Achievements & challenges mark 2015

In myriad ways, 2015 was a good year for civil legal aid in Washington. More than 5,000 lawyers, judges, firms and other concerned citizens made unrestricted gifts to the Campaign for Equal Justice. Coupled with income from other sources, the Legal Foundation of Washington distributed $12.3 million in grants to legal aid providers across our state—organizations that empower low-income people with help and hope.

But the fact remains that only 24% of those in need receive assistance. The 2015 WASHINGTON STATE CIVIL LEGAL NEEDS STUDY UPDATE is a rigorous assessment of the unmet civil legal needs of low-income families. Among key findings:

• Low-income Washingtonians routinely face multiple civil legal problems that deeply affect their lives. Seven in 10 such households face at least one significant civil legal problem each year.

• The compound effect of these difficulties on individuals and families is increasingly acute, with the average annual number of civil legal issues per household nearly tripling since 2003.

• Most of our low-income neighbors—a full 76%—do not get the help they need to solve their legal problems.

Despite much good work during the last decade, Washington’s poorest residents still do not have equal access to our state’s civil justice system. We hope these facts, coupled with a reading of this report, will inspire you to redouble your personal commitment to LFW’s Campaign for Equal Justice and the people we serve.

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Campaign for Equal Justice
Why we do what we do

More than 70 percent of the 1.25 million Washingtonians living in poverty experience critical legal problems each year:

- Women and children fleeing domestic violence;
- Immigrant children at risk of deportation;
- People, young and old, fighting hunger and homelessness;
- Military veterans unable to access their benefits;
- Senior citizens who fall victim to fraud; and
- Legions of others confronted with daunting legal challenges.

While the U.S. Constitution guarantees all people the right to legal representation in a criminal trial, it does not extend this right to people facing civil legal issues. One unresolved civil legal problem can lead to a series of complex and interconnected legal challenges that can quickly threaten the health, safety, and financial security of low-income people.

“I believe justice cannot be only available to those who can afford it. It has to be available to everyone. Civil legal aid is a smart investment, saving public and private resources, improving the well-being of our communities, and ensuring justice for all. This is why I give to the Campaign for Equal Justice.”

William D. Hyslop, President (2015-2016), Washington State Bar Association

Legal aid can help meet basic needs. It can mean the difference between nagging hunger and food on the table, homelessness and secure housing, bankruptcy and economic stability. Access to legal aid helps people gain self sufficiency, leads to better outcomes, and enhances the safety and strength of our communities. It is a smart, results-oriented investment with a priceless return.

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1 Source: 2015 Washington State Civil Legal Needs Study Update. To qualify for most civil legal aid services, annual income must be at or below 125% of the federal poverty guidelines. For a family of four this is $27,563.

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In 2015, LFW distributed annual grants to these organizations:

- Benton-Franklin Legal Aid Society
- Blue Mountain Action Council Pro Bono Lawyer Referral Program
- Chelan-Douglas Volunteer Attorney Services
- Clallam-Jefferson County Pro Bono Lawyers
- Clark County Volunteer Lawyer Program
- Columbia Legal Services
- Cowlitz Wahkiakum Legal Aid
- Eastside Legal Assistance Program
- King County Bar Pro Bono Services
- Kitsap Legal Services
- Legal Assistance by Whatcom (LAW) Advocates
- Lewis County Bar Legal Aid
- Northwest Immigrant Rights Project
- Seattle Community Law Center
- Skagit County Volunteer Lawyer Program
- Snohomish County Legal Services
- Solid Ground – Family Assistance Program
- Spokane County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyer Program
- Tacoma Pierce County Bar Association Volunteer Legal Services Program
- TeamChild Advocacy for Youth
- Thurston County Volunteer Legal Services
- Unemployment Law Project
- Yakima County Volunteer Attorney Services
“Alice” grew up with a lot of conflict at home and was convicted of assault against a parent before being placed in foster care. After exiting foster care at age 18, Alice decided to live alone. TeamChild helped her secure critical short-term benefits, but Alice’s goal was to get a job and support herself independently.

TeamChild believes it is the paramount duty of our community to help youth overcome the obstacles of poverty, juvenile justice involvement, disability, neglect and abuse, racism, and discrimination, in order to achieve their true potential.

After graduating from high school and enrolling in a certified nursing assistant program, she was denied externship learning opportunities due to a juvenile charge remaining on her record. Discouraged and worried about her future, Alice reached out to TeamChild for additional assistance.

