

2020



ANNUAL REPORT

2020 IMPACT REPORT



LegalAidofNebraska.org

Milo Mumgaard

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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When 2020 began, we had no idea what the year would truly entail. However, we quickly realized it was going to be a year like no other. From the first days in March 2020, as the coronavirus moved quickly through rural meatpacking plants, nursing homes, and low-income communities, Legal Aid of Nebraska was forced to quickly adapt to this fast-changing reality.

The closing of our offices and reopening as fully remote, telework operations across our geographically large state, also meant a suspension of walk-in self-help “Access to Justice” (A2J) clinics and community collaborations — all part of Legal Aid’s commitment to taking our services into our client communities, rather than waiting for them to come to us. It also meant Legal Aid’s intensive community outreach and education programs, the cornerstone of our efforts to equitably reach all low-income Nebraskans, were put on hold. Further, it became apparent that our client community was growing quickly. Calls for our legal help would not just be from families long enmeshed in poverty; we saw that many more Nebraska families would both need our help and be eligible for our services for the first time.

These fast-moving COVID-19 impacts on Legal Aid and our staff rolled through our organization like a spring thunderstorm, booming across the Great Plains. Fortunately, Legal Aid’s long experience and talented staff was more than up to the task. Our funders remained faithful, and our partners stayed true. And as the COVID and racial equity events of 2020 challenged all of us, here at Legal Aid we came away with the satisfying knowledge we do our jobs well indeed: providing free high-quality civil legal services to as many eligible clients with priority legal needs as we can, making a positive and meaningful difference in their lives. We do not know the future, of course, but I know one thing well: Legal Aid’s staff, volunteers, Board, and supporters will continue to respond with confidence, wisdom, and optimism to any challenges in our path. Together, we will make equal justice happen.



Milo Mumgaard

Executive Director

We
make
equal
justice
happen

WHERE, HOW AND WHO



68% of people served were female



458 cases involved U.S. veterans



2,062 people served with disabilities



27% of people served were 60 years old or over



1,213 cases involved a victim of abuse



26% of all households served were in deep poverty



9,384 total of children helped on all closed cases



9,695 cases were handled and closed



1,400+ requests for assistance a month via phone, online, walk-ins, letters and outreach

14,069
requests for assistance

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2020, the work of Legal Aid of Nebraska helped **12,127** unique individuals

Lincoln, Nebraska

LEGAL AID HELPS A MOTHER FIGHT FOR LIFE-SAVING MEDICATION FOR HER TWO CHILDREN

When a Lincoln family had nowhere else to turn, they called Legal Aid of Nebraska.

"When you're falling through the cracks and you feel like nobody else will help you and you don't know where to go — Legal Aid was there," said client Angie Hertzell.

Her children, Carter and Zander, suffer from an extremely rare disease and their medication was no longer available to them due to changes in a Medicaid waiver program. She and her husband were beyond devastated.

"I begged, I pleaded. I wondered, 'Where can I get help?'"

Then she met her Legal Aid attorney.

"She was the first person that said, 'I'm going to help you. I'm going to try my best to help you get what you need.'" Angie said she can't even begin to describe the enormity of the task her Legal Aid attorney took on. "But she did it. She knocked it out of the park."

Many Lincoln residents are helped every day through Legal Aid's Health, Education & Law Project (HELP), that offers legal assistance to patients in need through a partnership with Nebraska hospitals and federally qualified low-income health care providers.

"Just even knowing that there was somebody there for me, I felt hope. There is no way to ever repay them — ever," Angie said. **"If they hadn't helped, I do not think my children would be walking this planet."**

"The fact that my Legal Aid attorney was willing to listen to me and to try and help me was amazing. Not only did she try to help — she won the case for both of my kids."

