

**CARPLS**   
everyday justice

# ONE JUSTICE CHICAGO

**2018** ANNUAL REPORT

**25**  
1993  
2018

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND BOARD PRESIDENT

# ONE JUSTICE CHICAGO

It was a day filled with anticipation and hope when we took our first phone call on May 11, 1993. Now, 25 years and more than 900,000 legal consultations later, CARPLS has gained national recognition as one of the most cost-effective legal aid providers in the country.

In this 25th Anniversary edition of its annual report, CARPLS celebrates many of the people and milestones that marked our journey to success. As an organization, we are grateful to the many dedicated supporters who have made our work possible. We hope to build on this support as we continue our journey with the *One Justice Chicago* initiative, a vision to provide anyone with a legal problem access to advice and counsel from an attorney.

Our experience tells us that without access to legal assistance, people often make uninformed decisions that have life-changing consequences. In many cases, a simple legal consultation with an attorney can resolve most everyday legal problems, helping a single parent get child support, a veteran obtain health benefits, a single working mom keep her home, or a senior fight credit fraud. Early access to legal counsel also benefits our civil justice system by diverting minor disputes away from our overburdened courts and by allowing the legal aid safety net to focus its limited resources on more complex legal needs.

CARPLS is uniquely positioned to realize its vision for *One Justice Chicago*. We have a proven platform that has effectively harnessed new technologies to dramatically increase access to legal counsel. With your support, we intend to expand our operations so that no one in Chicago will be forced to confront a legal problem without access to advice and counsel.

Thank you for standing with us in this vision and for your generous support.

Sincerely,



A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink.

**ALLEN C. SCHWARTZ**  
CARPLS Executive Director



A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink.

**DAVID B. H. WILLIAMS**  
CARPLS Board President

# CARPLS BY THE NUMBERS

## WHAT WE DO

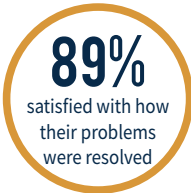
WE PROVIDE MORE THAN  
**63,000**  
CONSULTATIONS ANNUALLY



COVERING  
**1,870**  
DIFFERENT LEGAL TOPICS



**2 OUT OF 3**  
clients had never  
spoken to an  
attorney prior to  
calling us

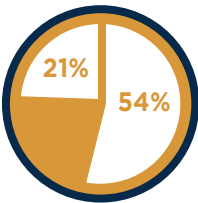


**25%** of all  
legal aid  
cases are  
handled  
by CARPLS



**85¢** out of  
every dollar  
raised goes  
to client  
services

## OUR CLIENTS



**54%** are African American;  
**21%** are Latino



**34%** are caring  
for one or  
more child



**14%** are age  
65 or older



**23%** have a  
college degree



More than **20%** of our clients live  
in public/subsidized housing, are  
homeless, or pay no rent



**14%** of our clients  
are veterans or  
service members

# THE ORIGIN OF CARPLS:

The mythological birth of CARPLS started with some scribbles on a cocktail napkin in 1989. Everyone loves the story, but Mark Marquardt, current Executive Director of The Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois (LTF) is doubtful that such a napkin exists. He counters that the origin story really belongs to an expansive group of dedicated people. “If there is a cocktail napkin, I’m afraid it has been lost to history,” Mark said.

In fact, the story goes back even further when Ruth Ann Schmitt, Mark’s predecessor at LTF, was Director of the Chicago Volunteer Legal Services, starting in 1978. “I saw firsthand how clients would be sent off to others without regard as to what would happen to them,” said Ruth Ann.

Ruth Ann worked with LTF to conduct the Legal Needs Study in 1988 (published in 1989) and the main problem facing legal aid across the state became clear: resources were nonexistent for intake, even though it was a huge need. In towns where information and referral services existed, legal aid resources could be shared more efficiently for the client. Two driving principles came together: 1) information referral services make a difference and 2) what if they created a mechanism that could help coordinate these services?

“The problem was that nothing like this existed in the country,” Mark said. So, in spring 1991, Ruth Ann and Mark jetted out to DC to meet with Wayne Moore, who oversaw AARP hotlines across the country.