TeamChild succeeded in waiving Alice’s legal financial obligations and sealing her juvenile record. Alice is now free to focus on school and develop employment skills to secure the full-time job she has been working toward.
Every day, thousands of youth face profound legal and social barriers that increase their chances of dropping out of school, being homeless, or ending up in the juvenile justice system. With offices in five of our state’s largest counties (King, Pierce, Snohomish, Spokane, and Yakima), TeamChild assisted more than 940 youth in 2015 to help keep them safe, housed, and in school. TeamChild leverages its legal expertise and community partnerships to break down barriers to community services in order to overcome the root cause of a youth’s involvement in the juvenile justice system.

“I have been supporting the Campaign for Equal Justice for more than a decade because I believe that providing legal services to those in need makes our communities safer and healthier places to live. And it’s the right thing to do, especially for lawyers.”

Philip (Wick) Dufford, *monthly donor since 2002*

In 2015, TeamChild further expanded its juvenile record-sealing program, offering clinics in Kent, as well as Seattle, and helped to support a Spokane record-sealing clinic administered by Gonzaga University School of Law. This laid the groundwork to expand the record-sealing program to Pierce County in 2016 by partnering with Tacoma-Pierce County Volunteer Legal Services. The program is a lifeline for many low-income youth and young adults trying hard to graduate and secure employment while struggling with family poverty.
“Valerie” came to the Eastside Legal Assistance Program (ELAP) as a referral from the Domestic Abuse Women’s Network. She sought assistance with her divorce and securing a domestic violence protection order (DVPO) against her husband. The couple has been together since high school and has a four-year-old daughter.

From the beginning of their relationship, Valerie’s husband was physically and emotionally abusive. After the last incident, Valerie decided it was time to end the abuse. She also feared for her daughter’s safety because her husband’s brother is a registered sex offender.

As retaliation for leaving, Valerie’s husband filed a DVPO against her. Valerie then filed her own DVPO against her husband. ELAP represented her at the hearing at which the commissioner referred the case to family court services. An ELAP fellow represented Valerie and family court services recommended Valerie be protected and her husband not have any visitation until he completes six months of a domestic violence treatment program. Thanks to the legal help she received from ELAP, Valerie finally feels her daughter is safe.
GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT ELAP

The Eastside Legal Assistance Program provides access to justice through free civil legal aid to low-income residents of east and northeast King County, and domestic violence assistance throughout King County. ELAP operates 11 legal clinics (six general law and five specialty clinics) where, in 2015, staff and volunteers served 959 low-income clients.

“We are proud to support the Campaign for Equal Justice because we believe in providing equal access to the law. Supporting the Campaign is the best way to help the thousands of low-income families in our community who need critical legal assistance.”

Robert A. Blackstone, Partner in Charge
Davis Wright Tremaine Seattle Office, donor since 1992

Specialty legal clinics cover the areas of family law, bankruptcy, immigration, and more, and are operated across the county in partnership with many social service providers. ELAP serves individuals living at 200% of the federal poverty level and domestic violence survivors referred by a DV advocate, legal aid agency, or social service agency.

Annually, through a network of more than 200 volunteer attorneys and three staff attorneys, ELAP excels at assistance to domestic violence survivors, partnering with key community groups and human service agencies to provide advice clinics at crisis centers, churches, and other neighborhood-based sites.

The organization’s vision is simple and straightforward: All people on the Eastside and survivors of domestic violence countywide will have access to justice in the civil legal system.
“Jeff,” a veteran suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), came to Blue Mountain Action Council (BMAC) Pro Bono Lawyer Referral Program because he was facing imminent eviction. The landlord, represented by an attorney, claimed Jeff had failed to pay rent for several months. Jeff insisted he had attempted to pay, but his checks were refused. In addition, Jeff reported the landlord had punched holes in his door and acted in a threatening manner, triggering symptoms of his PTSD.

Unable to afford an attorney or comprehend the legal documents his landlord’s attorney served him, Jeff was skillfully guided through this stressful and potentially life-altering situation by BMAC. Although BMAC’s volunteer attorney was not able to prevent Jeff’s eviction, he was able to make sure the $5,000 judgment against him was dropped and allowed Jeff to stay in his house for one month before needing to vacate. With the assistance of a volunteer attorney, Jeff avoided a large financial burden and homelessness.
GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

BLUE MOUNTAIN ACTION COUNCIL

Blue Mountain Action Council Pro Bono Lawyer Referral Program is one of our small but mighty grantees—in 2015, this legal aid program grew by 66%! BMAC is a community action nonprofit agency serving residents in Southeast Washington. Staff and volunteers work to meet basic needs of low-income families and individuals, offer opportunities for people to achieve greater levels of self-sufficiency, develop strategies to prevent poverty, and leverage community support and volunteerism.

