



2023 - 2024 Annual Snapshot



ABOUT US

Summit Legal Aid is a nonprofit legal aid organization funded by federal, state, and local contracts. We provide free legal services to qualified residents in our ten-county region in Southwestern Pennsylvania. Summit Legal Aid is dedicated to equality, justice, and breaking down barriers.

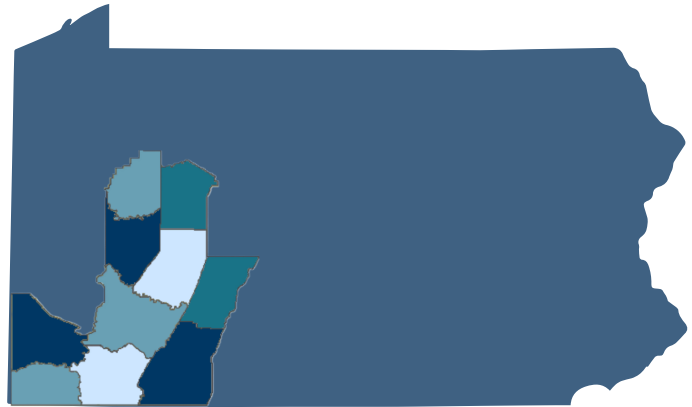
Our legal advocates work to provide services that empower our clients by keeping families protected, homes secured, and finances stabilized.



AT A GLANCE: SERVICE AREA

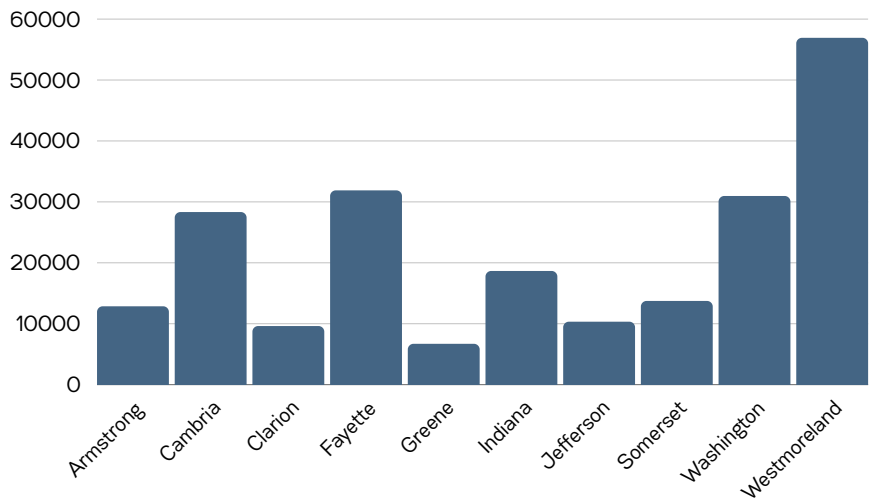


4,747 Square Miles
1,116,608 Total Population

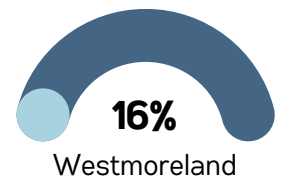
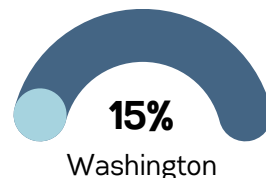
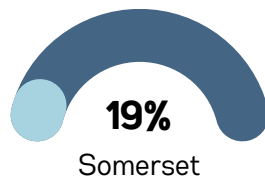
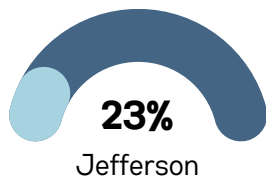
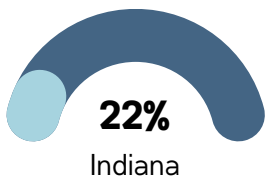
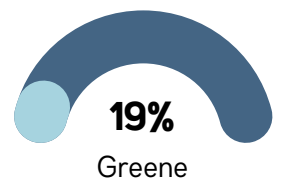
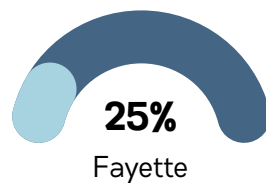
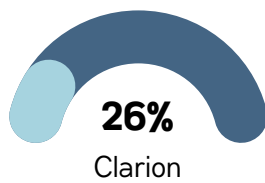
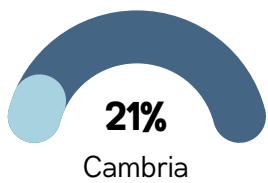
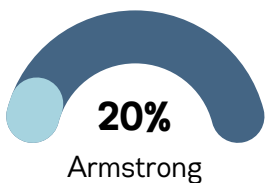


220,030 People Below 150% of the Federal Poverty Level*

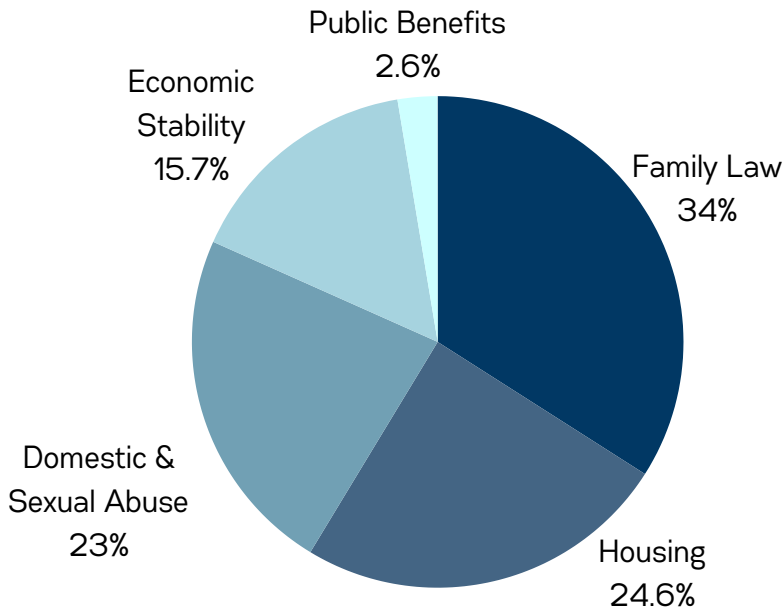
Armstrong	12,861
Cambria	28,330
Clarion	9,620
Fayette	31,888
Greene	6,704
Indiana	18,660
Jefferson	10,333
Somerset	13,740
Washington	30,967
Westmoreland	56,927



