



# Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York, Inc.

## 2006 Annual Report

Serving Broome, Cayuga, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego and Otsego counties and Farmworkers statewide

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Robert B. Salzman, Esq.

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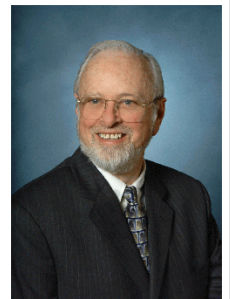
Suba Viswanathan, Esq.

### Our Mission:

*To ensure equal justice for low-income people facing civil legal problems that threaten basic needs for economic and family stability, shelter, health, safety and other critical legal rights.*

## Message from the Executive Director


When the federal Legal Services Corporation (LSC) decided to reconfigure program service areas across the state as of January 1, 2004, the Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York (LASMNY) faced difficult challenges. The new thirteen-county service area is not only one of the largest in the state (stretching from the Canadian border in the north to Pennsylvania in the south), but had been served by three separate LSC-funded programs. In addition, the reconfiguration process took place in the context of declining governmental support for civil legal services to the poor, and an LSC study confirming that an average of only 20% of clients in need receive services nationwide.



Fortunately, along with these challenges came unique opportunities to improve services for clients in the region. One of the most dramatic innovations has been the birth of the Justice Alliance of Central New York, a partnership between LASMNY and the formerly LSC-funded Legal Services of Central New York (LSCNY). While LASMNY remained an LSC program subject to federal funding restrictions (for example, restrictions on class actions, lobbying for favorable legislation and seeking attorney's fees for successful litigation), LSCNY became an unrestricted non-LSC program serving the same thirteen-county area. Together, LASMNY and LSCNY provide a more complete chest of legal tools for indigent clients.

I am also pleased to report that in the face of decreasing governmental support, local foundations and other non-governmental sources, such as the United Way, have stepped up to fill the gap. With their support, LASMNY overcame a significant budget deficit in 2004, achieving a balanced budget by 2005. Local funders from throughout the service area also contributed over \$200,000 toward the Central New York Legal HelpLine Project, which will create the first centralized intake system for the region, utilizing the latest in telephone technology. Similar systems nationwide have greatly increased numbers of clients served, and provided increased access for clients in rural areas, clients lacking transportation, the working poor, senior citizens and clients with disabilities.

My thanks go out to the LASMNY Board, managing attorney team, staff and volunteers, whose hard work and dedication have made 2006 such an exciting and productive year. With the continued support of local funders, and possible increases in governmental funding finally on the horizon, the future of civil legal services in Central New York looks promising.

  
Robert B. Salzman  
Executive Director

## 2006 CLIENT SERVICE STATISTICS

### Summary of 2006 Client Services

Cases closed:  
4,537

Persons helped:  
9,930

Monetary awards for clients:  
\$820,442

Estimated savings to county taxpayers:  
\$1,825,047

Community legal education events:  
32 (attended by 651 people)

Legal education brochures distributed:  
34,677

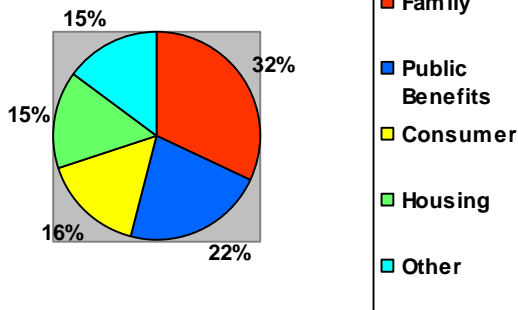
Referrals to other sources of assistance:  
8,187

In 2006, LASMNY closed 4,537 cases, benefiting 9,930 individuals. Of the 4,537 cases closed, 32% involved family law matters (with a focus on domestic violence); 22% involved assistance with public benefits (such as Social Security Disability and SSI, Food Stamps and Public Assistance); 16% involved consumer matters (including debtor relief from overzealous debt collection, frauds/scams, etc.); 15% involved housing matters (such as preventing or delaying evictions and enforcing tenants' rights); and 15% involved other matters such as employment, access to healthcare, elder law and future planning. LASMNY staff provided extended services in 47% of all cases, twice the national average for civil legal services programs.

In the course of representing its clients, LASMNY attorneys and paralegals obtained \$820,442 in retroactive awards for clients, pumping revenue back into local economies. LASMNY also saved county taxpayers over \$1,825,047 by obtaining federal Social Security Disability and SSI benefits for clients with disabilities, removing them from county welfare rolls, reimbursing counties for welfare benefits paid out while federal disability claims were pending, and bringing federal Medicaid dollars into the community to offset county Medicaid costs.

