



Annual Report



2025

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Interim Executive Director's Message

01

In 2025, the Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York (LASMNY) faced significant challenges that demonstrated both our resilience and our commitment to the future. We started the year with a reduction in force to ensure long-term sustainability. We ended it by bidding farewell to Paul Lupia, our Executive Director of 18 years, as he retired after more than forty years in civil legal aid.

Amid these transitions, our staff remained committed to our mission. We continued to deliver exceptional service to our communities by closing 6,365 cases and helping 12,584 people (7,846 adults and 4,738 children) across 13 counties.

Housing matters, the most urgent legal need in the region, represented 41% of our total caseload, or 2,554 cases. We assisted 961 households in maintaining housing, including preventing evictions for 389 families, delaying eviction proceedings to give 529 families time to relocate safely, and avoiding foreclosure for 43 homeowners.

We continued to be a vital support for survivors of domestic violence. This year, a total of 1,492 survivors received legal assistance, which accounts for nearly a quarter of all the clients we served. Our advocacy efforts resulted in 31 protective orders, 139 divorces or separations, 33 custody and visitation orders, and 19 child support orders.

Additionally, we served 3,296 clients with disabilities, representing 52% of our overall caseload. We helped 123 individuals secure Social Security benefits, including 91 SSI and 32 SSDI awards. We also provided legal services to 416 veterans, representing 7% of our client base, and prepared 923 estate planning documents to help seniors and families protect their futures.

This year, we significantly expanded access to justice in rural areas. Our offices in Oswego, Oneonta, and Watertown handled 572 cases, up from 359 in 2023, now accounting for 9% of our total caseload. As our presence in rural communities grows, distance is becoming less of a barrier to accessing justice in Central New York.

In 2025, our staff and board members worked together to produce a three-year strategic plan. We set eight priorities: strengthening community partnerships, enhancing client services, ensuring financial sustainability, modernizing technology, expanding outreach, improving staff development, deepening advocacy efforts, and increasing program evaluation. This plan provides a clear roadmap to advance our mission and will guide our work through 2028.

We also collaborated with thredpartners, an external consulting firm, to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to test whether our services match community needs. The needs assessment helped us identify service gaps and emerging legal issues. We will use the results to allocate resources more effectively and strengthen our capacity to reach and serve more people.



The challenges of 2025 tested us and demonstrated our collective strength. As we move into 2026, we have a sharper focus on our priorities and an even greater dedication to our mission. There is more work ahead, more families to support, and undoubtedly new challenges to address. We invite you to join us as a partner or donor as we continue this important work. Together, we can close the justice gap.

With gratitude,

Christina Reilly
Interim Executive Director
Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York, Inc.



Our Mission

At the Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York, Inc. (LASMNY), our mission is to improve clients' access to the essentials of life through the highest standards of competent, holistic legal representation and education, while maintaining compassion, integrity, and respect.

We are committed to providing high-quality legal assistance, advocacy, and education to individuals and communities who face barriers to accessing the legal system.

We work to protect rights, promote dignity, and help low-income communities overcome legal challenges.

Service Area & Office Locations

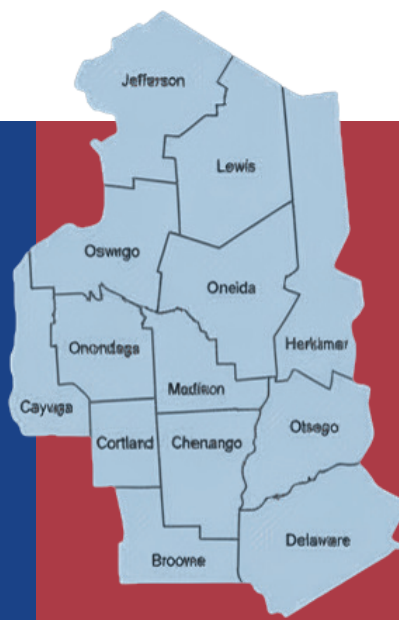
LASMNY serves a 13-county region in Central and Northern New York through offices in Utica, Syracuse, Binghamton, Oswego, Oneonta, and Watertown. We also operate a centralized HelpLine, in partnership with Legal Services of Central New York, offering clients a single point of access for assistance across the region.

In addition to our regional services, LASMNY operates the Agricultural Worker Project, which provides legal services and advocacy for agricultural workers throughout New York State.