Poverty Percentage of Total Population



AT A GLANCE: CASE NUMBERS

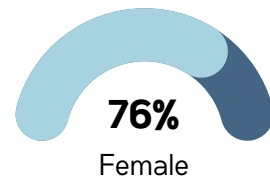
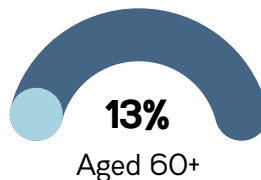
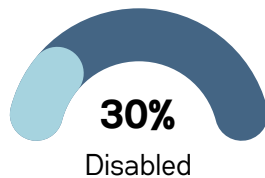
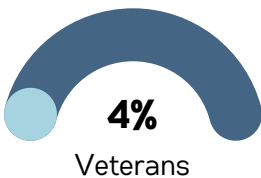
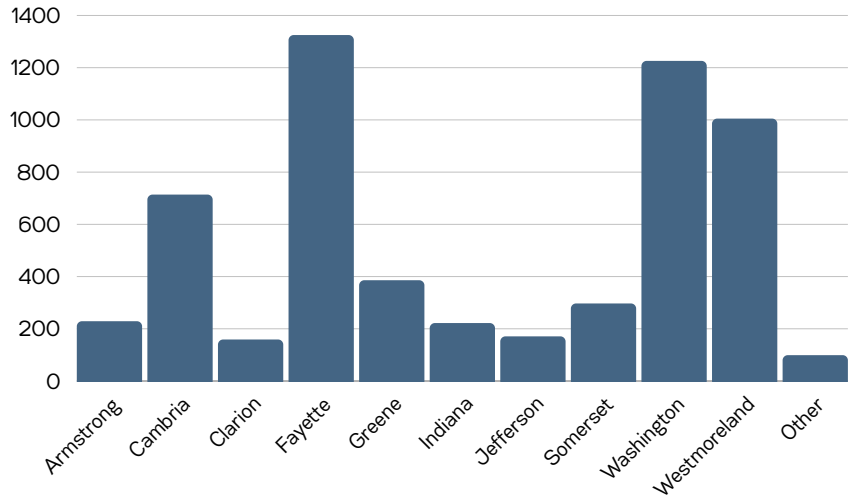


5,833 Cases Handled in 2023-2024

Family Law:	1,985
Housing:	1,437
Domestic & Sexual Abuse	1,342
Economic Security	916
Public Benefits:	152
Other	1

5,833 Cases Handled

Armstrong	229
Cambria	714
Clarion	159
Fayette	1,325
Greene	386
Indiana	222
Jefferson	171
Somerset	297
Washington	1,226
Westmoreland	1,005
Other	99



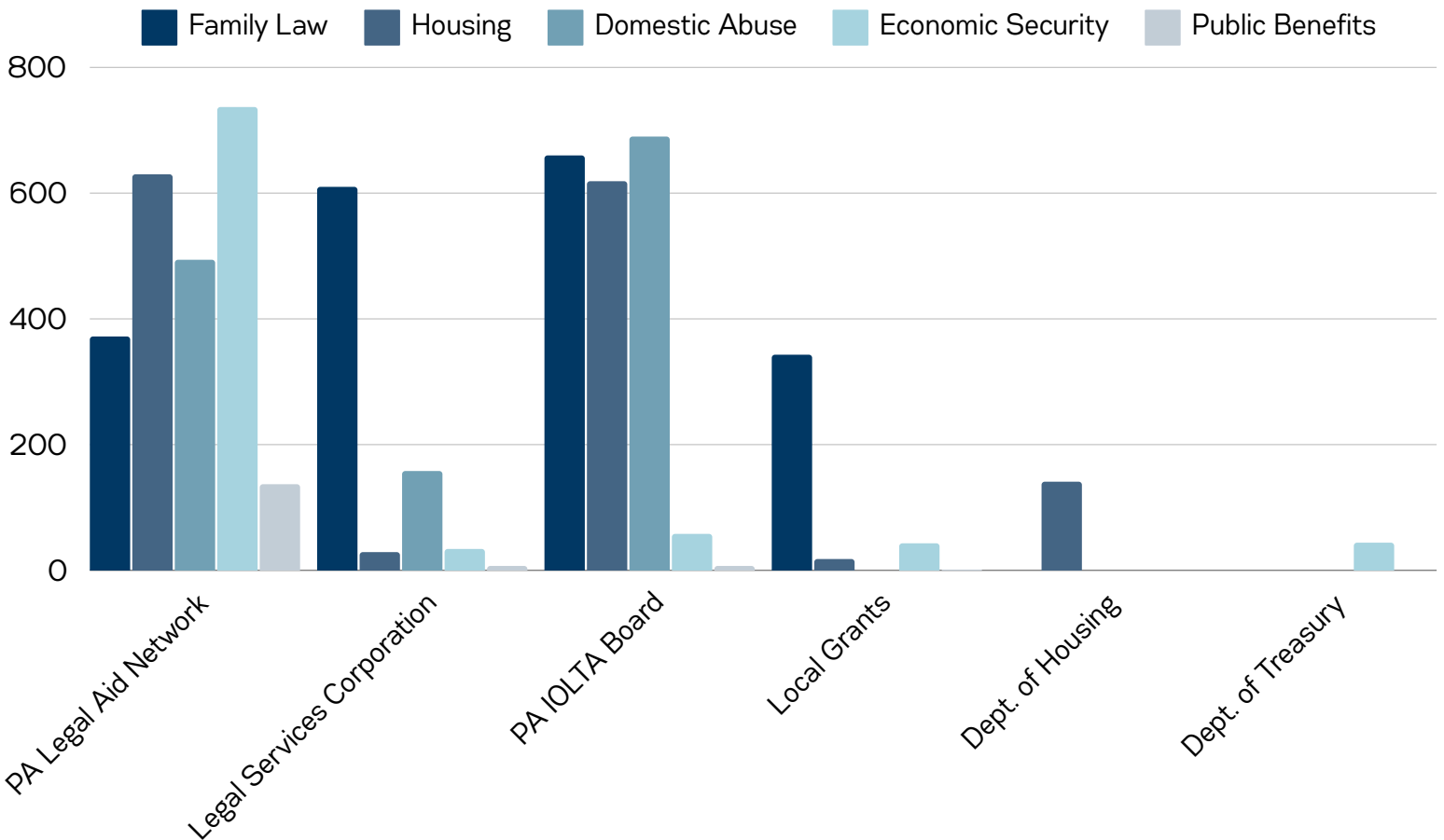
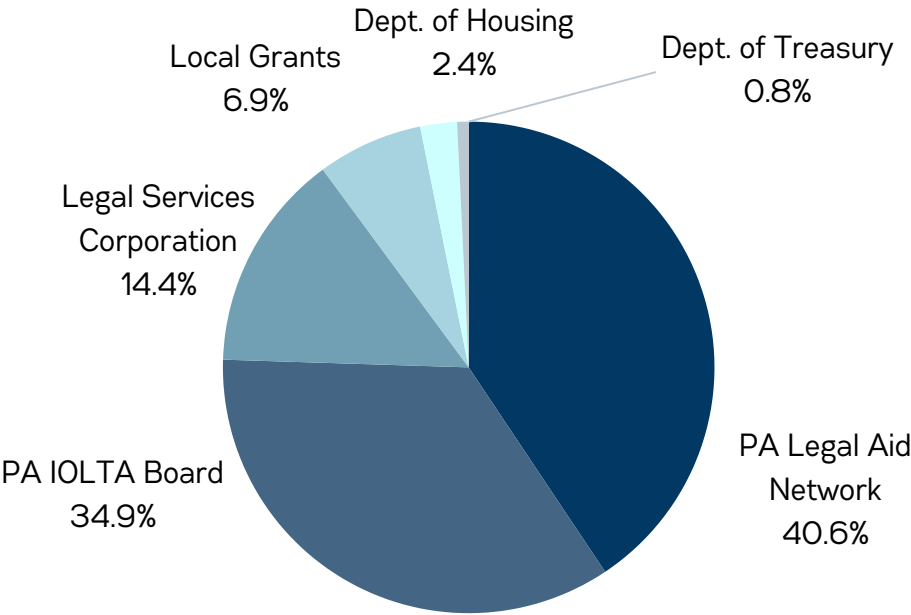
14,551 people were helped in 2023-2024