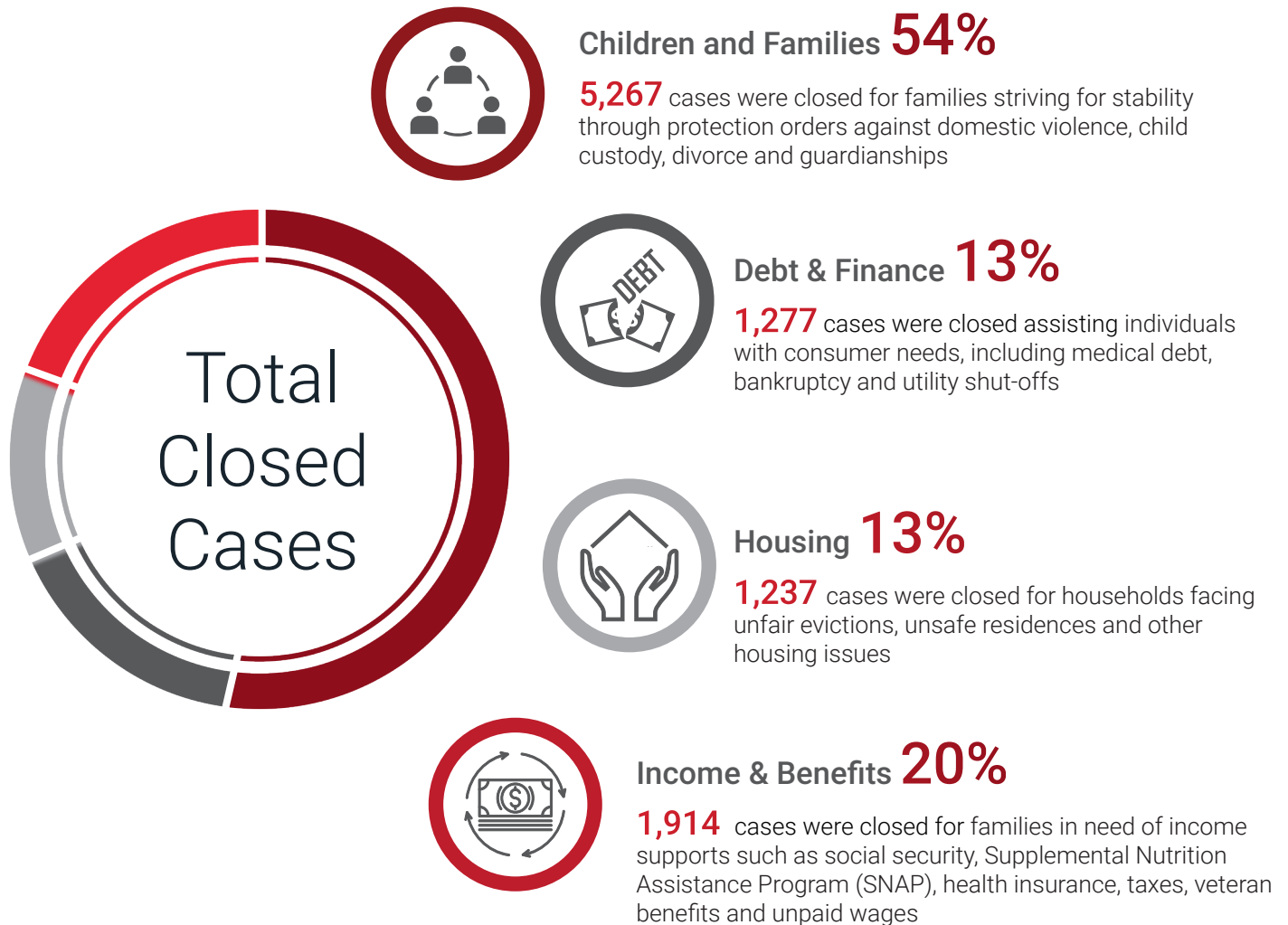
“

Just even knowing that there was somebody there for me, I felt hope. There is no way to ever repay them — ever.”



Total Closed Cases 2020

MAKING EQUAL JUSTICE HAPPEN



Total Economic Impact
\$12,686,369

\$2,811,636 Total Increased Assets **\$4,469,531** Total Increased Income **\$5,405,202** Total Decreased Debt

“

“He’s a good lawyer. He was on top of it. He told me, ‘if you need anything, let me know.’”

Native American Program

HELPS SINGLE MOTHER REUNITE WITH DAUGHTER

Life during the pandemic hasn’t been easy for “Melissa,”* a single Nebraska mother. When she was released from prison for a drug-related offense, she had no job or home. Not having custody of her six-year-old daughter, who is a member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, was especially hard.

With persistence and hard work, every day she took steps to build a solid foundation for the both of them. Like so many Nebraska families from low-income backgrounds, making ends meet every month was a struggle.

“It took me a year to get established and get my own house,” she said. But without the help of an attorney, reuniting with her daughter would be nearly impossible.

“I wasn’t financially able to hire a lawyer, so somebody told me about Legal Aid.”



“Melissa” met Billy Boyd, an attorney with Legal Aid’s Native American Program, who quickly went to work on her court case. After several months of hard work and Melissa’s steadfastness, they were able to succeed in regaining custody of her daughter.

“He’s a good lawyer. He was on top of it. He told me, ‘if you need anything, let me know.’”

“The court specifically found that she had turned herself around and is in a great place to be a fit parent,” Boyd said.

The day she reunited with her daughter was one she will never forget. **“It was exciting and overwhelming,”** she said.

With this new beginning, and the assistance of the Native American Program, the duo are thriving and making happy memories together.

* The client’s name has been changed.

Year ended December 31, 2020

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

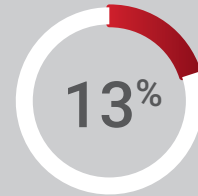
2020 Revenue Percentages \$9,776,499



Federal



Legal Services Corp.



