

CONNECTICUT LEGAL SERVICES INC.

ANNUAL REPORT
2013

CLOSING THE
JUSTICE GAP



Service Area, Offices, and Staff

Connecticut Legal Services is a private, not-for-profit law firm dedicated to improving the lives of low-income people by providing access to justice.

In the CLS service area—all of Connecticut except the greater Hartford and New Haven areas—more than 200,000 people are financially eligible for services (2010 census).

CLS has six full-service offices, four satellite offices, and one administrative office.

On June 30, 2013, the CLS staff consisted of

- 46.83 FTE lawyers
- 2.00 FTE paralegals
- 13.86 FTE legal assistants
- .63 FTE child welfare advocates
- 7.88 FTE administrative staff.



CLS Helps Disabled Woman Find Safety and Stability

Being kidnapped and sexually assaulted was harrowing for Marcia*. She suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a panic disorder with agoraphobia, and chronic abdominal pain. She also has fibromyalgia, chronic back pain, osteoarthritis, carpal tunnel syndrome, and asthma. Her multiple impairments make maintaining steady work impossible. She applied for disability benefits from the Social Security Administration twice and was denied both times. While Marcia waited for her hearing to challenge those denials, her then-boyfriend attacked and beat her several times. She contacted the police, and her abuser was removed from the home and not allowed to return. Marcia, however, received minimal state cash benefits and could not afford the apartment by herself. She faced eviction and found her way to Connecticut Legal Services for help.

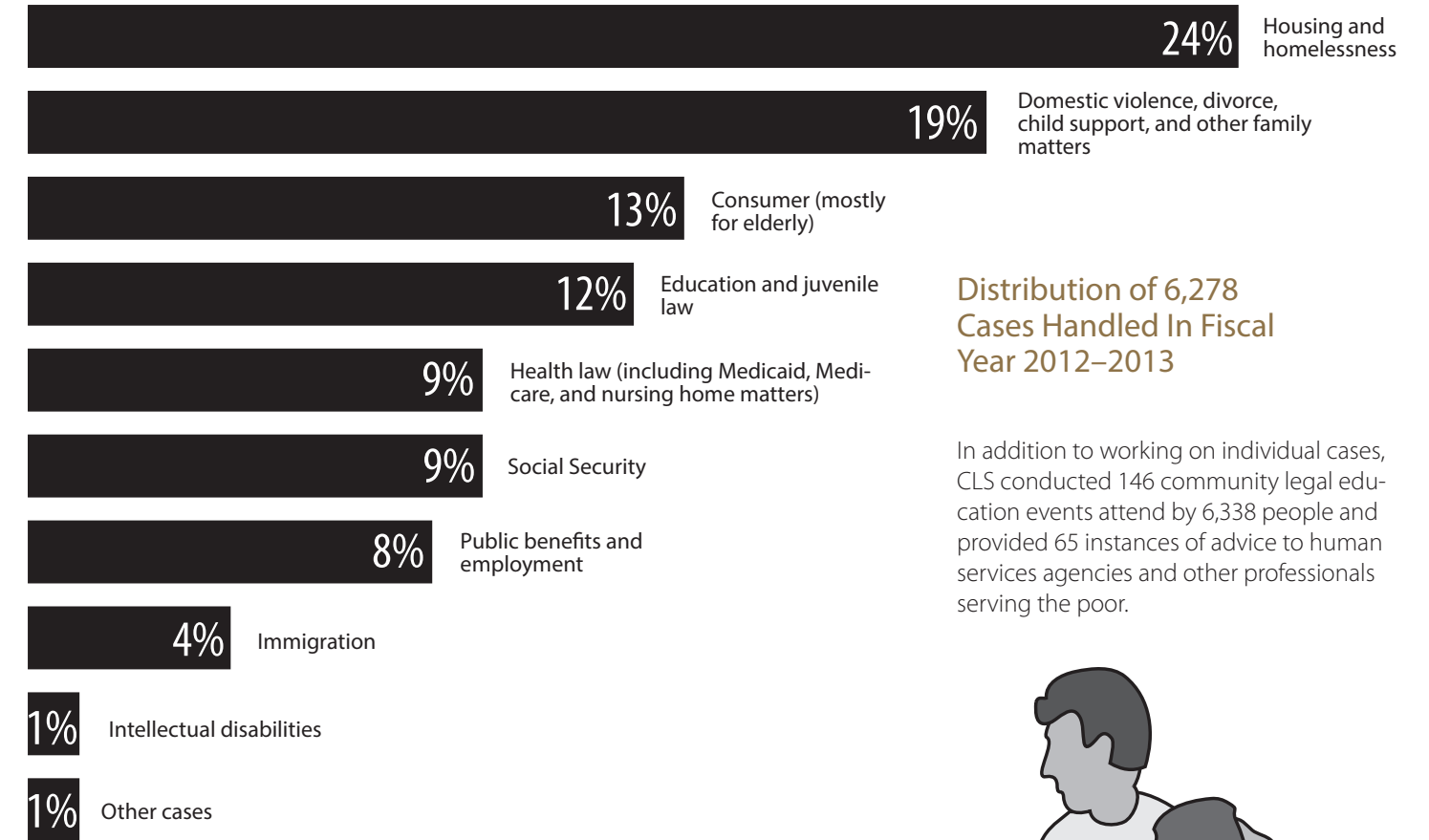
Marcia's CLS attorney filed an appearance in her disability case and represented her at the hearing. Her attorney was able to clearly document that she met the standard for SSI disability benefits and persuade the administrative law judge to designate Marcia's disability claim a "critical case." That meant a decision would come in less than a week rather than the normal one to two months. Marcia and her lawyer prevailed, and because of her disability benefits, she can afford a new apartment and is safely out of her abusive ex-boyfriend's reach.