“We told him we have this idea to create an information referral service for legal aid programs in Chicago,” said Mark. “He said, ‘that’s interesting, but are you going to offer legal advice over the phone?’ We said no. He said, ‘if you do that, you are just rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic, and you’re wasting your time.’ So that was a big moment.”

They rounded up leaders from various legal aid organizations throughout Illinois to talk about this prospect. “When we had this meeting, it was fairly remarkable because it was the first time all of the legal services providers were in the same room,” said Ruth Ann.

After those discussions, there was the challenge of creating something logistically that had so many moving pieces: creating the software, figuring out how it should be staffed, etc. Mark reflects, “It’s been such a great surprise to those of us involved in the early days of CARPLS that so many people have devoted so much of their careers to the organization. The initial vision was that being a CARPLS staff attorney would be a short-term gig. The longevity has really allowed people to really master the art of providing legal advice and brief services. That’s something we really didn’t expect.”

While Ruth Ann and Mark speak proudly but modestly about their role in CARPLS’ creation, Leslie Corbett, Executive Director of the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation (and CARPLS’ second Executive Director), argues that the organization came to be through the determination and innovative thinking of Ruth Ann and others at LTF. “They revolutionized legal aid delivery in Illinois by ensuring that every lawyer had a computer. Using technology to actually deliver services was the next step in that journey.”

Mark argues that Ruth Ann took all the risk. “I was just a 26, 27-year-old kid who had nothing at stake. It was really a new path, and she forged that.”

Ruth Ann, however, remembers it differently. “I didn’t think of it as a risk, and I didn’t think of a downside. I just thought it was the right thing. It was the right idea at the right time, and it made so much sense for the client.

***“Every now and then, it’s important to step back and look at the delivery system as a whole, look at the pieces of the puzzle and see how they fit together. You can fit them in new ways. CARPLS is a critical and indispensable piece of that puzzle.” -Mark Marquardt***

•••••1989•••••

The first Illinois Legal Needs Study is published

•••••1991•••••

Plans are finalized for a new advice and referral hotline for Chicago named Coordinated Advice & Referral Program for Legal Services (CARPLS).

•••••1992•••••

First meeting of CARPLS’ Board of Directors



– MaryAnn Sarosi, CARPLS first Executive Director



*- Leslie Corbett, CARPLS' second Executive Director  
and current Executive Director of Illinois Equal  
Justice Foundation*



– Al Schwartz, CARPLS' first staff attorney,  
and current CARPLS Executive Director



– Leonard Schrager, CARPLS Advisory Board  
Member, and Dean Emeritus & Professor Emeritus,  
John Marshall Law School

After seven years of hotline referrals and advice, in 2001 CARPLS added additional in-person services at court-based advice desks through a partnership with The Chicago Bar Foundation (CBF). Bob Glaves, Executive Director of CBF, said it was a natural partnership after being involved with CARPLS since 1994.

“After the CBF started the Domestic Relations Advice Desk, we started seeing the connection between brief services and assistance over the phone and how the CARPLS model might work in person,” said Bob. “The impact of CARPLS was so much more visible once they were in court. People had some sense of their impact on the hotline, but now you could see it with your own eyes, and judges could see firsthand the benefits of CARPLS. CARPLS was really the first to step out to do this among legal aid organizations, and it set the stage for the development of many more advice desks in the courts, with CARPLS and with other legal aid partners. CARPLS has been a really integral partner in our work.”



• • • **1996** • • •  
CARPLS introduces LIARS  
(Legal Intake and Referral Software)

# EVERYDAY JUSTICE

Andy Polovin, of Uptake Technologies and committed CARPLS Board Member, reflects on the significance of CARPLS’ services today in our community.

“Divorces, evictions, consumer issues—for many legal aid organizations, those are not necessarily compelling cases,” Andy said. “But to CARPLS, it’s where we focus our resources to help a population that otherwise might go without representation. Other organizations might be able to tell stories that bring tears to your eyes, and we have some of those too, but our primary focus is helping everyday people with everyday problems. And we do that more efficiently than anyone else and at a very high standard.”

