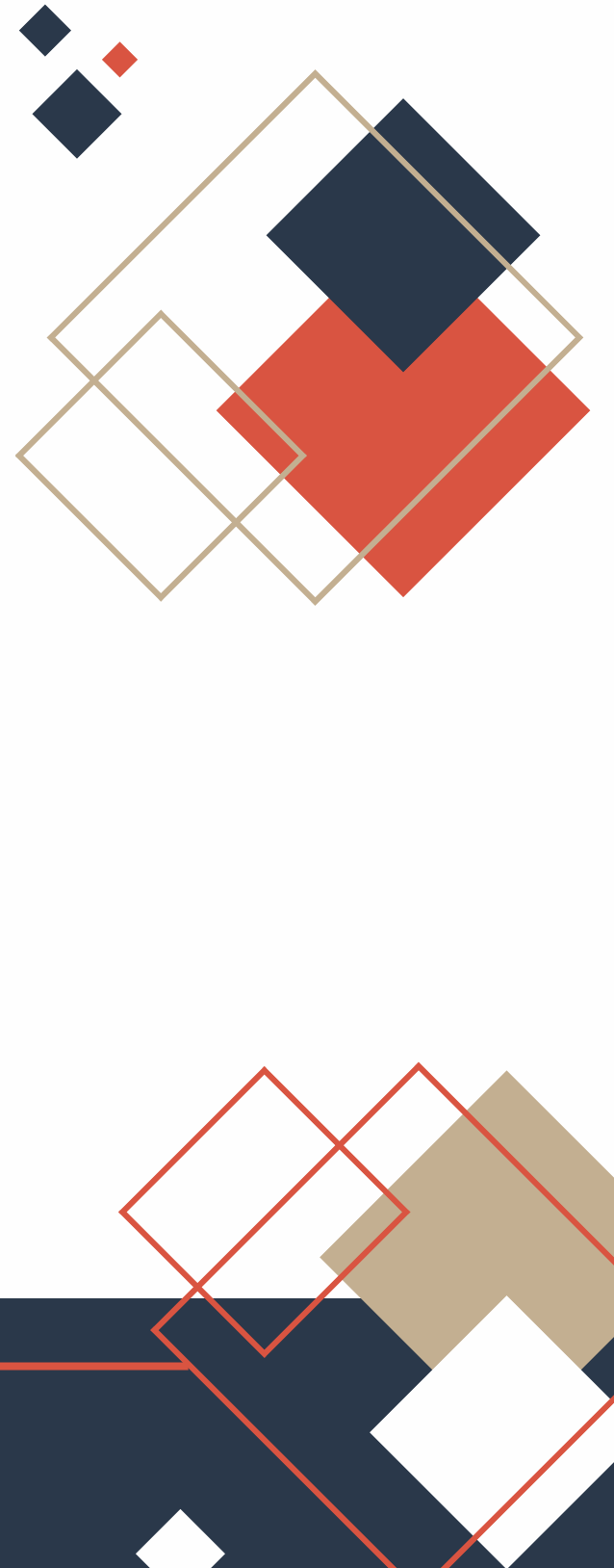


2022

# ANNUAL REPORT

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ADVANCING JUSTICE.  
STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES.



Because no one should have to  
face a legal problem alone

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Access to justice is a fundamental right that should be available to all. Unfortunately, many individuals face significant barriers to accessing the legal system, including poverty, language barriers, and systemic discrimination. Our organization exists to break down these barriers and ensure that the clients we serve have access to the legal representation they need. As the President of Legal Aid of East Tennessee, I am delighted to share with you our Annual Report for 2022. It has been a year of tremendous growth, and we are proud of our many accomplishments made with the help of our dedicated staff, volunteers, and board members.

First, I want to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of our departing board members. Their contributions to our organization have been invaluable, and we will miss them dearly. We are grateful for the time and energy they have invested in our cause.