AT A GLANCE: CASES BY FUNDERS

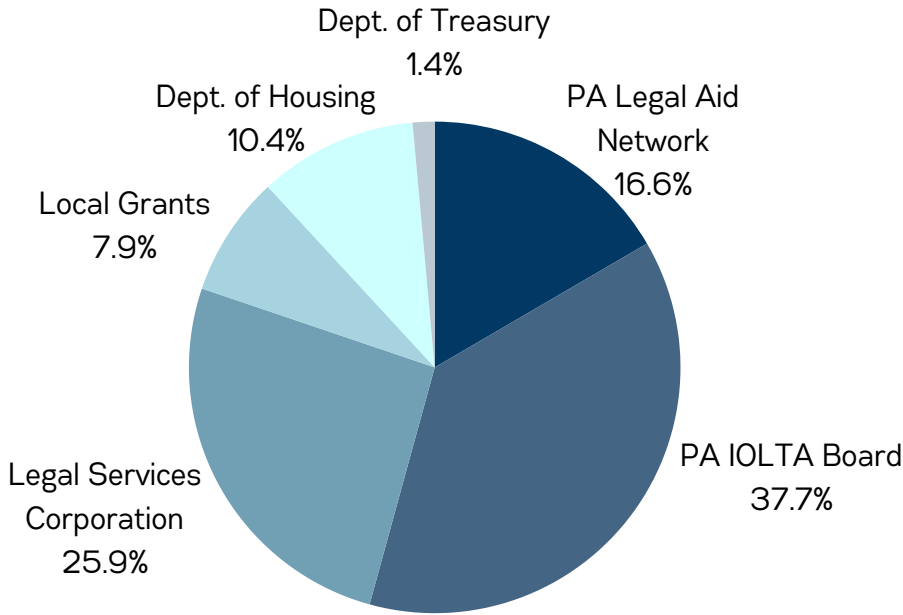


5,833 Cases Handled in 2023-2024

Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network	2,370
PA IOLTA Board	2,034
Legal Services Corporation	839
Local Grants	405
Dept. of Housing	141
Dept. of Treasury	44



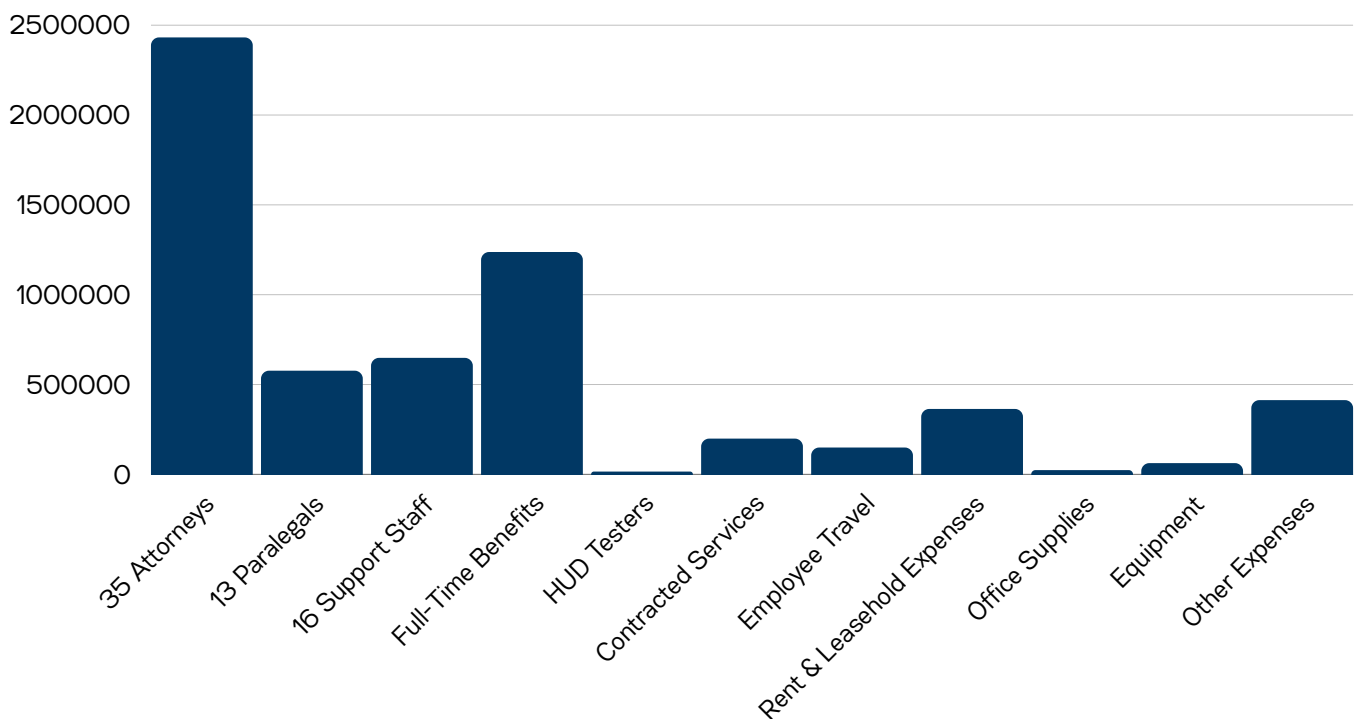
AT A GLANCE: FUNDING & EXPENSES



**Total Grant Awards:
\$6,744,966 in 2023-2024**

Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network	\$1,023,639
Legal Services Corporation	\$1,599,474
PA IOLTA Board	\$2,323,858
Local Grants	\$489,589
Dept. of Housing	\$643,192
Dept. of Treasury	\$88,750