Justice Mary Anne Mason, of the Second Division of the Illinois Appellate Court, former CARPLS Board Member, and former co-chair of the Circuit Court of Cook County’s Pro Se Advisory Committee, notes CARPLS’ impact on self-represented litigants. “It’s incalculable. When you think about it, the Internet was not available to most people even in 1993, so the thought that you would have a number for centralized referrals and advice helping people to navigate the maze of legal service providers was groundbreaking. CARPLS is currently and will continue to be an indispensable tool for people trying to negotiate the justice system in Cook County and Illinois.”

“CARPLS takes the time to evaluate their work and produce data and research that can be used to continuously improve their services,” said Bob Glaves, Director of the Chicago Bar Foundation. “I think that’s a real bonus that goes beyond what was contemplated when CARPLS first began. Al [Schwartz] used to say in the earlier days of CARPLS that they didn’t really know if referrals stuck unless the client called back. Now, CARPLS has an online hub where you can track these things in real time as part of the new Illinois Armed Forces Legal Aid Network. You can ask questions and improve services from this information. CARPLS has built and is still building an active network of partners to look at all vantage points and to coordinate service.”



***“We change lives every day.”***  
***- Bob Brown, Paralegal***

Sean Gallagher, of Bartlit Beck LLP and longtime CARPLS Board Member and immediate past President, said his investment in and commitment to CARPLS has everything to do with the hard work, conscientious staff, and executive leadership.

“I’m a practicing lawyer so I understand the legal aid community. I feel compelled to give because I recognize social justice and how important it is to the courts. For someone on the edge of poverty, our services can be everything. The story of CARPLS is simply one of excellence and efficiency. The money is not wasted. Your dollar is going to facilitate people working hard. That’s just the kind of organization it is.”

Sean has gradually grown into a major advocate and donor for CARPLS.

“I had to figure out the depths of CARPLS and why it’s important. As you get to know the organization, there’s so much more. Knowing the people who work there and how committed they are and how hard they work makes me feel good about giving. It’s what got me to transition from being a generous donor to someone deeply committed to the organization.”

• • • • • 1997 • • • • •

CARPLS receives a grant for AARP to provide technical assistance to legal aid programs interested in adopting hotline delivery systems

• • • • • 2001 • • • • •

CARPLS launches the Domestic Relations Advice Desk – the first of a series of court-based legal resources supporting a growing class of unrepresented litigants in the Cook County court system

• • • • • 2002 • • • • •

CLASS, CARPLS’ third generation case management software, is introduced

# IS A SOUND INVESTMENT

## STAFF VOICES

*What are the greatest challenges in servicing clients?*

It's the wide array of difficulties that people have beyond the law. Whether it's something in their personal lives or physical and/or mental limitation, it can be a challenge. We need to work through these things to have a conversation, suss out the legal issue and decide what can be done about it to help the client.

-Ian Turnipseed, Staff Attorney

*If you could change one thing to improve the justice system, what might it be?*

I would want more help desks at the little branch courts in various neighborhoods. This idea has been amplified since I've been at CARPLS. Even with all the technological advancements that may come, we still need that in-person component. You're always going to have the gamut of issues that need human interaction. Often what we're left with are very vulnerable populations that really need help.

-Mary Flynn, Staff Attorney

## CLIENT STORY: REUNITED

After overcoming many obstacles, Lisa had one more hurdle she wanted to conquer: gaining custody of her child.

"CARPLS was able to give me very good, valid information," Lisa said. "I understood the situation, and CARPLS took the time to help me without rushing to judgment. They kept track of the details I previously provided them and they gave me good referrals. CARPLS was there every step of the way."

With CARPLS' guidance, Lisa filed the court paperwork herself and reunited with her daughter permanently. "My daughter was so happy and so surprised," Lisa said. "She said, 'how did you get me back?!' That's when I told her all about CARPLS and what they did for us."