On the other hand, I am pleased to welcome our new board members, who are just as enthusiastic and passionate about our mission as the outgoing ones. We are fortunate to have such a talented and diverse group of individuals on our board, and we look forward to working with them to further our goals.

I want to take a moment to express my deep gratitude to our volunteers who have generously donated their time and expertise to provide pro bono legal services to our clients. Your dedication to our mission is inspiring, and we are incredibly fortunate to have you as part of our team. Your contribution allows us to extend our reach and help even more people in need. Your selflessness and commitment have significantly impacted our clients, and we are grateful for your invaluable support.

Looking ahead, we are reviewing and updating our strategic plan to ensure that we continue to be aligned with our vision of an East Tennessee where justice is a community value and where no one faces a legal problem alone. We are also reviewing our program service priorities to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our clients in the most effective and efficient way possible.

I am excited to report that we have added several new staff members to our team, whose energy and expertise will help us continue providing high-quality legal services to those in need. They have already made a positive impact on our organization, and we are looking forward to their continued contributions.

Finally, I want to thank our supporters for their continued generosity and belief in our mission. Without your support, we would not be able to provide the vital legal services that our clients need. We are proud to be a part of the East Tennessee community, and we believe that our work is making a significant difference in the lives of the people we serve. We know that there is still much work to be done, and we are committed to continuing our efforts to improve access to justice in our state.

We look forward to working with you in the coming year and beyond.



Keith Alley, LAET 2022 President

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As I reflect on 2022, I think about how our clients fared in these continued difficult times. Our clients face so many challenges, such as struggling to keep their homes, providing safety and security for their children, feeding their families, and so much more. Oftentimes there is an underlying legal issue to those struggles that only a lawyer can solve. However, knowing that our staff works tirelessly every day to help our clients address the daunting legal issues they face gives me great comfort and leaves me in awe of their dedication, not only to our individual clients, but also the broader goal of access to justice for all. LAET is stronger today than ever with more staff and funding to do the important work of helping our clients and our community.

While it is not possible to speak to all of the great work LAET has undertaken this past year, I want to highlight two projects of which we are particularly proud. First, our eviction prevention/housing stability work continues to grow and make a difference in the lives of so many in East Tennessee. During 2022 we continued two eviction prevention projects in Chattanooga and Knoxville. These two programs that help clients facing the loss of their homes by helping them avoid eviction served over 670 clients last year. Both projects showcase the value of collaborations with other community partners to meet each client's holistic needs.

Another significant accomplishment this past year was the expansion of our Mental Health Law Partnership (MHLP) collaboration with the McNabb Center. The MHLP pairs lawyers with clinicians at McNabb to help their patients address the legal issues that have an impact on their health outcomes. This past year we added additional staff to the project and also expanded our reach to McNabb's Blount County campus. The MHLP is an excellent example of a good idea that has grown into an important project to serve clients with mental health challenges.

Beyond these two projects, our staff continued to provide outstanding legal help to those in our community. LAET closed over 5,600 cases impacting more than 11,400 clients and family members in 2022. Yet, despite our accomplishments there is so much more to do! Our limited resources mean we can only help a small fraction of the over 400,000 people eligible for our services living in our 26 county service area.

Throughout the pages of our 2022 annual report, you will see stories of the difference our staff makes in our client's lives and the words of our clients themselves. My deepest gratitude goes to each and every member of the LAET staff who dedicate their career to this work. I want to give special thanks to our pro bono volunteers who do so much to serve our clients and expand the reach of our limited resources and to our donors who help make our work possible. As we continue to fight against injustice and work towards a future where everyone has access to the legal support they need to thrive, we are forever grateful to all who support our work.