*All names and identifying information have been changed to protect client confidentiality.



Distribution of Cases

In 2012–2013, Connecticut Legal Services received approximately 18,858 requests for service. We responded by opening 3,550 new cases for legal representation and counseling. We also worked on 2,728 cases opened in previous years. CLS services in these 6,278 cases benefited approximately 14,642 household members.



Distribution of 6,278 Cases Handled In Fiscal Year 2012–2013

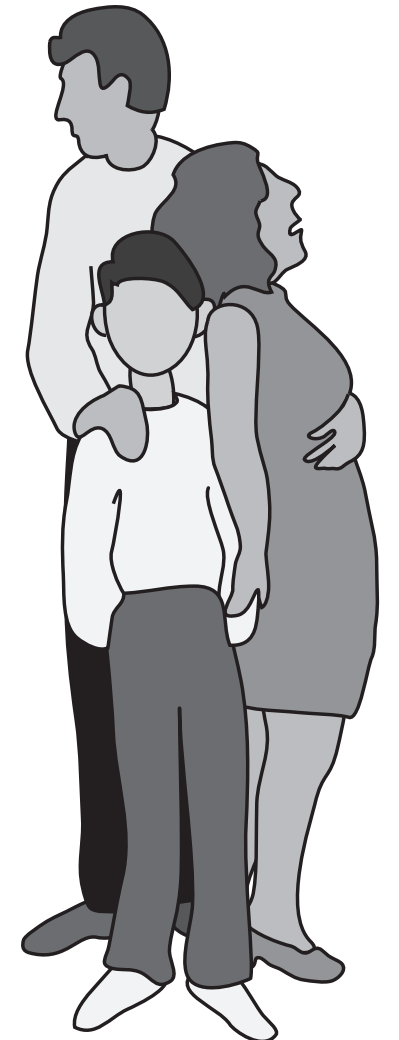
In addition to working on individual cases, CLS conducted 146 community legal education events attend by 6,338 people and provided 65 instances of advice to human services agencies and other professionals serving the poor.

CLS Helps Family Rocked by Legal Issues Find Stability

Nick has a developmental disability. A young man, he lives with his parents, who have stayed together out of necessity. The family had no heat and could not afford the rent. They had no income, no benefits, and no community support other than a caseworker the state had assigned only to find a day program for Nick. Nick's parents found their way to Connecticut Legal Services for help.

