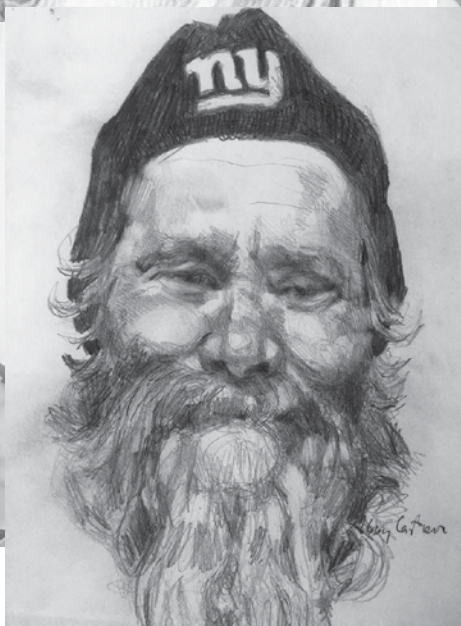
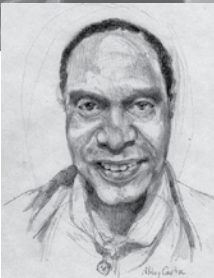
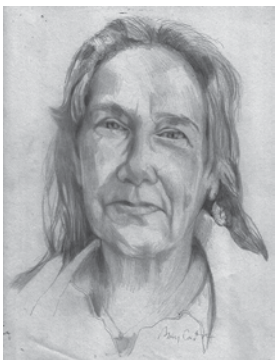


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CONNECTICUT  
LEGAL SERVICES,  
INC.



ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2016

## CLS Helps Young High-Schooler Navigate a Sea of Troubles

**A**ustin\* was set to repeat his freshman year of high school for the third time when Connecticut Legal Services met with him. His teachers had referred him for informal academic assistance, but he had been unable to earn enough credits to move forward in school. He became depressed and truant. He also had a slight speech impediment that his mother did not know how to address. In fact, his mother had no idea that the school could help him overcome these difficulties, even though they affected his communication and learning. After missing more than ten days of school, Austin received a note that said he was no longer enrolled in school and that if he wanted to return, he would have to re-enroll. CLS responded by filing a complaint with the Department of Education, addressing the school's failure to evaluate Austin for potential eligibility for special education despite years of struggles and the school's unilateral decision to withdraw him involuntarily.

After CLS intervened, the school district agreed to evaluate Austin for special education, using both English and Spanish measures, and to evaluate his speech. The district also agreed to stop the practice of involuntary withdrawals. Finally, CLS secured group support and stress management and coping skills training for him. Austin has not missed a day of school since the district agreed to evaluate him, his grades are up to passing, and he is getting speech and language help. Most important, his self-esteem has improved drastically, and he has hope for his future.

\*Names and identifying information in CLS client stories were changed to protect client confidentiality.

