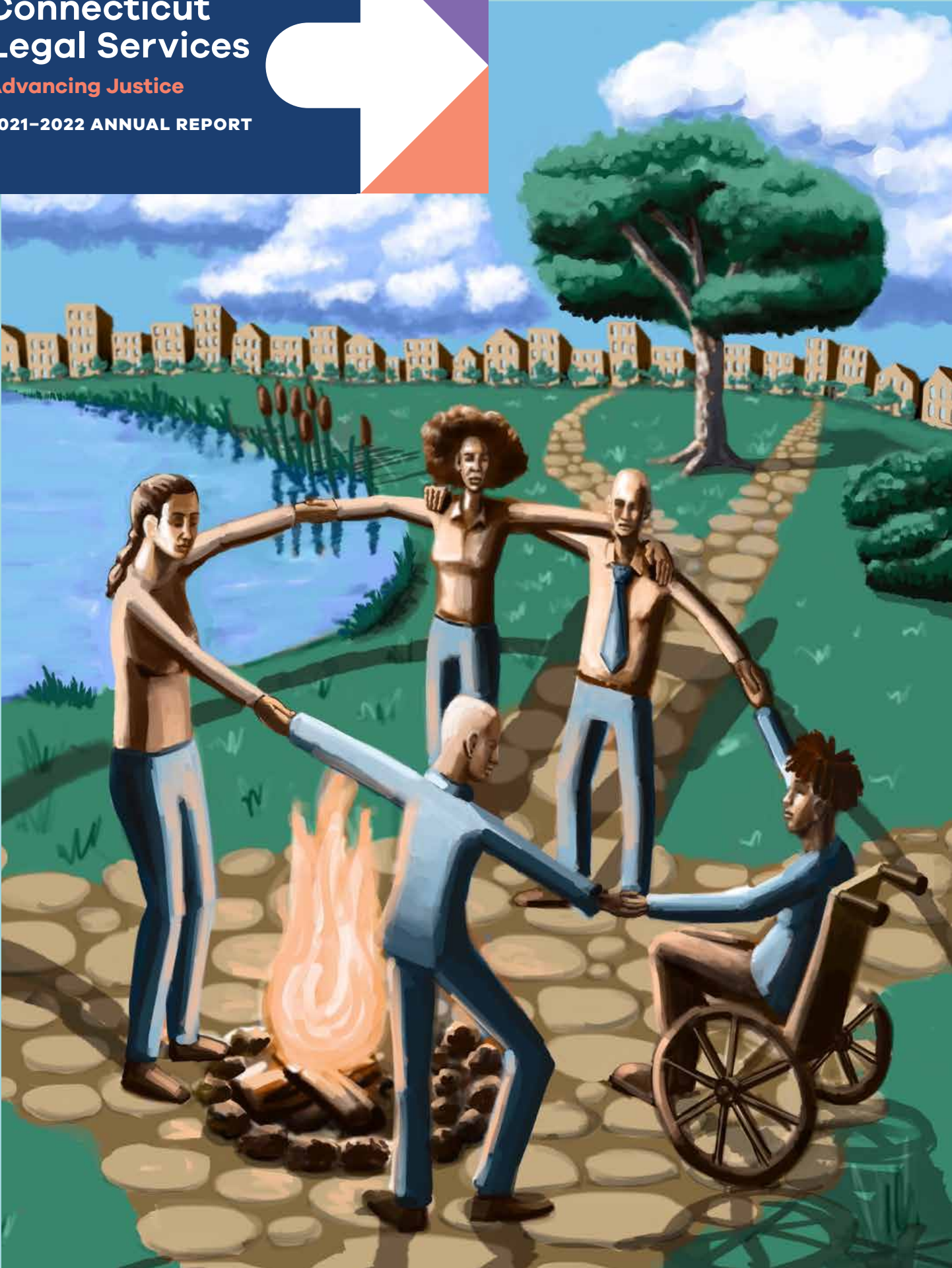


Connecticut Legal Services

Advancing Justice

2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORT



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.



CLS Helps Elderly Man Save His Friends

Eddie* does not speak English, has a mental disability, and relies on his two best friends—little kittens—to help him fight depression and keep him company. He rents an apartment with the help of a public housing program.

During the pandemic, Eddie became more isolated and relied more on his kittens for support. He always took very good care of his kittens, ensuring they received all necessary medical care and were registered with the vet. However, the property manager, who was not on the premises, falsely claimed that Eddie's kittens were a nuisance to other neighbors and served Eddie with eviction papers. Eviction would mean losing his rental assistance and ultimately result in homelessness and the possible loss of his beloved kittens.

