

STABILIZING LIVES. STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES.



2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Friend of Centro Legal,

We look back at 2018 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 of Milwaukee to a firm that works with clients from all over the greater Milwaukee area. On an annual basis, we provide representation in nearly 600 cases and conduct consultations, outreach, and family law classes for another 1,500 people each year. Combined, we directly touch the lives of over 2,000 people across all our programs. However, we are keenly aware that our services truly impact hundreds of people beyond our immediate clients, most notably the nearly 550 children of our clients. By helping to resolve pressing family law matters, we help to improve the consistency, stability, and health of family environments for all family members.

In 2018, we made some notable changes. We welcomed a new attorney, Chelsea Fischer, to our team and prepared to bid farewell to now-former Executive Director Nicole Renouard. Most significantly, however, we expanded our program offerings to Waukesha County in a new partnership with The Women's Center. We began providing monthly family law consultations for survivors of domestic abuse on site at The Women's Center, and we are now taking on full-representation family law cases in Waukesha County Family Court. We know that the need for quality, low-cost legal services does not end at the Milwaukee County border, and we are thankful for our ability to fill that need. We look forward to growing this program in the coming months and years.

Our staff has been busier than ever and recorded one of our most productive years to date in 2018. 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 event) ever. 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. We look forward to continuing this growth in our programs.

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

Molly Dobberke Riehle
Executive Director



"We are more determined than ever to continue helping our clients make positive changes to improve their lives and the lives of their families."

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.

2018 LEGAL SERVICES SUMMARY

839

Legal consultations provided

421

Attendees at several family law classes

599

Cases served with full legal representation

323

Family law cases
201 cases involved domestic violence

237

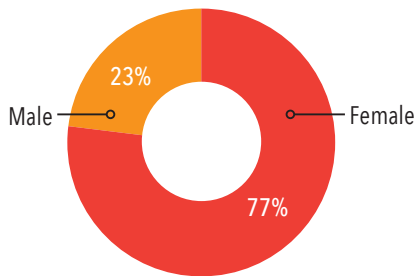
Guardian ad litem cases

39

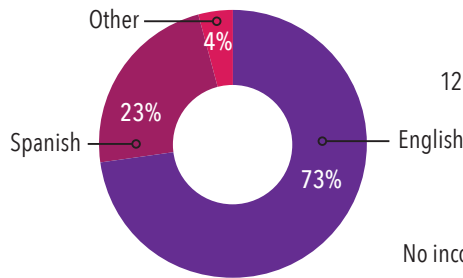
Criminal misdemeanor cases

WHO WE'RE HELPING

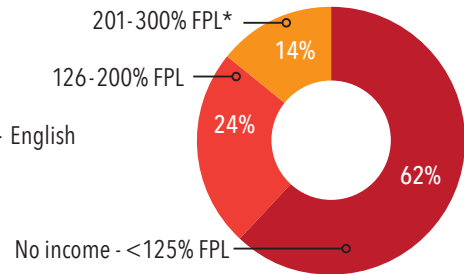
GENDER



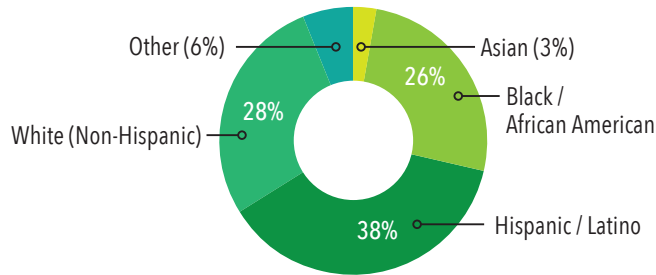
PRIMARY LANGUAGE



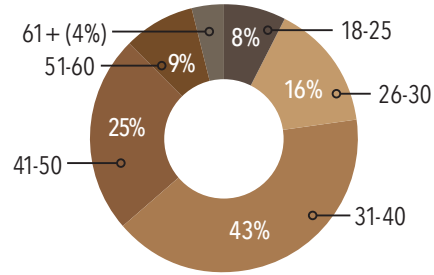
INCOME



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 \$15,175 for a single-person household and \$31,375 for a family of four.

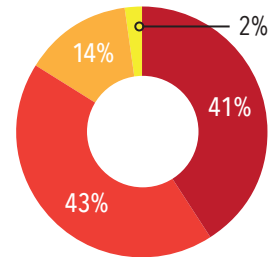
FINANCIALS

Our work in 2018 was supported by contributions from more than 320 individuals, corporations and foundations.

Revenues: \$575,428

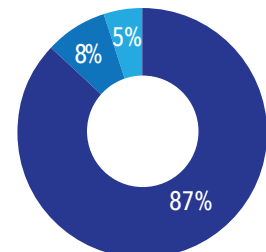
Funding Sources:

Donations and Events: (donations \$114,676) + (event gross \$122,008)	\$ 236,684
Grants:	\$ 246,633
Client and GAL (GAL fees primarily paid by Milwaukee County) Fee Revenue	\$ 81,086
In-kind:	\$ 10,750
Miscellaneous:	\$ 274



Expenses: \$495,881

Total program expenses:	\$ 432,970
Family Law Program:	\$ 346,060
Guardian Ad Litem Program:	\$ 67,951
Criminal Law Program:	\$ 18,959
Management and General:	\$ 39,056
Fund Development:	\$ 23,855



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 2018, we provided representation in 323 family law cases for clients who are parents to 541 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 2018, 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 2018, we provided representation in 39 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 2018, we represented the best interests of 237 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 2018, we provided 839 legal consultations.

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*

Annual Event - LeGala

June 21, 2018
DiscoveryWorld

Nearly 300 guests attended our annual signature event, which included live and silent auctions, a wine pull, and a live program. Three past clients shared their stories 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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Jennifer Montalvo, Senior Attorney
Molly Dobberke Riehle, Staff Attorney
Alex Foundos, Staff Attorney
Chelsea Fischer, Staff Attorney
Molly Kanter, Part-Time Attorney
Maricela Paredones, Legal Assistant

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