## 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, 2016, the CLS staff consisted of

41.84 FTE lawyers

2.00 FTE paralegals

10.72 FTE legal assistants

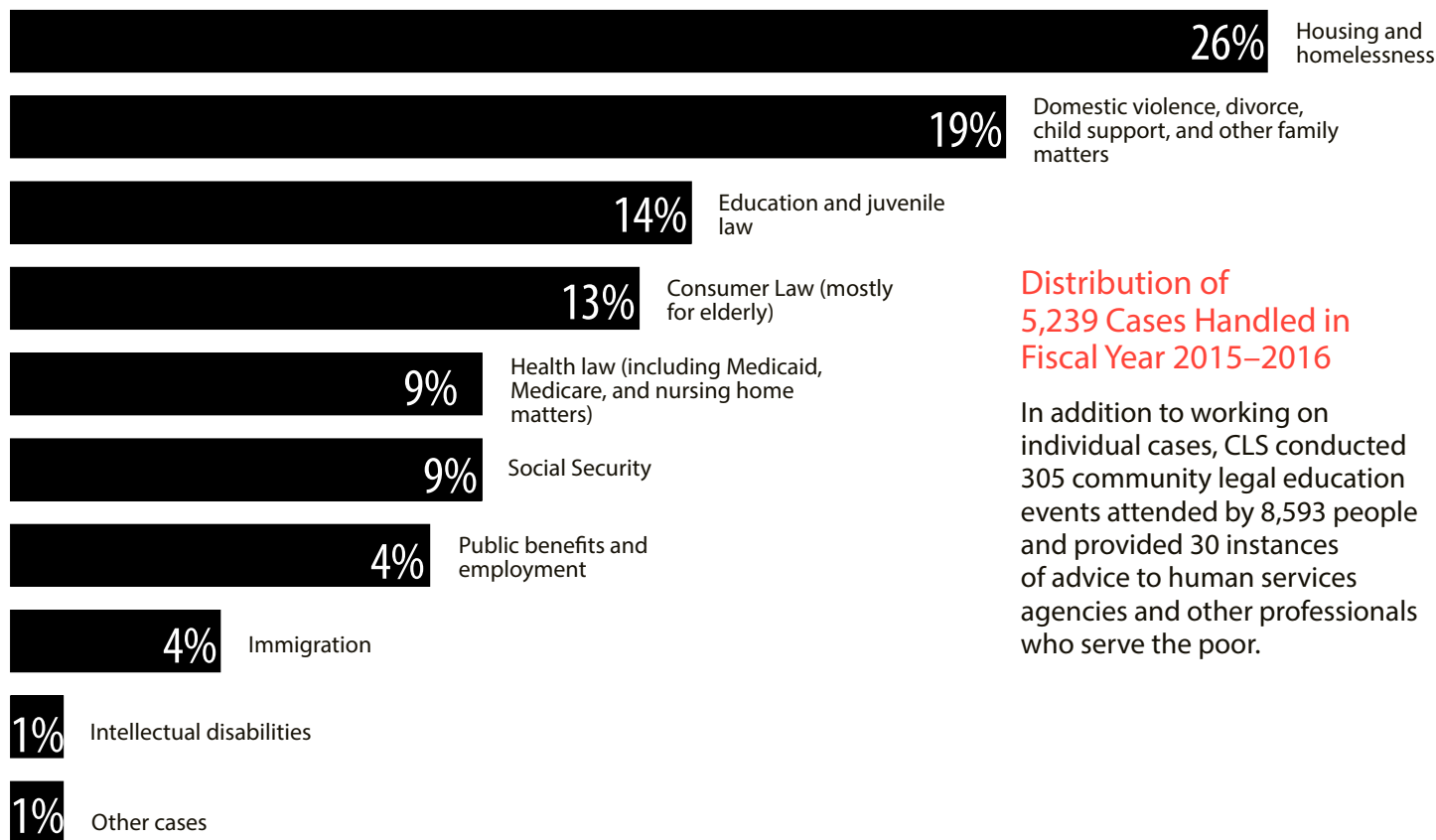
.67 FTE child welfare advocates

7.00 FTE administrative staff.



## Distribution of Cases

In 2015–2016, Connecticut Legal Services received approximately 16,707 requests for service. We responded by opening 3,265 new cases for legal representation and counseling. We also worked on 1,974 cases opened in previous years. CLS services in these 5,239 cases benefited approximately 12,400 household members.



### Distribution of 5,239 Cases Handled in Fiscal Year 2015–2016

In addition to working on individual cases, CLS conducted 305 community legal education events attended by 8,593 people and provided 30 instances of advice to human services agencies and other professionals who serve the poor.

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## CLS Helps Disabled Woman Fighting for Benefits

**C**indy suffers from multiple physical and mental disabilities, including fibromyalgia, gastritis, irritable bowel syndrome, chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder, impairments of both upper and lower extremities following a serious fall, osteoarthritis of the back, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression. She received a letter from the Department of Social Services advising her that she was no longer eligible for food stamps because she did not meet the program's work requirements. Cindy was referred to Connecticut Legal Services for assistance. Her CLS attorney assessed Cindy's case and determined that given her disabilities, she was unable to work and exempt from the work requirement. The attorney contacted the DSS on Cindy's behalf to challenge the termination of her food stamp benefits, providing the necessary medical support and an affidavit from Cindy attesting to the factors that exempt her from the work rule. After our advocacy, DSS reinstated her benefits back to the date they were originally terminated. In addition to helping Cindy maintain her food stamps, we are providing full representation in the fight to secure the disability benefits to which she is entitled and desperately needs. These benefits will include income, access to medical services, and eligibility for disabled housing, which will give Cindy a level of stability she has never enjoyed.