After working with Nick's family, the CLS attorney, who focuses on developmental disabilities, realized that other factors might be contributing to the problems Nick's parents had paying the rent. The attorney arranged community services for Nick and the extra Social Security benefits he needed. Meanwhile, a CLS benefits attorney set up appointments for medical evaluations, which revealed that Nick's mother had an undiagnosed developmental disability and Nick's father had developed disabling competency issues that made working difficult for him. This attorney arranged for a lifeline telephone service at the house and a heating oil delivery and helped the family complete the necessary benefit applications. All three family members immediately started receiving benefits from the Social Security Administration, food stamps, Medicaid, and energy assistance.

Once each family member had income, a CLS housing attorney was able to arrange an agreement regarding payment of rent while helping the family find appropriate living arrangements. Nick's father now lives in an affordable housing unit with built-in supports to help him maintain his benefits and receive ongoing medical care; Nick and his mother will soon have subsidized housing. If CLS had not taken a holistic approach to helping, Nick's family would have faced imminent homelessness and, possibly, inappropriate institutionalization. However, because of the CLS attorneys' work, Nick and his family can continue to live in their community with the supports they need.



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Letter from Executive Director and Board Chair

Dear Friends,

Connecticut Legal Services advocates achieve remarkable results for low-income clients who face serious, often unjust, problems. Without our help, Marcia (p. 2) would have been completely impoverished, homeless, and in danger. Nick's family (p. 3) would have had no home heating and no medical coverage. Sam (p. 9), 77 years old, would have been homeless because of his stroke and mental condition. Josh (p. 7) would never have found stable supports as he approached young adulthood.

CLS' legal representation of these clients made all the difference in their lives, as our representation does for so many others. The results pay off more broadly as well. Every time a CLS lawyer helps a client avoid a long stay in a homeless shelter or a domestic violence shelter, the state saves thousands of dollars. Every time a CLS lawyer gets a low-income disabled child the education he or she needs, the chance that the child will end up in jail (the costly process sometimes referred to as the "school to prison pipeline") is reduced. Every time a CLS lawyer demonstrates that a client is eligible for government medical insurance, the client can start getting the preventive care that saves society the costs of much more expensive emergency care.

However, CLS lacks the resources needed to serve the tens of thousands of additional people who face equally compelling needs. The "justice gap" in Connecticut is growing. A majority of the people who seek legal representation must be turned away. The justice gap is also reflected in the courts: most defendants in evictions go unrepresented, and most family law cases include at least one unrepresented party.

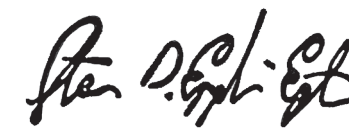
The CLS Board and staff are working with sister programs to narrow the justice gap. In the coming year, we must obtain the support of the General Assembly and the governor to eliminate the sunset provision on judicial court fees that legal aid programs rely on for funding. We must continue to build all areas of revenue (philanthropic, government, revenue, and donor-based) so we can more appropriately compensate and expand staff. Continual efforts to build and strengthen CLS will, in the coming years, narrow the justice gap and bring us closer to the goal of justice for all.

We count on your support.

Sincerely,



Richard F. Orr
Board Chair

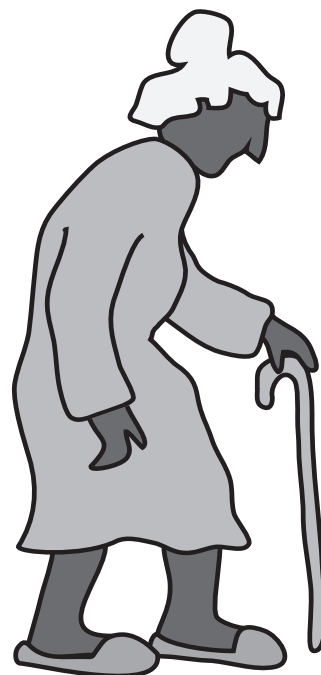


Steven D. Eppler-Epstein
Executive Director

CLS Helps Elderly Woman Get Much-Needed Home Services

Flora, an 89-year-old woman who lives alone in senior housing, has disabilities that interfere with her housekeeping. Her landlord claimed that she was a hoarder, kept an unsafe apartment, and was responsible for bringing bedbugs into the building. He started an eviction against her and unlawfully billed Flora for past legal charges, which she paid without question. Initially, Flora tried to represent herself in the eviction proceedings; however, the court staff determined that Flora was not capable of properly representing herself and asked Connecticut Legal Services for help.

