

THE LEGAL AID ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA



2019 ANNUAL REPORT

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Change is hard. We talk about change as an opportunity and that growth can't come without change, but we all know that change, even good change, means we all have to find our way in a new land.

This has been a year of change. Due to the increase in IOLTA interest rates, the State Bar **doubled IOLTA grants** next year. We secured \$20 million in homelessness prevention funding. We supported a champion legislator to **more than double funding** for Shriver Civil Counsel Act projects. Community development grants funded by cannabis tax revenue started this year and will grow.

We have truly, finally, recovered from the economic downturn of a decade ago that decimated funding for our community.

But with this change comes a challenge.

Each of you have struggled to fill positions. Many of you shared that the pipeline for new legal aid attorneys has slowed to a trickle. We partnered with the State Bar to survey over 2,000 law students to learn about career choices. We found out that there is a huge "public interest drift" of students who start law school planning to go into public interest, but choose a different path by graduation.

Preventing that drift is our community's biggest challenge in the years ahead. **We must offer more internships** so that law students see how rewarding a career in legal aid can be. **We must pay law students** for their internships so they don't take on more debt. **We must fund a robust statewide loan repayment assistance program** to replace the broken Federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program. We must be there for the next generation of legal aid attorneys. And when they join us, **we must show them we value them** by incorporating practices to prevent burnout. **We must also have a sea change in salaries across our sector.**

A third of legal aid attorneys plan to leave in the next two years – the majority for financial reasons. **We are risking the rich diversity of our community by forcing out talented and committed attorneys who cannot work for low wages.**

This will be hard – but we've succeeded in the past when we never thought it was possible. We've reaped rewards that were planted long ago in different political climates. We are committed to finding the path forward to a meaningful LRAP program, higher wages, and supported staff. **LAAC is up for the challenge, and I know you are, too.**

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Salena Copeland". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'S' at the beginning.

Salena Copeland, Executive Director

LAAC SUPPORTERS

\$10,000 OR MORE LEVEL

American College of Bankruptcy
Foundation
Bigglesworth Family Foundation
Jack Londen
LAAC Members
State Bar of California
van Löben Sels/RembeRock
Foundation
Walter and Elise Haas Fund

*Thank
you!*

\$1,000 - \$9,999 LEVEL

Bay Area Legal Aid
The DLA Piper Foundation
East Bay Community Law Center
Eviction Defense Collaborative
Fenwick and West LLP
Judicial Council
Keker, Van Nest, Peters LLP
LAAC Board of Directors
Legal Aid Society of San Diego
LexisNexis
Pro Bono Net

Mechanics Bank
California Change
Lawyers
Jenna Rinehart
Stephanie Barclay
Daphne Gronich
Cindy Bokser
Chris Douglas
Larry Weiss
Ellen Skrzypek
Ben Ricciardi
Jonathan Cantu
Sara Baumann
Jenny Williams
Kelly Horein
Stephanie Koguchi
Seth Freilich
Paula McGee
Claire Dean
Rachel Dessauer
Geoff Moss
Marc Bauer
Mona Tawatao
Erick Berkowitz
Justin Elder
Jenny Valenti
Rebecca Edmunds
John O'Toole
Marc Mayerson
Bethany Little
Lauren Ripley
Patricia Buss
Theresa Perkins
Jodie Berger
Valerie Hanneman
Jeremy Aliason

James Roe
Victoria Snyder
Valerie Flood
Jith Meganathan
Dawn Davis
Jennifer Farrell
Shelley Gregory
Syma Siddiqui
Jenny Chung-Mejia
Christine Zupanovich
Elika Naraghi
Katha Kuspa
Ampha Cardenas
Anonymous
Claudia J Alt
Mark Yoshida
Amy Lee
David Daniels
Michael Rawson
Steven Weiss
Matthew Hyner
Brandon Anand
Darrell Moore
Lara Holtzman
Hannah Goldsmith
Ellen Hammerle
Nikki Love
Kim Kruckel
Mari Bufosky
Susan Shanley
Camila Alvarez
Tracy Friedman
Sara Hedgpeth-Harris
Jess Weinger
Frances Antonio
Frank Perez
Amazon