## Letter from Executive Director and Board Chair

*Dear Friends,*

*Connecticut is diverse. Small in area, it is rich in different landscapes, histories, and kinds of people. At any time, within 20 miles, we are likely to find people of very different religions, different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, different political beliefs, and very different levels of income and wealth. But in times of acrimonious public discourse, it is important to remember that this diversity does not change the fact that the people of Connecticut are citizens of one state and contribute to one community.*

*Connecticut Legal Services relies on the support of government agencies, philanthropic institutions, and private citizens to provide legal help to residents who face great need. We have been doing this work for almost 40 years, and our impact is immense. One measure of our success is the volume of demand: so many battered women, families facing homelessness, people with disabilities, elders, and others reach out to us for help that we must choose among them, dedicating our services to cases in which we can make the greatest difference for people least likely to succeed without our lawyers' help.*

*What makes this challenging work possible?*

- *The contributions of our Board and other pro bono volunteers*
- *The skill, experience, and passion of our dedicated staff*
- *The support we receive from so many donors and funders across the state*

*Justice for all remains a vital cornerstone of the Connecticut community. Thank you for joining us in this crucial work, which changes thousands of lives each year.*

*Sincerely,*



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

Steven D. Eppler-Epstein  
Executive Director



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

Ross H. Garber  
Board Chair

# Financial Supporters and Other Income Sources for 2015–2016 Expenditures

## Government Based Grants

Agency on Aging, Senior Resources (Eastern Connecticut)	\$	52,513
Agency on Aging, Southwestern Connecticut Area		50,528
Agency on Aging, Western Connecticut Area		61,184
City of Middletown		10,000
Community Development Block Grant Program—City of Waterbury		10,175
Community Development Block Grant Program—Town of Fairfield		4,017
Community Development Block Grant Program—Town of New London		3,000
Park City Communities		52,739
State of Connecticut Court Support Services Division		929,390
State of Connecticut Court Support Services Division—Family Matters Training Program		5,000
State of Connecticut Department of Aging		13,976
State of Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development		85,000
State of Connecticut Department of Social Services		729,432
State of Connecticut Judicial Branch		80,000
State of Connecticut Long Term Care Ombudsman Program		50,000
State of Connecticut Nonprofit Grant Program		25,300
State of Connecticut Office of Protection & Advocacy		123,467
State of Connecticut Office of the Chief Public Defender		45,000
Town of Ashford		1,000
Town of Coventry		925
Town of Ellington		2,200
Town of Groton		10,000
Town of Mansfield		6,500
Town of Vernon		2,000
<b>Total Government Based Grants</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>2,353,346</b>

## Private Grants

Bodenwein Public Benevolent Foundation	\$	1,500
Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut—Woman & Girls Fund, Windham		9,964
Connecticut Bar Foundation (Interest on Lawyer's Trust Account)		1,145,065
Connecticut Bar Foundation (Court Fees Grants-in-Aid)		5,843,792
Connecticut Bar Foundation (Judicial Branch Grants-in-Aid)		771,458
Connecticut Bar Foundation (Bank of America Settlement Award)		57,775
Connecticut Fair Housing Center		10,000
Connecticut Health Foundation		110,000
Connecticut Health Foundation—Health Equity Solutions		150,000
Community Foundation of Fairfield County		40,000

Community Foundation of Middlesex County—Women & Girls Fund		3,000
Estate of Ruth I. Krauss		5,000
Frontier Employees Community Services Fund—Central Region		400
Health Equity Solutions		28,000
Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, Inc. (LawyerCorps Connecticut Fellowship)		0
Jeffrey P. Ossen Family Foundation		100,000
Seaman Family Foundation		100,000
St. John's Community Foundation		3,750
Vera Institute of Justice, Inc.		0
The Frank Loomis Palmer Fund, Bank of America, Trustee		10,000
The Kitchings Family Fund at the Community Foundation of Middlesex County		10,000
The Maurice Goodman Foundation, Inc.		2,500
The Melville Charitable Trust		70,000
The Sassafras Foundation, Inc.		50,000
The Tow Foundation, Inc.		50,000
The Workplace		60,000
The Xerox Foundation		15,000
United Way, Central and Northeastern Connecticut		51,800
United Way, Greater Waterbury		16,600
United Way, Greenwich		750
United Way, Meriden and Wallingford		21,500
United Way, Northwest Connecticut		5,092
United Way, Southeastern Connecticut		29,409
United Way, Southington		4,000
United Way, West Central Connecticut		4,000
United Way, Western Connecticut—Litchfield County		462
United Way, Western Connecticut—Northern Fairfield County		4,163
United Way, Western Connecticut—Stamford		12,025
<b>Total Private Grants</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>8,797,005</b>