**Total Expenditures:
\$6,121,754**

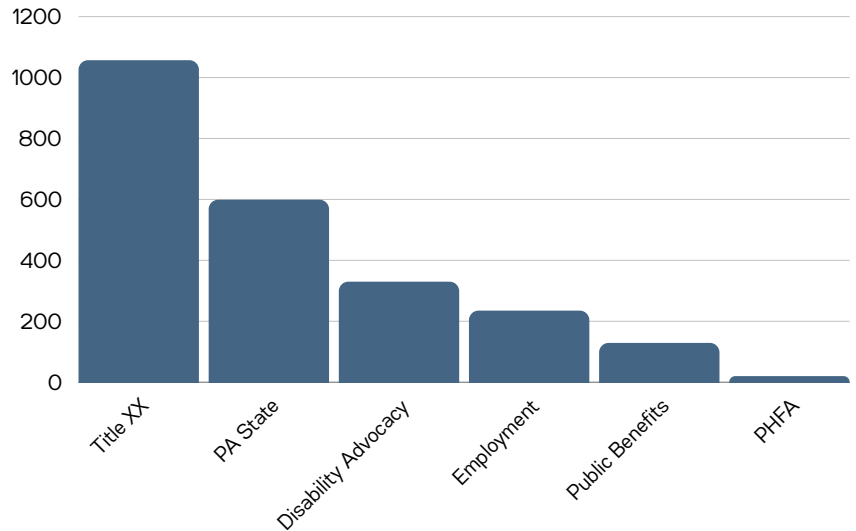


AT A GLANCE: PA LEGAL AID NETWORK

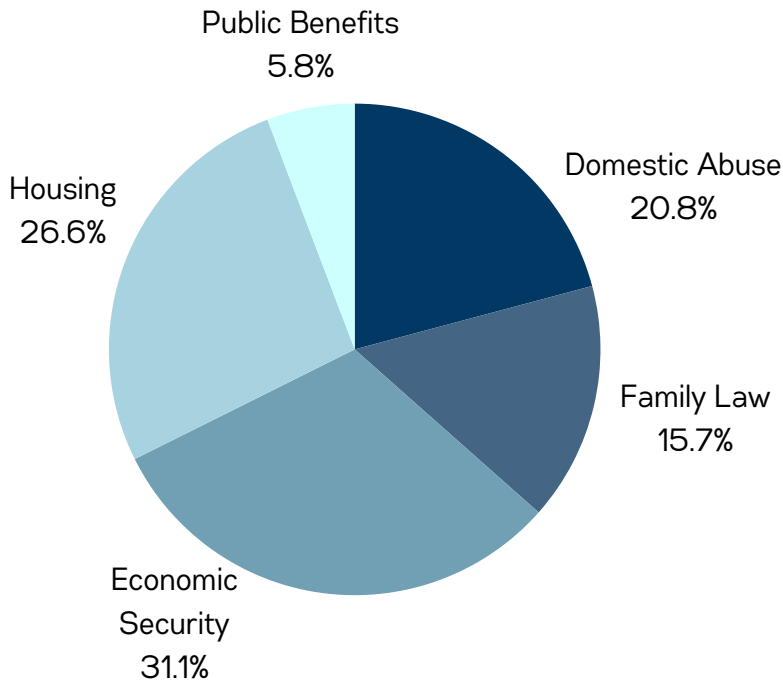


Case Numbers by Contract

Title XX	1,057
PA State	599
Disability Advocacy	330
Employment Project	235
Public Benefits Project	129
PHFA	20

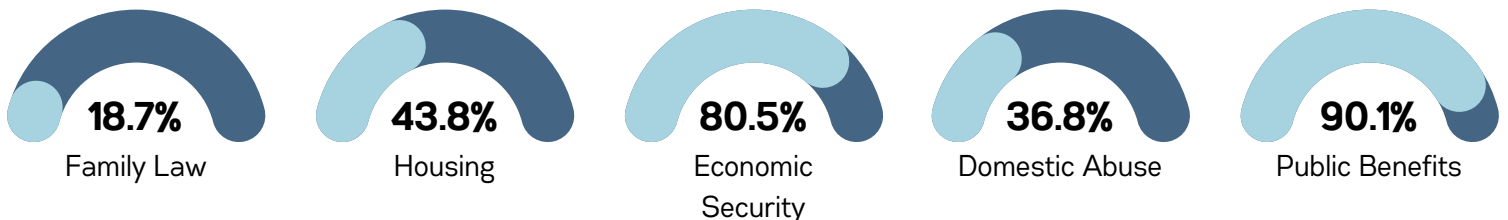


2,370 Cases Handled in 2023-2024



Domestic Abuse	494
Family Law	630
Economic Security	737
Housing	630
Public Benefits	137

