

COMMUNITY LEGAL AID SOCIETY, INC.

PROGRAMS AND UNITS



WHAT DO OUR ATTORNEYS DO?

Community Legal Aid Society, Inc. (CLASI) attorneys provide critical, life-changing assistance to low-income and marginalized individuals and families throughout Delaware. From our state's urban areas to rural and farming communities, they zealously represent a diverse group of clients with a wide range of civil legal problems, including housing, immigration, family violence and sexual assault, public benefits, elder, and disability issues.

Individual Representation

Each day, our attorneys work to protect our clients' most fundamental rights by representing them in individual cases, helping to keep them housed, fed, and safe from violence. In 2022, our attorneys and advocates handled 6,303 cases, assisting 11,289 individuals and family members statewide.

Systemic Advocacy

In addition to individual representation, our attorneys also work for systemic change in each of our programs and units through impact litigation, community education, and legislative and policy advocacy on both the state and national level. They regularly draft legislation, provide testimony before the Delaware General Assembly, author op-eds, are quoted in media outlets, and participate in many statewide, regional, and national advocacy coalitions to further the interests of our clients.

PROGRAMS AND UNITS

Disabilities Law Program

We are designated by the Governor as Delaware's Protection and Advocacy ("P&A") agency for people with disabilities. Through our Disabilities Law Program, we work to empower and advocate for Delaware residents with physical or mental disabilities. Our role as the P&A includes monitoring of facilities that serve people with disabilities, as well as representative payees who handle the Social Security benefits of people with disabilities; investigating suspected abuse/neglect; self-advocacy training; community outreach; education related to policy; and traditional legal advocacy on an individual and systemic level. Our legal assistance covers a wide variety of areas, including problems related to:

- Special education and accommodations in education, and school discipline/expulsion;
- Vocational services and training;
- Social Security Disability/SSI cessations and overpayments;
- Medicaid, Medicare, and Medicaid waiver services;
- Reasonable accommodations (changes to policies and practices) in housing or at work;
- Overcoming barriers to employment;
- Deinstitutionalization and overcoming barriers to community integration;
- Accessibility/discrimination by businesses or government services;
- Abuse and neglect cases;
- Access to assistive technology devices and services;
- Voting access.

Elder Law Program

We represent individuals aged 60 and older with a range of legal matters including:

- Powers of Attorney and Advance Health Care Directives;
- Fraud or financial abuse and exploitation;
- Nursing home discharges;
- Housing problems including eviction;
- Benefits issues such as Medicare and Social Security Retirement.



PROGRAMS AND UNITS (CONTINUED)



Fair Housing Program

We work to eradicate discrimination in housing transactions against individuals based on race, color, national origin, religion, creed, sex, marital status, familial status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. We assist people who believe they have been victims of housing discrimination through advocacy and enforcement actions, and we encourage fair housing practices through education, training, and outreach.

Medical-Legal Partnership Program

Our Medical-Legal Partnership works to address systemic health inequities in Delaware by partnering directly with healthcare and social service providers statewide to tackle health-harming social needs. We provide trainings to providers who then refer their patients/participants to our program. We assist vulnerable children, families, and adults with legal issues that negatively impact their health and wellbeing, such as:

- Income issues including accessing health insurance, food benefits, and disability benefits;
- Housing problems such as evictions, voucher terminations, and poor housing conditions;
- Employment and education issues such as pregnancy discrimination, or accommodations in school/higher education;
- Legal immigration status issues for survivors of domestic violence, trafficking, crime, and children/youth who are abused or neglected;
- Personal and family stability issues such problems with the Division of Family Services, need for a Protection from Abuse order, or disability-related problems.

Domestic Violence Unit

We assist domestic violence survivors to help them break the cycle of violence, power, and control to achieve safety and independence. We represent survivors in family law matters such as civil restraining orders, known as Petitions for Protection from Abuse, and in certain divorce, custody/visitation, property division, and support cases.

Housing Unit

We represent people facing eviction, housing instability, or unsafe housing conditions, and work to strengthen tenants' rights and address the shortage of safe, affordable housing in Delaware. We assist people at risk of losing their housing subsidies as well as people facing housing discrimination.

Immigration Unit

We represent immigrant survivors of domestic violence, trafficking, or other violent crime, as well as abused, abandoned, or neglected immigrant children and youth. We assist with U Visa petitions for crime victims, T Visa petitions for human trafficking survivors, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) petitions for children and youth, and Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) self-petitions for abused spouses and children of U.S. citizens or residents. Through our Medical-Legal Partnership, we also assist with citizenship applications, green card or Temporary Protected Status (TPS) renewals, and renewal applications for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

Public Benefits Unit

We help people to achieve economic stability by assisting individuals and families who are improperly denied, reduced, or terminated from critical government benefits, including: Social Security/SSI disability benefits; SNAP (Food Stamp) benefits; Medicare or Medicaid health insurance benefits; LIHEAP home energy assistance; and cash assistance.

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