. A Statewide website, operated by Florida Legal Services and supported by the Foundation, links Florida legal aid advocates and pro bono attorneys to training, community legal education materials, legal research resources and other support services. The website is also available to clients for information on available legal aid services, client community education materials and other resources.
- The Foundation handles the centralized billing for a statewide contract with Westlaw and provides supplemental funding to enable Foundation legal assistance grantees access to full computerized legal research materials and services at a very reasonable rate.
- During 2012, the Foundation adopted the web-based grant management system (LegalServer) which is the companion to the case management system (LegalServer) used by Foundation general support grantees. The grant management system serves as a database of grantee information and allows Foundation staff to solicit and receive electronic grant applications, reports, and outcomes measures from its grantees. Technical support and training is provided by Foundation staff who also support the help desk for grantees using the LegalServer case management system.

## **Planning for the Future...**

Since the collapse of the national economy in the latter half of 2008, the Foundation has experienced significant declines in IOTA revenue. Utilization of a significant reserve by the Foundation has enabled grants to be decreased over a period of several years. However, very significant grant reductions have been necessary. Grant reductions in 2012 resulted in an overall cut in Foundation grants of 30% from the prior year's grants. It is projected that grant reductions will continue over the next two to three years. The Foundation has sought funding from other sources to alleviate these reductions and in several instances the Foundation has been successful in obtaining other funding. However the sources of funding obtained have not been near to the level of revenue lost due to low interest rates on IOTA accounts. The Foundation continues to pursue other funding initiatives and prioritize its funding reductions in order to preserve the core of critical civil legal assistance to low-income families in Florida.

# Florida's Regional Legal Services Delivery System



<sup>1</sup>Federally Funded Program (7)

<sup>2</sup>Statewide Program or Program with a statewide component (4)

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