Eddie, confused and unsure of what to do, walked into his local CLS office and asked for help. He was able to request a reasonable medical accommodation, which was supported by a note from his doctor stating that the kittens were medically necessary for Eddie's personal well-being and helped him manage his condition. Even though the threat of eviction no longer hung over him, Eddie wanted to move. CLS helped him get his security deposit back so he could find another place to live and ensured he would have no problems using his rental assistance. Eddie now lives in a pet-friendly apartment that he loves with his two kittens and is no longer at risk of being homeless.



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

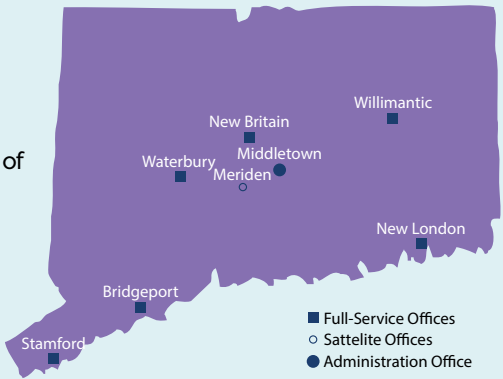
Service Area, Offices, and Staff

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 (2020 census).

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

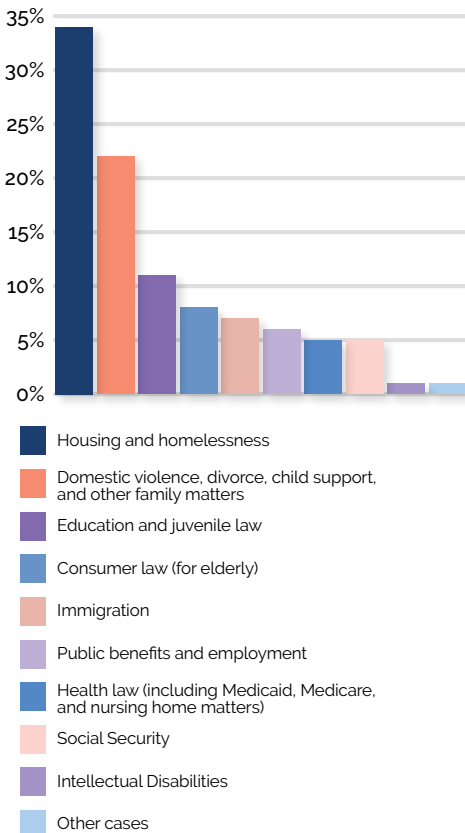
On June 30, 2022, the CLS staff consisted of

- 42.80** 📌 FTE lawyers
- 11.80** 📌 FTE legal assistants
- 9.00** 📌 FTE administrative staff
- 2.00** 📌 FTE paralegals
- .55** 📌 FTE child welfare advocates



Distribution of 3,492 Cases Handled in Fiscal Year 2021-2022

In 2021-2022, Connecticut Legal Services received approximately 15,397 requests for service. We responded by opening 2,001 new cases for legal representation and counseling. We also worked on 1,491 cases opened in previous years. CLS services in these 3,492 cases benefited approximately 8,315 household members, which included 3,468 children.



CLS Helps Abused Woman Keep Her Child



Jasmine, a young, pregnant woman, sought refuge with a friend in Connecticut after fleeing from her abusive partner. Back in her former home state, the baby's father immediately sought and obtained a court order for custody of the newborn child and began contacting Jasmine's family, claiming he knew Jasmine's whereabouts, would travel to Connecticut, take the baby, and make sure Jasmine never saw their child again. Jasmine contacted a domestic violence agency and was immediately provided with shelter at a safe house and other services, including safety planning, counseling, and a referral to a Connecticut Legal Services attorney. Shortly after Jasmine began contacting her attorney via her cell phone, her former partner began calling the attorney directly, making it clear that he had somehow hacked into Jasmine's cell phone account and knew who she was in contact with and her general location.

Jasmine's domestic violence advocate helped Jasmine get a new cell phone account, close all her social media and email accounts, and begin again. Her CLS attorney filed a custody case on Jasmine's behalf in Connecticut, the appropriate state to make orders regarding her child, and worked with the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence to find legal counsel in her former home state to get the competing custody orders dismissed. Because of COVID, Jasmine's custody case was delayed. However, her attorney was finally able to obtain the custody orders Jasmine sought, ensuring that she and her child are protected and may remain in Connecticut.

