

LEGAL AID ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA

2023

ANNUAL REPORT

**LEGAL AID FIGHTS FOR JUSTICE.
WE FIGHT FOR LEGAL AID.**



2023 STAFF

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FROM LAAC'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



This year, LAAC marked our 40th anniversary, and I celebrated 10 years as LAAC's Executive Director. It was a big year for us, as you'll see in this report. We found ways to connect with you, and we were happy to finally see you in person. We hosted an Executive Directors retreat (which we'll repeat in 2024), returned to in-person NITA trainings, held our Legal Aid Day actually *in* Sacramento, launched virtual legal aid affinity groups, and hosted countless zooms to coordinate our community on opportunities to comment.

Looking back, I feel a mix of optimism and realism, much like my past year-end letters. We've seen remarkable strides in our advocacy work. In the past few years, we won new funding for homelessness prevention, consumer debt legal services, innovation and infrastructure grants, and a huge ongoing increase to Equal Access grants. We also worked closely with you to get input on many changes at the State Bar, including the definition of civil legal services, the increase in the income eligibility threshold, and many changes to how you report your work.

Our Sixth Annual Civil Legal Aid Week was a powerful demonstration of our unity and commitment to justice, and we were happy to offer it both online and in Sacramento. The solidarity and passion we showcased are more important than ever. Our voices and actions are shaping the decisions that will define the future of legal aid and the communities we serve.

In our journey towards greater diversity, equity, and inclusion, we've made significant progress. Achieving the Gold Tier in the State Bar of California's Diversity Leadership Seal program reflects our ongoing dedication to creating an inclusive legal aid sector that truly represents the diversity of our state, and we supported the community in sharing resources as many of us answered the Bar's call to action.

As we stand at the brink of an election year, the importance of our mission is clearer than ever. The choices we make and the leaders we support will have lasting impacts on our work and those we serve. LAAC is ready to advocate for policies and initiatives that resonate with our passion for access to justice.

To each member, supporter, and friend of LAAC, I extend my heartfelt thanks. Your unwavering belief in our cause, your steadfast support, and your commitment to access to justice are the driving forces behind our success. Let's step into 2024 with a renewed sense of purpose, working together to ensure that access to justice is not just a principle, but a reality for every Californian.

Thank you for standing with us through a year of growth and challenges. Here's to embracing the opportunities 2024 will bring, as we continue our shared journey towards a more just and equitable society.

With deepest appreciation,



Salena Copeland
Executive Director

THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

FOUNDATION SUPPORT

CALIFORNIA LAWYERS FOUNDATION
BIGGLESWORTH FAMILY FOUNDATION
VAN LÖBEN SELS/REMBEROCK
WALTER AND ELISE HAAS FUND
AMERICAN COLLEGE OF BANKRUPTCY
FOUNDATION
MORRISON AND FOERSTER FOUNDATION

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

STATE BAR OF CALIFORNIA
KEKER, VAN NEST & PETERS, LLP
FENWICK AND WEST, LLP
JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA

AND ALL OF OUR MEMBERS AND INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS!

THANK YOU TO THE CALIFORNIA ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION

