

WE PERSEVERE

## MISSION

Connecticut Legal Services provides access to justice and protects critical civil legal rights of low-income individuals and families through representation, systemic advocacy, advice, collaboration, and education.

## VISION

Connecticut Legal Services believes that Connecticut can become a state in which all people are heard, are treated fairly, can meet their basic needs, and have equal opportunities to thrive.

## VALUES

### At Connecticut Legal Services, we believe in

#### Justice

We know all people are worthy of respect, compassion, fair treatment, and equal opportunity.

#### Excellence

We strive to deliver high-quality, effective services with integrity and to continually evaluate and improve our work.

#### Empowerment

We believe in the power of self-advocacy and strive to foster that skill in our clients and the communities we serve.

#### Racial Equity

We strive to achieve and maintain racially equitable practices internally and in our services and interactions.

#### Commitment

We understand that achieving our mission requires the unyielding commitment of our staff and board to our clients, to our work, and to one another.

# Service Area, Offices, and Staff

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 (per 2010 US Census).

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

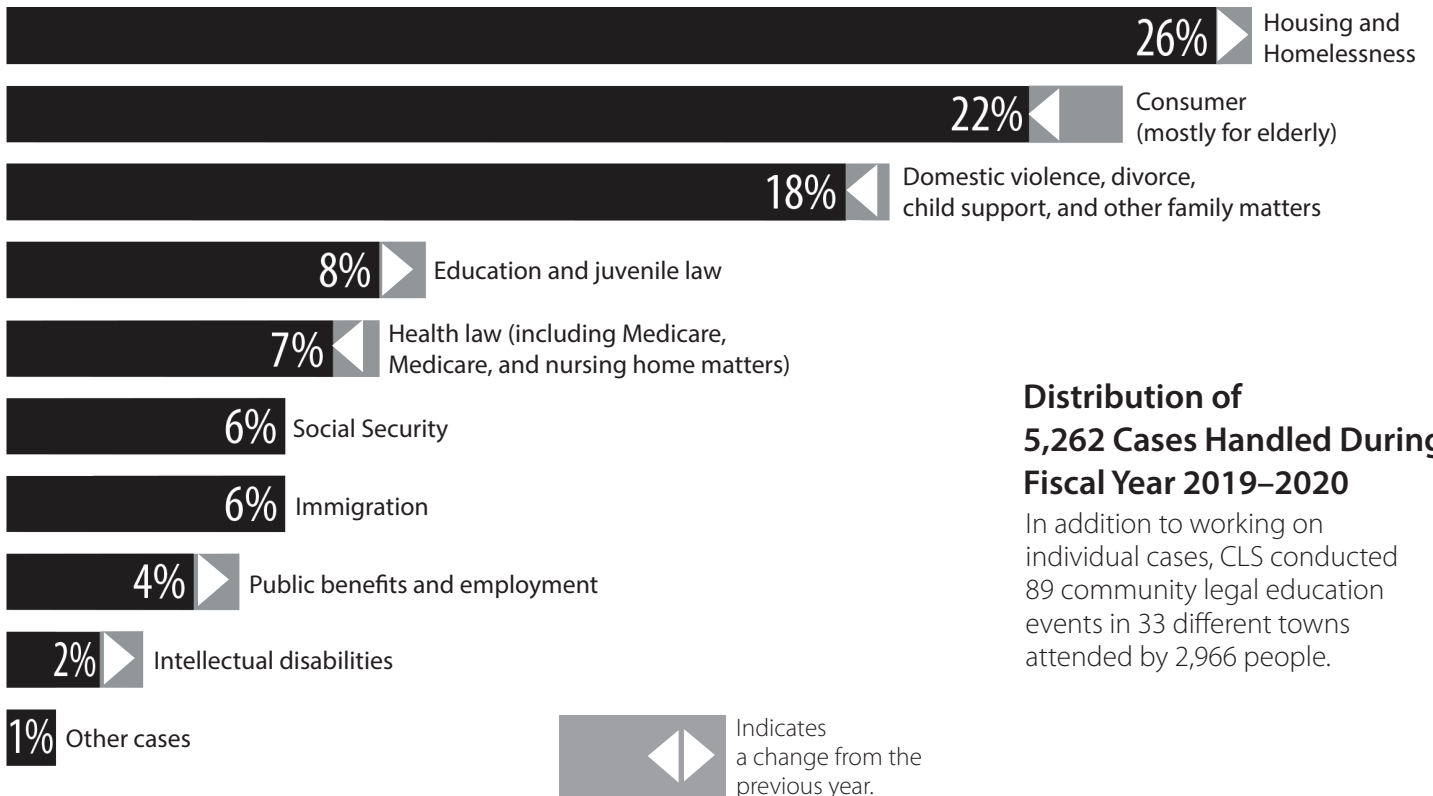
On June 30, 2020, the CLS staff consisted of