Utica | Syracuse | Binghamton | Oneonta | Oswego | Watertown

6

Offices



13

Counties

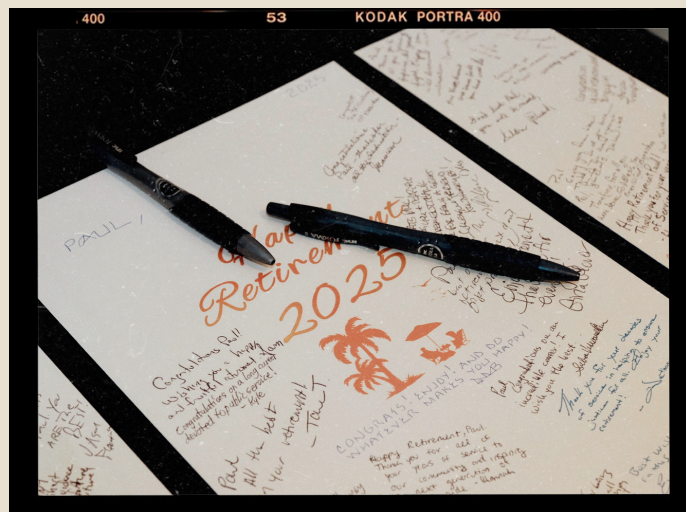
Organizational History

Founded in 1952 with support from the Oneida County Bar Association, LASMNY started as a single-county legal services provider. In 1956, Frederick K. Baldwin became the first full-time attorney and Executive Director, starting a tradition of steady leadership that has lasted for more than seventy years.

Frederick Baldwin served as Executive Director for 19 years, guiding the organization through its early growth. In 1967, the organization began receiving federal funding through the Office of Economic Opportunity, enabling significant expansion of services and staff capacity.

In 1975, Robert Salzman, who had been with the organization since 1968, was promoted to Executive Director. He became only the second leader in the organization's history. Under Bob Salzman's leadership in the late 1970s and 1980s, federal funding through the Legal Services Corporation continued to increase, enabling dramatic expansion. The organization's services reached Herkimer, Lewis, Madison, Otsego, and Delaware Counties.

In 1984, the organization changed its name to Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York to reflect its expanding geographic reach. By 1989, the organization's budget surpassed \$1 million, making it one of the largest regional legal aid providers in New York State.



Paul Lupia, LASMNY's third Executive Director, led the organization for 18 years before retiring in 2025, after over four decades in civil legal aid. Under Paul Lupia's leadership, the organization expanded and developed specialized programs to meet emerging community needs. During the 2010s foreclosure crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, LASMNY adapted to help preserve housing for low-income families. Using Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) funding, LASMNY successfully prevented unlawful evictions and promoted housing stability.

In 2026, LASMNY will enter a new era with the appointment of only the fourth Executive Director in the organization's 74-year history. This remarkable continuity of leadership has provided stability and long-term vision, enabling the organization to build deep community relationships, weather funding challenges, and maintain its commitment to high-quality legal services across a vast geographic region.

Our Core Values

1

Access to Justice

We are committed to ensuring that every one of our clients has access to high-quality legal representation and advocacy.

2

Client-Centered Approach

We prioritize the needs and goals of our clients, ensuring our clients and their needs remain the focus of our mission.

3

Advocacy for Social Change

We are dedicated to challenging unjust, unbalanced systems and policies to create a fair and equitable society.

4

Collaboration

We believe in the power of partnerships and work collaboratively with clients, community partners, and other legal aid organizations to create meaningful change.

5

Empowerment

Through our work, we aim to empower individuals and communities by providing the tools, resources, and legal support needed to achieve justice and dignity.

6

Integrity & Compassion

We uphold the highest ethical standards in our work, ensuring transparency, accountability, and trust in all our interactions. We understand that each client deserves compassion, understanding, dignity, and respect for their unique experiences and challenges.



Year in Review 2025

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By the Numbers

In 2025, LASMNY closed 6,365 cases and assisted 12,584 individuals, including 4,738 children. We addressed the most urgent legal needs of low-income families in the greater Central New York region, focusing on housing stability, family law, and services for vulnerable populations.

We handled 2,554 housing cases, representing 41% of our total caseload. These cases included private landlord-tenant issues, federally subsidized housing, foreclosures, and public housing disputes. As a result, we helped 961 households avoid homelessness. Of these, 389 families stayed in their rental homes, 529 evictions were delayed so tenants could find new housing, and 43 homeowners avoided foreclosure.

We also handled 1,312 family law cases, providing critical legal representation in divorce, custody, domestic violence, and child support issues that affect family stability and the well-being of children.