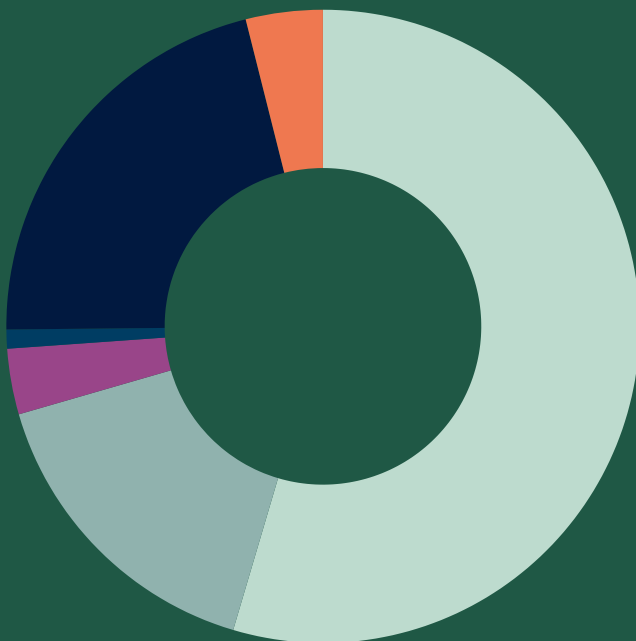
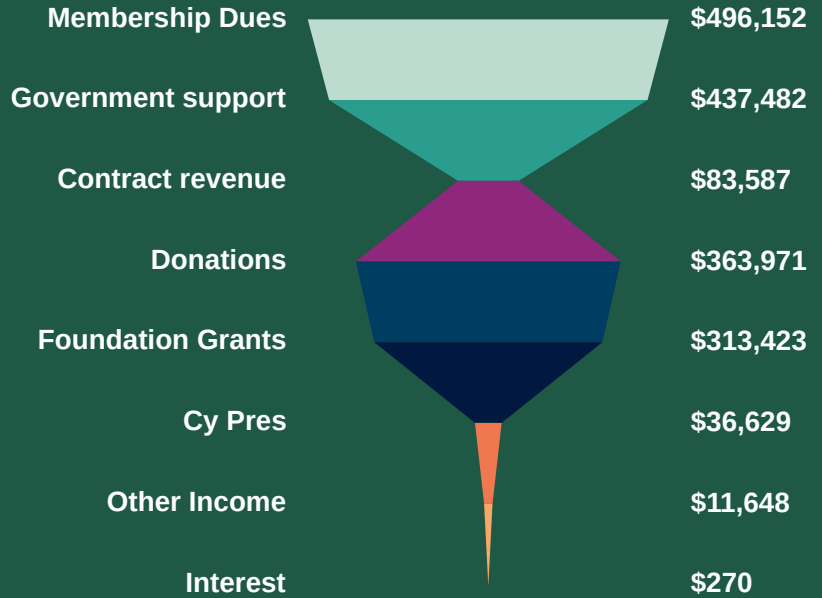
In 2023, LAAC continued our partnership with the California Access to Justice Commission (CalATJ). LAAC appoints two people to the commission, and we are happy to have Jim Meeker, Professor Emeritus, UC Irvine and Elica Vafaie, Immigrant Rights Program Director, Evelyn & Walter Haas Jr. Fund as our 2023–2024 appointees.



FINANCIALS

REVENUE

TOTAL
\$1,651,240



EXPENSES



ADVOCACY



In 2023, we continued our mission to advocate for more funding and better laws for legal aid as well as more effective policies and procedures at the State Bar of California and Judicial Council.

We rallied our community at our Sixth Annual Civil Legal Aid Week in Sacramento, with nearly 50 legal aid advocates and attorneys meeting with around 40 legislators' offices.



Legislatively, we focused on SB 662, a bill that sought to dramatically expand the use of electronic recording to produce a verbatim record. While it did not become law this year, we helped get SB 662 further than any other electronic recording bill has ever gone before and kept it alive for the next cycle. We protected legal aid funding in the state budget, and supported a successful effort to create a statewide Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP).

Our advocacy work at the State Bar continued to concentrate on updating the rules that regulate the distribution of funds to legal aid organizations through the Legal Services Trust Fund Commission.

ADVOCACY (CONT.)

We kept our community informed and made sure our voice was heard on several other issues at the Bar, and increased our individualized technical assistance to organizations navigating funding issues at the Commission.

We deepened our Research and Evaluation project in many ways, including through projects with OneJustice focused on maximizing impact and supporting data-driven practices within two practice area-specific cohorts. We created two reports: *California Legal Aid Data and Evaluation Landscape* and *Government Funding for Civil Legal Services*.

The former established a baseline understanding of what the community is doing to collect and utilize data, and the latter produced a snapshot of what government-based funding sources legal aid nonprofits are tapping into. Last, we maintained our Legal Aid in the Judiciary Project, including seeing another former legal aid leader take the bench.