2021–2022 Board of Directors and Advisory Council

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Former Executive Director: Freedom of Information
Commission

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Richard Slavin, Esq.—Partner: Cohen and Wolf, P.C.

Stanley Twardy Jr., Esq.—Partner: Day Pitney LLP

2021–2022 Chief Office Personnel

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Anne Louise Blanchard—Deputy Director

Keith W. Boyce—Finance Director

Astrid Lebron—Director of Development

Nilda R. Havrilla—Litigation and Advocacy Director

Ashley S. Barnum—Human Resources Manager

Whit Freer—Information Technology Administrator

Letter from Executive Director and Board Chair

To the generous friends of Connecticut Legal Services:

Thank you for your commitment to Connecticut Legal Services in 2022. The year was one of coming together in so many ways: our offices reopened as colleagues gathered again and met with clients face-to-face, and the courts and other service providers returned to increasing numbers of in-person proceedings. We all reemerged into a world evolving and changing at mind-boggling speed with a deepening sense of crisis and isolation. We are proud that CLS continues to respond to the needs of clients who struggle in this unpredictable environment.

This past year, CLS needed to make unprecedented adjustments to meet clients' urgent needs. Housing protections expired, and evictions skyrocketed. Tensions rose in homes, and domestic violence incidents increased. Children returned to their schools with decreased resilience, and calls for special education support accelerated. CLS staff responded to the mounting needs for services while handling struggles in their personal lives.

The Connecticut General Assembly responded to some of the more salient crises with new state funding for housing and domestic violence services, but, inevitably, CLS faced new challenges to meeting state goals without abandoning clients who had different service needs. CLS is digging deeper to advocate for clients while stretching ever thinner to maintain services in traditional areas of need.

CLS needs your support more than ever if we are to remain a full-service legal assistance agency able to meet clients where they are and support them in what they need. We know that the answer is both public and private fundraising. Our board continues its pledge to enhance our fund-raising capacity so we may address the complex spectrum of service needs for our clients.

As we approach the third anniversary of the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we must lean on our community and look ahead with new optimism and a renewed commitment to our mission. By coming together, we can achieve equality and dignity for everyone, especially those who are most vulnerable and lack the resources they need to navigate life in this ever more complicated world.

CLS appreciates you and your support more than we can say.

Sincerely,



Deborah Witkin

Deborah R. Witkin
Executive Director



Carolyn Wilkes Kaas

Carolyn Wilkes Kaas
Chair, Board of Directors

Financial Support 2021–2022

GOVERNMENT-BASED GRANTS

SUPPORT

Agency on Aging, Senior Resources (Eastern Connecticut)	\$36,637
Agency on Aging, Southwestern Connecticut Area	\$36,631
Agency on Aging, Western Connecticut Area	\$46,697
City of Middletown	\$10,000
Community Development Block Grant Program—City of Waterbury	\$2,468
Community Development Block Grant Program—Town of Fairfield	\$4,800
State of Connecticut Court Support Services Division—Family Matters Training Program	\$2,000
State of Connecticut Department of Developmental Services	\$106,638
State of Connecticut Department of Housing	\$650,441
State of Connecticut Department of Social Services	\$681,868
State of Connecticut Judicial Branch	\$26,191
State of Connecticut Office of the Chief Public Defender	\$8,437
State of Connecticut Office of Victim Services	\$2,108,746
Town of Ashford	\$1,000
Town of Coventry	\$500
Town of Ellington	\$2,200
Town of Groton	\$7,260
Town of Mansfield	\$6,500
Total Government-Based Grants	\$3,739,014

PRIVATE GRANTS

Children's Community Programs of Connecticut	\$2,300
Community Foundation of Eastern CT	\$2,500
Community Foundation of Eastern CT—Women & Girls Fund	\$18,600
Community Foundation of Fairfield County	\$87,510
Connecticut Bar Foundation (Court Fees Grants-in-Aid)	\$4,708,274
Connecticut Bar Foundation (Interest on Lawyer's Trust Account)	\$1,207,099
Connecticut Bar Foundation (Judicial Branch Grants-in-Aid)	\$727,396
Connecticut Bar Foundation (RTC Eviction Defense)	\$315,870
Connecticut Bar Foundation (RTC Restraining Orders)	\$600,000
New Reach	\$10,000
Southern Connecticut Gas Company	\$100,000
St. John's Community Foundation	\$3,500
The Tow Foundation, Inc.	\$80,000
The Tudor Foundation	\$85,000
United Way, Central and Northeastern Connecticut	\$12,000
United Way, Greater Waterbury	\$16,600
United Way, Meriden and Wallingford	\$10,750
United Way, Northwestern Connecticut	\$643
United Way, Southeastern Connecticut	\$26,717
United Way, West Central Connecticut	\$2,654
Vera Institute of Justice, Inc.	\$21,488
Total Private Grants	\$8,038,901

