



2020

ANNUAL REPORT

ADVANCING JUSTICE.
STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES.





REFLECTIONS FROM INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEB HOUSE

2020 was a year like no other. The year began with our staff energized by new possibilities for helping our clients and innovative ways to reach our community. Then in March everything changed with the onset of the crippling COVID-19 pandemic. Our staff were put in an incredibly difficult position in determining how to continue to serve our clients while changing the way in which we work. Within days of the emergency federal declaration, we were working remotely and remained so throughout much of the year. Despite this unthinkable situation our staff never missed a beat in continuing to serve our clients.

I cannot say enough about the way our staff accepted the challenges not only of remote work but also of continuing to help those most in need. While all of our clients were impacted by the pandemic, the effect on seniors was especially grave. The members of our Senior Law Alliance team took extraordinary measures to reach isolated seniors who had no way to get out to meet with a lawyer in a time of particular need, especially for important documents such as living wills and powers of attorney. Our staff at our four Family Justice Centers continued to do all they could to help those suffering abuse when the pandemic kept them in their home with a violent partner. Our housing attorneys addressed unthinkable tactics by landlords to get our clients out of their homes during a moratorium on lawful evictions. We saw cases of people being locked out of their homes and utilities being cut off in the heat of summer, all illegal actions. Without the help of a lawyer, these clients and their families would have been rendered homeless at the height of the pandemic. All of this work could not have been accomplished without the support of our other staff members, including our Finance, Human Resources, and Development Team members, who ensured our attorneys were able to represent their clients while working remotely.

Last year LAET staff and our wonderful Pro Bono Attorneys helped 533 people with legal problems related to the pandemic. The majority of the problems we saw were housing related, issues involving unemployment compensation, and requests for advance directives or wills. Our staff rose to the challenge of meeting the overwhelming legal need for our low-income neighbors and closed over 5,500 cases while navigating the various hurdles created by the pandemic.

The pages that follow contain our 2020 annual report, which highlights the work of our staff and the gratitude of our clients. Please join me in thanking our wonderful staff for their hard work and dedication in a most unusual year. As we reflect on 2020 and look forward to the hope of 2021 LAET never wavered in our commitment to the cause of equal justice for all.



2020

ONE VISION. ONE FIRM. ONE COMMUNITY.

The mission of Legal Aid of East Tennessee is to strengthen
communities and change lives through high quality legal services.

Our vision is an East Tennessee where justice is a community value and
no one faces a legal problem alone.



2020 IMPACT

11,657 CLIENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS IMPACTED

CASES BY TYPE

2004
SENIORS

INCLUDING
3951
CHILDREN

352
PRO BONO CASES

107
JUVENILE

1446
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

305
VETERANS

SERVED BY
214
VOLUNTEER ATTORNEYS

323
INCOME

63
EMPLOYMENT

146
HEALTH

644
CONSUMER

1056
MISC

1345
HOUSING

1896
FAMILY

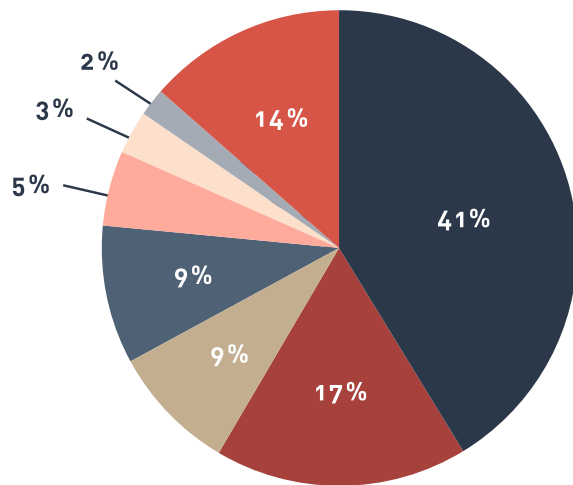


ECONOMIC IMPACT AMOUNT

\$ 72.4 Million

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2020 REVENUE SOURCES



- Legal Services Corporation
- Administrative Office of the Courts
- Other
- Office of Criminal Justice Programs
- United Ways
- Other State of TN Grants
- Fundraising and Contributions
- Title III, Elder Trust, Cycles of Success, CARES - Payroll Protection Plan, TN CARES Act

**EVERY \$1 CREATES
\$11.21 IN LOCAL IMPACT.**

CLIENT TESTIMONIALS

“I was able to keep my home.
Life changing.”

“Thanks to LAET,
I no longer live
in fear!”

“The Legal Aid
staff were very
kind to me.”

“LAET’s handling of my case
gave me peace of mind.”



OUR CLIENTS' STORIES

A client we will call “Mark” sought help from LAET after he was evicted at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mark did not know about the CDC eviction moratorium that helped people stay in their homes during the pandemic. Before he contacted LAET, Mark went to court without an attorney but did not present the required paperwork to stay in his home. The judge did not inform people in the courtroom about the moratorium so Mark had no way to know it would help him. Sadly, Mark was evicted that very day. After contacting LAET, attorney Jeff Armstrong convinced the county attorney to honor the moratorium on Mark’s behalf and further convinced him to stop the local sheriff’s department from executing evictions on anyone else during this moratorium. This action by Attorney Armstrong saved our client, Mark and countless others from wrongful eviction and losing their homes in the midst of a pandemic.

Last year we helped “Joseph,” an elderly client who sought assistance from LAET after his daughter wrongfully used a power of attorney to sell his home and take his savings. The daughter then used that money to purchase her own home. LAET was able to present evidence that Joseph’s daughter had wrongfully used the power of attorney and had not acted in his best interest. The judge ordered that her newly purchased home be put solely in Joseph’s name and also entered a judgement for her to repay the savings she had taken from him. Without LAET’s help, Joseph would be without a home and means of financial support.



2020

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