Flora's CLS housing attorney asked the court mediator to contact Protective Services for the Elderly on Flora's behalf so that it could determine if she was, in fact, capable of living independently. The protective services worker determined that Flora was not a hoarder but that she did have too much "stuff." The worker arranged for a crew to clear out the clutter in Flora's apartment and prepare it for bedbug treatment. Flora's apartment was cleaned out, and she applied for Title XIX qualification to receive ongoing homemaker services. The building's property manager was satisfied with the condition of the apartment and the services put in place. The landlord agreed to withdraw the eviction but refused to refund the improper legal fees. Flora's CLS attorney filed a complaint with the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the money was immediately credited to Flora's rental account.



Financial Supporters and Other Income Sources for 2012–2013 Expenditures

Government Based Grants

Agency on Aging, Senior Resources (Eastern Connecticut)	\$ 45,025	The Cottonwood Foundation, Inc.	1,517
Agency on Aging, Southwestern Connecticut Area	51,329	Equal Justice America, Inc.	1,567
Agency on Aging, Western Connecticut Area	53,140	Estate of Ruth I. Krauss	6,387
Bridgeport Housing Authority	71,112	Fairfield County Bar Association, Inc.	1,585
City of Middletown	9,000	Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund—General Re Corporation Fund	2,500
Community Development Block Grant Program—City of Meriden	3,000	The Frank Loomis Palmer Fund, Bank of America Trustee	2,461
Community Development Block Grant Program—City of Waterbury	6,378	Jeffrey P. Ossen Family Foundation	55,346
Community Development Block Grant Program—Town of Fairfield	3,094	Maurice Goodman Foundation	1,500
Community Development Block Grant Program—Town of Greenwich	5,150	Seaman Family Foundation	87,500
State of Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities	53,446	Skadden Fellowship Foundation	8,960
State of Connecticut Court Support Services Division	765,284	St. John's Community Foundation	6,170
State of Connecticut Department of Social Services	908,711	The Tow Foundation, Inc.	50,581
State of Connecticut Office of Protection and Advocacy	146,772	United Way, Central and Northeastern Connecticut	65,000
State of Connecticut Office of the Chief Public Defender	43,500	United Way, Greater Waterbury	16,600
Town of Ashford	500	United Way, Greenwich	15,000
Town of Coventry	925	United Way, Meriden and Wallingford	25,000
Town of Darien	2,000	United Way, Northwest Connecticut	5,003
Town of Ellington	2,200	United Way, Southeastern Connecticut	31,976
Town of Groton	12,000	United Way, Southington	5,000
Town of Mansfield	5,000	United Way, West Central Connecticut	6,000
Town of Vernon	4,000	United Way, Western Connecticut - Litchfield County	3,500
U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs	106,585	United Way, Western Connecticut - Stamford	10,719
Total Government Based Grants	\$ 2,298,151	University of Connecticut School of Law	9,975

Donations and Other Income

Total Private Grants	\$ 8,231,905
Attorney Fees	\$ 235,690
Campaign for Justice	240,110
Donated Goods & Services	223,746
United Way Donor Designations	19,614
Interest/Dividends Earned & Unrealized Gain/(Loss) on Investments	2,434
Miscellaneous	3,498
Total Donations and Other Income	\$ 725,094
Total CLS Income	\$ 11,255,149

