

# Civil Legal Aid in North Carolina

## An Overview

By Martin H. Brinkley, President  
North Carolina Bar Association

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### *Legal Aid Clients*

Legal aid clients are:

- Working Families
- Children
- The Elderly
- 75% of clients are women
- Typical household income is \$12,000



## ***What is civil legal aid?***

- Civil legal aid means providing free legal services to low-income people in **non-criminal** cases.
- Civil cases can involve the loss of **home, family, livelihood and personal safety**.
- Civil legal aid programs **do not** handle personal injury, medical malpractice or other tort cases.

## ***Who provides civil legal aid?***

Legal aid programs are **independent nonprofits**. NC's legal aid programs are:



- **Legal Aid of North Carolina (LANC)** serves residents in every county from 20 offices.
- **Legal Services of Southern Piedmont (LSSP)** is located in Charlotte and serves residents in the Charlotte-metro area and in west-central N.C.
- **Pisgah Legal Services (PLS)** is located in Asheville and serves residents of Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, Polk, Rutherford, and Transylvania counties.

## *Who is eligible?*

- Legal aid programs serve North Carolina's most vulnerable citizens.
- Generally, legal aid clients must be below 125% of the federal poverty level.

125% of the federal poverty line  
for an **individual** is: **\$13,963**  
(Annual Income)

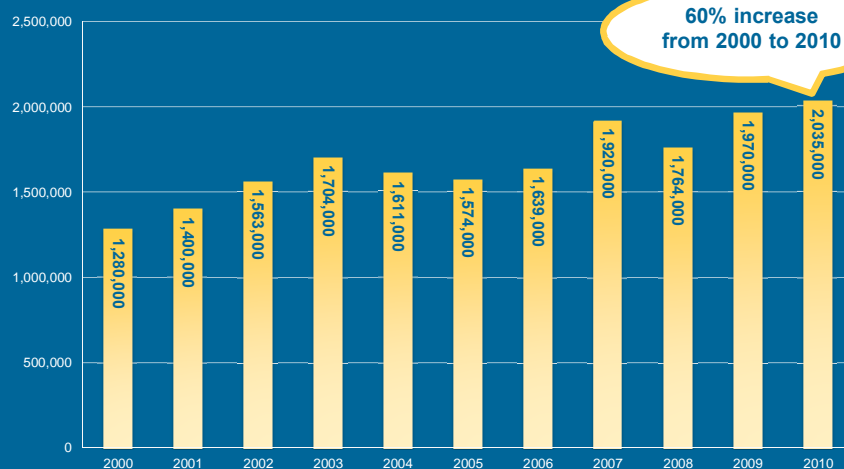
125% of the federal poverty line  
for a **family of four** is: **\$28,813**  
(Annual Income)

## *How many are eligible?*

- **2 million citizens**, 22% of the population.
- **772,000 children**, 34% of all children.
- **206,000 senior citizens**, 18% of all seniors.
- **15% increase** in eligible population since the recession began in 2008.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau reports on Income, Poverty and Health Insurance, 2008 to 2010.

## ***A Growing Eligible Population***



Source: U.S. Census Bureau reports on Income, Poverty and Health Insurance, 2000 to 2010.

## ***What does legal aid do?***

- Help victims of domestic violence escape abuse;
- Fight scams upon consumers, especially seniors;
- Preserve homes, prevent homelessness and improve housing conditions;
- Protect and improve household income for families and seniors;
- Establish eligibility for access to medical care and coverage in federal programs;
- Recruit and train private lawyers to donate their time, money and services in order to increase access and to reduce the overall costs.

## ***Legal Aid Fights Domestic Violence***

- The N.C. Council for Women reports its programs served an average of nearly **60,000 victims** of domestic violence annually for the last 3 years.
- The N.C. Department of Justice reports an average of more than **100 domestic violence-related homicides** annually from 2008 to 2010.
- Legal aid programs help victims **and their children** escape abuse by obtaining and enforcing **protective orders** and helping victims establish financial independence from their abusers.

## ***Legal Aid Prevents Foreclosure***

- In NC last year, between 2,000 and 3,000 homes were threatened by foreclosure **every month**.
- Legal Aid of North Carolina's foreclosure caseload **more than doubled** from 2008 to 2011.
- **Negotiation not Litigation:** Legal aid works with lenders and homeowners to save homes and preserve community property value.

## ***Legal Aid Brings Federal Dollars to NC***

Legal aid helps clients secure **hundreds of millions of dollars** in federal benefits every year which directly contribute to NC's economy.

- The Earned Income Tax Credit provides relief for **low-income working families**.
- **20% of workers** eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit do not apply for it.
- **\$2.05 billion** in Earned Income Tax Credits came to North Carolina in 2011.

## ***Legal Aid Leverages Pro Bono***

- Legal aid programs leverage the resources of thousands of lawyers who volunteer tens of thousands of hours to legal aid clients.
- For pro bono to work well, volunteer lawyers need a robust legal aid infrastructure to provide recruitment, training and support.
- The NC legal community recognizes its professional responsibility and is committed to increasing pro bono participation.

## ***Legal Aid Does Not Clog the Courts***

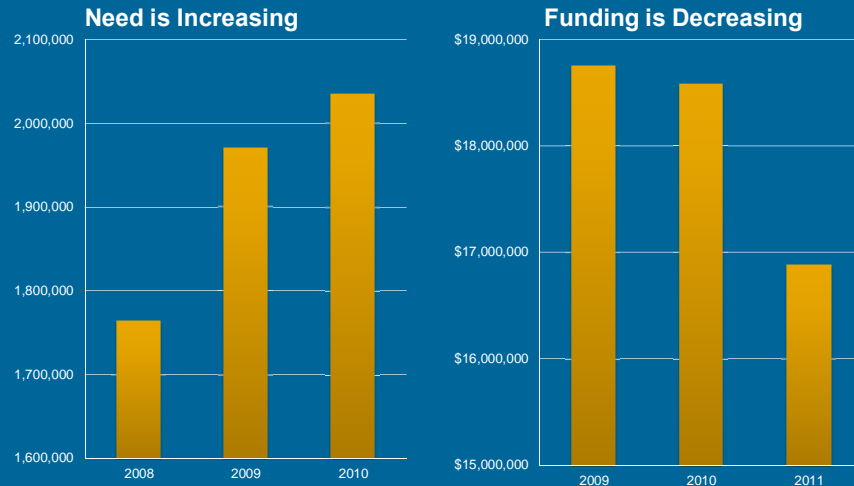
- North Carolina's legal aid programs resolve **more than 70% of their cases** outside of court.
- Many cases are resolved by a phone call or letter.
- Legal aid litigates only the most meritorious cases and **successfully defends 90% of them.**

## ***Legal Aid Faces Funding Shortfalls***

Legal aid funding from primary sources has been in steep decline in recent years:

- United Way funding **dropped by 14%.**
- Federal funding has been **cut by 18%.**
- State funding is **down by 20%.**
- Funding from the State Bar's Interest on Lawyers' Trust Account program has **plummeted by 40%.**

## ***Need is Up, Funding is Down***



## ***Impact of Funding Cuts***

- Funding cuts have forced Legal Aid of North Carolina to **close 4 offices and lay off 30 employees.**
- Restoring recent state funding cuts could provide services to **an additional 4,000 to 5,000 households each year.**