LAWHELPCA

In 2023, LawHelpCA celebrated a significant milestone with the relaunch of LawHelpCA.org on Pro Bono Net, following years of meticulous planning and user testing, culminating in a major site overhaul to boost accessibility and usability. Our dedication to accessibility and equity led to enhanced features like dynamic font size and improved multi-language support, along with an optimized layout for screen readers with alt-text and tabbed functionality.

Since its relaunch, LawHelpCA has attracted 256,000 users between January 1st and November 7th, 2023. Popular resources include our legal aid directory, court programs, and lawyer referral services, alongside information on housing and family law.

In 2023, LawHelpCA had 256,000 users.

Additionally, our LiveChat program has soared, recording 4,709 chats since January 1st, 2023, with a 94% user satisfaction rate, mainly covering housing, eviction, and family law issues.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our supporters, including Pro Bono Net, the State Bar, Judicial Council, and American College of Bankruptcy, whose backing made this relaunch possible. As LawHelpCA continues to evolve, we remain committed to providing vital legal resources to Californians, with the revamped LawHelpCA.org marking a crucial step in our mission to make justice accessible to all.

DEI & RACIAL JUSTICE

In 2023, the Legal Aid Association of California (LAAC) significantly advanced its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and Racial Justice initiatives. A key achievement was its involvement in the California State Bar's Diversity Leadership Seal program, earning Gold Tier recognition. LAAC played a pivotal role, facilitating informational sessions, coordinating meetings for legal aids to strategize applications, and creating a resource-sharing archive to enhance DEI practices across organizations.

Additionally, LAAC staff, in collaboration with the California Lawyers Association, hosted webinars on accessible hybrid events, addressing inclusivity and COVID-19 adaptations.

We also launched the Affinity Groups project, creating networking opportunities for legal aid staff focusing on DEI and Racial Justice. This initiative includes groups for DEI-focused and non-attorney legal aid personnel, aiming to foster collaboration and knowledge sharing.

LAAC is extremely grateful for financial support from the California Lawyers Foundation, member organizations, and the State Bar of California, which enabled us to launch this program.



TRAININGS

In 2023, LAAC steadfastly continued our mission to offer comprehensive, relevant training to legal aid attorneys throughout California. This year, we delved into topics like trauma-informed legal care, cultural humility, and ethical representation. Each session was designed not just to build skills, but to foster a community of legal practitioners resilient in the face of challenges and committed to inclusivity and justice.

LAAC continues to provide high quality NITA trainings to LAAC members. In January we started the year providing an Online Deposition Skills NITA Training. In November, our In-Person Trial Skills Program for attorneys in the San Francisco Tenant Right to Counsel Program trained 32 participants in their trial expertise with a special emphasis on tenant rights.

In 2023, LAAC's efforts were not just about individual training sessions but about building a stronger, more skilled, and more compassionate legal aid community. We believe that empowering legal aid attorneys with these tools is crucial for ensuring equitable access to justice for all Californians. We are grateful for your continued support in these endeavors.



F I G U R E S

101

TOTAL
MEMBERS

3

NEW
SUMMER
FELLOWS

28

TRAININGS &
SUMMITS

25

MEMBERSHIP
BENEFITS

At the Legal Aid Association of California, we believe everyone deserves fair access to the justice system, even if you can't afford an attorney. The system, however, is not fair and accessible for everyone, especially for BIPOC, low-income, and vulnerable populations in California. So we work every day to strengthen the legal aid safety net through advocacy, nonprofit coordination, and training.



THANK YOU TO ALL OUR 2023 MEMBERS!