Statements of Financial Position—June 30, 2013, and June 30, 2012

ASSETS	June 30, 2013	June 30, 2012	LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	June 30, 2013	June 30, 2012
Current Assets			Current Liabilities		
Cash and Cash Equivalents—Operating Funds	\$ 1,354,252	\$ 1,555,835	Accrued Pension Liability	\$ 3,770,695	\$ 4,949,959
Cash in Escrow—Client Funds	1,887	51,884	Accounts Payable	106,592	72,639
Cash—Insurance Escrow	9,591	0	Accrued Expenses	50,380	31,395
Receivables			Refundable Advances	18,994	17,867
Grants and Contracts Receivable	\$ 86,086	\$ 138,697	Accrued Annual Leave	542,439	586,963
Promises to Give	722,784	1,031,772	Client Trust Deposits	1,885	51,878
Other Receivables	51,910	13,433	Total Current Liabilities	\$ 4,490,985	\$ 5,710,701
Prepaid Expenses	118,985	173,148	Net Assets		
Total Current Assets	\$ 2,345,495	\$ 2,964,769	Unrestricted		
Fixed Assets			Operations	\$ (2,910,635)	\$ (3,876,510)
Property and Equipment	\$ 504,458	\$ 564,784	Insurance Escrow	9,591	0
Leasehold Improvements	766,295	766,295	Fixed Assets	349,654	402,752
Total Fixed Assets Before Depreciation	1,270,753	1,331,079	Total Unrestricted	(2,551,390)	(3,473,758)
Less Accumulated Depreciation	(921,099)	(928,327)	Temporarily Restricted	776,936	1,172,033
Total Fixed Assets	\$ 349,654	\$ 402,752	Total Net Assets	(\$1,774,454)	(\$2,301,725)
Other Assets			Total Liabilities And Net Assets	\$ 2,716,531	\$ 3,408,976
Security Deposits	\$ 21,382	\$ 21,382			
Donated Common Stock	0	20,073			
Total Other Assets	21,382	41,455			
Total Assets	\$ 2,716,531	\$ 3,408,976			

CLS Helps Homeless Kid Reunite With His Father

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) referred Josh, who is 17 years old, to the Connecticut Legal Services Child and Youth Advocacy (CYA) team. Josh's CYA team learned that he had been living with his maternal grandmother, his only known relative. She didn't want him, though, and she took him out of school and moved to another town. Shortly thereafter, Josh left her home, went into DCF care as a homeless child, and was placed in a group home. Luckily, Josh has a very attentive surrogate parent who helped CLS ensure that Josh could stay in the school he had attended before his grandmother moved him. Upon entering DCF care, Josh reached out to his psychological father, who was living in a different state. Josh's CYA team advocated that Josh be placed with his psychological father and arranged for Josh to visit him. Despite Josh's wishes and the CYA team's advocacy, DCF would not allow Josh to stay with his psychological father until he turned 18 and left DCF care.

Josh had planned to live in the group home until his 18th birthday; the environment was stable, and he attended school regularly. With only a few months left until his birthday, he reached the occupancy limit at his group home, and DCF proposed moving him to another home across the state. Josh's CYA team advocated that his current placement was best for Josh and challenged DCF on the plan to move him. DCF did not agree, and the CYA team went to court on Josh's behalf. DCF agreed to an out-of-court settlement that allows Josh to live in his current group home until he is 18 and have a 12-day visit with his psychological father. If Josh decides to live with his father after leaving DCF care, DCF will pay to move him to his psychological father's home.



Connecticut Legal Services Campaign for Justice

Donor List July 1, 2012, through December 1, 2013

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CLS Helps Man Overcome Hoarding

Sam, a 77-year-old man, moved from his large home into a subsidized two-room apartment in senior housing, where he lived alone. He kept as many of his treasured items as he could in storage lockers and in his small apartment, but over the years, Sam collected more and more, and his apartment began to overflow. The Housing Authority, citing an unsafe living environment, started eviction proceedings against him, and Sam contacted Connecticut Legal Services.

Sam's CLS attorney represented him in the eviction. Parties involved in Sam's case agreed that he suffered from a hoarding disorder. His CLS attorney understood that eviction was only part of Sam's problem and that his condition required the establishment of additional supports. The attorney referred Sam to a case manager from a local behavioral health care organization, which developed a plan and arranged home chore and health care services. During a routine check-in call, Sam's CLS attorney realized that Sam was having a stroke. The attorney secured immediate medical services, and while Sam recovered, his CLS attorney litigated on his behalf to make sure Sam would receive the additional home services he would need when he returned.

Thanks to his CLS attorney, Sam started treatment with a visiting therapist who is an expert in hoarding disorders. Today, Sam continues to receive support from service providers in his markedly less cluttered apartment—an environment that is healthier for him and his neighbors—and he no longer faces homelessness.