Sincerely,



Debra House, LAET Executive Director

# VISION

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

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

# MISSION

**Across 26 counties — from Chattanooga to the Tri Cities — Legal Aid of East Tennessee provides civil legal representation free of charge for those who need it most. The elderly. Victims of domestic violence. Low-income families. All those who face a legal challenge yet don't have the vital legal help they need. Every day, we proudly answer the call for high-quality legal services that help change lives and improve communities.**

# 2022 IMPACT

**11,452** CLIENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS IMPACTED

1,702  
SENIORS

INCLUDING  
139  
CHILDREN

653  
PRO BONO CASES

1,163  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

273  
VETERANS

165  
VOLUNTEER ATTORNEYS

## CASES BY TYPE

1,704  
HOUSING

1,644  
FAMILY

1,112  
MISC

632  
CONSUMER

316  
INCOME

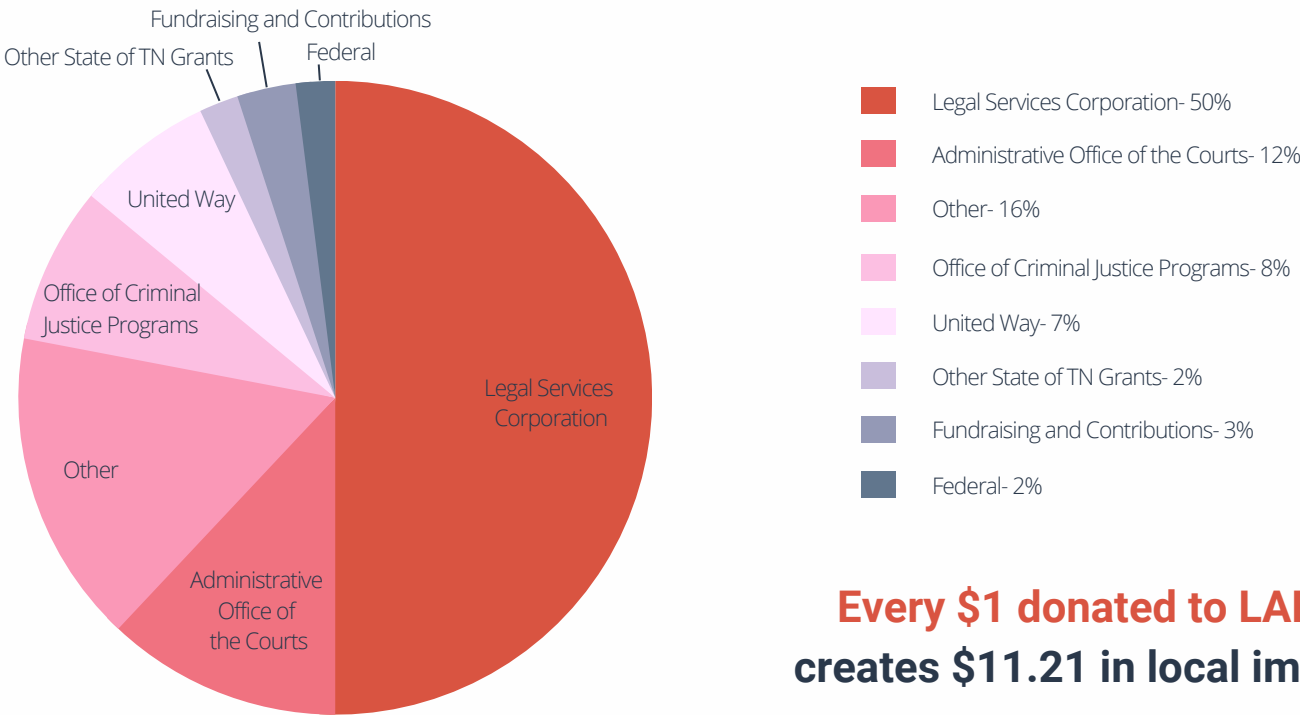
92  
JUVENILE

91  
HEALTH

37  
EMPLOYMENT



# 2022 REVENUE SOURCES



**Every \$1 donated to LAET creates \$11.21 in local impact**

# CLIENT TESTIMONIALS

"They helped us  
**keep our house**  
after a financially  
challenging year."

