

LEGAL AID
of East Tennessee

2023
**ANNUAL
REPORT**

ADVANCING JUSTICE.
STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES.

Our mission:

Strengthening communities and changing lives through high-quality legal services

Our vision:

An East Tennessee where justice is a community value and no one faces a legal problem alone



FROM AARON CHAPMAN, ATTORNEY AND LAET BOARD PRESIDENT

Look up “development” in any dictionary. and you’ll find several meanings. Some definitions I found described themes of “making visible,” “creating,” “changing,” and, of course, “growing.” And that’s where we are at LAET.

We have worked for decades to make civil injustice more visible and to let ourselves be seen as guardians against it. We have worked to show our clients’ stories to those with the power to help. We have created one of Tennessee’s strongest legal voices, with the compassionate expertise of our lawyers, staff, and volunteers. We have built trust in our communities and are often the first call made in helping solve community-wide legal problems. We have changed how we operate, with advances in technology and a holistic focus on family justice. We have changed how legal problems are addressed by forming unique partnerships with medical and mental health providers.

And we have grown! LAET has approximately 80 team members in several locations across our 26-county region. We are supported by state, federal, and local funders, in addition to a robust network of private and corporate donors. Despite the growth and the changes we are experiencing, our mission remains simple: strengthening communities and changing lives through high-quality legal services.

As President of LAET’s Board of Directors, I can’t wait for you to learn about the great work we’ve been doing and what we’re still aiming to accomplish in the months and years to come. On behalf of our Board, I appreciate your ongoing assistance in our mission, and I’m hopeful you will continue to be a part of our continuing development!



FROM DEBRA HOUSE, ATTORNEY AND LAET EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



When an agency covers 26 counties, leadership must come from all sides.

Our annual report reflects this.

The firm’s team consistently exhibits determination, as they advocate for the region’s most vulnerable. This includes attorneys, paralegals, support staff, and our fiscal and development departments. Our board of directors provides governance and oversight, both of which are crucial. Strong partners expand our reach, and our Pro Bono Program is the perfect example, as they enlist the help of the best legal minds around. Finally, our funders lead the way. They vigilantly examine community needs and stay atop trends. As a result, they ensure dollars are present to provide what is needed most. Our private donors and local foundations are critical to this, and LAET depends upon your influence, as part of this group.

With your help, LAET will continue striving for an East Tennessee in which justice is a community value, and no one faces a legal problem alone. As we approach 60 years of service, I hope you take this opportunity to read about our work and encourage us with your dollars, volunteer time, and expertise.

2023 IMPACT SNAPSHOT

13,863

CLIENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS IMPACTED, INCLUDING:

1,514

SENIOR ADULTS

929

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

INCLUDING

5,804

CHILDREN

229

VETERANS

ECONOMIC IMPACT AMOUNT

87.3 million dollars return on investment to the East Tennessee community

CASES BY TYPE

2,425

HOUSING: Public housing, landlord/tenant, property rights, and similar

1,653

FAMILY: Adoption, guardianship, conservatorship, custody, visitation, divorces, annulments, separation, domestic abuse, name change, and other supports

977

MISC: Advance directives, power of attorney, tort, will, estate planning, and the like

625

CONSUMER FINANCES: Bankruptcy, debtor relief, collections, contracts, warranties, predatory lending, benefits, unfair and deceptive sales and practices, etc.

264

INCOME: Benefits, unemployment compensation, benefits for veterans

144

JUVENILE: Emancipation, conservatorship, minor guardian, neglected, abused, and similar

88

HEALTH: Home and community-based care, long-term healthcare facilities, Medicaid, Medicare, state and local health benefits