- 44.95 FTE lawyers
- 10.80 FTE legal assistants
- 10.00 FTE administrative staff
- 2.00 FTE paralegals
- .55 FTE child welfare advocates.



## Distribution of Cases

In 2019–2020, Connecticut Legal Services received approximately 15,667 requests for service. We responded by opening 2,681 new cases for legal representation and counseling. We also worked on 2,581 cases opened in previous years. CLS services in these 5,262 cases benefited approximately 12,110 household members, including 4,876 children.



### Distribution of 5,262 Cases Handled During Fiscal Year 2019–2020

In addition to working on individual cases, CLS conducted 89 community legal education events in 33 different towns attended by 2,966 people.

# 2019–2020 Board, Council, and Chief Office Personnel

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## CLS Helps Disabled Man Find Stability

**Rick\***, a 63-year-old disabled man, came to CLS after being denied Social Security Disability benefits. When we met Rick, he lived in transitional housing after a spell of homelessness and struggled with untreated depression and anxiety. He worked nine hours a week as a janitor, but his attendance was poor because of his depression. He also had frequent panic attacks on the job. His employer reduced his hours to six per week but eventually let him go. Rick desperately needed a source of income as well as the medical benefits that come with eligibility for Social Security Disability. He turned to CLS for help.

It was a long road. Even after CLS became involved, Rick was again denied benefits. After going through the long appeals process three more times, we finally achieved a favorable decision for him, including a retroactive payment of benefits in the range of \$70,000. His monthly benefits are enough for Rick to find stable housing, which he did at a senior/disabled housing complex, and he is able to access all the medical services he needs to help manage his depression and anxiety. CLS believed in Rick’s case and persisted to ensure that Rick would not become homeless or live without the services he desperately needs.

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

## Letter from Executive Director and Board Chair

Dear Friends,

Thank you for supporting Connecticut Legal Services in the work of providing justice and equity to our clients. This past year, many people faced unexpected challenges, and the impact on low-income people already in crisis was particularly harsh. In spite of the unpredictable circumstances, we found ways to meet the growing legal needs of our client communities.

CLS pivoted immediately and effectively to various remote and in-person strategies (with pandemic-safe policies) to continue the services our clients need. For many, the pandemic created a crisis within a crisis. As our clients' advocates, we made sure they were fully represented systemically in administrative and legislative processes as well as in their individual cases.

We strengthened our existing commitment to address racial injustice and to use a race equity lens for both internal processes and external client services. We, along with many of you, witnessed in outrage the senseless, racially motivated killings of several people of color in the spring and summer of 2020, and we maintain our commitment to recognize and address ongoing racial injustice in our client communities.

As we persevered through these difficult times, we took the opportunity to strengthen our support of one another as well as our clients. Our staff stretched to address unprecedented client needs, providing regional coverage through remote practices, increasing our online resources, and working with the courts to ensure access to justice. CLS continued to move forward successfully despite the challenges of COVID-19, the loss of staff through attrition, and the pandemic-related loss of income.

Thank you for your continued support, especially during these exceptionally difficult times for our client communities.