UP TO \$999 LEVEL

Chehie Songstad	Sarah Reisman
Deborah Thrope	Gerson Sorto
Henry Martin	Nancy Muñoz
Maria Mindlin	Bigelow
TapRoot	Carolyn Kim
Catherine Blakemore	Nick Levenhagen
Susan Singer	Denny Chan
Jennifer Troia	Creighton Mendivil
Jordan Parker	Amy Fitzpatrick
Amy Peckner	Jenni Gomez
Mary Weiss Alpers	Tashara Kuspa
Antoinette Balta	Jessica Redditt
Christine Lee	Jason Hoff
Gene Kum	Donna Chandler
June Chang	Lauj Huab Pa
Sues Cho	Sara Bimbryer-Lao
Lauren Chung	Lauren Hansen
Janey Cha	Sebold Torno
CorePower	Ellinor Mills

LAC MEMBERS

Affordable Housing Advocates
AIDS Legal Referral Panel
Alliance for Children's Rights
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles
Asian Law Alliance
Bay Area Legal Aid
Bet Tzedek Legal Services
California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform
California Indian Legal Services
California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation
California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.
California Women's Law Center
Casa Cornelia Law Center
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies
Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law
Central California Legal Services, Inc.
Centro Legal de la Raza
Child Care Law Center
Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations
Community Legal Aid SoCal
Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto
Contra Costa Senior Legal Services
Disability Rights California
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Disability Rights Legal Center
East Bay Community Law Center
Elder Law & Advocacy
Family Violence Appellate Project
Family Violence Law Center
Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance
Harriett Buhai Center for Family Law
Homeless Action Center
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
Impact Fund
Inland Counties Legal Services
Inland Empire Latino Lawyers Association, Inc.
Inner City Law Center
Justice and Diversity Center
Justice in Aging
Katharine & George Alexander Community Law Center
Law Foundation of Silicon Valley
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area

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
 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
 McGeorge Community Legal Services
 National Center for Youth Law
 National Health Law Program
 National Housing Law Project
 National Immigration Law Center
 Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County
 OneJustice
 Positive Resource Center
 Prison Law Office
 Pro Bono Project
 Public Advocates Inc.
 Public Counsel
 Public Interest Law Project
 Public Law Center
 Riverside Legal Aid
 San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program
 San Luis Obispo Legal Assistance Foundation
 Senior Adults Legal Assistance
 Senior Advocacy Network - Senior Law Project
 Senior Citizens Legal Services
 University of San Diego Legal Clinics
 Veterans Legal Institute
 Voluntary Legal Services Program of Northern
 California
 Wage Justice Center
 Watsonville Law Center
 Western Center on Law & Poverty
 Worksafe
 Youth Law Center
 Yuba Sutter Legal Center for Seniors

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Butte County
 Law Library

Center for
 Justice and
 Accountability
 (CJA)

Elder Law and
 Disability Rights
 Center

Eviction Defense
 Collaborative

FreeFrom

HEART LA

Immigrant
 Defenders Law
 Center

Justice At Last

Open Door Legal

Root & Rebound

Step Forward
 Foundation

The Center Long
 Beach

THE NUMBERS

Led efforts to secure
\$20 Million
in Equal Access Funding

575
MCLE
SELF-STUDY
CREDITS
RETURNED

25% increase in LawHelpCA.org
users, bringing the annual
total to over 400,000

Member
organizations:

102

30

FREE MCLE
WEBINARS WITH
OVER 600
PARTICIPANTS

LAAC is proud to report that this is the first year we are large enough to warrant audited financials. Our auditors have completed the field work and will have our July 2018-June 2019 financials complete soon, but not by the time of this publication. You can access our financials by going to www.LAACOnline.org, or by requesting via email to info@LAACOnline.org.