DONATIONS AND OTHER INCOME

Program Fees	\$142,115
Campaign for Justice	\$393,380
Donated Goods and Services	\$172,364
Investment Income	\$4,809
Other Income	\$17,806
United Way Donor Designations	\$3,837
Total Donations and Other Income	\$734,311
Total CLS Income	\$12,512,226

Statements of Financial Position

JUNE 30, 2022, AND JUNE 30, 2021

ASSETS	JUNE 30, 2022	JUNE 30, 2021
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and Cash Equivalents—Operating Funds	\$3,944,729	\$4,568,759
Cash in Escrow—Client Funds	\$500	\$4,125
Short Term Investments	\$1,997,151	-
Receivables		
Grants and Contracts Receivable	\$758,363	\$657,830
Promises to Give	\$1,834,357	\$1,765,729
Other Receivables	\$93,670	\$21,814
Prepaid Expenses	\$82,224	\$80,300
Total Current Assets	\$8,710,994	\$7,098,557
FIXED ASSETS		
Property, Equipment, and Software	\$1,393,558	\$1,386,175
Leasehold Improvements	\$311,118	\$311,118
Total Fixed Assets Before Depreciation	\$1,704,676	\$1,697,293
Less, Accumulated Depreciation	(\$1,048,196)	(\$975,709)
Total Fixed Assets	\$656,480	\$721,584
OTHER ASSETS		
Security Deposits	\$51,075	\$54,565
Total Other Assets	\$51,075	\$54,565
TOTAL ASSETS	\$9,418,549	\$7,874,706
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
	JUNE 30, 2022	JUNE 30, 2021
LIABILITIES		
Accrued Pension Liability	\$5,505,371	\$3,336,073
Accounts Payable	\$424,467	\$413,959
Accrued Expenses	\$245,605	\$240,558
Refundable Advances	\$1,187,516	\$61,705
Accrued Annual Leave	\$442,632	\$536,538
Client Trust Deposits	\$500	\$4,125
Total Liabilities	\$7,806,091	\$4,592,958
NET ASSETS		
Without Donor Restrictions		
Attributable to Operation	\$1,764,018	(\$784,481)
Attributable to Pension Liability	(\$2,169,298)	\$2,544,259
Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions	(\$405,280)	\$1,759,778
Net Assets With Donor Restrictions	\$2,017,738	\$1,521,970
Total Net Assets	\$1,612,458	\$3,281,748
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$9,418,549	\$7,874,706

Campaign for Justice Contributors

JULY 1, 2021–JUNE 30, 2022

TRAILBLAZERS: \$10,000–\$24,999

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Community Foundation of Eastern
Connecticut
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Finn Dixon & Herling LLP
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**SUPPORTERS:
 UP TO \$199**

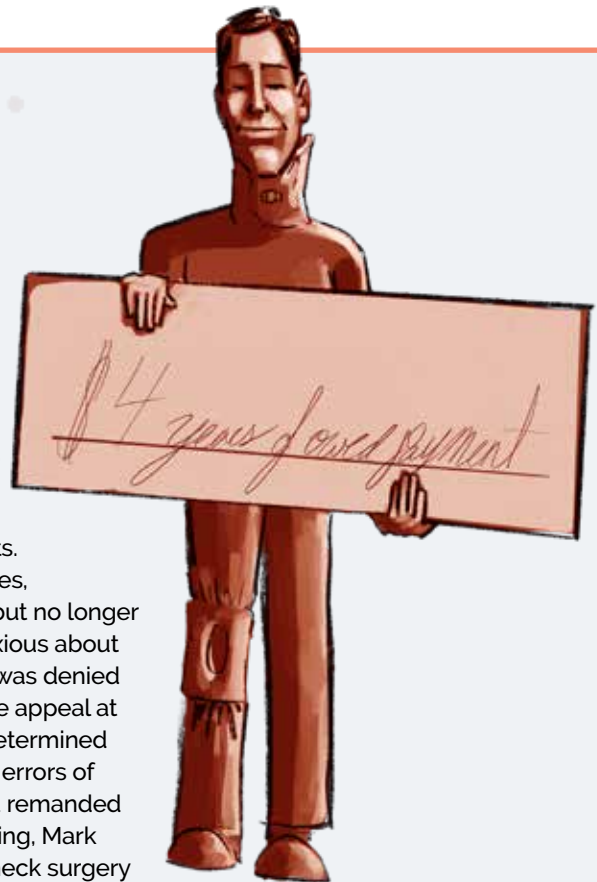
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CLS Helps Disabled Man Access Necessary Services