Percentage of All Cases Handled

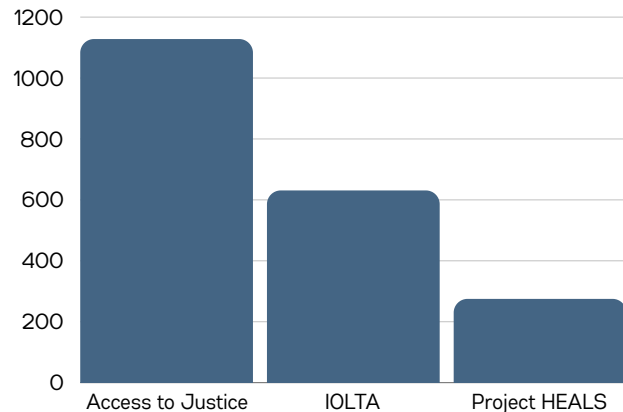


AT A GLANCE: PA IOLTA BOARD



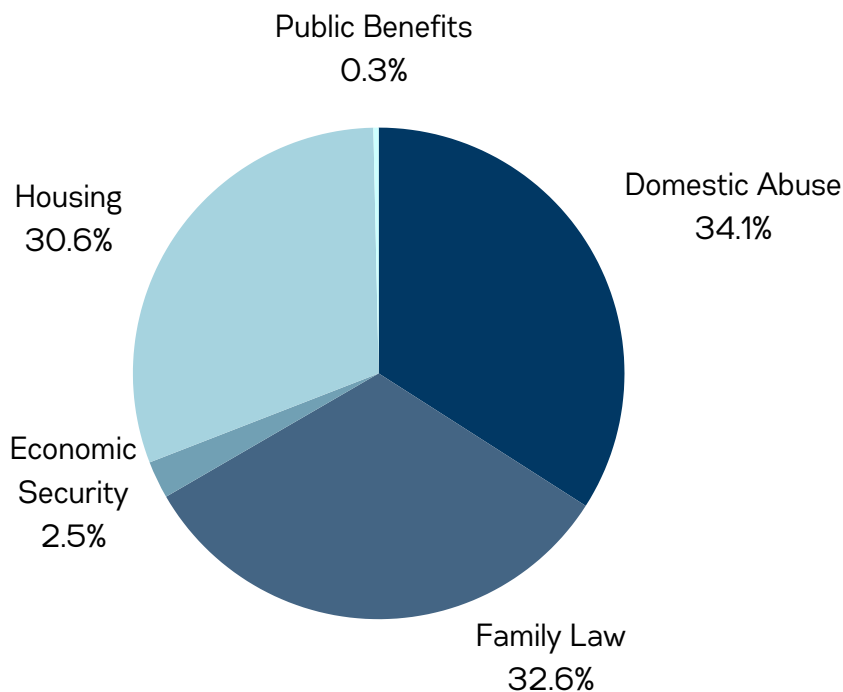
Case Numbers by Contract

Access to Justice	1,128
General IOLTA Contract	631
Project HEALS	275



IOLTA grant funds are awarded annually to qualified legal aid organizations across the state to provide legal assistance to low-income individuals and families facing a civil legal crisis where basic human needs, such as shelter, medicine, and safety, are at stake.

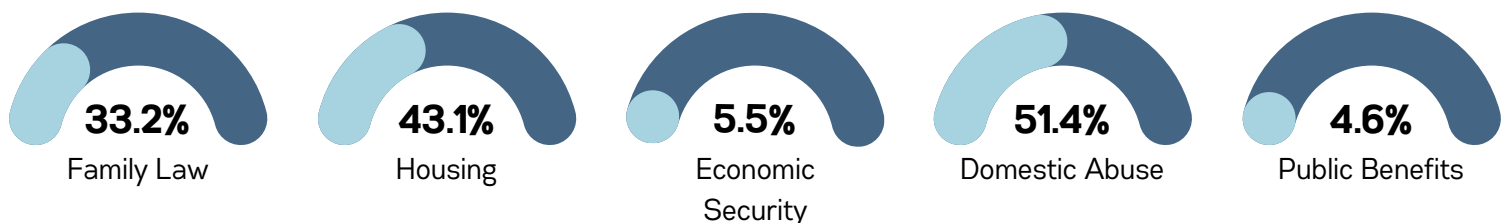
Project HEALS is a special program to prevent homelessness in our region.



2,034 Cases Handled in 2023-2024

Housing	619
Family Law	660
Domestic Abuse	690
Economic Security	50
Public Benefits	7

Percentage of All Cases Handled



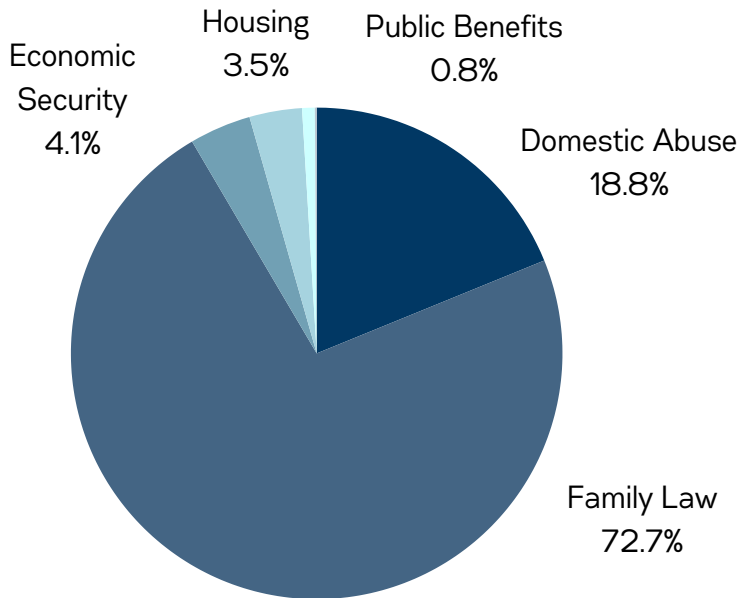
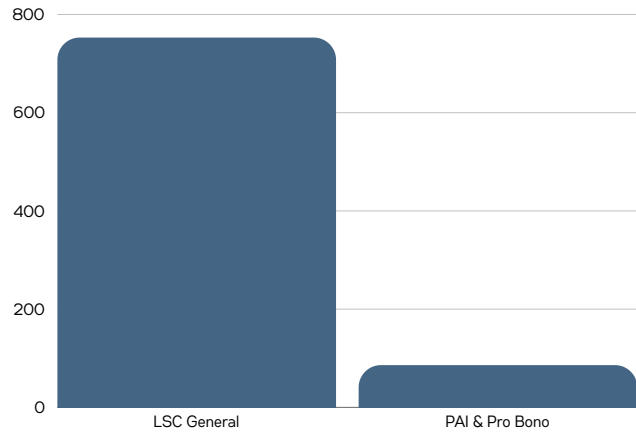
AT A GLANCE: LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION



Case Numbers by Contract

General LSC Contract	753
PAI & Pro Bono	86

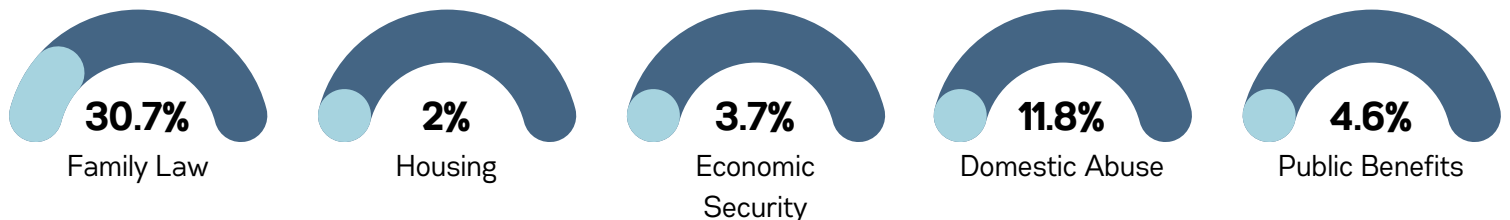
Legal Services Corporation (LSC) is the largest funder of civil legal aid in the nation. With LSC funds, we provide life-saving help to low-income residents who are facing legal crises and cannot afford an attorney. We also partner with private members of the local bar associations to help with cases with a Private Attorney Involvement (PAI) and Pro Bono program.



