

**Community Legal Aid Society, Inc. (“CLASI”)  
Strategic Plan<sup>1</sup>  
May 2018**

**Mission:** CLASI’s mission is to combat injustice through creative and persistent civil legal advocacy on behalf of vulnerable and underserved Delawareans.

**Vision 1:** CLASI provides high quality individual and systemic legal aid to underserved populations in order to promote a more just Delaware. CLASI serves diverse and vulnerable populations across Delaware, including persons living in poverty, individuals age 60 +, persons with disabilities, and victims of crime and domestic violence.

**Goal A:** CLASI’s legal services will be responsive to client populations’ current and anticipated needs by looking regularly, and carefully, at the work we are doing and not doing, and the populations that we are serving and not serving, with particular attention to emerging trends and traditionally underserved groups

**Action Step:** Program/unit priorities and goals will be determined at least yearly through an iterative process that incorporates and reviews client/advocate (and other legal services and social services organizations whenever feasible) experience and insight. Project Directors/Managing Attorneys/Supervising Attorneys will ensure that this takes place, and within three months of the finalization of the strategic plan will draft a policy and timeline, with concrete deadlines, to formalize the process.

**Goal B:** CLASI’s legal services will be well-coordinated. CLASI will work fluidly across its offices, programs, and units, and with other legal services, advocacy, and social service organizations to benefit clients.

**Action Step:** Leadership Team Meetings will be held monthly, advocate meetings quarterly, and staff meetings three times per year to enhance communication, cooperation, and coordination among CLASI’s many teams and outside organizations. The Executive Director, Project Directors, and Managing Attorneys will ensure that this is happening and, within six months of the finalization of this plan, shall submit proposals to increase interoffice and inter-program collaboration.

**Goal C:** CLASI’s legal services will be multi-dimensional.

**Action Step:** In addition to direct client assistance, CLASI will engage in a wide range of advocacy and assistance including, but not

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<sup>1</sup> Approved by CLASI’s Board of Directors on April 26, 2018

limited to, community education both in-person and online, legislative advocacy, administrative advocacy, litigation (individual and class), coalition building, media presence, and publication of white papers. The Advocacy Director, Senior Counsel, Project Director, and Managing and Supervising Attorneys will ensure that this takes place. Each unit's yearly priorities and goals will reflect a multi-faceted approach. Within six months of the finalization of this report, the leadership team or committee thereof shall propose a concrete plan to improve the breadth of advocacy in all units.

**Goal D:** CLASI will develop creative, innovative, and new ways to deliver services to clients more efficiently and effectively.

**Action Step:** CLASI shall continually review its operating procedures to ensure that clients receive services in the most efficient and effective way possible. As part of this, CLASI will continually investigate the feasibility of new and different methods of providing services and opportunities to partner with other organizations, including legal services colleagues both inside and outside Delaware. As a first step, within three months of the finalization of this strategic plan a committee will be formed to explore the feasibility of creating a centralized intake unit.

**Vision 2:** CLASI is a healthy, well-run, diverse, collaborative, transparent, and progressive workplace.

**Goal A:** CLASI will recruit, train and nurture a diverse workforce and Board that is empathic with clients, committed to CLASI's mission, and collaborative and thoughtful about how work is conducted.

**Action Step:** CLASI will recruit actively to ensure a talented, diverse and committed advocacy staff and Board that is dedicated to serving vulnerable populations, is empathic with clients, and shares CLASI's values and mission. When developing hiring criteria, CLASI will include diversity in all its forms, ability to connect with clients, and commitment to CLASI's mission, as core criteria. The Board of Directors, Executive Director, Chief Financial Officer, Hiring Committees, and Diversity Committee will work together to ensure this happens.

**Goal B:** CLASI will continue to view staff as partners, whose hard work, input, and happiness are vital to the success of the organization.

**Action Step:** CLASI will model its positive worldview by maintaining a supportive, egalitarian, transparent, kind, generous, and humane work environment. Management will work cooperatively and transparently with the Union and staff to provide employees the resources and support they need to be successful and remain at CLASI long-term, to ensure that CLASI retains its values, and to solve problems as they may arise. The Executive Director, through workplace surveys (e.g., Workplace Dynamics survey), frequent staff meetings and communications with staff and Board, will continue to solicit employee concerns and ideas and remain committed to being responsive to staff. All supervisors and managers shall be expected to maintain “open door” policies for employees at all levels to the maximum extent possible. Within six months of the finalization of this report, the Executive Director, with the assistance of other managers, shall establish a plan to provide formal recognition and celebration of exceptional work done by staff.

**Goal C:** CLASI will remain committed to staff training and professional development.

**Action Step:** CLASI will implement and regularly refine a training curriculum for all staff and will facilitate good supervision, mentoring, and professional development across all job categories through supervision plans, and in-house and external training opportunities. The Executive Director, Advocacy Director, and Managing Attorneys will ensure that supervision and training plans are updated each year (as contemplated by the CBA) and shall consult with employees regarding areas in which they feel training would be particularly helpful.

**Goal D:** CLASI will continue to pursue opportunities to enhance its long term financial health and administrative operational efficiency.

**Action Step:** The CFO—with assistance from the Board and Executive Director--will engage in long range financial planning. The CFO will explore initiatives to make more of CLASI's operations paperless and to achieve appropriate staffing levels in the financial/HR office to ensure that CLASI infrastructure can support CLASI's growth. CLASI will continue to grow its cash reserves and reduce debt such that within five years its debt (excluding Sussex County building mortgage) is retired and its cash reserves equal or exceed 10% of its yearly operating budget.

**Vision 3:** CLASI, along with its civil rights partners, will enhance financial support for civil legal services in Delaware, its visibility in the community, and the diversity of its funding.

**Goal A:** CLASI, along with its partners, will advocate for structural solutions to chronic underfunding of civil legal services.

**Action Step:** CLASI's Executive Director will coalesce with its legal services and other partners to advocate with the Access to Justice Commission, the Delaware Supreme Court, the Delaware Bar Foundation, and the Delaware Legislature, for increased stable, long-term financial support for civil legal services.

**Goal B:** CLASI will enhance its visibility and reputation through social media, its website, and traditional media sources.

**Action Step:** CLASI's Director of Development, with the assistance of advocacy staff, will improve CLASI's website, actively update its social media platforms, and with the Executive Director pursue opportunities to speak and write about CLASI's accomplishments and issues of concern to clients.

**Goal C:** CLASI will continue to diversify and expand its funding sources.

**Action Step:** The Executive Director and Development Director will continue to explore federal, state, local, foundation, and private funding that is mission consistent and forward thinking so that CLASI can continue to do its core work to advance clients' access to justice—and expand to address unmet legal needs in our client communities.

**Goal D:** CLASI's Board of Directors will continue to promote and support CLASI's mission and funding opportunities.

**Action Step:** CLASI's Board of Directors will continue to use its connections and expertise to promote and support CLASI's mission and funding with current and proposed funders and the public at large. The Executive Director and Leadership Team shall ensure that board members are provided with the information that they need to advocate on CLASI's behalf, and on behalf of the clients CLASI serves.