Mark applied for disability benefits after experiencing several musculoskeletal injuries that resulted in five surgeries: three for a shoulder, one for a knee, and one for an ankle. His musculoskeletal deterioration began when he injured a shoulder while working. After his Workers' Compensation benefits ended, Mark applied for disability benefits. Prior to the application, much of his life had been characterized by surgeries, innumerable MRIs, physical therapy, and chronic pain. Previously athletic but no longer able to do the things he once did, he became depressed, suicidal, and anxious about his life: he wasn't yet 40 but depended on his family for full support. Mark was denied disability benefits and went to Connecticut Legal Services for help with the appeal at an administrative law judge (ALJ) hearing. The ALJ denied his claim and determined he could perform light work. CLS petitioned the Appeals Council, alleging errors of law the ALJ made in writing the decision. The Appeals Council agreed and remanded the case back to the same ALJ for another hearing. At the time of the hearing, Mark had undergone a sixth surgery involving his knee and was scheduled for neck surgery post-hearing. His CLS attorney obtained updated medical records and submitted an updated legal memo supporting the disability claim. The ALJ reviewed the medical evidence and legal memo and reversed himself, resulting in an award of almost four years of retroactive disability benefits. After the favorable decision, Mark contacted his CLS counsel and thanked him. "I had no hope, but you saved my life," he said. "You saved my life!"





CLS Helps Family Stay in Their Home

Chris was referred to Connecticut Legal Services by another legal services agency because his landlord was evicting him. In fact, he didn't know this until he was notified that he would be evicted and his apartment cleared of his things in a matter of days. The landlord had put the incorrect address on all the paperwork, so the Notice to Quit and Writ, Summons, and Complaint were never served; the court even sent the Judicial Notice to the wrong mailing address.

After meeting with Chris, CLS filed motions to reopen and dismiss the case because of the mistakes on the paperwork filed with the court. The case went to a hearing before a judge, where Chris testified to his address, the location of the adjacent building on the property, and other relevant facts—despite the landlord's attempts to intimidate him and everyone in the courtroom. After a 90-minute hearing, the judge dismissed the case, ruling in Chris's favor. Chris and his family will continue to live in the apartment while searching for new housing.



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CLS Helps Severely Abused Child Start Over

CLS became involved with Jerry when he was taken to a hospital needing medical attention. His siblings, including Jerry's twin brother, were removed from the care of their parents, who were charged with child abuse. Jerry, five and half months old, had been shaken so violently and severely that he suffered life-threatening injuries and now has a lifelong disability. He had a long stay in the hospital and was then placed in a hospital for children with special needs. Criminal proceedings against the parents were initiated, and because of COVID limitations, no one from the family could visit him. CLS staff took turns visiting Jerry regularly until he could be placed in a foster home that could handle his unique needs. His foster family wanted to adopt Jerry, which is very rare for a child with disabilities. CLS supported the adoption and advocated with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to ensure physical supports for Jerry in foster care and ensure DCF's agreement to provide physical support equipment post adoption. In addition to an administrative hearing against DCF, CLS also reached out directly to the governor's office for assistance in persuading DCF to provide basic supports, such as wheelchair accessibility, in the foster placement. Jerry and his twin brother were adopted and live in a safe environment with a caring family that has the support necessary to ensure the long-term well-being of Jerry and his brother.



Connecticut Legal Services

Advancing Justice

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povertylaw@ctlegal.org

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bridgeport@ctlegal.org

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860-225-8678; 1-800-233-7619
(serving the New Britain and Meriden areas,
as well as Middlesex County)
newbritain@ctlegal.org

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newlondon@ctlegal.org

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203-348-9216; 1-800-541-8909
(serving the Greater Stamford and Norwalk areas)
stamford@ctlegal.org

85 Central Avenue
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