

What is the Louisiana Legal Services Network?

A network of 3 non-profit law firms with 12 offices staffed by full-time attorneys who provide civil legal services to the poor in every parish of the state. The Network has been described as the “lynchpin” in assuring access to justice for all Louisiana citizens through proper representation in Louisiana courts.

Why is legal assistance important?

Legal services are important because they help Louisiana citizens resolve difficult legal issues and foster stable, productive lives. It also helps Louisiana economically. These programs do not handle any criminal matters.

A basic tenet of our legal system is that all citizens will be treated fairly under the law and will have access to the court system. Louisiana’s Legal Services Network lawyers handle cases which are pivotal to the well-being of Louisiana’s poorest citizens by providing protection to victims of domestic abuse, restoring dignity to families through custody and support orders, protecting consumers from unscrupulous contractors and assuring that landlords provide habitable dwellings. By providing these basic civil legal services, not only do we ensure the stability and well-being of Louisiana families, but a 2010 Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) study indicates that providing these legal services helps create jobs and provides income to the State. Funding the Legal Services Network is a fiscally responsible act.

The LSBA study (see “Legal Services Programs in Louisiana: Their Economic Impact on the State of Louisiana” at www.lsba.org/lspstudy), shows that providing legal services to the poor creates positive economic activity when legal service programs’ clients receive a legally-entitled financial benefit, either as a judicial award or relief from of a wrongful payment or demand. Dr. James Richardson, author of the study, states that not only does the client benefit but “[t]his net new spending . . . creates a wave of economic activity within the state.” The economic benefit “would not be flowing to Louisiana citizens without the legal assistance of attorneys associated with the . . .” legal services Network. During the study period, the legal services Network assisted their clients in either acquiring or retaining over \$58 million. This monetary benefit initiates a series of economic transactions that will have a positive impact on the Louisiana economy. The economic impact is estimated to range from \$70 million to \$107 million in terms of total economic transactions, estimated personal earnings of \$21.6 million to \$33.2 million, and state and local tax collections ranging from \$2.9 million to \$4.4 million.” Dr. Richardson estimates that for every dollar spent on legal services for the poor there is a benefit to the state of \$1.55- \$2.40. The study also found that every \$100,000 of state allocated legal services funding results in “monetary benefits to its citizens that suggest that approximately \$33,000 in net new state and local tax collections will be forthcoming. Hence, the true cost of the additional state allocation is less than \$70,000 since net new state and local tax collections are forthcoming.”

“The economic impact is estimated to range from \$70 million to \$107 million in terms of total economic transactions...”

For more information, see “Legal Services Programs in Louisiana: Their Economic Impact on the State of Louisiana at www.lsba.org/lspstudy

Louisiana Legal Services Network Office Information

Acadiana Legal Service Corporation

Joseph R. Oelkers, III, Executive Director
1020 Surrey Street Lafayette, Louisiana 70501
Telephone: (337) 237-4320
Toll Free: (800) 256-1175
Branches: Alexandria, Lake Charles

Legal Services of North Louisiana, Incorporated

Alma S. Jones, Executive Director
720 Travis Street
Shreveport, Louisiana 71101
Telephone: (318) 222-7186
Toll Free: (800) 826-9265
Branches: Monroe, Natchitoches

Southeast Louisiana Legal Services, Incorporated

Brian D. Lenard, Co-Director
Mark A. Moreau, Co-Director
1010 Common Street, Suite #1400-A
New Orleans, Louisiana 70112
Telephone: (504) 529-1000
Toll Free: (877) 521-6242
Branches: Baton Rouge, Covington,
Hammond, Houma, Marrero