• • • • • 2005 • • • • •

CARPLS launches the Collection Advice Desk located inside the Post Judgment Collection courtroom at the Daley Center – the busiest courtroom in the entire state

• • • • • 2007 • • • • •

CARPLS develops its Knowledge Management 1.0, an interactive database of legal solutions for common legal issues

• • • • • 2008 • • • • •

CARPLS launches the Administrative Hearings Desk at the City of Chicago Department of Administrative Hearings and takes over management of Municipal Court Advice Desk at the Daley Center

# CARPLS: THE HUB OF

The vision of *One Justice Chicago*, to provide anyone with a legal problem access to an attorney consultation through CARPLS, is not only celebrated by those looking to the future of legal aid, but it is also a marker of what we need.

Andy Polovin, General Counsel of Uptake Technologies and a CARPLS Board Member, thinks CARPLS is uniquely positioned to achieve the *One Justice Chicago* goal. “There are a few reasons CARPLS is capable of providing an attorney to everyone who needs one: 1) CARPLS’ substantial investment in technology, 2) our focus on what are called “brief” services, and 3) our willingness to collaborate with other legal aid organizations to make them more efficient by handling cases that CARPLS might be better positioned to handle.”

“If you can get that advice early, it’s kind of like in medicine,” said Bob Glaves. “If you can treat it early, you can deal with issues before they become too big. If everyone really had that kind of access in a convenient and flexible way to get it when they needed it, the entire system would be so much more efficient.”

The question is how do we move forward? Andy supports CARPLS investing in a way that “allows us to automate processes without losing the critical personal relationship between attorney and client.”

“For example, let’s say one of our clients needs help making sure their landlord provides heat,” Andy says. “An attorney needs to guide the client through the process, but our software should be able to generate the required letters or pleadings, and then trigger the

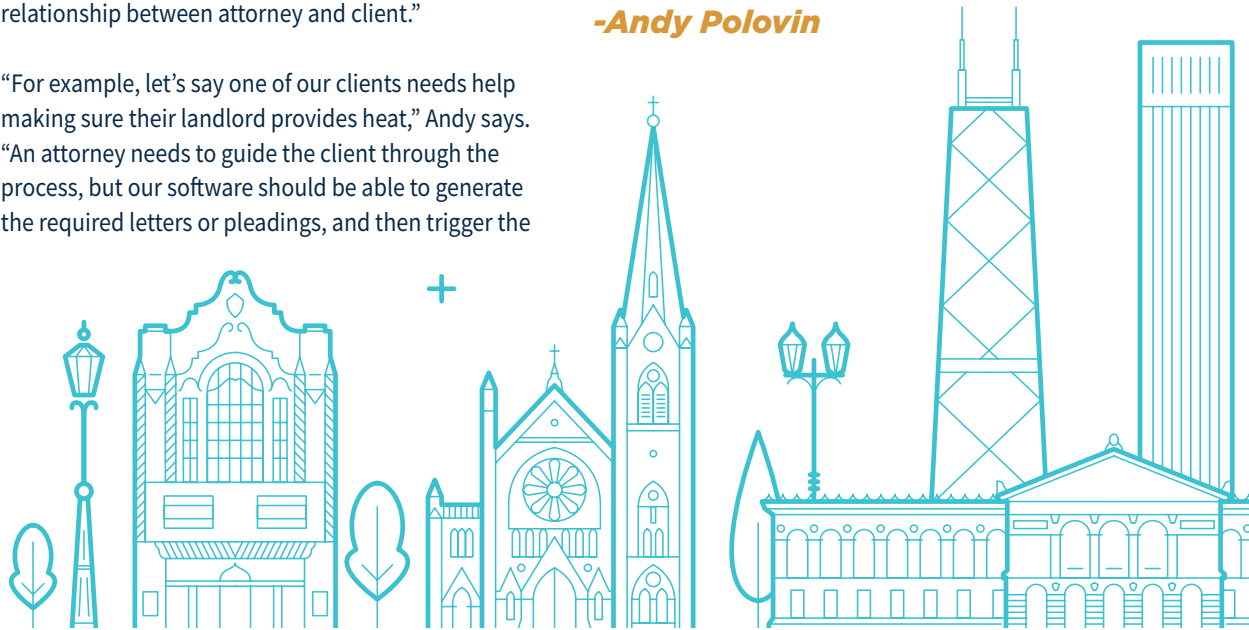
appropriate follow ups. By leveraging technology, we increase efficiency and free up our lawyers to work more closely with clients. If you look into the not-too-distant future, we will be able to leverage data not only to help with our clients’ current problems, but we will be able to predict other problems to which that client might be susceptible.”