Recognized

FIVE

**INDIVIDUALS
FOR THEIR
OUTSTANDING
WORK IN
LEGAL AID**

**30
MEMBER
ORGS**

Converged on the Capitol for LAAC's 2nd Annual Legal Aid Day in Sacramento to inform the legislature of the value and necessity of funding legal aid

**TRANSLATED
RESOURCES INTO
LANGUAGES ON
LAWHELPCA.ORG** **7**

LAAC PARTNERED
WITH NITA TO BRING

200

ATTORNEYS FREE
LITIGATION TRAINING

\$11M

IN NEW SHRIVER FUNDS

400+

participants at the
Pathways to Justice
Conference

2 Dan Bradley
Fellowships
Awarded

\$1,850,000

OPENED UP IN CANNABIS
TAX REVENUE GRANTS

LEGAL AID DAY IN SACRAMENTO 2019



On February 27th, 2019, LAAC convened our Second Annual Legal Aid Day in Sacramento at the State Capitol. We coordinated over 30 attorneys and advocates from organizations that provide services to low-income

Californians. Along with LAAC staff, volunteers met with nearly 40 legislators or their staff. We informed lawmakers about what legal aid does, how free legal services to low-income people in their region strengthens the safety net, and how California is behind many other states in supporting legal aid through the state budget. In mobilizing the legal aid community at Legal Aid Day in Sacramento, we were able to ensure that our legislators heard the legal aid community's collective voice.

“The California legal aid community should feel comforted that they are well represented in Sacramento. It was clear when we met with legislators that they knew LAAC, they understood EAF, and they valued the role legal aid plays in helping protect access to justice.”

-Fay Gordon, Justice in Aging

LAAC-NITA TRAININGS



Over the past year, LAAC launched a new training program in partnership with the National Institute on Trial Advocacy (NITA), which teaches lawyers

valuable "learn-by-doing" trial and deposition skills. These highly-regarded trainings are usually expensive and out of reach for nonprofits (up to \$3,000 per person per training). Because of LAAC's partnership with NITA, we offered the trainings for free (or at a very low cost) to legal aid attorneys.

Together with NITA, we trained nearly 200 legal aid attorneys from 50 legal aid organizations across the state. We will continue offering this amazing opportunity at no cost in 2020.



"Incredibly valuable and helpful training. I enjoyed all of the faculty and was very impressed by their breadth of knowledge and willingness to help all the NITA participants grow and learn."

-LAAC-NITA Participant

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION REPORT

This summer, LAAC launched our second Recruitment and Retention study, following up on our 2010 report. LAAC coordinated a set of surveys for current and former legal aid attorneys. 56 legal aid organizations participated, with 1,064 current attorneys completing the survey, and 408 former attorneys completing a survey to share why they left their organizations.

In partnership with the State Bar of California, we then launched a set of focus groups designed to better understand what current law students think about a career in civil legal aid, and what, if any, barriers exist to launching such a career. Nineteen focus groups were convened with law students in summer legal aid internships, bringing together 70 law students from nearly 20 legal aid organizations to discuss their perceptions of a career in legal aid. The results will be released in a report soon.

“It was really rewarding to be in a legal aid office where someone would come in, pay no money out of pocket, and get adequate legal representation that would completely transform their lives.”

-Anonymous Legal Aid Intern

JUSTICE IN GOVERNMENT PROJECT

The Justice in Government Project (JGP) is a national project out of American University. LAAC leads the California effort to embed civil legal services into existing state agencies to unlock funding for legal aid nonprofits. From our advocacy effort at the California Office of Emergency Services, more than \$25 million in new funding was earmarked for legal aid nonprofits since 2016.



CALIFORNIA COMMISSION ON ACCESS TO JUSTICE

We're thrilled to announce that as of October 2019, the California Commission on Access to Justice (CalATJ) is now an independent nonprofit and is partnering with LAAC.

For over 22 years, CalATJ worked to increase resources and improve methods of helping Californians facing legal problems. CalATJ will continue to partner with the State Bar and other stakeholders on these efforts, but now with more independence to tackle tough issues.

To learn more, visit www.CalATJ.org.

RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE



Every year, LAAC honors extraordinary individuals in our community for their hard work in legal services. This year, LAAC recognized Sharon Ngim for her career-long commitment to improving the lives of low-income Californians.

Sharon worked at the State Bar for over 30 years. Her colleagues remember her as caring, thoughtful, and dedicated to access to justice. "Sharon was like the bright star who always wanted to make sure others shined brighter," says Sharon's close friend and colleague, Phong Wong.

In her honor, LAAC and Sharon's family created an award for those who demonstrate cultural humility and dedication to the legal aid community.

Above: Sharon Ngim; Right: Salena Copeland, Elizabeth Hom, Rachel Mock, Nadine Lai.