We prioritized assistance for 1,492 survivors of domestic violence (23% of all clients), obtaining 31 protective orders and providing trauma-informed services to address their specific needs and help them achieve safety and stability.

We served Central New York's most vulnerable populations. Over half of our clients (52%) were disabled individuals requiring assistance with housing, benefits, and other essential needs. We helped 123 disabled individuals secure vital Social Security benefits (91 SSI, 32 SSDI).

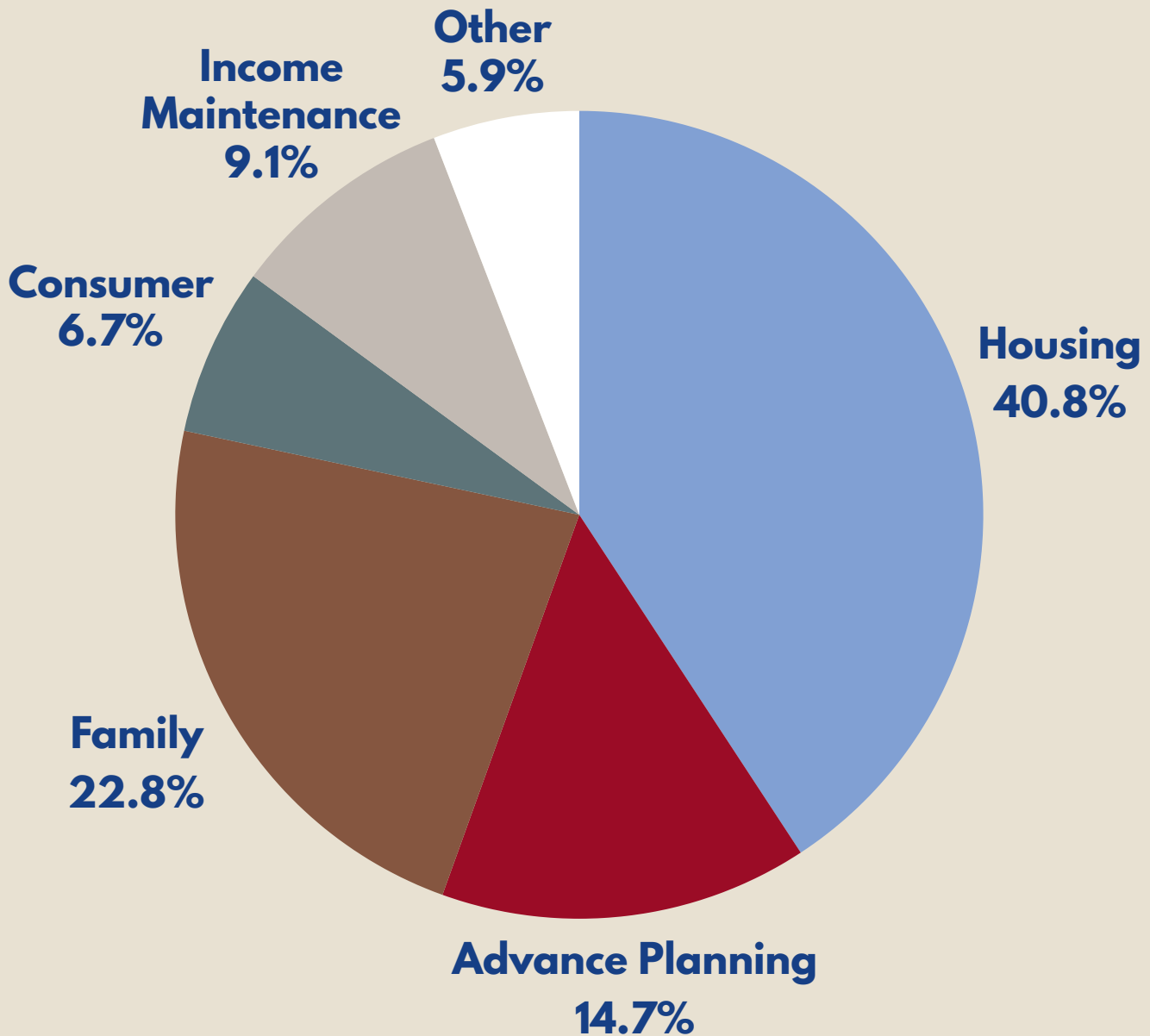
We also served 416 veterans and provided 923 estate planning documents—including 301 wills and 622 powers of attorney and healthcare proxies—to seniors and families seeking to protect their assets and make critical end-of-life decisions.