22

EMPLOYMENT: Rights, discrimination, wage claims, taxes, and the like

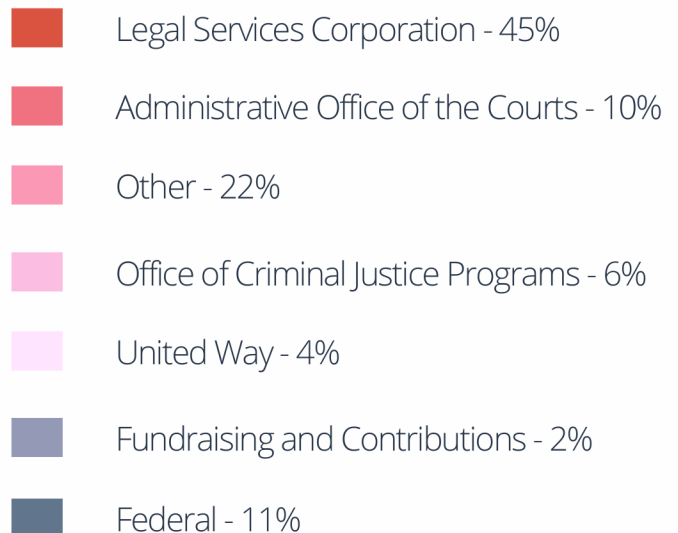
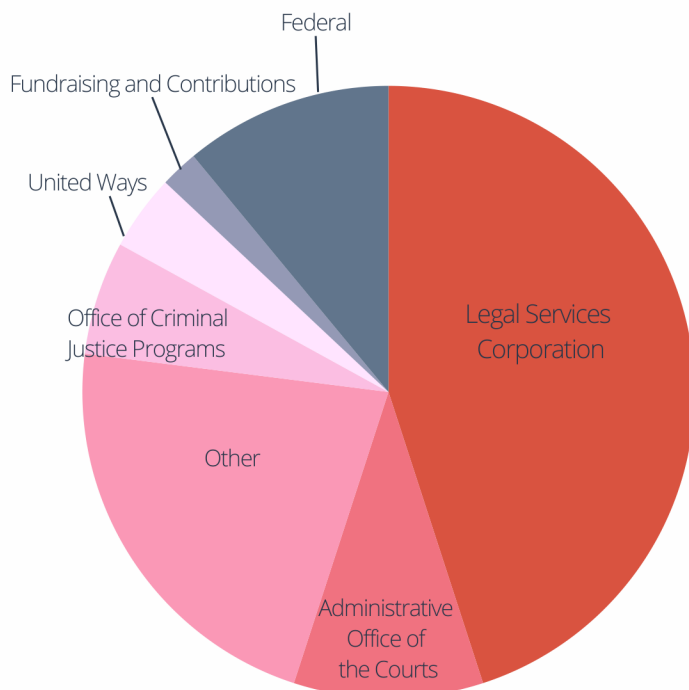
127

INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: Civil, disability, expungement, immigration, naturalization, etc.

3

EDUCATION: Accessibility, expulsion

2023 REVENUE SOURCES



Every \$1 donated to LAET creates \$14.83 in local impact

2023 PRO BONO PROGRAM IN REVIEW

510

Number of pro bono cases

131

Number of pro bono attorneys

50+

Number of clinics offered

221

Number of hours donated by law students

1,599

Number of hours donated by law students and attorneys combined

over \$467,000

Dollar value to the 26-county region

“Working with Legal Aid of East Tennessee was a streamlined and rewarding experience!

Assisting a local client who wouldn't have otherwise had access to counsel was incredibly fulfilling. Knowing I had the support and resources of Legal Aid of East Tennessee was the cherry on top!”

Joseph P. Maus,
Attorney,
The Law Office of
Joseph P. Maus,
PLLC

“I had a wonderful and rewarding experience volunteering with Legal Aid of East Tennessee. At a handful of court appearances, pro bono clinics, and seminars, I've been able to help and counsel clients with family law issues and have helped educate and guide clients needing advance directives and powers of attorney. The LAET people—attorneys, paralegals, and staff—have all been wonderful to work with. And for the first time in more than 15 years of practice (most at a big firm), I got a ‘thank you so much!’ hug from a client!”

Jeff Mead,
Attorney

“I do pro bono because everyone deserves meaningful access to legal representation.

