

2017

ANNUAL
REPORT

CENTRO
LEGAL

STABILIZING LIVES.
STRENGTHENING
COMMUNITIES.



Dear Friend of Centro Legal:

We look back at 2017 with pride of what we have accomplished and excitement for our future. Since our founding in 1991, we have grown from a bilingual law firm exclusively serving the South side to a firm that works with clients from all over Milwaukee County. On an annual basis, we provide representation in approximately 600 cases and conduct consults, outreach and family law classes to another 1,500 people each year. Combined, we work with over 2,000 people across all our programs. However, we are keenly aware that our services directly impact hundreds of people beyond our immediate clients, most notably the 550-plus children of our clients, as we help to resolve family law matters that improve the consistency, stability and health of the family environment.

This past year, we made some notable changes. Most significantly, we settled into our new office space and made it our new home. With a brand new space and some stunning artwork gifted to us from a prominent local artist, our clients can feel welcomed in a professional and up-to-date environment. In addition, our new space inspired us to make some other updates, including adoption of an updated logo that depicts our name in bold letters with a dramatic color transition from dark to light, symbolizing how we help our clients move toward a brighter, stronger and more stable future. These major updates have reinvigorated our identity and our mission as we strengthen our efforts to make an impact on those we serve and the greater community.

Our staff has been busier than ever and recorded one of the most productive years to date, with major increases to our family law program, consultations and community outreach efforts. These improvements have been recognized by our broad array of supporters, as we have built upon our development efforts and hosted our most successful fundraiser (our LeGala) to date. We are immensely proud of what we have accomplished and are more determined than ever to continue helping our clients make positive changes to improve their lives and the lives of their families. As we head into 2018, we look forward to continuing this growth in our programs and plan to expand our work into Waukesha County.

Thank you for your continued support. There is no doubt that we could not accomplish all of this work without your help. We are profoundly grateful and will continue to wisely use your financial contributions to stabilize Milwaukee families and strengthen our communities.

Nicole Renouard
Executive Director



*"We are keenly aware that our services directly impact hundreds of people beyond our immediate clients, most notably the **550-plus children** of our clients, as we help to resolve family law matters that improve the consistency, stability and health of the family environment."*



Our Mission:

To improve access to the court system and assure quality legal representation for clients regardless of income, ethnicity, or native language by providing legal education and representation to low-income clients who are in personal transition out of poverty toward safety and self-sufficiency.

Our Vision:

Families will achieve stability and build a successful future for themselves and their children.

Our Background:

For nearly 30 years, Centro Legal has provided free and low-cost legal assistance to thousands of Milwaukee low-income individuals and families facing a crisis. Our holistic approach helps our clients resolve complex issues, overcome obstacles and ultimately transition to a more stable and healthy family environment. We primarily provide family law and criminal misdemeanor defense services, both of which are areas that are highly personal, emotional and with high stakes, particularly when children are involved. Our goal is to help our clients successfully navigate the legal system and obtain a successful resolution so that they can maintain employment, stabilize their families, and continue moving forward towards financial independence and self-sufficiency.

SUMMARY:

2017 Legal Services Summary

821

Legal Consultations
Provided

520

Attendees at
Family Law Classes

585

Cases Served With
Full Legal Representation

330 →

Family Law
Cases

204

Number of
Family Law cases
that Involved a
**DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE
SURVIVOR**

207

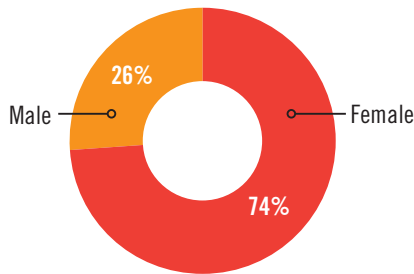
Guardian ad Litem
Cases

48

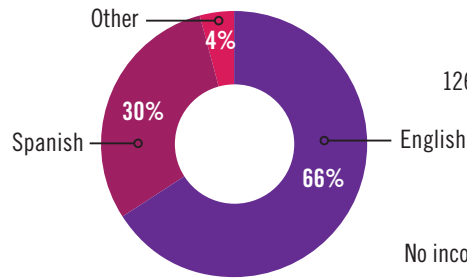
Criminal
Misdemeanor
Cases

WHO WE'RE HELPING

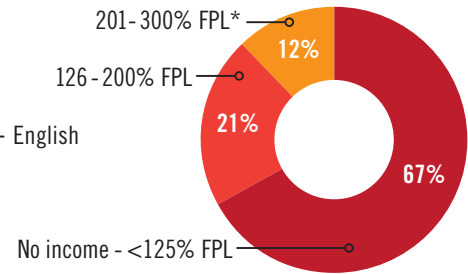
GENDER



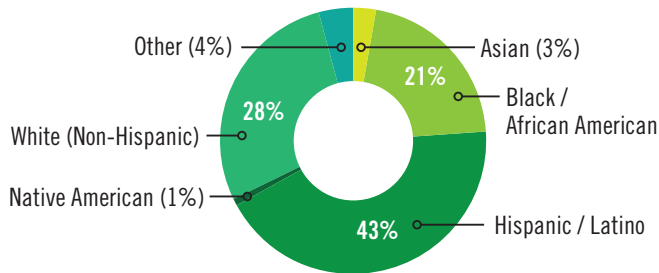
PRIMARY LANGUAGE



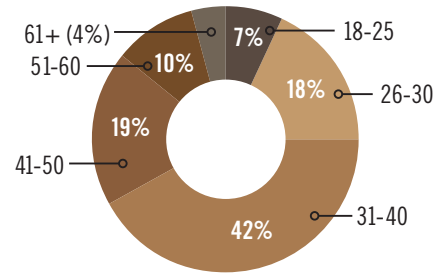
INCOME



RACE/ETHNICITY



AGE



FPL refers to Federal Poverty Levels, which differ depending on the size of household. For example, annual income of 125% FPL is \$15,075 for a single-person household and \$30,750 for a family of four.