Our HelpLine attorneys handled 38% of all cases (2,420 cases) in 2025, providing efficient counsel, advice, and connections to resources to resolve legal problems quickly for 2,655 clients who might otherwise go unserved.

2025

Year In Review

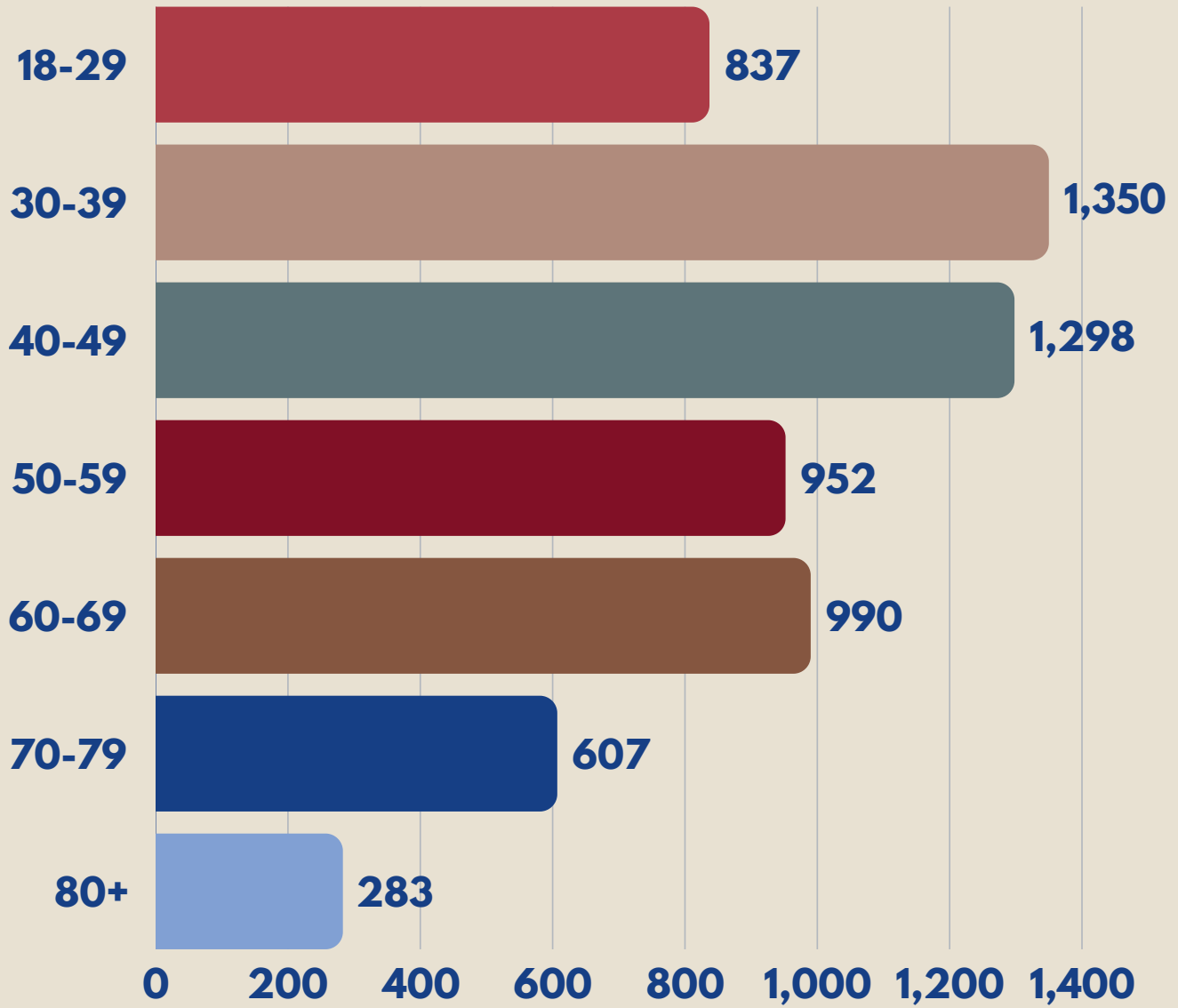
Case Types



6,365

**Cases
Closed**

Client Age Distribution



52% Disabled



23% Domestic Violence



30% Age 60+

Featured Client Stories

Pro Bono Collaboration Helps Family Find a New Beginning

Several years ago, the client sought our assistance with a family offense petition due to severe abuse she and her young children experienced from the children's father. LASMNY staff represented her in family court, obtaining a stay-away order of protection that was subsequently extended to protect her and her children.

