

Legal Aid Provides For Fairness and Justice

Civil legal aid in Oregon ensures fairness in the justice system. It provides critical help to low-income and vulnerable Oregonians when faced with a legal matter to protect their livelihood, their health and safety, and their families.

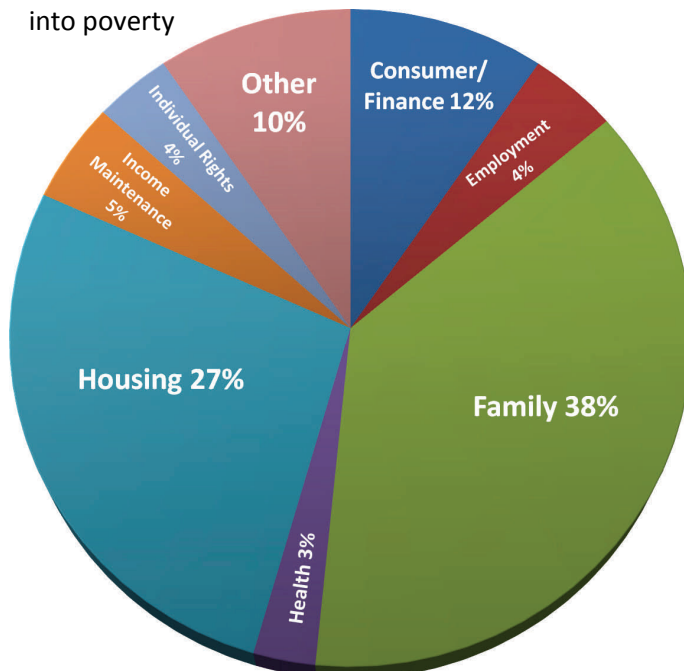
When low income Oregonians lack the resources for needed legal help, they are effectively shut out of the justice system.

To the average person, our legal system is a maze—that's why lawyers are trained to guide their clients through the system. Legal aid provides free civil legal services to more than 20,000 poor and elderly Oregonians each year who have no where else to turn for legal help.



Legal Aid Provides

- Free civil legal services to low-income and elderly Oregonians
- Brochures, court forms and self-help materials to help people navigate our justice system
- A website with accessible legal information available to all Oregonians
- Help to victims of domestic violence and their children to keep them safe
- Resources to help stabilize families and prevent a further slide into poverty



The above chart shows what types of cases legal aid handles. Note that 65% of cases involve physical safety and keeping safe housing.

The Campaign for Equal Justice, founded by Oregon lawyers in 1991, supports Oregon's legal aid programs. Four non-profit corporations work together as a part of an integrated delivery system designed to provide relatively equal access statewide: two statewide programs, Legal Aid Services of Oregon and the Oregon Law Center; two county wide programs, Lane County Legal Aid and Advocacy Center, and the Center for Non-profit Legal Services (Jackson County).

Oregon's Justice Gap

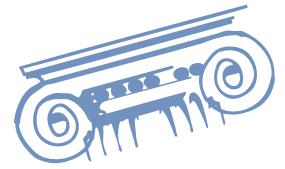
There is currently funding to meet 15% of the civil legal needs of the poor.

Resources have not kept pace with the increase in poverty

- Between 2000 and 2011, poverty in Oregon increased by 61.5%—the 8th highest increase in the nation.
- Between 2009 and 2012, funding cuts to legal aid forced the closure of two offices and a 20% reduction in staff across the state.

The **Task Force on Legal Aid Funding**, which included elected officials and leaders in the legal community, concluded that we need to double the resources for Oregon's legal aid programs in order to have minimally adequate funding. Funding for legal aid is a state, federal and private partnership. Increased revenue needs to come from a number of different sources. For more information, see reverse side and <http://www.cej-oregon.org/taskforce.php>.

Legal Aid Looks Out For Oregonians In Need.