CLS Helps Elderly Woman Gain Independence

Alicia is 82 years old and lives in senior housing; her only income is a small sum from Social Security. She ordered three pairs of slacks from a mail order catalog for \$46. A few days later, she mailed a check for the full amount, which the company cashed. Soon Alicia began receiving calls from the mail order company's bank, which told her that she still owed money. Alicia disputed the outstanding balance, and the bank referred her to the mail order company. When she contacted the company, it too insisted that she still owed money but refused to tell her why. Alicia continued to receive monthly statements showing unspecified charges plus large monthly late fees. They soon added up to hundreds of dollars.

She did not pay and began receiving harassing phone calls. When her credit was damaged because this supposed debt was reported to the credit reporting agencies, Alicia went to Connecticut Legal Services for help. Her CLS attorney wrote both the mail order company and the bank, demanding that they stop harassing Alicia and stop billing her for something she did not owe. The company and bank refused. Alicia's attorney investigated further and found that Alicia was being charged for a service she had never authorized. The CLS attorney filed a suit in federal court against both the mail order company and the bank. After negotiations, both agreed to stop the harassment and reimbursed Alicia for her pain and suffering.

Alicia planned to use the settlement money to purchase a car so she could get to her medical appointments. However, because she was enrolled in a Medicaid-based program for low-income adults, the Department of Social Services (DSS) told Alicia that she would have to give the entire amount to the state to retain her benefits. Alicia's CLS attorney disputed this, arguing that under the law, Alicia's settlement from the federal case was not subject to this requirement. DSS agreed, and Alicia was able to keep the entire amount of her settlement. Alicia no longer receives threatening phone calls and can drive herself to and from her appointments.



Campaign for Justice continued



CLS Helps Keep Disabled Woman From Losing Everything

Tami has a developmental disability and receives help from the Department of Developmental Services. She lives with her young son and cannot successfully pay her bills without assistance, so at one point, her electricity was shut off, and the gas company threatened to terminate services. If she could not resolve her utility issues immediately, the Department of Children and Families would remove her child from her care, and she would lose her home and her much-needed housing subsidy. Fearing homelessness, Tami contacted Connecticut Legal Services. Her CLS attorney negotiated a payment schedule with the electric and gas companies that eliminated the risk of service termination. Thanks to CLS, Tami resolved her utility problem, kept her housing subsidy, and, more important, retained custody of her son.

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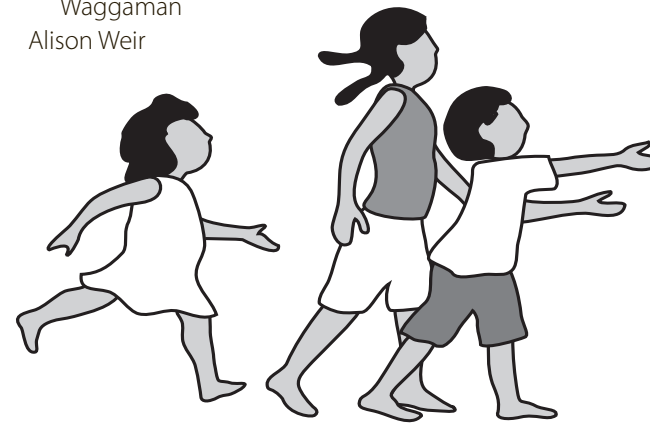
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CLS Helps a Battered Mother Reunite With Her Children

Lucia's ex-husband is a U.S. citizen who forced her to enter the country illegally "to be with her husband." Throughout the marriage, he repeatedly and violently abused her sexually, emotionally, and physically. He controlled her by threatening to have her deported and to separate her from her children forever. After one violent incident, Lucia left the home, and her husband immediately initiated a divorce. While the divorce was pending, he refused to let Lucia see their children and said negative things to the children about her. He also manipulated her financially and told her she had fewer rights because she had less money. The domestic violence shelter she was staying in referred her to Connecticut Legal Services.

CLS represented Lucia in the divorce, and her attorney successfully negotiated a fair custody and visitation agreement. Lucia now sees her children regularly, and her ex-husband has stopped bullying her. Lucia also received help from a CLS immigration attorney to file a VAWA self-petition with an application for work authorization and an application for a green card. Lucia's work authorization was approved, and she is proud to be financially independent, safe from abuse, reunited with her children, and working toward obtaining citizenship.