Sincerely,



*Deborah  
Witkin*

Deborah R. Witkin  
Executive Director, CLS



*Ann G. Taylor*

Ann G. Taylor  
Chair, CLS Board of Directors

# Financial Supporters and Other Income Sources for 2019–2020

## Government-Based Grants

	<b>Support</b>
Agency on Aging, Senior Resources (Eastern Connecticut)	\$ 36,554
Agency on Aging, Southwestern Connecticut Area	48,607
Agency on Aging, Western Connecticut Area	64,030
City of Middletown	10,000
Community Development Block Grant Program—City of Waterbury	9,643
Community Development Block Grant Program—Town of Fairfield	3,804
Park City Communities	33,553
State of Connecticut Court Support Services Division—Family Matters Training Program	4,000
State of Connecticut Department of Developmental Services	79,319
State of Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation Services	11,500
State of Connecticut Department of Social Services	683,644
State of Connecticut Judicial Branch	29,691
State of Connecticut Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program	250
State of Connecticut Office of the Chief Public Defender	65,563
State of Connecticut Office of Victim Services	2,073,702
Town of Ashford	1,000
Town of Coventry	500
Town of Ellington	2,200
Town of Groton	7,260
Town of Mansfield	6,500
<b>Total Government-Based Grants</b>	<b>\$ 3,171,320</b>

## Private Grants

	<b>Support</b>
Childrens Community Programs of Connecticut	4,600
Connecticut Bar Foundation ( <i>Interest on Lawyers' Trust Account</i> )	1,656,975

Connecticut Bar Foundation ( <i>Court Fees Grants-in-Aid</i> )	5,691,646
Connecticut Bar Foundation ( <i>Judicial Branch Grants-in-Aid</i> )	701,082
Connecticut Health Foundation	50,000
Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut	2,000
Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut - Women & Girls Fund	11,000
Community Foundation of Fairfield County	100,000
Disability Rights Connecticut	6,325
Equal Justice Works Trafficking Victims Protection Act Fellow	52,930
Frank Loomis Palmer Foundation	10,091
St John's Community Foundation	4,000
The Meriden Foundation	10,000
The Tow Foundation, Inc.	80,000
Vera Institute of Justice, Inc.	60,242
United Way, Central and Northeastern Connecticut	15,996
United Way, Greater Waterbury	16,600
United Way, Meriden and Wallingford	21,500
United Way, Northwest Connecticut	3,380
United Way, Southeastern Connecticut	25,506
United Way, West Central Connecticut	3,720
<b>Total Private Grants</b>	<b>\$ 8,527,593</b>

## Donations and Other Income

Program Fees	196,849
Campaign for Justice	\$ 334,819
Donated Goods and Services	124,671
United Way Donor Designations	5,846
Investment Income	26,318
Other Income	291
<b>Total Donations and Other Income</b>	<b>\$ 688,794</b>
<b>Total CLS Income</b>	<b>\$ 12,387,707</b>



## CLS Helps Elderly Woman Avoid Homelessness

Betty lives in subsidized housing. The 90-year-old woman was being evicted by her landlord because of bedbugs. The landlord had exterminated but claimed that the bugs could not be eradicated because Betty had failed to properly prepare for the extermination. The exterminator thought the apartment was clean and that preparation for the extermination was fine. However, even after several visits, the bedbugs kept coming back. Betty was staying with her daughter in another town until the issue could be resolved and appealed to CLS for help. Her CLS attorney sought assistance through community partners and contacted an elder care agency that helped Betty prepare her apartment much more thoroughly for a new series of exterminations. The exterminations worked. Betty's attorney then negotiated with the landlord, who agreed to withdraw the eviction. Betty is now back in her apartment, bug free, and living without the fear of being homeless.