839 Cases Handled in 2023-2024

Family Law	610
Domestic Abuse	158
Economic Security	34
Housing	29
Public Benefits	7
Other	1

Percentage of All Cases Handled

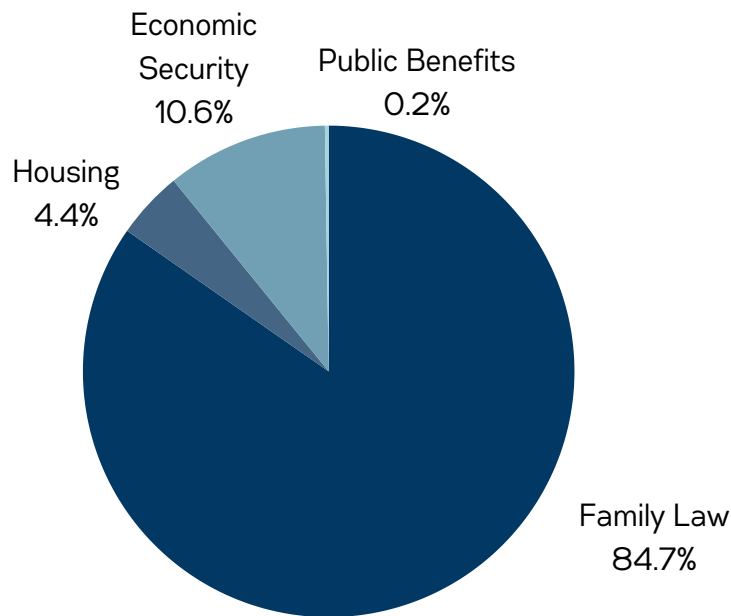
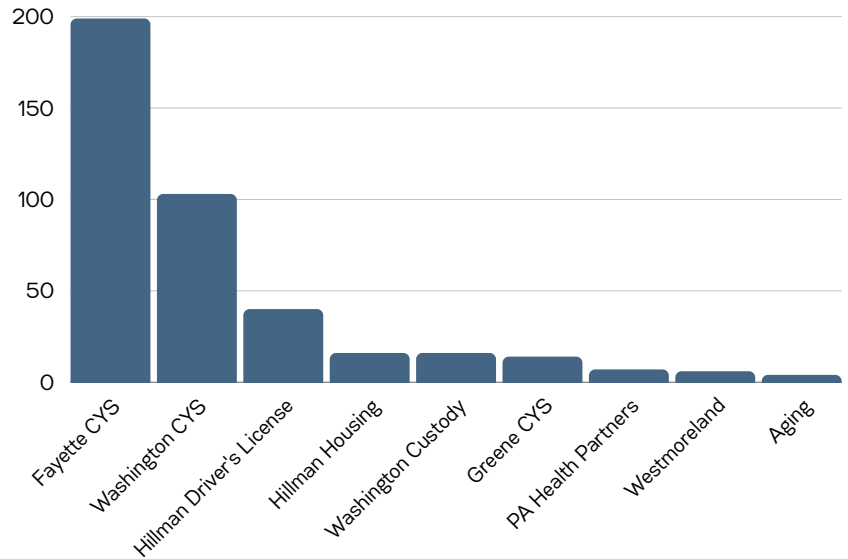


AT A GLANCE: LOCAL FUNDING



Case Numbers by Contract

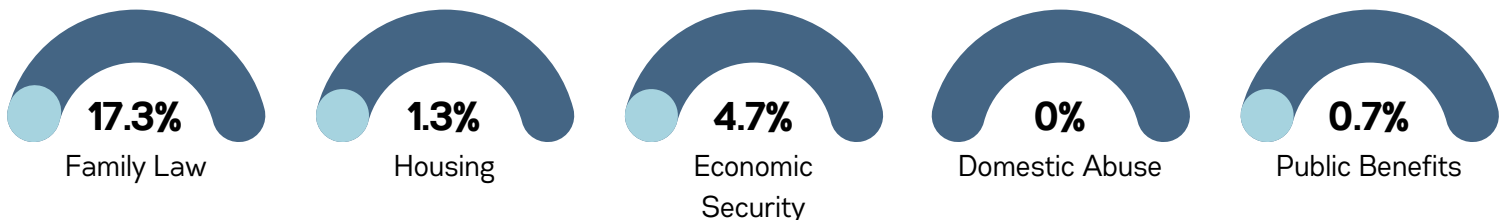
Fayette County CYS	199
Washington County CYS	103
Hillman Driver's License	40
Hillman Housing	16
Washington County Custody	16
Greene County CYS	14
PA Health Partners	7
Court-Appointed Westmoreland	6
Aging	4



405 Cases Handled in 2023-2024

Family Law	343
Economic Security	43
Housing	18
Public Benefits	1
Domestic Abuse	0

Percentage of All Cases Handled



AT A GLANCE: SERVICE TYPES



BRIEF SERVICES

Advice and Counsel

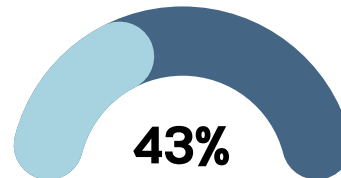
Assistance is limited to the review of information relevant to the client's legal problem(s) and counseling the client on the relevant law and/or suggested course of action. Advice and counsel does not encompass drafting of documents or making third-party contacts on behalf of the client. This may occur by telephone, correspondence or in person.

Limited Services

Providing a discrete and time-limited (90 days or less) service to a client beyond advice and consultation, including but not limited to activities, such as the drafting of documents or making limited third party contacts on behalf of a client.

IN 2023-2024:

**2,500 CASES HANDLED
WERE BRIEF SERVICES**

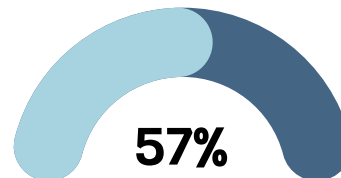


Extended Services

The performance of multiple tasks incident to continuous representation going beyond the other two, more limited categories: Examples include litigation of any form and extended negotiations or other services that exceed 90 days.

IN 2023-2024:

**3,333 CASES HANDLED
WERE EXTENDED SERVICES**



AT A GLANCE: OUTCOMES

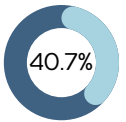


CASE CLOSING DATA IS USED TO MEASURE OUR LEVEL OF SERVICES FOR OUR CLIENTS

2023-2024

Advice and Counsel

Assistance is limited to the review of information relevant to the client's legal problem(s) and counseling the client on the relevant law and/or suggested course of action.



Limited Action

Provided a discrete and time-limited service to a client beyond advice and consultation, including but not limited to activities, such as the drafting of documents or making limited third-party contacts on behalf of a client.



Negotiated Settlement (without litigation)

Representation results in a written or recorded settlement occurring before a complaint or petition is filed.



Negotiated Settlement (with litigation)

Representation results in a written or recorded settlement occurring after a complaint or petition is filed.