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In Memory of

Gladys and Philip Bear
Zigmunt and Gregory Bednarski
Martin M. Berger
Roy F. Brown
My brother, Curt, who always struggled and still had a good sense of humor
Hon. Anthony DeMayo
Heinz Eppler
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In Honor or Appreciation of

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Vivien Blackford
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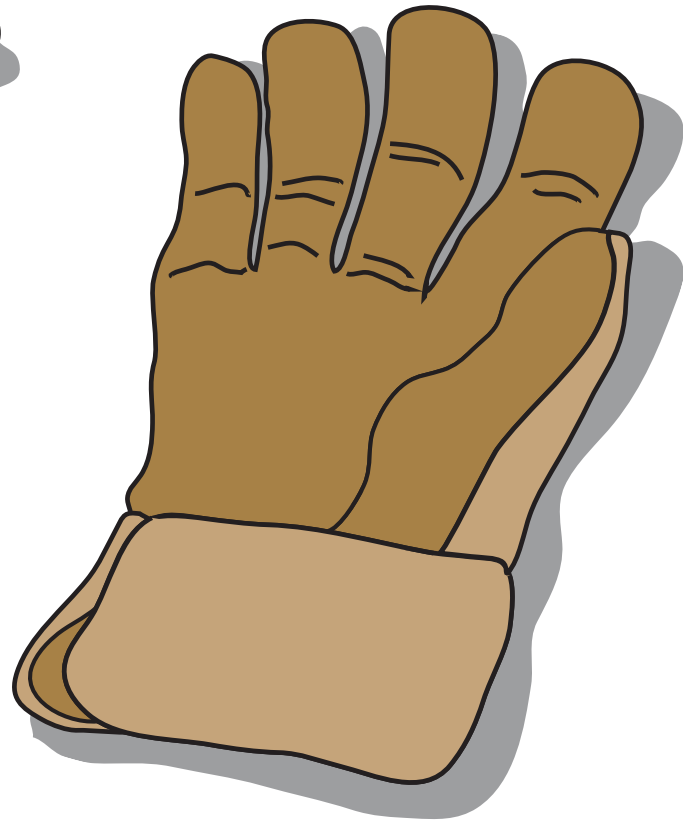
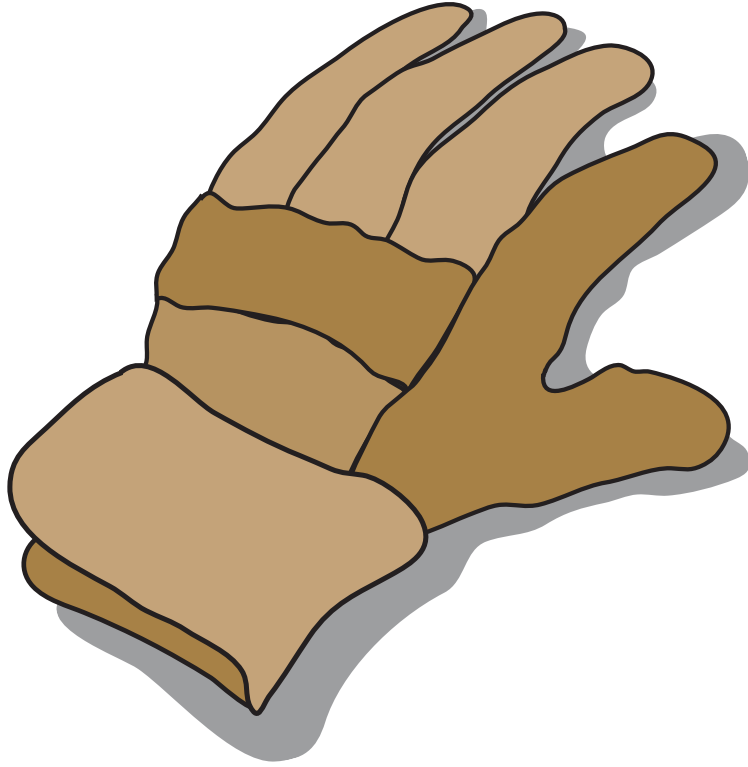
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