Clients receive ongoing legal services including:

- Bankruptcy assistance
- Limited or full representation
- Preparation of complex legal documents
- Group clinics with an attorney present

“Low-income people can often face a multitude of seemingly mundane—but potentially devastating—legal issues. As a champion of the rule of law, I can ensure everyone has equal access to legal representation by supporting the Campaign for Equal Justice.”

Margaret Niles, Partner, K & L Gates, new donor

In 2015, BMAC pro bono staff started regular intake clinics at the local Veterans Center. This clinic was created in response to feedback from staff and clients that the traditional intake process often acted as a barrier to services for vulnerable (homeless and/or mentally ill) veterans. BMAC also uses the clinic as a method of referral to the local Northwest Justice Project office when appropriate.

In 2015, BMAC volunteer attorneys donated 423 hours of pro bono time, which amounts to a value of $85,962 in donated services. The program served 246 low-income families last year.

RAINIER CUP WINNER

Congratulations to the attorneys of Whatcom County, winners of the 2015 Rainier Cup where 41% of the legal community made gifts to the Campaign for Equal Justice. Thank you!

The Rainier Cup is awarded to the bar association that has the highest percentage of members donating to the Campaign for Equal Justice.

BAKER CUP WINNERS

Bonney Lake Municipal Court
Chelan County District Court
Chelan County Superior Court
Cheney Municipal Court
Douglas County District Court
Douglas County Superior Court
East Wenatchee Municipal Court
Fircrest Municipal Court
Jefferson County Superior Court
Pasco Municipal Court
Poulsbo Municipal Court
Ruston Municipal Court
Sedro Woolley Municipal Court
Skagit County District Court
Skagit County Superior Court
Snohomish County Superior Court
Thurston County District Court
Washington State Supreme Court

Courts achieve Baker Cup status when 100 percent of their judges make gifts to the Campaign for Equal Justice.
2015 Financials

**INCOME**

Net interest on IOLTA accounts $1,716,593

Investment income $27,458

State pass through funds $1,903,000

Private unrestricted contributions $2,418,275

Cy pres awards $1,037,432

Home Justice & Prison Re-Entry $6,595,047

**TOTAL REVENUE** $13,697,805

**EXPENSES**

Annual grants $6,892,042

Home Justice & Prison Re-Entry grants $4,967,340

One-time grants $492,013

Program expenses $892,143

Administration $461,696

**TOTAL EXPENSES** $13,705,234

**thank you**

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THE CAMPAIGN FOR EQUAL JUSTICE:
LFW’s unified fundraising drive

The Campaign for Equal Justice is the only state-wide fundraising effort for civil legal aid. We raise private unrestricted funds for 23 legal aid providers in Washington. Our coordinated fundraising model allows the legal community to give once a year, reducing duplication and confusion, and raising more money.

In 2015, 5,000 individuals supported civil legal aid by contributing $1.2 million to the Campaign. Thank you to all our donors whose support changes lives every day in every community in our state.

In 2015, LFW awarded $12.3 million in grants, and our grantees helped more than 30,000 individuals and families facing urgent legal problems. Additionally, the systemic advocacy of our grantees positively impacts hundreds of thousands of low-income Washingtonians each year.
Each year, more than 1,000,000 people in Washington State need legal aid they can’t afford. They deserve justice.

Here’s how you can help:

☑️ **GIVE TO THE CAMPAIGN FOR EQUAL JUSTICE.**
By participating in the Campaign for Equal Justice, you are supporting the work of 23 legal aid programs across Washington. Your gift supports systemic reforms to remove barriers that keep people in poverty like unfair legal financial obligations or loss of home or livelihood.

☑️ **GIVE TO THE ENDOWMENT FOR EQUAL JUSTICE.**
The Endowment for Equal Justice raises unrestricted funds to provide a stable, long-term source of funding for civil legal needs of our low-income neighbors. Gifts to the Endowment grow in value and in perpetuity, providing legal help now and for generations to come.

☑️ **LEAVE YOUR LEGACY.**
Make your mark and join our Justice Society by making a planned gift or bequest to the Legal Foundation of Washington. Consult your estate planning attorney or financial advisor about how you may include LFW in your living will and make a lasting investment in your community. Unless otherwise requested, bequests fund the Endowment for Equal Justice.

☑️ **GIVE YOUR VALUABLE TIME.**
You can help by becoming a volunteer attorney. Our local legal aid programs are always in need of skilled and compassionate lawyers. For more detailed information on opportunities to make a difference in your community, contact your chosen legal aid program directly.