

## Access to Civil Legal Assistance for Basic Human Needs is Far Below Demand Please Support the Appropriation For Civil Legal Assistance

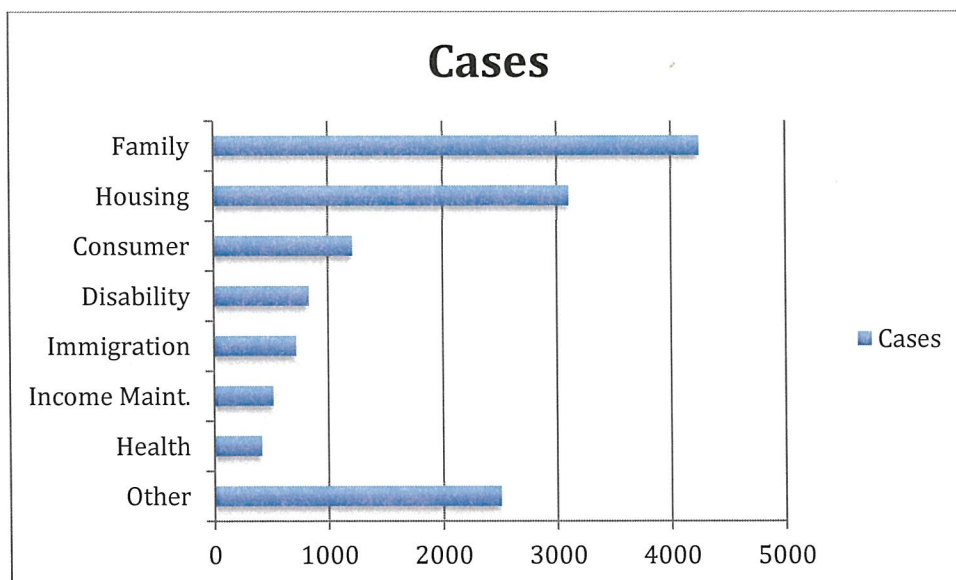
Each year the state's two largest providers of legal services to the poor – New Mexico Legal Aid and Law Access New Mexico – turn away over 18,000 applications for legal assistance. The state Supreme Court's Commission on Access to Justice has reported that less than 20% of the legal needs of low income New Mexicans are being met.

The consequences of not resolving civil legal problems such as access to housing, education, health care, food assistance and child support can be devastating for families. Consumer scams and unfair labor practices that prey on needy, vulnerable populations also take a toll. They can break a vulnerable family's budget, driving them deeper into poverty, even causing them to become homeless.

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The entire community and court system also suffer. Unresolved legal problems can unnecessarily drain the coffers of local and state government and charities that seek to provide an often-inadequate safety net. Court systems become clogged with cases that could have been resolved had legal services been provided, further burdening our already overburdened courts. Ultimately everyone is deprived of a timely resolution of disputes.

In FY17, the Civil Legal Aid providers handled 13,558 cases. The following chart shows the types of cases handled by civil legal aid providers in FY 2017.



The Civil Legal Aid providers handled cases in all thirty-three counties in the state. They have worked hard to increase services to rural areas by recruiting private attorneys to take on family law cases, connecting pro bono attorneys in urban areas with low-income clients in rural areas via Skype, and increasing services provided on an “unbundled” basis, for instance where the attorney drafts legal documents for the client to present in court.

**A recent study showed that every public dollar invested in Civil Legal Services yields a return of \$3.65.**

The Civil Legal Aid providers have launched other initiatives to leverage limited resources: an online triage portal to streamline the intake process; an initiative to co-locate six agencies in Albuquerque; and multiple innovative projects designed to reach clients using technology. Nevertheless, there is only so much that can be done to squeeze more out of less. The state appropriation to the Civil Legal Services Fund is down by almost \$300,000 since its high point in 2009.

A recent study showed that every public dollar invested in Civil Legal Services yields a return of \$3.65. New Mexico’s Civil Legal Aid providers respectfully suggest that the State continue to invest in Civil Legal Services by restoring the appropriation for the Civil Legal Services Fund to its 2008 level of \$2,500,000 if at all possible, and resist any move to reduce the appropriation by any amount.

Civil Legal Services Providers

Provider	Description	Tel. #	Service Area
Law Access New Mexico	Statewide telephone helpline provides legal advice, brief service and referrals to low-income New Mexicans.	(505) 998-4529	Statewide
New Mexico Legal Aid	Civil legal services to low-income New Mexicans including outreach, training, education and quality legal representation.	(866) 416-1922	Statewide
Catholic Charities	Immigration and citizenship services including family unification. Assistance to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.	(505) 247-0442	Albuquerque metro
Disability Rights New Mexico	The federally designated protection and advocacy program for New Mexico with authority to pursue legal, administrative and other remedies on behalf of persons with disabilities.	(800) 432-4682	Statewide
DNA People's Legal Services	Civil legal services to low-income residents of five counties in Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico, including the Navajo Nation and six other Native American nations.	(505) 325-8886	Northwest NM
Enlace Comunitario	Legal services to Spanish-speaking victims of domestic violence.	(505) 243-8972	Albuquerque metro
Native American Disability Law Office	Advocates for legal rights of Native Americans with disabilities.	(800) 862-7271	Four corners area

Civil Legal Services Providers

Provider	Description	Tel. #	Service Area
New Mexico Appleseed	Advocates for high impact solutions to the problems impacting the poor and underserved.	(505) 659-1380	Statewide
New Mexico Immigrant Law Center	Legal assistance to low-income immigrants facing separation due to deportation, asylum seekers, and unaccompanied minors.	(505) 247-1023	Statewide
Pegasus Legal Services for Children	Civil legal services to at-risk children and youth including guardianship, homelessness, education, and teen parents.	(505) 244-1101	Statewide
Senior Citizens' Law Office	Legal representation for the problems and needs of the elderly.	(505) 265-2300	Albuquerque metro
Southwest Women's Law Center	Works through law, research and creative collaborations to create opportunities for women.	(505) 244-0502	Statewide
United South Broadway Corporation	Direct representation for homeowners at risk of losing their homes.	(505) 764-8867	Albuquerque metro