Over time, circumstances changed. The abuser passed away, and the children, now teenagers, asked to be adopted by their mother's spouse, a man they had long considered their father, and who had given them the love and stability their biological father never did.

The LASMNY attorney who was asked to take on the adoption case wanted to help but recognized that adoptions were outside her usual practice area. She enlisted a private attorney to serve as pro bono co-counsel. Legal aid staff worked closely with the client to complete the necessary paperwork and collaborated with the pro bono attorney to prepare and file the court petition.

The adoption was finalized at the courthouse, with family and friends filling the room. The presiding judge took photographs with the family and presented them with a journal to mark the occasion. It was a joyful day for everyone, especially the client, her children, and their new father.



A Second Chance at Homeownership

When a homeowner faced foreclosure, he turned to LASMNY, feeling defeated and ready to give up. "I was thinking, 'I don't need a house, I don't care,'" he recalls. But his attorney saw a path forward through Chapter 13 bankruptcy and clearly explained how he qualified and what the process would entail.

Over the next five years, his attorney became a lifeline—checking in regularly, explaining each step of the complex bankruptcy process, and maintaining consistent contact even when transportation challenges made it difficult for him to reach out. "When I couldn't call her, she called me," he says, grateful for that unwavering commitment.

Through dedicated advocacy and patient guidance, the client successfully completed his Chapter 13 bankruptcy repayment plan and saved his home from foreclosure.

When asked what advice he'd give others facing similar circumstances, he emphasized the importance of seeking help early: "Don't wait until you're in crisis—reach out to Legal Aid. They can help you see options you didn't know existed."

Finding Stability After Crisis

A woman with serious health conditions came to LASMNY for help applying for Supplemental Security Income, benefits that could finally give her financial stability. Chronic pain and mental health challenges had made it impossible for her to keep a steady job.

Her situation became even more difficult during the application process. She and her young child had to leave their home to escape domestic violence. Suddenly, she was homeless, managing her health conditions, and trying to keep her child safe, all without a steady income.

Our staff supported her for over a year, collecting medical records, building her case, and guiding her through a complicated process during a very hard time in her life. Even with all these challenges, she stayed involved and determined, driven by the hope of a better future for her child.

Her hard work paid off. At her hearing, the administrative law judge made a fully favorable decision, awarding her monthly benefits and a significant payment for past months.

Now, she and her child have a stable home and reliable transportation. Legal help restored her sense of security and hope for the future.

Financial Overview

In 2025, the Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York advanced its mission with support from federal, state, county, and private funders. With approximately \$15.8 million in total revenue, our diverse funding base enabled us to deliver essential civil legal assistance to low-income individuals and families across our service area.

Federal Funding

A considerable portion of our funding is provided through federal sources. The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) awarded a total of \$2,973,604, including:

- \$2,492,329 for Basic Field Program
- \$391,497 for Agricultural Worker Program
- \$89,778 through a Technology Initiative Grant

Additional federal support in 2025 included:

- \$335,796 from the Department of Justice under the Violence Against Women Act
- \$10,775 from the City of Auburn through Community Development Block Grant funding; and

- Approximately \$241,530 as pass-through funding from local offices for the aging to meet targeted community needs.

State and Local Support

New York State and local funding streams continue to play a vital role in sustaining our services. We received approximately \$6.8 million from the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) to support eviction defense and housing stability services. We subcontracted a portion of the eviction defense funds to five other legal services organizations.

Funding from the New York State Judiciary exceeded \$2 million and supported civil legal services across the region. Additional state-supported programs in 2025 included:

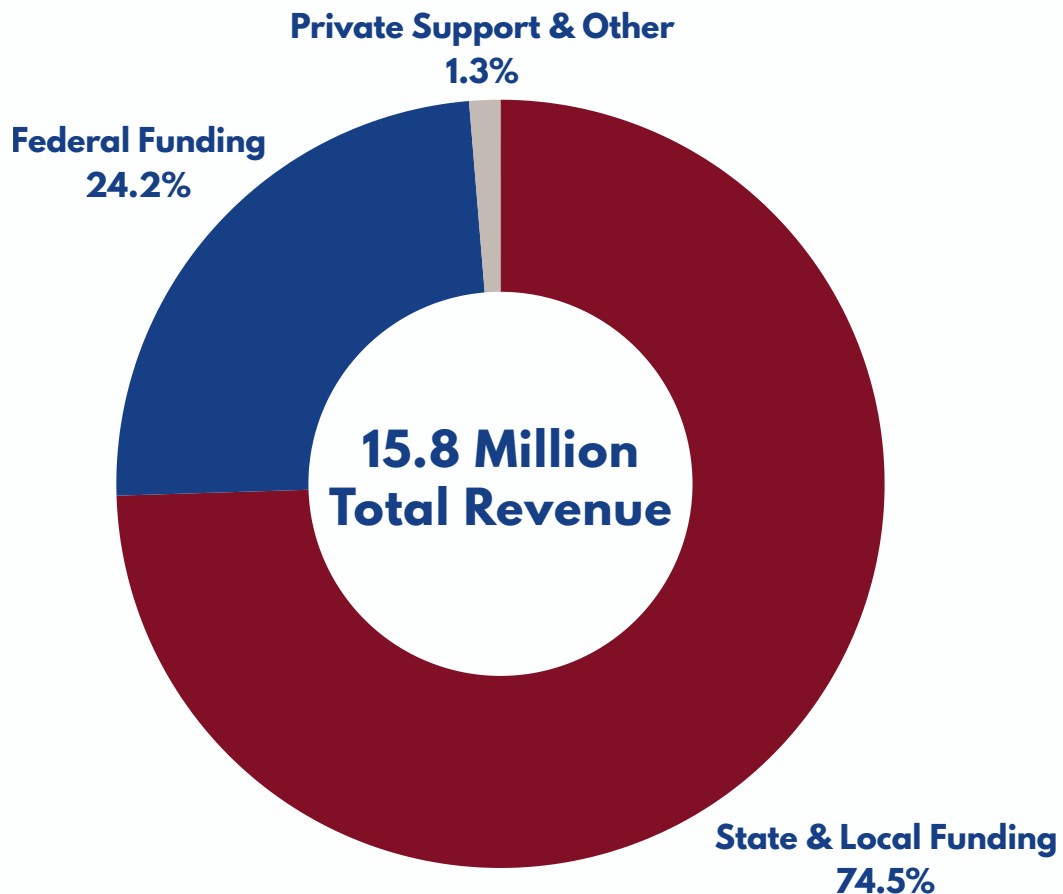
- \$858,000 for Disabilities Advocacy Project (DAP)
- \$826,000 for the Homeowner Protection Program (HOPP)
- \$274,000 in Interest on Lawyer Account (IOLA) funding
- \$340,000 from the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS)
- Approximately \$300,000 for Crime Victims Assistance

Private Support and Other Revenue

Private contributions, while representing a relatively small share of our overall funding, are vital to our operations. Last year, LASMNY received \$59,040 in financial contributions from individuals, foundations, and community partners, including support from United Way and fundraising events such as the Taste for Justice and Mohawk Valley Gives campaigns.

In addition, nonfinancial contributions totaled approximately \$115,400, reflecting the value of pro bono legal and accounting services, volunteer time, and donated goods. Other revenue sources included approximately \$13,600 from attorney fees and miscellaneous income.

These combined resources enabled the Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York to serve more than 12,500 individuals and families during the year, providing essential legal assistance in areas such as housing, domestic violence prevention, and disability advocacy.



Fundraising

Taste for Justice: A Successful Return to Fundraising in Binghamton

After a fundraising hiatus from 2021 to 2025, LASMNY resumed activities with our inaugural "Taste for Justice" fundraiser on November 5, 2025, at the New Leaf Cider Company in Port Crane, New York. Attendees enjoyed assorted pizzas and appetizers and sampled a range of New Leaf's ciders while the band "Side Hustle" provided the perfect musical backdrop.

Between 2014 and 2021, LASMNY held a similarly themed fundraiser, "Race for Justice," a 5k run/walk in downtown Binghamton. Returning as our main sponsor for the 2025 event was the law firm Coughlin & Gerhart. Coughlin & Gerhart has been a steadfast supporter of every LASMNY fundraising event since our first in 2014. They were joined by the two other major Binghamton law firms, Hinman Howard & Kattell and Levene Gouldin & Thompson. This was the first LASMNY fundraising event sponsored by all three firms. Each firm's attorneys have also been actively engaged in our pro bono programs for many years, and their volunteer service was highlighted at the event.