## Donations and Other Income

Attorney Fees	\$	246,604
Campaign for Justice		225,051
Donated Goods and Services		338,683
United Way Donor Designations		19,042
Interest/Dividends Earned and Unrealized Gain/(Loss) on Investments		3,916
Miscellaneous		61,968
<b>Total Donations and Other Income</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>895,264</b>
<b>Total CLS Income</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>12,045,615</b>

# Statements of Financial Position—June 30, 2016, and June 30, 2015

ASSETS	June 30, 2016	June 30, 2015	LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	June 30, 2016	June 30, 2015
<b>Current Assets</b>			<b>Liabilities</b>		
Cash and Cash Equivalents—Operating Funds	\$2,435,557	\$2,186,490	Accrued Pension Liability	\$5,964,996	\$4,314,744
Cash in Escrow—Client Funds	2,912	9,236	Accounts Payable	80,963	58,088
Cash—Insurance Escrow	0	0	Accrued Expenses	41,493	31,848
Receivables			Refundable Advances	60,717	60,120
Grants and Contracts Receivable	53,485	35,927	Accrued Annual Leave	451,997	501,543
Promises to Give	1,207,849	1,247,485	Client Trust Deposits	2,912	9,236
Other Receivables	44,759	35,031	<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$6,603,078</b>	<b>\$4,975,579</b>
Prepaid Expenses	65,721	133,903			
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$3,810,283</b>	<b>\$3,648,072</b>	<b>Net Assets</b>		
<b>Fixed Assets</b>			Unrestricted		
Property and Equipment	\$506,858	504,458	Undesignated—attributable to operations	780,972	795,445
Leasehold Improvements	818,520	792,020	Undesignated—attributable to pension liability	-4,311,065	-2,977,608
Total Fixed Assets Before Depreciation	\$1,325,378	\$1,296,478	Designated		
Less Accumulated Depreciation	-1,058,607	-1,014,690	Insurance Escrow	0	0
<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>	<b>\$266,772</b>	<b>\$281,788</b>	Fixed Assets	266,772	281,788.29
<b>Other Assets</b>			<b>Total Unrestricted Net Assets</b>	<b>-\$3,263,321</b>	<b>-\$1,900,375</b>
Security Deposits	\$21,382	\$21,382	Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	758,680	876,038
<b>Total Other Assets</b>	<b>\$21,382</b>	<b>\$21,382</b>	<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>-\$2,504,641</b>	<b>-\$1,024,337</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$4,098,437</b>	<b>\$3,951,242</b>	<b>Total Liabilities And Net Assets</b>	<b>\$4,098,437</b>	<b>\$3,951,242</b>

## CLS Helps Secure Appropriate School for Autistic Child

**G**eorge, who is ten years old, has mental health issues and autism. He was arrested because he acted out in school. He needed a therapeutic placement, which his doctors had requested and considered necessary. The school district refused to provide the placement and kept George in mainstream classes even after doctors, service providers, and a private advocate tried to persuade the school to make these educational changes. George was referred to Connecticut Legal Services for help. When CLS became involved, he had not been arrested again but was continually suspended from school. His CLS advocate got the school to recognize that George's behaviors were manifestations of his disabilities and implemented a plan that specified appropriate responses to minimize those behavioral incidents at school. These responses required the use of more supportive services (e.g., calling George's mother) and less dependence on the school security officer. Although the intervention plan was based on a functional behavior assessment created by a behavior analyst, George continued to struggle with his behavior. After additional advocacy from his CLS attorney, the school finally agreed to place George in a therapeutic school. His new school is much more able to meet his behavioral needs and address some of his medical needs. If CLS hadn't been able to step in, George would have continued to face challenges in his mainstream school placement.