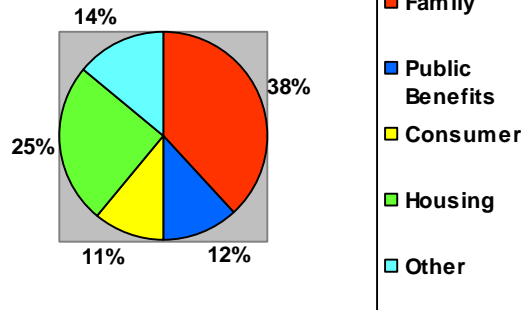
## 2006 Cases Closed by Problem Type and Depth of Service

### LASMNY

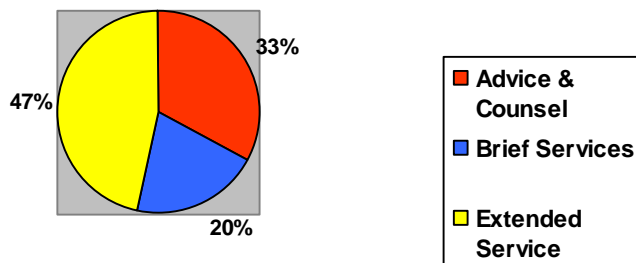


Cases by Problem Type (LASMNY)

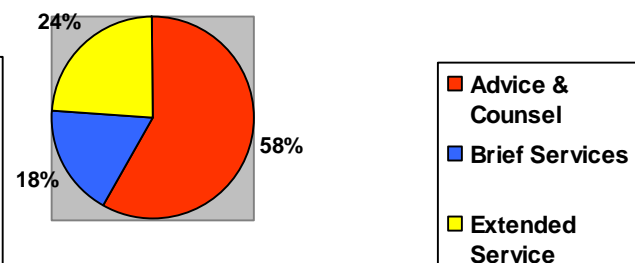
### National Average for LSC-Funded Programs\*



Cases by Problem Type (National Average)



Cases by Depth of Service (LASMNY)

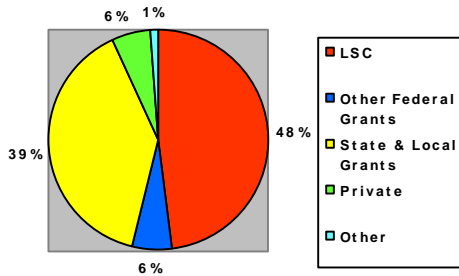


Cases by Depth of Service (National Average)

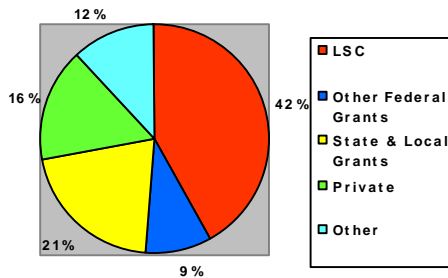
\*Source: LSC Fact Book 2006

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION 2006

### 2006 LASMNY Funding by Source



### National Average for LSC-Funded Programs\*



Excerpt from Audited Financial Statement 2006

#### SUPPORT & REVENUE

Grants & Contracts	3,638,602
United Way	184,492
Foundations	30,680
Donations & In-Kind Contributions	18,005
Other	57,484

TOTAL SUPPORT & REVENUE 3,929,263

#### EXPENSES

Program Services	3,283,029
Management & General	465,235

TOTAL EXPENSES 3,748,264

#### ASSETS

Net Assets	651,171
Change in net assets	180,999

\*Source: LSC Fact Book 2006

## Spotlight on Special Projects

### Central New York Victim Assistance Project

With the assistance of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, New York State and Broome County Family Court, Project staff completed and closed 392 cases in 2006 for victims throughout a twelve-county area. Of these, 75% involved extended representation: 141 victims received a divorce; 50 victims obtained custody orders; 33 victims obtained orders of protection (not including women who received orders of protection in the context of other proceedings); 16 victims obtained child and/or spousal support; and 9 victims received other relief, such as bankruptcy discharges, resolution of landlord/tenant problems, preservation of public benefits and immigration relief. As part of a massive outreach campaign to refugee/immigrant and limited English proficient women, LASMNY staff distributed 5,625 brochures in Arabic, Bosnian, Russian and Vietnamese.

### Private Attorney Involvement (PAI) Program

In 2006, volunteer private attorneys with LASMNY's PAI program closed 644 cases, contributing a total of 1,386 hours toward representation of indigent clients.

### Disability Advocacy Program (DAP)

In 2006, LASMNY's DAP Program won federal SSD and/or SSI disability benefits for low-income clients in 305 cases, removing them from county welfare rolls and saving county taxpayers over \$1,825,047 across the region.

### Farmworker Law Project

LASMNY's Farmworker Law Project distributed 3,527 bilingual legal education materials, including "harvest calendars" and a newsletter for H-2A workers, at labor camps and social service agencies across the state.