LOUISIANA’S LEGAL SERVICES NETWORK

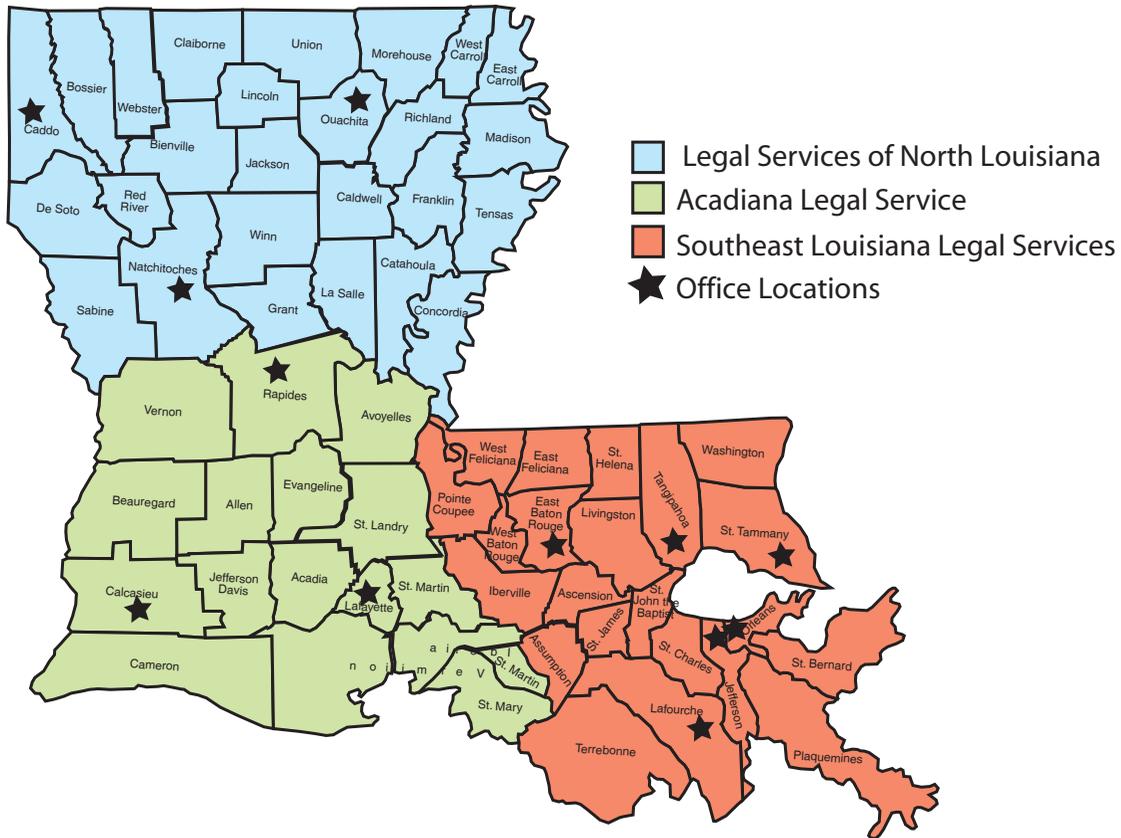


Providing Justice
For All
Throughout Louisiana

How is Louisiana’s Legal Services Network currently funded?

Louisiana’s Legal Services Network is primarily funded by the federal Legal Services Corporation. The Network has previously received annual state legislative appropriations as a supplement to their mix of federal, private and foundation funding. The Louisiana State Bar Association has felt an obligation to help establish a state appropriation for the Network. For several years, the state provided the Network with a \$500,000 appropriation to help provide direct legal services. For FY 2010 this was removed from the state budget. Even with extreme budget cuts in FY2011, the Legislature felt the issue important enough to restore funding of \$150,000 to the legal services organizations. Funding was again cut from the budget in 2012 and not re-established. Even in these tough economic times, other states have recognized the importance of funding legal services to the poor and Louisiana was one of only 4 states not to receive a state appropriation nor statewide fee allocation in 2012. Re-establishing an appropriation is fiscally responsible and assures that Louisiana citizens are still able to receive basic civil legal services.

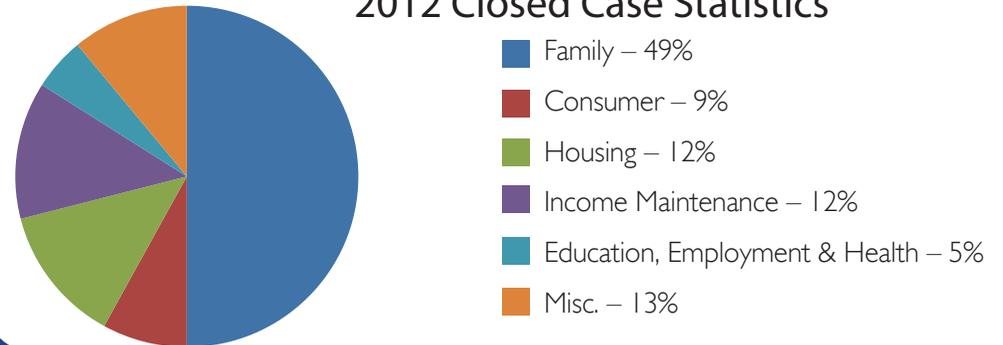
Louisiana Legal Services Network



What cases do legal services offices handle?

Network lawyers handle civil cases that help the poor provide for their basic life needs and often give them the tools to rise above their circumstances. Legal services offices do not accept criminal cases, nor do they accept fee-generating cases that private attorneys could take. This chart identifies the types of cases by percentage handled by Network lawyers:

2012 Closed Case Statistics



Why is State Funding Needed?

Last year, the Louisiana Legal Services Network handled approximately 16,000 cases on behalf of our state’s poorest citizens. Still, in many parts of Louisiana, applicants must wait over three months to see a lawyer. Worse, each year almost 15,000 eligible individuals must be turned away because these programs simply do not have lawyers to handle the cases. Years of low or reduced funding has left the Louisiana Legal Services Network offices dramatically understaffed. Louisiana legal service programs have consistently diversified their funding sources, but continue to rely heavily on federal funding from the Legal Service Corporation. Recently released funding figures predict up to a 40% decrease in the Network’s funding by 2014.

Not only is the state impacted through the personal tragedy of its citizens whose legal issues are not cared for, but the economic impact study suggests that if fewer services are provided, the state’s economy stands to lose revenue. The economic impact study found “[t]he overall economic activities associated with the burst of net new spending from clients of the legal services corporation led to personal earnings of \$33.2 million, state and local tax collections of just over \$4.4million, and the creation and support of 1,309 jobs in the state.” A decrease in funding will impact both the well-being of the state and its citizens.

How can YOU, as a Louisiana legislator, help?

Continued loss of a state appropriation will be a devastating blow to the tens of thousands of constituents in every district who rely on the Louisiana Legal Services Network to represent them in domestic violence, foreclosure, employment and public benefits cases. Help ensure Louisiana citizens have legal representation to help stabilize their lives. Work to have Louisiana join the 46 states that currently believe state funding for legal services is necessary.