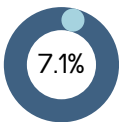
Administrative Agency Decision

Representation concludes after a decision by an administrative agency.



Uncontested Court Decision

Representation concludes after an uncontested local court decision, not the result of a written or recorded settlement.



Contested Court Decision

Representation concludes after a contested local court decision.



Appeals

Representation for any litigation above the Court of Common Pleas, District Court, or administrative agency to appellate court(s).



Extensive Services

Multiple tasks are performed that are incident to continuous representation, going beyond the other more limited categories. Examples include extended advice and/or negotiations.



Remaining Cases

These are cases that are still active when we reached the end of our fiscal year on June 30th.



INTRODUCTION

What is Legal Aid?

- Civil legal aid is a combination of services and resources that helps people to effectively navigate the justice system in civil cases, regardless of how much money you have. While there is a general right-to-counsel for criminal law, this is not the case for civil law. Legal Aid enables the opportunity for low-income people facing civil legal issues to have an attorney at no cost.
- The direct economic benefits of the subset of civil legal aid cases in Pennsylvania included in a study during fiscal year 2018 totaled \$43.6 million and, when accounting for ongoing future benefits, \$123.2 million in present-value dollars

The Prevalence of Civil Legal Problems

- In a study conducted by Legal Services Corporation in 2022, most low-income households have dealt with at least one civil legal problem in the past year – and many of these problems have had substantial impacts on people’s lives.
- **(55%)** low-income Americans who personally experienced a problem say these problems substantially impacted their lives – with the consequences affecting their finances, mental health, physical health and safety, and relationships.
- Legal Aid organizations across the nation work to ensure that our clients facing these dire legal issues are being represented in the courtroom. Without legal aid, the most vulnerable residents in our communities: the elderly, veterans, victims of domestic violence, and children are receiving help.



About Us

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to provide civil justice to vulnerable people in need of legal help. Our services empower our clients by keeping families protected, homes secured, and finances stabilized.

Our #1 Priority is to ensure that people in our communities who are in need of help are served with quality legal representation and advice and that everyone is treated with respect and dignity.

OUR VISION

We envision our clients thriving beyond meeting the basic necessities of safety, housing, and financial security.

We see barriers broken, lives improved, and communities uplifted thanks to the hard work of our dedicated legal staff.



Cases Handled: Family Law

PROTECTING FAMILIES

We help clients who are victims of domestic violence get Protection orders without regard to income level. That means Summit Legal Aid will do our best to help anyone who needs help for Protection from Abuse cases.

We also handle petitions for the Protection of Victims of Sexual Violence & Intimidation (PSVI).

Family Law Cases Handled in 2023-2024

Child Custody/ Visitation:	1,233
Child Support:	87
Divorce (for cases with no assets):	322
Child Abuse/Neglect through local county contracts:	316
Parental Rights Termination/ Name Change/ Other Juvenile Law:	21
Guardianships for elderly residents in Westmoreland County:	6

A child was withheld from our client for months when they came to our organization for help. Summit Legal Aid filed a complaint for custody and represented the client in custody proceedings. The father did not appear. Summit Legal Aid filed for contempt and the Court found that the father violated the Custody Order.

The Court ordered that custody immediately be turned over to our client and they were finally reunited with their child. At that time, it had been over nine months. Summit Legal Aid is dedicated to ensuring that families remain in safe and secure situations.

34%

of all cases handled were for family law

1,342

cases were to help victims of domestic or sexual abuse



Cases Handled: Housing Law

PROTECTING HOUSING

We help clients who have disputes with landlords or are facing eviction. Additionally, our Fair Housing Law Center enforces and advocates for laws prohibiting housing discrimination.

Housing Law Cases Handled in 2023-2024

Landlord/ Tenant Issues such as eviction & habitability:	845
Federal Housing:	179
Mobile Homes:	20
Mortgage Foreclosures & Lending:	121
Public Housing	76
Home Ownership/ Real Property:	26
Other Housing:	29

Specialty Housing Programs

- Fair Housing Law Center
- Project HEALS: A Homelessness Prevention Program for the elderly or for people with a criminal record

In 2023-2024:



**of all cases handled
were housing**





Specialty Housing Program

FAIR HOUSING LAW CENTER

The Fair Housing Law Center provides education, advocacy, and legal representation to victims of housing discrimination.

The Fair Housing Law Center serves offers:

- Legal Counsel and Representation
- Training and Materials
- Education and Outreach

In close collaboration with its partners, Fair Housing Law Center provides the first and only coordinated effort in the 28-county region of Western Pennsylvania to affirmatively promote through testing, advocacy, counsel, and litigation the rights of the protected classes delineated in the Fair Housing Act.

The federal Fair Housing Act defends the rights of seven protected classes – race, religion, color, national origin, gender, disability and familial status. If you have been denied housing, and you believe it was because of one of these classes, you have rights. This applies when you are renting or buying a home, getting a mortgage, seeking housing assistance or engaging in any other housing-related activities.

In the beginning of 2024, The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission ordered 1400 Main Holdings, LLC, AJH Management Company, and Landlord to pay \$60,000.00 to a tenant who requested a reasonable modification to allow them to install grab bars in their shower.

The Commission also ordered Respondents to cease and desist from refusing to permit any tenant with a disability from making reasonable modifications to the unit at the tenant's expense and otherwise acting in a discriminatory manner against anyone seeking to lease a property from them; participate in fair housing training; and pay the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania a civil penalty of \$7,000.

Through their representation, Fair Housing Law Center advocates fought for equality and ensured accountability.

In 2023-2024:

141

housing discrimination cases were handled



Specialty Housing Program

PROJECT HEALS

The Homeless Education Advocacy and Legal Services

Summit Legal Aid is devoted to prevent homelessness in our communities. Under Project HEALS, we are focusing on two groups of people in our ten counties who are in need of our help:

- Residents aged 60 years and older, or
- Residents who have a criminal record

Examples of Case Types Handled

- Landlord/tenant issues: A client is in danger of being evicted
- Public and subsidized housing: A client has been denied public housing due to a criminal record
- Mortgage foreclosures: A client has received a foreclosure notice on their home
- Predatory lending: A client has been deceived or manipulated by creditors or brokers who was fraudulently convinced to sign for unaffordable mortgage loans
- Homeownership: A client has been denied a mortgage loan due to a criminal record

A client came to Summit after the Magisterial Judge had issued an Order for Possession. The judgment showed that the client was responsible for 100% of the back-due water bill, even though the lease stated that the landlord would pay up to \$100 per month and our client would owe anything above that amount. The client was also experiencing domestic abuse, so Summit Legal Aid assisted in obtaining a DV affidavit and filing it with the Magistrate -- this gave the client extra time to file an appeal with Summit Legal Aid's help.