### Customized Employment Grant

LASMNY participated in the Customized Employment Grant (CEG), an initiative by the Workforce Investment Board of Herkimer, Madison and Oneida Counties to assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining quality employment. LASMNY staff closed 62 CEG cases in 2006, assisting clients in removing legal barriers to employment such as credit problems, driver's license issues, employment discrimination and other legal problems.

### Office for Aging Program

With the help of Office for Aging funding in Broome, Delaware, Herkimer, Jefferson, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga and Otsego Counties, LASMNY closed 759 cases for the area's most economically vulnerable seniors.

## Office Locations

### **Main Office:**

255 Genesee Street  
2nd Floor  
Utica, New York 13501  
Phone: (315) 732-2131  
(877) 203-1062  
Fax: (315) 732-3202

### **Binghamton Office:**

30 Fayette Street  
Binghamton, New York 13901  
Phone: (607) 723-7966  
Fax: (607) 724-7211

### **Cortland Office:**

111 Port Watson St.  
Cortland, New York 13045  
Phone: (607) 753-1134  
Fax: (607) 753-7257

### **Oneonta Office:**

P.O. Box 805  
387 Chestnut Street  
Oneonta, New York 13820  
Phone: (607) 433-2600  
(800) 821-9895  
Fax: (607) 433-1433

### **Oswego Office:**

108 W. Bridge St.  
Oswego, New York 13126  
Phone: (315) 342-2191  
Fax: (315) 342-1891

### **Syracuse Office:**

472 South Salina St.  
Suite 300B  
Syracuse, New York 13202  
Phone: (315) 475-3127  
Fax: (315) 671-0062

### **Watertown Office:**

44 Public Square  
Watertown, New York 13601  
Phone: (315) 788-2072  
Fax: (315) 785-9118

### **Farmworker Law Project:**

52 S. Manheim Blvd.  
New Paltz, New York 12561  
Phone: (845) 256-9096  
(800) 804-8575  
Fax: (845) 256-0494



Funded in part by the Legal  
Services Corporation

## CLIENT STORIES

### FAMILY



LASMNY represented a victim of domestic violence whose abuser had a long history of terrorizing her family, including sexually assaulting several family members. LASMNY was able to successfully bar the abuser from having any contact with the woman or her children, giving law enforcement the time they needed to bring an indictment against him.

### HEALTH



A young Somali refugee was working two jobs and taking English classes. Unfortunately, when riding his bicycle between one job and another, he was struck in a hit-and-run accident and broke his shoulder. He applied for emergency help from social services, but was denied because his limited English made it difficult for him to understand the application process. At the time he came to LASMNY, he had been turned away from local clinics and hospitals due to lack of insurance. A LASMNY attorney, working together with a volunteer private attorney, was able to overcome the denials of Medicaid and medical treatment. After getting treatment for his shoulder, the client was able to return to work.

### HOUSING



A senior citizen on a fixed income gave notice to move out of her apartment, cleaned it thoroughly, and took pictures showing that she left it in immaculate condition. Even so, the landlord refused to return her security deposit. A LASMNY attorney represented the woman in small claims court and helped her get her money back.

### CONSUMER



A disabled man successfully went back to work, but was having difficulty making ends meet because of his defaulted student loans. He was unable to get any benefit out of the Earned Income Tax Credit, because his tax refunds were seized each year to pay off his loans. In addition, his paycheck was at risk for being garnished. A LASMNY attorney helped the man consolidate his loans, automatically removing them from default status. The consolidation resulted in an affordable payment plan, which will allow him to keep up to date on his loan payments.

## Update on the Central New York Legal HelpLine Project

LASMNY and partner agency Legal Services of Central New York, Inc. (LSCNY) are bringing civil legal services for low-income clients into the digital age. LASMNY and LSCNY plan to launch the first centralized intake system for the Central New York region in 2007, utilizing cutting-edge "voice over-IP" technology to manage telephone calls and data traffic over an internal computer network.

Modeled after a highly successful centralized intake system in Ohio, the Central New York Legal HelpLine will provide toll-free or local call access to a central telephone server for clients anywhere in a thirteen-county service area. Existing clients will now be able to route their calls directly to their advocates, while new clients will be served by a central intake unit of four to five skilled attorneys. The central intake unit will specialize in providing telephone advice and counsel, referring clients in need of more in-depth services to specialized practice units within both agencies.

Other programs nationwide switching to a centralized intake model have experienced a substantial increase in numbers of clients served, while continuing to maintain or even increase in-depth services. The system will erase previous county service boundaries, providing the same access to clients regardless of where they live, and increase access to clients who cannot visit an office due to work hours, disabilities, lack of transportation or other barriers. Pro bono attorneys will even be able to sign on to the system and take client calls from the convenience of their own offices. Other exciting features of the system include a pre-recorded "law library" of tele-topics that clients can browse after hours or while on hold, the ability to route limited English proficient callers directly to a bilingual advocate, and the ability to quickly set up toll-free hotlines for clients affected by disasters.