# Connecticut Legal Services Campaign for Justice Donor List

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## Young Abuse Victim No Longer Fears Deportation

**C**ara, 13 years old, came to Connecticut Legal Services for help finalizing her legal permanent residency. Her father had been convicted of molesting her and was in prison in another state. Cara had been instrumental in the case investigation and subsequent prosecution of her father. Because of her help, the judge on her case signed a certification of her cooperation in the investigation. Armed with this certification and a letter from her therapist testifying that the abuse had caused substantial harm, both mental and physical, Cara's CLS attorney persuaded the court to grant Cara and her mother legal nonimmigrant status in the United States. After three years, Cara and her mother will be able to apply for permanent legal residency and get their green cards. They now live free from fear of having to leave the United States and can concentrate on healing from the abuse.



## Young Mother Prevails in Struggle With Housing Authority

**V**icky and her children lived in public housing. Vicky's husband had been abusive for years, and after he began abusing his and Vicky's young daughter, the Department of Children and Families became involved. Vicky's husband was removed from the household, and he disappeared. She had no idea where he was or how to access his funds to pay their rent and meet their basic needs. In public housing, rent is based on a percentage of the household income. When Vicky notified the manager of her housing project that her husband was no longer in the household, the manager refused to recalculate her rent unless Vicky's husband appeared and asked to be removed from the lease. Vicky tried numerous times to explain the situation to the manager, who refused to budge. The manager then moved to evict Vicky for failure to pay the rent. Vicky sought help from a local social services agency, which referred her to Connecticut Legal Services.

Vicky's CLS attorney worked to show that a public housing authority should remove a household member from a lease, without regard to whether he is a signatory to the lease, and terminate occupancy rights to any individual who is physically violent toward family members without evicting or terminating assistance to the victims. The housing authority finally agreed and reduced the rent based on Vicky's income. With help from DCF and the local social services agency, which collaborated with CLS throughout the process, Vicky paid the overdue rent. She and her children are now free from abuse and live without fearing imminent homelessness.

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### Tax Problems Threaten Nonagenarian's Home

**D**onald, 93, lived independently in his home despite suffering from a number of serious medical conditions. He applied for and was granted a reverse mortgage. Donald fell behind on his real estate taxes, and the mortgage company advised him that if he didn't pay the taxes in full, it would foreclose on the property. Donald contacted Connecticut Legal Services for help, but he had let some time lapse and had misplaced the notice he had received. His CLS advocate contacted the mortgage company, which claimed it was too late for Donald to repay and said it planned to move forward with the foreclosure. CLS helped Donald apply for a hardship exception given his circumstances. The mortgage company granted the exception, but HUD was not satisfied. CLS resubmitted the application for a hardship exception and included much more information about Donald's medical condition. HUD approved the application shortly thereafter. Donald's CLS attorney helped him set up the repayment process, and now Donald can stay in his home without fear of foreclosure.

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### *In Memory of*

Esther Abel  
 Thomas H. Belote  
 Roy F. Brown  
 My brother, Curt, who always  
 struggled and still had a good  
 sense of humor  
 Diana Norton Giles  
 Alan Handler  
 Mark Kravitz  
 Dick McCarthy  
 Ed McCarthy  
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 Trudy and Julie Brown  
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 Elder law unit of CLS  
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### *Abused Woman Wins Lengthy Custody Battle*

**J**essica's husband repeatedly abused her, and she fled to a local domestic violence shelter with their three children. The shelter, which has a long-standing relationship with Connecticut Legal Services, referred Jessica to our offices for help. She wanted to keep her husband from their home so she and the children could return. Jessica's CLS attorney immediately helped her obtain a temporary restraining order. Next, her attorney filed a divorce petition seeking custody of the children. Initially, Jessica and her husband agreed to share physical custody of the children while in the process of finalizing the divorce. However, her husband continued to verbally abuse her during the process and find other ways to punish Jessica for leaving, such as claiming that he wanted full and sole custody of the children

For two years, Jessica and her husband engaged in mediation, participated in a custody evaluation, and were in and out of court. The court finally acknowledged that Jessica's husband was unwilling to cooperate and scheduled a trial to finalize the divorce and child custody. Jessica's CLS attorney represented her during the eight-day trial, and she was finally granted her divorce and sole physical and legal custody of the children. The court ordered that any communication between Jessica and her husband take place only through a third-party website, and she now has a measure of peace. The trial decision brought Jessica the closure she needed and protects her from her former spouse's efforts to tyrannize her. Most important, her children can focus on their lives and not be subject to parental push and pull and the presence of court evaluators in their lives.

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