In addition to these leading firms, other attorney sponsors were local solo practitioner Palmer Pelella and attorney Matthew Skinner, a LASMNY board member. Business sponsors included



Protection Auto Detailing and Querious, Inc., while Red Barn Technology Group contributed the "step and repeat" photo backdrop and event sign. Continuing the tradition of community partnership, area businesses (including Adam Weitzman, Alexander's Café, Black Bear Hockey, Déjà vu Salon, Fantastic Sun Tanning Center, Florals by Jolette, Lost Dog, Midway Lanes, and Tchir Realty, LLC) donated a variety of gift baskets, which were raffled at the event. The silent auction featured several upscale items and a dining experience donated by Pro Bono Managing Attorney Michaela Rossettie-Azemi.

The event was emceed by LASMNY board member Ron Lanouette. Our recently retired Executive Director, Paul Lupia, delivered the keynote, emphasizing the impact of our work, including our pro bono efforts. State Senator Lea Webb also attended, speaking about the ongoing need for our services and the importance of funding. Ultimately, the event raised \$14,550.00, surpassing all previous Binghamton area fundraising events.

Mohawk Valley Gives: Community Support in Action

For the third consecutive year, LASMNY participated in Mohawk Valley Gives, an annual day of giving that brings together nonprofits, businesses, and community members across the region in a 24-hour celebration of philanthropy. In 2025, this partnership with the Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties generated \$40,459 for LASMNY.

The Mohawk Valley Gives campaign provides critical unrestricted funding that enables LASMNY to respond effectively to emerging client needs, while also increasing public awareness of civil legal services and the essential role LASMNY plays in the community. We are thankful to every donor who contributed during this campaign and to the Community Foundation for matching funds and promotional support.



Fundraising Impact

Our fundraising initiatives raised \$55,009 in 2025, showing strong community support for LASMNY's mission. The broad support from law firms, businesses, individual donors, and community members affirms that access to justice is a shared value across Central New York. As we build our fundraising capacity, these relationships and this momentum will help us sustain and expand our services to meet growing community needs.

Retirements

A Tribute to Paul Lupia

After more than forty years providing civil legal aid in Central New York, Paul Lupia retired as Executive Director of the Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York in October 2025, closing a defining chapter for our organization and the communities we serve.

Paul's journey with LASMNY began in 1980 when he joined the Legal Aid Society of Oneida County, our predecessor. Before that, he served as a VISTA Volunteer, advocating for children with disabilities, and as a Staff Attorney with North Country Legal Services. He found his home at LASMNY, where he served for 45 years in various roles. In December 2007, he was appointed Executive Director.

As Executive Director, Paul led LASMNY through an economic recession, funding uncertainties, technological change, and the COVID-19 pandemic, always focusing on serving those most in need. Under his leadership, LASMNY diversified funding, strengthened partnerships, and embraced new service delivery models. Most significantly, he fostered a culture of collaboration, respect, and client-centered advocacy.



During his 18 years as Executive Director, Paul was active in the legal community, serving on committees for the New York State and county bar associations. He built partnerships between legal aid and the private bar, expanding access to justice in our region.

On October 9, 2025, LASMNY staff, board members, family, and friends gathered at 12 North Sports Bar in Marcy to celebrate Paul's retirement. The informal setting reflected his approachable style. Board members and staff shared tributes highlighting his wisdom, steady leadership, and dedication to the LASMNY team.

Staff presented Paul with Yankees tickets, a fitting gift for an avid fan. Fellow retiree Renee Kolwaite and her husband, Jack, gave him a handcrafted Adirondack chair.

We are grateful for Paul's tireless commitment to LASMNY and our mission.

A Tribute to Renee Kolwaite

Renee Kolwaite, a dedicated paralegal at LASMNY for more than 30 years, retired in June 2025. Throughout her career, she stood out for her many contributions.

Early in her career, Renee became skilled in grant compliance reporting, which helped LASMNY maintain vital funding each year. This funding supported civil legal services, including work on domestic violence cases through the Justice Department's Violence Against Women Act grant.

Renee developed programs with the private bar through our Private Attorney Involvement Program, focusing on difficult domestic violence divorce cases. She persuaded busy attorneys to help, including securing pro bono representation for a client facing multiple legal challenges after escaping an abusive spouse. As a result, the client obtained a favorable settlement, finished her education, and found stable work.



Renee was always committed to helping clients and finding ways to refer cases. When private attorneys were unavailable for divorce cases, she established a pro se clinic that enabled clients to handle their own divorces. This clinic became a model for our program. She created court-approved, easy-to-use forms and brought in attorneys to teach clients how to use them. Renee continued to support clients by checking their forms, ensuring spouses were served, and guiding them through every step. She even went with nervous clients to file their papers.

Staff and clients all miss Renee. We are confident she will bring the same energy and dedication to whatever she does next.