Bob Glaves agrees that technology has a place in legal aid to improve service efficiency and to “help people find information and solve smaller problems on their own.”

“Technology will take care of some of the knowledge gaps so that people can connect more efficiently to the resources they need. But it won’t change the issues people are facing. Those will still exist,” said Bob. “I think the proof will remain that having a legal advocate on your side gets you better results in the long run.”

“There will always be a need for personal relationships between attorneys and clients for the types of cases that CARPLS handles, though that should not stop us from evaluating ways in which technology can improve that personal relationship,” Andy adds.

***“CARPLS is really one of a kind.”***  
***-Andy Polovin***



2012

CARPLS begins partnership with the CBF’s Justice Entrepreneurship Project (JEP), a program for solo practitioners to serve modest-means clients

2013

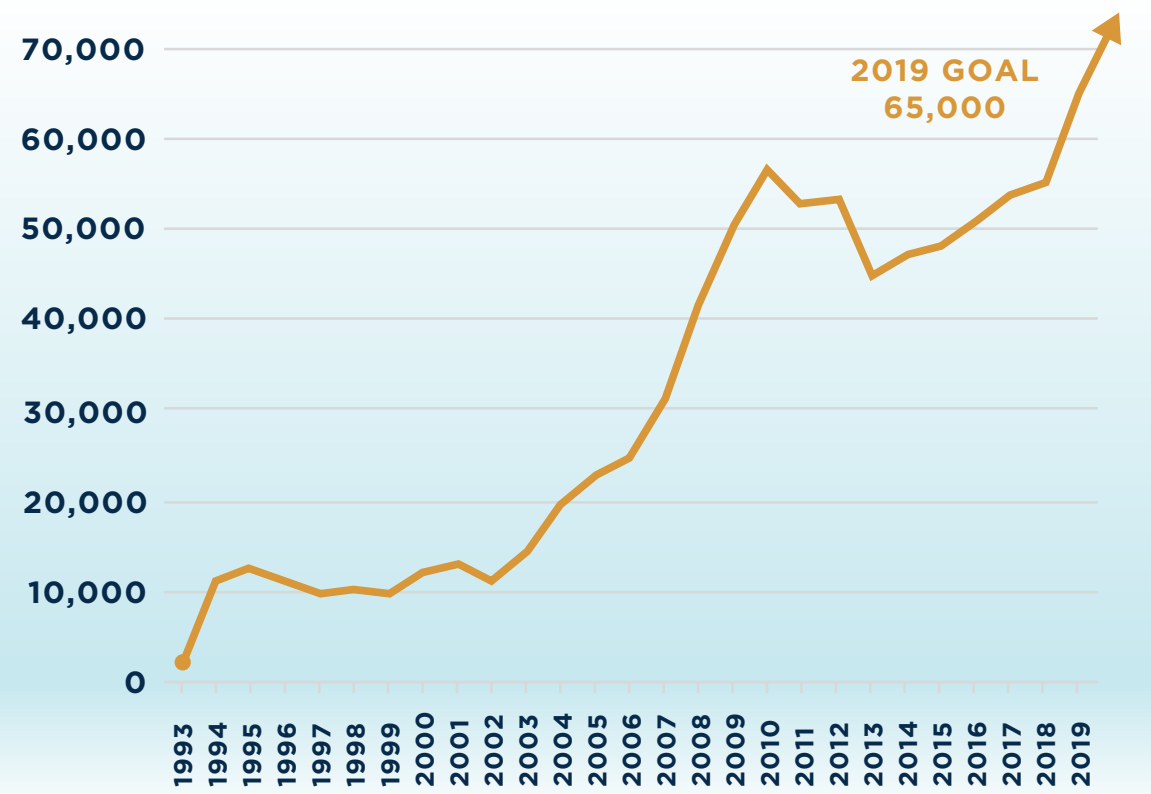
CARPLS introduces Force4J, its fourth generation case management system built on the powerful Salesforce platform