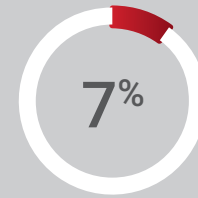
State



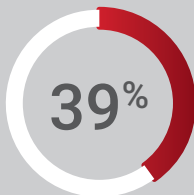
Interest on Lawyers
Trust Accounts



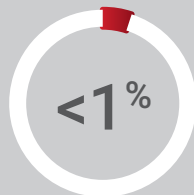
United Way



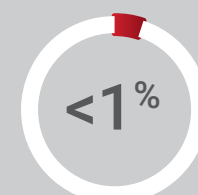
County



Foundations, Corp,
Private

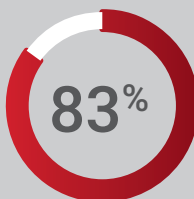


Contributed Services

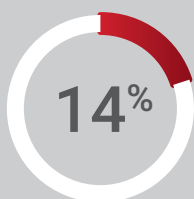


Interest & Misc

2020 Expense Percentages \$8,592,999



Program Services



Administrative



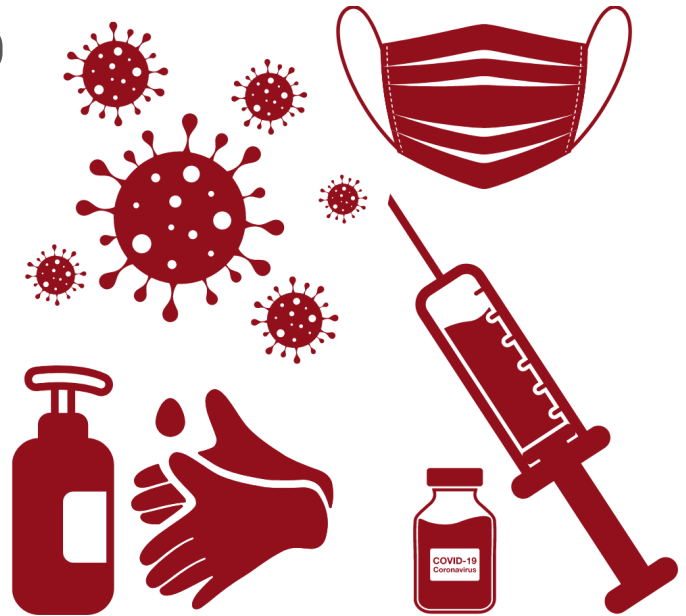
Development

Jennifer Gaughan

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF OF LEGAL PROGRAM/STRATEGY

HOW COVID-19 IMPACTED LEGAL AID OF NEBRASKA

A state of emergency was declared on Friday, March 13, 2020, marking the beginning of a time unprecedented in our history. As most of the world was shutting down, our staff immediately began preparing a response, working tirelessly to ensure low-income Nebraskans impacted by COVID knew their rights, had access to crucial legal assistance, and engaged in outreach and advocacy about issues affecting Nebraska's low-income families.



Within days of the pandemic, COVID-19 legal resources were available on our website, providing information for tenants to help keep them in their homes, for employees needing to take COVID-related leave, and for low-wage workers who lost their jobs and needed unemployment benefits. We launched the COVID-19 Legal Hotline, enabling low-income Nebraskans statewide to easily access and receive essential legal services. We worked with partners across the state, providing information on the laws and relief available to help families impacted by COVID, raising awareness of Legal Aid's services and how to refer individuals needing legal help. We advocated for our clients' rights within the justice system, many of whom had no choice but attend in-person court hearings during a deadly pandemic.

Legal Aid's dedicated staff always remained focused on our mission of ensuring our clients, who have nowhere else to turn, receive essential legal help. Our staff of about 100 employees provided legal assistance to thousands of low-income Nebraskans, keeping families in their homes, ensuring they had access to income, benefits, food, and medical care, and improving their health, safety and security. The pandemic reinforced the importance of Legal Aid in the realization of equal justice for all.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer Gaughan'.

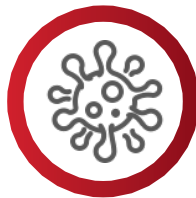
Jennifer Gaughan

Chief of Legal Program/Strategy

COVID-19 IMPACT



23% of all weekly requests since March 9, 2020, have been COVID-19 related



2,605 requests for assistance were COVID-19 related issues in 2020



68% of all COVID-19 related requests were received from Douglas, Lancaster, Sarpy and Hall counties



78% of COVID-19 related cases opened have received some level of service



35% of those seeking assistance for COVID-19 related reasons were people of color



68% of COVID-19 related requests for assistance were made by females



25% of COVID-19 related people served were 60 years old or over



34% of COVID-19 related cases opened involved housing



22% of COVID-19 related cases opened involved income and benefits



22% of COVID-19 related cases opened involved debt and finance



20% of COVID-19 related cases opened involved children and families



We make equal justice happen.



LegalAidofNebraska.org



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for Equal Justice
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