Many of my pro bono clients have been parents seeking conservatorships over their adult children who have disabilities. These parents need conservatorships to continue caring for their kids. The conservatorship process can be daunting, and I am proud to make that process easier.”

Laura Hughes,
Attorney
Husch Blackwell



“Last year, I needed help obtaining a conservatorship for my son, Alexander, who is disabled. I was scared and confused on what to do and where to go. I finally contact Legal Aid of East Tennessee and told them my situation. I then received a message from LAET attorney, James Greene. From Day One [of meeting James] I knew everything needing to be done. I was extremely impressed by everyone at LAET. James helped me get the conservatorship, and I was blessed to have his help through it all. I don't know what I would have done without Legal Aid of East Tennessee.”

– Rachel, mother of Alexander (pictured together)

“LAET staff have been absolutely wonderful to work with. Henrietta Brazal's gentle and optimistic tone made it easy for me to forget that my life was falling apart. I also couldn't be more grateful for Daisey Lovin being assigned to my case. The level of knowledge, experience, and overall competence was beyond impressive. And the level of patience and consideration she showed during our interactions leaves no doubt in my mind that she is exceptionally well suited for her role at the McNabb Center working with clients who are receiving behavioral health services.

I would also like to thank LAET for offering assistance beyond representation during the eviction process by helping file an injunction to recover losses I experienced from the landlord and especially for providing assistance with applying for housing, which is something I have been desperately seeking for months. Finally, but most importantly, I can't express how much it meant to me you advocated for my cat, Moo, in the court documents. I recall hearing a phrase along the lines of "My client and his emotional assistance animal," which absolutely warmed my heart. It made me feel like you really understood the human side of the case number.”

– Michael, cat-dad to Moo (pictured)



“In my time of need, LAET was the one resource offering a spark of hope. I was in a desperate situation, trying to figure out how to keep my family safe, and I had been at a loss for what to do and felt completely helpless.

With their support, Ethan and I were able to be freed from an ever-present nightmare. For years, we had been dealing with an abusive person, which led us to feel utterly trapped. Now, my son is visibly happier than he's ever been, and he is thriving in a way I didn't think possible.

Our lives have been positively affected in numerous ways, and I still see the amazing changes day by day. This is solely due to the beneficial nature of LAET. They are providing a vital service and hope to those who need it most.”

– Suzie, mother of Ethan (pictured)

2023 VOLUNTEERS

Note: If you volunteered during 2023 and do not see your name, or notice an issue with your name, please know we value your gift of time and wish to know about our error, so we can correct our mistake in a future publication.

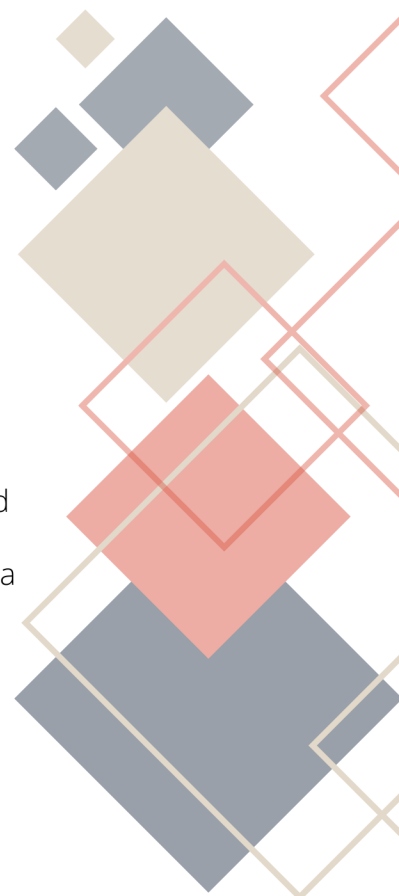
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CLEVELAND
(423) 303-2266
(800) 572-7457

JOHNSON CITY

(423) 928-8311
(800) 821-1312

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(423) 587-4850
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Mental Health Law Partnership

Providing free assistance that
improves mental health

Ballad Medical Legal Partnership

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