DAN BRADLEY FELLOWSHIP

In most years, LAAC awards one Dan Bradley Fellowship (of \$3,000) to a law student working on a rural project at a LAAC member organization. But thanks to our incredible donors, we were able to award two Dan Bradley Fellowships in 2019. Our Fellows were Anthony Lee and Jorge Lopez Espindola. Thank you to our members, donors, and fellows for making this opportunity a reality!



Anthony Lee

Anthony spent the summer working at California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. (CRLA) on housing and eviction cases for migrant workers, know-your-rights workshops, research into courts upholding Jameson v. Desta, and field monitoring of rural California farms to encourage their compliance with state and federal health and safety standards.



Jorge Lopez Espindola

Jorge interned at Legal Aid of Marin (LAM) and focused on housing and employment law. He was also able to take two trips to west Marin and connect with farm workers on two dairy farms. This is part of LAM's strategy to bring more visibility to rural farm workers in the area.

AWARDS OF MERIT

We also honored four other individuals with Awards of Merit for their dedicated work to improving access to justice for low-income people. These honorees are nominated by their peers and are often working behind the scenes to balance the scales. In 2019, our honorees were: Jonathan Reader for Outstanding Client; Martin Kohan for Outstanding Volunteer; Linda Petite for Outstanding Paralegal; and Bob Capistrano for Outstanding Legal Services Attorney.

From left to right: Darrell Moore, Michelle Carey, Salena Copeland, Rachel Mock, Martin Kohan, Jonathan Reader, John Anthony Alaimo, Linda Petite, Ariella Hyman, and Rebekah Evenson.



ADVOCACY

Our coordination and advocacy led to some big wins in 2019, including:

- \$20M in one-time funds for the Equal Access Fund through the State Budget.
- \$2.5M for the Shriver Civil Counsel Projects, for organizations who largely provide services in family law and eviction matters.
- Passage of AB 330 (Gabriel), which also expands funding for legal aid programs via the Shriver Civil Counsel Act, an estimated \$11M in annual funding.

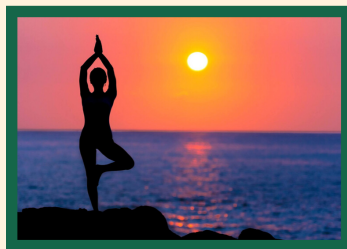
DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION



In 2019, LAAC created the Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity in Legal Aid (IDEAL) board committee dedicated to improving and supporting our members around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) issues. The committee is busy working on the first ever DEI toolkit for legal aid service providers and will make it available for free to the community in 2020. We are also now offering on-site DEI trainings for member organizations.

SELF-CARE & WELLNESS

It's no secret that legal aid providers experience high rates of vicarious trauma and burnout which critically impact recruitment and retention community-wide.



Research shows self-care helps. In an effort to deepen our level of support, LAAC is rolling out new wellness benefits, including mindfulness retreats for legal aid attorneys and a Wellness Summit in 2020. Check our website for more information and how to claim your benefits.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Sarah Reisman, Secretary
Los Angeles Center for Law
and Justice

Nancy Muñoz Bigelow,
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Inland Counties Legal
Services

April Caires
Bet Tzedek Legal Services

Denny Chan
Justice in Aging

Connie Chu
Disability Rights California

Amy Fitzpatrick
San Diego Volunteer Lawyer
Program, Inc.

Jenni Gomez
Legal Services of Northern
California

Carolyn Kim
Asian Americans Advancing
Justice - LA

Tashara Kuspa
Central California Legal
Services

Nick Levenhagen
Disability Rights California

Creighton Mendivil
Senior Citizens Legal
Services

Kellie Morgantini
Legal Services for Seniors

Jessica Redditt
Bay Area Legal Aid

Victoria Snyder
Contra Costa Senior Legal
Services

Gerson Sorto
Neighborhood Legal
Services of Los Angeles
County

Marcus Tang
California Rural Legal
Assistance Foundation

Deborah Thrope
National Housing Law
Project

Keith Wurster
Lawyer's Committee For
Civil Rights

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Lauren Lofton, Program Attorney
Jenna Mowat, Training Coordinator
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Theo Ser-Ramin, Program Associate

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