IOLTA MEMBERS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING ADVOCATES
 AIDS LEGAL REFERRAL PANEL
 ALAMEDA COUNTY HOMELESS ACTION CENTER
 ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS
 ASIAN AMERICANS ADVANCING JUSTICE - ASIAN LAW CAUCUS
 ASIAN AMERICANS ADVANCING JUSTICE - LOS ANGELES
 ASIAN LAW ALLIANCE - SANTA CLARA COUNTY
 BAY AREA LEGAL AID
 BET TZEDEK LEGAL SERVICES
 CALIFORNIA ADVOCATES FOR NURSING HOME REFORM
 CALIFORNIA INDIAN LEGAL SERVICES
 CALIFORNIA RURAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION, INC.
 CALIFORNIA RURAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE, INC.
 CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S LAW CENTER
 CAPITAL PRO BONO
 CASA CORNELIA LAW CENTER
 CENTER FOR GENDER AND REFUGEE STUDIES - CALIFORNIA
 CENTRAL CALIFORNIA LEGAL SERVICES
 CENTRO LEGAL DE LA RAZA
 CHILD CARE LAW CENTER
 COALITION OF CALIFORNIA WELFARE RIGHTS ORG., INC.
 COMMUNITY LEGAL AID OF SOCIAL
 COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES IN EAST PALO ALTO
 CONTRA COSTA SENIOR LEGAL SERVICES
 DEPENDENCY ADVOCACY CENTER
 DISABILITY RIGHTS CALIFORNIA
 DISABILITY RIGHTS EDUCATION AND DEFENSE FUND, INC.
 DISABILITY RIGHTS LEGAL CENTER
 EAST BAY COMMUNITY LAW CENTER
 ELDER LAW & ADVOCACY
 EVICTION DEFENSE COLLABORATIVE
 FAMILY VIOLENCE APPELLATE PROJECT
 FAMILY VIOLENCE LAW CENTER, INC.
 GREATER BAKERSFIELD LEGAL ASSISTANCE, INC.
 HARRIETT BUHAI CENTER FOR FAMILY LAW
 HOUSING AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS ADVOCATES
 IMMIGRANT LEGAL RESOURCE CENTER
 INLAND COUNTIES LEGAL SERVICES
 INLAND EMPIRE LATINO LEGAL AID
 INNER CITY LAW CENTER
 JUSTICE AND DIVERSITY CENTER
 JUSTICE IN AGING
 LA RAZA CENTRO LEGAL
 LACBA COUNSEL FOR JUSTICE
 LAW FOUNDATION OF SILICON VALLEY
 LAWYERS' COMMITTEE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS - SF BAY AREA
 LEARNING RIGHTS LAW CENTER
 LEGAL ACCESS ALAMEDA
 LEGAL AID AT WORK
 LEGAL AID FOUNDATION OF LOS ANGELES
 LEGAL AID FOUNDATION OF SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
 LEGAL AID OF MARIN
 LEGAL AID OF SONOMA COUNTY
 LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF SAN BERNARDINO
 LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF SAN DIEGO, INC.

LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF SAN MATEO COUNTY
 LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOR SENIORS
 LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO THE ELDERLY
 LEGAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN
 LEGAL SERVICES FOR SENIORS
 LEGAL SERVICES OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA
 LOS ANGELES CENTER FOR LAW & JUSTICE
 LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY
 MCGEORGE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES
 MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY SERVICES, INC.
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 NATIONAL HEALTH LAW PROGRAM
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 PUBLIC LAW CENTER
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 SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY ALEXANDER LAW CENTER
 SENIOR ADULTS LEGAL ASSISTANCE
 SENIOR ADVOCACY NETWORK - SENIOR LAW PROJECT
 SENIOR CITIZENS LEGAL SERVICES
 SOCIAL JUSTICE COLLABORATIVE
 THE IMPACT FUND
 THE PUBLIC INTEREST LAW PROJECT
 UNCOMMON LAW
 UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO LEGAL CLINIC
 VETERANS LEGAL INSTITUTE
 WAGE JUSTICE
 WATSONVILLE LAW CENTER
 WESTERN CENTER ON LAW AND POVERTY
 WORKSAFE LEGAL CENTER
 YOUTH LAW CENTER
 YUBA SUTTER LEGAL CENTER FOR SENIORS

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

BUTTE COUNTY LAW LIBRARY
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 ELDER LAW AND DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER
 IMMIGRANT DEFENDERS LAW CENTER
 INSIGHT CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
 LEGAL LINK
 POSITIVE RESOURCE CENTER