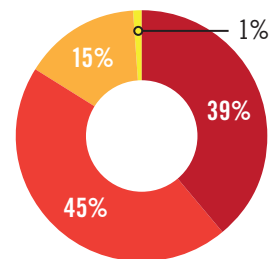
FINANCIALS

Our work in 2017 was supported by contributions from more than 320 individuals, corporations and foundations.

Revenues: \$ 506,872

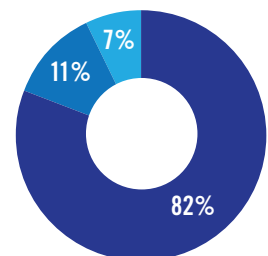
Funding Sources:

Donations and Events:	\$ 221,511	■
Grants:	\$ 251,394	■
Client Fees and Guardian ad Litem Fees:	\$ 83,139	■
In-kind:	\$ 4,828	■



Expenses: \$ 486,058

Total program expenses:	\$ 394,931	■
Family Law Program:	\$ 300,947	
Guardian Ad Litem Program:	\$ 43,320	
Criminal Law Program:	\$ 50,664	
Management and General:	\$ 56,237	■
Fund Development:	\$ 34,890	■



Audit: See pages 3 and 4 of our audit for the Statement of Activities and the Statement of Financial Position.

LEGAL PROGRAMS

Family Law Program:

Centro Legal provides complete legal representation in family law matters, including restraining orders, child custody and placement, child support and divorce. These cases often involve serious issues regarding the safety and well-being of children. Over 60% of our family law clients are survivors of domestic abuse. In these cases, we provide specialized services and partner with domestic abuse advocates to ensure that our clients receive all the support they need during a transitional and emotional period in their lives. In 2017, we provided representation in 330 family law cases for clients who are parents to 561 children in their households.

Domestic Violence Family Law Program:

Over the last decade, we have developed a particular specialty in providing legal advice and representation to survivors of domestic abuse. In fact, the majority of our family law clients have experienced abuse. In this program, we are able to provide free legal assistance to resolve all the family law issues beyond a restraining order. These issues are critical for the family to establish a new family foundation that is safe, strong and consistent. Within this program, we work collaboratively with several domestic abuse shelters and programs so that our clients receive holistic support to support the transition from abuse to independence. In 2017, we provided free representation to over 200 domestic abuse survivors and consulted with many more to give legal advice and guidance.

Criminal Law Program:

Centro Legal represents individuals who do not qualify for public defender representation but cannot afford to hire a private attorney. To qualify for public defender representation, the income requirements are set at 115% of the federal poverty guidelines, leaving a significant gap in legal support for those with low and modest incomes. In most cases, we represent our clients in diversions or deferred prosecution agreements. Our legal support can help these individuals remain in the community, stay employed and address substance abuse or other concerns during their cases. In 2017, we provided representation in 48 misdemeanor cases.

Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Program:

The courts appoint Centro Legal to represent the best interests of children and minor parents in family and paternity cases. We are appointed as GALs for most of the minor fathers in Milwaukee County who must interact with the court system to establish paternity and parental rights. We also represent children in custody and placement cases. In 2017, we represented the best interests of 207 children and minor parents.

Community Outreach and Family Law Classes:

In addition to our full representation services, we provide legal advice and information through our consultation program and family law classes.

Consultation Program: Centro Legal provides in-depth legal consultations for people with family law concerns. We help individuals understand their court orders and complete their paper work, prepare individuals to represent themselves, deter inappropriate or ill-timed claims and provide referrals to community resources. Since most people must face the family court system without an attorney, we seek to prepare as many people as we can to represent themselves effectively. In 2017, we provided 821 legal consultations, an increase of 14%.

Family Law Class: Centro Legal teaches family law classes at local non-profit agencies to inform participants about the family court process and help dispel common misconceptions. Currently, many of our classes are provided through our participation in the Pathways for Fathers and Families (formerly called the Milwaukee County Pathways to Responsible Fatherhood Program). By educating fathers about their rights and obligations regarding child support, custody and placement, we seek to equip fathers to become more engaged and responsible fathers.



CENTRO LE *Gala*

Our Annual Event

June 22, 2017, Discovery World

Nearly 300 guests attended our annual signature event, which included live and silent auctions, a wine pull, and a live program. A past client shared her story on video with us during the program, demonstrating the impact effective legal counsel can have in a family's life. Through the generous support of our sponsors and supporters, we raised over \$100,000 to support our programs and services.



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