“Flora LittleDove”

Flora LittleDove and her husband Joe have owned a 2 bedroom, 1 bathroom home for over 35 years. Their two children grew up there and Flora, who is now in her late sixties, expects to live out the rest of her life in “her own space on this earth.” Flora is battling cancer. To cover surgeries, they made the tough choice to refinance their home. Unfortunately, a few weeks later, Joe was laid off from his job. When the couple was unable to cover the higher mortgage, the bank began foreclosure proceedings. Flora had little energy to face the stress of losing her home. At the last moment, Flora turned to legal aid for help. “One of the best things was that I did not feel alone. When I could not get answers, legal aid did. They helped me carry the burden and stress.” Because of legal aid’s help, Flora and Joe have manageable payments and are able to stay in their home.



“Lynette”

Lynette is a 44 year old busy single mom of a 17 year old daughter. When she had difficulty breathing and started to have chest pains, she went to the hospital where she was admitted to the intensive care unit. She needed oxygen and breathing treatments and then was able to return home. Lynette was low-income and covered under the Oregon Health Plan and thought that would take care of the bill. She was surprised when she got a bill from the hospital and later a collections agency saying that some of the treatments weren’t covered. Lynette’s income covered her rent, utilities and groceries, with almost nothing left over and it would have been impossible to pay the hospital bill and stay current on other bills. She called legal aid, and the attorney worked things out with the hospital. Lynette said, “Legal aid was a godsend to me and I’m not sure what I would have done if they hadn’t been there to help.”



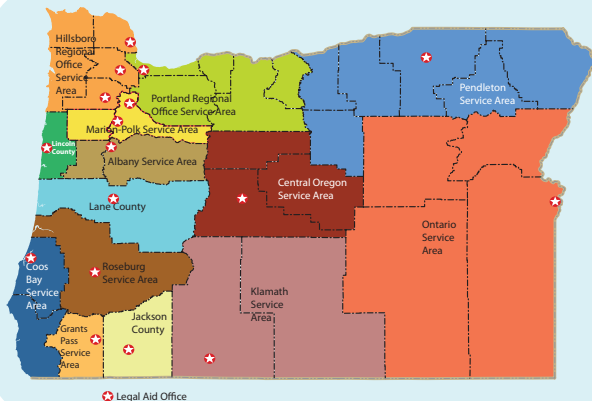
“Claudia”

Claudia and her 5 year old son, Ryan, were living with Chris, Ryan’s father. Chris would frequently yell and act aggressively. Claudia was concerned about the effect this was having on Ryan — he was so afraid of loud noises that he would cling to her legs when Chris was screaming at her. Then, after disappearing for over a week, Chris returned to the apartment with a pick up truck saying that he was leaving Claudia and wanted his belongings. Claudia let him in, but she was afraid that he would hurt her or take Ryan when he left. The next day Chris returned again and this time began to take items that didn’t belong to him. Claudia locked him out and called the police, fearing for her safety. Claudia also called legal aid. Legal aid helped Claudia file a restraining order. Once the restraining order was granted, Claudia stopped hearing from Chris. She and Ryan feel safe.



“Celine”

Nine year old Celine was dropped off for a weekend with her grandmother, Victoria. On Sunday, Celine’s mom did not return for her. As the weeks stretched into months, Victoria realized that Celine’s mom wasn’t coming back. Celine had no legal guardian to sign important papers, including consent to medical care. When Victoria went to enroll Celine in school, she was turned away. The school put Victoria in touch with legal aid. Legal aid helped Victoria go through the process of trying to find Celine’s parents. They put notices in papers and sent letters to old addresses, but they got no response. Legal aid then prepared a “relative caregiver affidavit” naming Victoria Celine’s legal guardian, a process that was made possible by a new Oregon law. With the guardianship approved, Celine is able to get medical care and is enrolled in school— thanks to legal aid’s help.



- Legal aid provides free civil legal services to poor and vulnerable Oregonians in all 36 Oregon counties.
- Because the need is so great, legal aid takes cases where legal help is essential to making sure families can meet their basic needs: food, shelter, medical care and physical safety.
- About 40% of legal aid’s cases are family law cases in which there is domestic violence. About one quarter are housing cases. Other subject matter areas include consumer law, income maintenance (social security, unemployment insurance, and other self-sufficiency benefits), health, employment, and individual rights.

Learn more at www.cej-oregon.org.