Eviction  
Prevention Case

"Got my divorce  
very quick and got  
me out of being  
mistreated, and I'm  
**happy now.** My  
health problems  
are getting better.  
**Good advice.  
Most helpful.  
Quick actions.**"

Divorce  
Case

"It was very stressful  
dealing with everything.  
**We didn't understand**  
all the procedures and  
felt like the  
Unemployment Office  
was **taking advantage**  
of that. I knew I hadn't  
done anything wrong  
but still couldn't get it  
cleared up. **When [An  
LAET attorney] took  
over our case things  
began to change.** We  
immediately felt relief  
because **we felt like he  
really cared about our  
situation.** He did a great  
job and we really  
appreciate all his  
efforts."

Income  
Case

"This is the first  
time in many years  
**I feel safe.**"

Domestic  
Violence Case

"Legal Aid helped  
**take the pressure  
from my life.** I was  
made to feel good  
about coming to  
Legal Aid. I was  
embarrassed about  
needing help and  
only having little  
money to get help.  
**But they made me  
feel it's okay to get  
help.**"

Conservatorship  
Case

## BETHANY NEEDED PROTECTION

"Bethany" and "Joe" were dating. One evening, **Joe became intoxicated and attacked Bethany** in the kitchen of her apartment. Bethany was afraid for her life. She had to flee the apartment and run to her neighbor's house where she called the police. The ambulance took her to the hospital, where **she learned she had a broken jaw and a concussion**. This is when she left Joe; however, two months later Joe came to her apartment. **When she refused to reconcile, he broke her jaw and blacked her eye**. This is when Bethany called LAET for help. **LAET took the case and helped Bethany get a temporary Order of Protection**. Once Joe's criminal case is concluded, LAET will help Bethany get a permanent Order of Protection.

"Berta" is a disabled mother who resided with her adult son in his home for many years. They lived together as a typical family, sharing chores and household expenses, **until the son decided to move in his new girlfriend** and her young children. It wasn't long before the girlfriend made an ultimatum that either the mother would move out, or she would be leaving. **Berta was told to leave**, but she couldn't find decent affordable housing quickly enough for his girlfriend's liking. **The son filed an eviction suit**, claiming the mother was no more than a tenant at his mercy and her time there was up. Since they were living as a family unit, there was no rental agreement, no payment of rent, or any other rental terms. **Berta contacted LAET to help**. After the LAET lawyer presented the law on this living arrangement, **the judge dismissed the son's lawsuit**.

## BERTA WAS GOING TO BE EVICTED

## JAKE NEEDED A POWER OF ATTORNEY

"Jake" has a mother and an aunt who both rely heavily on him to help them manage their lives because they are **both older and disabled**. When Jake needed help ensuring that he would be able to provide the necessary care as his family members approached a stage of life where they would need assistance, **he contacted LAET for help**. An LAET attorney met with Jake, evaluated his situation, and explained the legal options. **The LAET attorney was then able to help the family navigate the legal system and help Jake obtain powers of attorney** as well as durable powers of attorney for health care for his mother and aunt. Now that Jake has power of attorney, he can seamlessly schedule doctor appointments, and manage matters like insurance. **He can now care for them as they approach end-of-life**.

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(800) 572-7457

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

## CLEVELAND

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

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(423) 587-4850  
(800) 821-1309

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(865) 981-1818

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Providing legal help for those in abusive, violent, and trafficking situations

---

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(423) 574-7233

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(423) 722-3720

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(423) 643-7600

## KNOXVILLE FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER

(865) 215-6830

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Providing legal assistance that improves medical outcomes

---

## Mental Health Law Partnership

Providing free assistance that  
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**For McNabb Patients Only**

## Ballad Medical Legal Partnership

Providing free assistance that  
improves medical outcomes

**For Bristol and Holston Valley Patients Only**

(276) 244-1289



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