New Hires

Employee	Job Title	Hire Date
Bowman, Wynn	Supervising Attorney	1/13/2025
Oyanik, Hakan	Staff Attorney	1/13/2025
Rosettie-Azemi, Michaela	Managing Attorney	1/13/2025
Davenport, Elizabeth	Law Graduate	3/3/2025
Tulyk-Rossi, Laura	Managing Attorney	3/3/2025
Oxley, Jillian	Staff Attorney	4/7/2025
Ashraf, Courtney	Staff Attorney	8/11/2025
Delano, Kyle	Law Graduate	8/11/2025
Samoray, Jacob	Law Graduate	9/8/2025
Edwards, Stephanie	Staff Attorney	9/22/2025
Goodspeed, Sarah	Client Services Coordinator	12/8/2025

Promotions

Employee	Previous Title	Current Title	Effective Date
Matteson, Adam	Staff Attorney	Supervising Attorney	1/1/2025
Lark, Linda	Staff Attorney	Supervising Attorney	7/16/2025
Root, Christian	Staff Attorney	Supervising Attorney	7/16/2025
Smajic, Merima	Staff Attorney	Supervising Attorney	7/16/2025

2025 Needs Assessment Results

Between July and October 2025, LASMNY collaborated with thredpartners, an external consulting firm, to conduct a comprehensive civil legal needs assessment, gathering input from 92 community members, 32 partner organizations, and 75 staff members across all 13 counties. Significant findings of the needs assessment include:

- Housing insecurity emerged as the most urgent issue across all stakeholder groups. The assessment validates our strategic focus: housing cases now represent nearly 41% of closures, a 69% increase since 2022.
- Among community members who needed legal help but didn't seek it, 43% thought they "couldn't afford it," 40% believed legal help "wouldn't help," and 37% "didn't know where to go." These findings underscore the need for expanded outreach and community education.
- The percentage of LASMNY's clients aged 60+ continues to grow. Community members identified "legal help for seniors or caregivers" as their top educational priority.
- More than 88% of our partner organizations rated their experiences with LASMNY as "good" or "excellent," with nearly all expressing interest in deeper collaboration through joint legal clinics and community education.

Why Didn't You Seek Legal Help?



43% Couldn't Afford It



40% Wouldn't Help



37% Didn't Know Where to Go

Strategic Priorities for 2026 and Beyond

Our 2025 needs assessment highlights LASMNY's role as a direct legal service provider and a community partner advancing equity and justice across our service area. Informed by the needs assessment, our 2025–2028 Strategic Plan outlines a clear path for continued growth, effectiveness, and lasting impact.

In collaboration with staff, board members, and stakeholders, we identified eight priorities to guide our work: strengthening community partnerships and pro bono engagement, enhancing public awareness and trust, attracting and developing a diverse workforce, improving client services and intake, ensuring long-term financial sustainability, building staff retention and succession planning, strengthening internal structure and communication, and modernizing technology and security infrastructure.

In response to the needs assessment and as part of our Strategic Plan, LASMNY is developing a comprehensive outreach plan to serve underserved populations across our 13-county area. This plan will address awareness gaps and barriers to accessing our services. We will expand community education, strengthen partnerships with local organizations, and increase our presence in rural and aging communities. By meeting people where they are, both geographically and culturally, we aim to ensure those most in need are aware of and can access our services.

With a strong Strategic Plan, dedicated staff, and more than 73 years of service to Central New York, LASMNY is well-positioned to expand our community impact in the coming years. As we welcome our fourth Executive Director, we remain committed to ensuring that everyone in our 13-county area has access to the legal support they need to thrive. Together, we will continue to advance our vision of equal justice for all.



13

Counties
Served

6 Offices

Utica | Syracuse | Binghamton
Oneonta | Oswego | Watertown

2025 Board of Directors

Daniel B. Berman, Esq. (President)
Matthew J. Skinner, Esq. (First Vice President)
Anne Bogardus (Second Vice President)
Lawrence Hasseler, Esq. (Treasurer)
Walter Bowler, Esq. (Secretary)
Angela Carter
Scott Clippinger, Esq.
Mary Lannon Fangio, Esq.
Derrick Johnson
Lucy Johnson
Daniel Kornfeld, Esq.
Ronald Lanouette, Jr., Esq.
Mary Ellen Luker, CPA, JD, LL.M.
Kim Mills
Joanne Piersma, Esq.
Randy J. Schaal, Esq.
Suba Viswanathan, Esq.
Stewart L. Weisman, Esq.



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