# Statements of Financial Position—June 30, 2020, and June 30, 2019

ASSETS	June 30, 2020	June 30, 2019	LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	June 30, 2020	June 30, 2019
<b>Current Assets</b>			<b>Liabilities</b>		
Cash and Cash Equivalents—Operating Funds	\$3,661,489	\$1,579,508	Accrued Pension Liability	\$5,845,256	\$5,036,631
Cash in Escrow—Client Funds	\$3,825	\$2,368	Accounts Payable	\$326,152	\$263,599
Short-Term Investments	1,199,621	\$1,494,751	Loans Payable—PPP Loan	1,674,195	
Receivables			Accrued Expenses	\$254,602	\$242,136
Grants and Contracts Receivable	\$676,400	\$997,345	Deferred Revenue	\$110,266	\$11,719
Promises to Give	\$1,671,717	\$1,778,491	Accrued Annual Leave	\$548,466	\$488,536
Other Receivables	\$19,457	\$25,971	Client Trust Deposits	\$3,825	\$2,368
Prepaid Expenses	\$101,955	\$116,211	<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$8,762,762</b>	<b>\$6,044,989</b>
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$7,334,464</b>	<b>\$5,994,645</b>	<b>Net Assets</b>		
<b>Fixed Assets</b>			Without Donor Restrictions		
Property, Equipment, and Software	\$1,728,712	\$1,728,712	Attributable to operations	\$(1,320,528)	\$561,921
Leasehold Improvements	\$311,118	\$311,118	Attributable to pension liability	(867,619)	(1,830,386)
Total Fixed Assets Before Depreciation	\$2,039,830	\$2,039,830	Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions	(2,188,147)	(1,268,465)
Less Accumulated Depreciation	(\$1,245,565)	(\$1,171,998)	Net Assets With Donor Restrictions	\$1,608,679	2,151,991
<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>	<b>\$794,265</b>	<b>\$867,832</b>	<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$(579,468)</b>	<b>\$883,526</b>
<b>Other Assets</b>			<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$8,183,294</b>	<b>\$6,928,515</b>
Security Deposits	\$54,565	\$66,038			
<b>Total Other Assets</b>	<b>\$54,565</b>	<b>\$66,038</b>			
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$8,183,294</b>	<b>\$6,928,515</b>			

## CLS Helps Woman Maintain Independence

Pearl is 61 years old, is confined to a wheelchair, and requires around-the-clock care. She receives rental assistance in a large apartment complex that recently underwent renovations and modernization. Pearl originally contacted CLS because she had problems paying her electric bill. While resolving that problem, we discovered that the building in which she lives was not at all accessible to people with physical disabilities. The electronic key fob entry mechanism was too high for her to use from her wheelchair, and the main door did not have an automatic door opener. Pearl was able to access her building and unit because she always had an aide with her, but this prevented her from venturing out by herself and would create a serious problem in an emergency.

Pearl's CLS attorney asked the property manager to resolve the issue, but the property manager refused to make the changes because they were too expensive. The attorney then contacted the owner directly and explained that the law required the changes, which, at the very least, constituted a reasonable accommodation of Pearl's disability. In addition, Pearl's attorney indicated that failure to make the changes could result in a lawsuit. A few days later, the property manager called Pearl's attorney to say that a new entry system had been installed and that they were working on installing an automatic door button. Other repairs that hadn't been made were also being taken care of—Pearl's refrigerator was replaced, and her intercom system was repaired. Pearl is now able to move about freely without needing someone to help her reenter the building if she wants to go outside for any reason.



# Campaign for Justice Contributors

## Trailblazers

**\$10,000–\$24,999**

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## CLS Helps Woman Who Lost Job Because of COVID-19

**Martha lost her job at the beginning of the pandemic when her employer was forced to close. She was eligible for unemployment compensation but was unable to access any payments because of a small monetary penalty related to a previous unemployment claim. The rules do not allow penalties to be taken from future unemployment compensation. As a result, she was unable to pay rent. Afraid of becoming homeless, she asked CLS for assistance. Martha's CLS attorney informed her of her rights as a tenant during the pandemic and how to enforce those rights. Her attorney then navigated the process to get the penalty lifted. Within one business day, Martha's benefits were reinstated, and she was awarded more than \$11,000 in retroactive benefits. Without CLS, Martha would not have been able to access her benefits or save her housing.**





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## CLS Helps Elderly Man Retain Services

**David, an elderly man, was notified by the Department of Social Services (DSS) that his home care services were being terminated because he had failed to make co-pays. DSS had an incorrect list of his assets and used it to switch him from Husky C (which paid for the services) to a state-funded program that required a 9 percent co-pay—without any notice to David. When he received payment notices, the agency providing services told him they would take care of it. By the time David received the DSS notice, he was carrying a hefty balance.**

**David's sole source of income is Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and he has very few assets. He could not pay this balance, and his daughter contacted us for help. CLS collected records showing David's income and the extent of his assets and sat with DSS workers to review their notices to David over the last three years. The records showed that David was eligible for Husky C and was never notified of the program change. CLS then met with the DSS regional director, who agreed that David was and always had been eligible for Husky C. The regional director reinstated David's Husky C back to the original termination in 2017, which rarely happens, and David's balance was erased. David will continue to receive the services he desperately needs without worrying about how he can pay for them.**