Once the case was appealed, Summit Legal Aid advised the client through negotiations with the Landlord and an agreement was reached wherein the client paid their portion of the water bill, plus the late fee for a late rent payment. A new lease was signed and Summit Legal Aid advised our client on how to file a consent order with the court. The case was discontinued and our client was able to remain in their home.

In 2023-2024:

275

Cases were handled to prevent homelessness through Project HEALS



Cases Handled: Life-Sustaining Services

SECURING PUBLIC BENEFITS

Having access to food, water, and heat are basic necessities to life. When a client has been denied these life-sustaining services, our advocates help with the appeal process.

Public Benefits Cases Handled in 2023-2024

Medicaid/ Medicare/ Community Based Care/ Other Health:	106
SNAP (food stamps):	22
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF):	17
Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) appeals:	7

Our client needed home health care after a severe injury left them unable to perform basic tasks without assistance. For over ten years, our client received this home healthcare until they were suddenly declared Nursing Facility Ineligible (NFI) and could no longer participate in the Medical Assistance waiver program. The client lost their personal assistance services at home because the appeal was never received by the Office of Long-Term Living (OLTL) in Harrisburg.

After contacting Summit Legal Aid for help, our advocate contacted the OLTL and our client was able to have a new eligibility assessment done. After the new assessment, our client was found Nursing Facility Clinically Eligible (NFCE) again. With the help of our sister agency Pennsylvania Health Law Project (phlp.org), to have the client's record corrected to start home healthcare immediately.

It is unknown as to why our client's Medical Assistance Waiver services were denied after receiving it for over a decade. Summit Legal Aid is dedicated to ensuring that our clients get the help they need. Summit Legal Aid can help with the appeal process for people who have been denied Medical Assistance, waiver services, or other public benefits,

2.6%

of all cases were appealing for life-sustaining resources for clients



Cases Handled: Economic Security: Consumer Issues

CONSUMER ISSUES

We help to protect the elderly and other vulnerable groups from dishonest lenders. We also help with debt management and file for bankruptcy when appropriate.

Consumer Finance Cases Handled in 2023-2024

Consumer Finance/ Student Financial Aid/ Taxes:	47
Bankruptcy/ Debtor Relief:	76
Collections/ Repossessions/ Garnishments/ Harassment:	117
Contracts/ Loans::	2

Specialty Tax Program

Our Low-Income Tax Center (LITC) serves a 24-county region in Western Pennsylvania and they assist with IRS disputes.

15.7%

of all cases were to help
clients gain financial stability



Specialty Program

LOW-INCOME TAXPAYER CLINIC (LITC)

Funded by The Internal Revenue Service (IRS), LITC assists low income individuals who have a tax dispute with the IRS and provide education and outreach to individuals who speak English as a second language (ESL).

Income Limitations for IRS Tax Disputes

- 250% with special considerations on a case-by-case basis

LITC serves a 24-County region in Western and Central Pennsylvania



**Low Income
Taxpayer Clinics**

REPRESENTATION • EDUCATION • ADVOCACY

In 2023-2024:

44

**Tax dispute cases were
handled by LITC**

Cases Handled: Economic Security: Benefits

ECONOMIC SECURITY

For someone who has been denied benefits, it can be intimidating to go through the appeal process alone. Summit Legal Aid advocates fight to ensure that clients are treated fairly so they can have benefits to not only live, but to thrive.

Economic Security Cases Handled in 2023-2024:

Supplemental Security Income (SSI):	331
Social Security Disability (SSDI):	48
Unemployment Compensation:	57
Social Security:	3

A client had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. They made several attempts to file for disability benefits in their local Social Security Administration office, however they were directed to the local library to apply online rather than granted an emergency interview with a Social Security Administration clerk (as is policy).

The client came to Summit Legal Aid for help and an attorney stepped in and helped the Client complete a Compassionate Allowance form and filed an Entrance of Appearance. Our client brought these documents to the Social Security Administration office and was given an appointment within a week. Disability benefits were then granted within a month.

Many people may not have access to or are comfortable with technology or know where to start. Needless to say, it can be overwhelming to go through this process alone. Without the help of legal aid, our client would have been forced to navigate this process on their own, delaying much-needed benefits in order to survive.

In 2023-2024:

439

Cases were handled to help appeal decisions for benefits that are necessary for our clients



Cases Handled: Economic Security/ Employment

REMOVING CRIMINAL RECORDS

Having even a minor criminal record can prevent someone from obtaining employment, securing housing, or furthering their education. We help to eliminate these barriers through our employment project.

Employment Project Case Types

- PA Clean Slate
- Expungement Applications
- Pardon Applications

A client came to Summit Legal Aid with six cases on their record and wanted to have them sealed from public record for finding employment.

Summit Legal Aid was able to help with filing the petitions for sealing. Under the modified Act, the client's entire record is now sealed from public view and will not appear on a PA background check. The District Attorney consented to all petitions and now all six cases for our client are sealed, so employers and others in the public would not be permitted to access the records..

Under the PA Clean Slate Act, a criminal record can be sealed from public view and will not appear on a Pennsylvania background check. Criminal records will, however, still show up on a federal background check.

Sealing prior records helps to eliminate barriers and enables people to pursue new opportunities like education, housing, and employment for a fresh start.

In 2023-2024:

235

**Cases were funded by our
Employment Project to help give
new opportunities to our clients**



Specialty Program: Driver's License Restoration

DRIVERS' LICENSE RESTORATION PROGRAM

Funded by The Hillman Foundation and The Washington County Community Foundation, Summit Legal Aid serves residents in Washington County who have had their driving privileges sanctioned.

Summit Legal Aid staff helps clients navigate driver's license sanctions and explore additional options including:

- Occupational Limited Licenses
- Probationary Licenses
- Ignition Interlock Systems with Limited Licenses

In 2023-2024:

40

Cases were handled to restore driving privileges for clients





Organization

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Deputy Director
Deputy Director
Finance Director
Compliance Director
Communications Director



Organization

OFFICE LOCATIONS

231 West Main Street
Clarion, PA 16214
Phone: 814.226.4340
Fax: 814.226.5531

16 East Otterman Street
Greensburg, PA 15601
Phone: 724.836.2211
Fax: 724.836.3680

227 Franklin Street
Suite 400
Johnstown, PA 15901
Phone: 814.536.8917
Fax: 814.535.3377

203 West Union Street
Somerset, PA 15501
Phone: 814.443.4615
Fax: 814.444.0331

45 East Main St.
Suite 200
Uniontown, PA 15401
Phone: 724.439.3591
Fax: 724.439.6491

63 South Washington St.
Waynesburg, PA 15370
Phone: 724.627.3127
Fax: 724.852.4189

10 West Cherry Ave.
Washington, PA 15301
Phone: 724.225.6170
Fax: 724.250.1078