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Van Loon

### CLS Helps Disabled Boy Obtain Needed Educational Services

Joey is nine years old, nonverbal, in a wheelchair, and on homebound instruction because of a delicate and complicated medical condition. He cannot walk or eat on his own and has a feeding tube. During his last hospitalization, Joey suffered some brain damage that causes cognitive regression. His mother, Diana, is a single mom who is a domestic violence survivor still recovering from her trauma. She contacted CLS when Joey's school began creating obstacles to Joey's education that made her anxious. The school first insisted that Joey could attend for the full day and that school personnel would feed him. CLS spoke with Joey's doctors, who notified the school and explained why being in school all day was unacceptable for Joey. The school relented and provided home services for him. However, the school district cut all related services and provided only one hour a day of tutoring, two hours per month of physical therapy, and one hour a month of occupational therapy and speech therapy.

CLS successfully advocated having all related services increased based on Joey's needs, and Joey was scheduled for one hour per week of speech and language therapy, 45 minutes per week of occupational therapy, and 45 minutes per week of physical therapy. CLS also advocated for an augmentative alternative communication (AAC) evaluation because the school district had not done one. The AAC evaluation, used to determine whether a student with a speech impairment needs additional assistance with an alternative form of communication, made suggestions for new materials and devices to help Joey. CLS also advocated for increased communication between the school and Diana and ensured that she would receive progress reports every three weeks and that the school would answer her questions. The improved communication eased Diana's anxiety with the school, and Joey is getting the educational support services he needs.



Nancy and Peter von Euler  
Walsh Woodard L.L.C.  
Martin D. Wheeler and  
Deborah A. Ferrari  
A. Thomas White  
Kathleen White  
Michael Witkin  
Dick and Ann Wyles  
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Zwelling

### *In memory of*

Roy F. Brown  
Hon. Joseph Goldberg  
Tyrese Lamar Edward Malloy  
Dick McCarthy and Ed  
McCarthy  
Judge Thomas J. O'Sullivan  
Saul A. Rothman  
Judge Angelo Santaniello  
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Rev. Henry K. Yorkon  
Nancy Zeldes

### *In honor/ appreciation of*

Kevin Brophy  
CLS staff  
Cohen and Wolf's clients  
Marvin Farbman  
Bill Goddard's retirement  
Thomas Goldberg  
Thomas Goldberg's 65th  
birthday

Frank T. Judge III  
Roger Koontz  
Michael Koskoff  
Jane and Steven's wedding  
Joseph Lipia  
Hon. Robert A. Martin  
Carole A. Master  
Hunter Murdock  
William P. Osterdorf  
Jeff Plotkin  
Quinnipiac University Legal  
Clinic staff and faculty

Esther Rada  
Chief Justice Robinson  
Traveler's employees  
Anne Verrill  
Debi Witkin

### *In-Kind Gifts and Service*

Sam Baldwin  
April Condon  
David Falvey  
Ken Ginder  
Andrew Glassman  
James Greifzu  
Karen Hartford  
Austin J Pendleton  
Cindy Slane  
Domenico (Nick) Zaino

## **CLS Helps a Woman and Her Children Overcome Abuse**

Nancy, a mother of three, was visibly bruised and frightened when she approached CLS for help after one of many beatings at the hands of her husband. She was still living with her abuser at the time, but as part of a safety plan she and her CLS attorney created, her attorney helped Nancy file charges against her husband, and he was arrested. She obtained a restraining order, filed for divorce, and got a temporary order for custody of her children. CLS also helped Nancy and her children obtain shelter with a domestic violence program and access the services the program provides. Nancy's older son began receiving therapy to help him deal with the abuse he had witnessed in the household and the resulting post-traumatic stress disorder. With temporary safety achieved, Nancy's CLS attorney began working toward her longer-term stability: the attorney helped Nancy find a suitable home for her and her children where her abuser wouldn't be able to find them. In addition, her attorney helped Nancy apply for subsistence benefits to make sure she could feed her children and make ends meet while she worked to get back on her feet. Because of help from CLS, Nancy and her children are living in safety and working toward financial stability.



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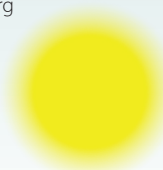
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*AND WE WILL NOT STOP*