2014

CARPLS moves the Municipal Court Advice Desk and the Domestic Relations Advice Desk into a new legal Resource Center for People Without Lawyers

# THE LEGAL AID SYSTEM

## CONSULTATIONS



2016

The American Lawyer declares CARPLS one of the most efficient legal aid providers in the country

2017

CARPLS launches a state-wide hotline serving veterans, service members and their families as part of a new Illinois Armed Forces Legal Aid Network (IL-AFLAN)

2019

CARPLS Board of Directors raises \$1,000,000 in honor of CARPLS' 25th anniversary to advance CARPLS' vision of universal access to legal advice

# CLIENT STORIES

CARPLS provides each client with direct access to our well-qualified and caring attorneys through our legal aid hotlines and four court-based advice desks. CARPLS serves the greatest number of clients of any legal aid program in Cook County, with more than 60,000 consultations annually.

We counsel Cook County residents or those who have a legal problem in the county on all legal matters, including:

- Divorce
  - Housing
  - Consumer Law
  - Criminal
  - Probate
- Employment
  - Personal/Property Injury
  - Public Benefits
  - Education
  - Guardianships

**CARPLS LEGAL AID HOTLINE**  
**312-738-9200**

CARPLS lawyers and volunteer attorneys provide free legal assistance on our general hotline—often resolving issues in a single phone call—in English and Spanish.

**IL-AFLAN HOTLINE**  
**855-452-3526**

CARPLS operates the statewide free civil legal aid hotline for veterans, service members and their families as part of the Illinois Armed Forces Legal Aid Network.



**CLIENT STORY: HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS**

It took Meg a long time, but she was pleased with the location of the subsidized apartment she found for her family. However, when her building failed a CHA inspection, her landlord retaliated against her with a wrongfully filed eviction. Meg called CARPLS to fight this.

CARPLS counseled Meg on how to represent herself in eviction court and the case was dismissed. Meg and her family moved to another apartment without losing their CHA benefits. The CARPLS attorney described Meg as “someone who never stopped fighting.”

**CLIENT STORY: GETTING WHAT’S DESERVED**

Nicholas is a veteran who was facing an already complicated VA mortgage application process when he discovered a fraudulent judgment entered against him. Nicholas reached Steve on the veterans (IL-AFLAN) hotline where he answered immediate questions and referred him to one of our legal partners.

“Steve asked questions kindly and addressed the legal issue. I felt confident in his answers. He was able to ease my anxiety and stress level to the point I could listen and understand.”

**CARPLS SENIORS PROJECT**

The City of Chicago refers seniors to CARPLS, where they receive legal advice and appropriate legal referrals.

# AND PROGRAM SERVICES

## ADVICE DESKS

### ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS

*City of Chicago Department of Administrative Hearings,  
400 West Superior Street, 1st Floor*

CARPLS attorneys counsel self-represented litigants navigating city ordinance violations.

**CLIENT STORY: NAVIGATING THE SYSTEM**

One of our clients, Rebecca, got a notice for a parking ticket while her vehicle was at a repair shop. The CARPLS attorney told Rebecca that as the owner of the vehicle, she was liable for the ticket, but she should then seek reimbursement from the repair shop since they had it parked illegally on the street. Rebecca said of her experience, "Every time I've had a legal question or problem CARPLS has always answered my questions and resolved my problems in a satisfactory manner. I'm so glad that they are there for people in need."

### CONSUMER COLLECTION

*Post-Judgment Collection Court at the Richard J. Daley Center, 50 West Washington Street, Room 1401*

CARPLS lawyers provide legal advice and referrals to self-represented debtors and creditors in the courtroom

**CLIENT STORY: PROTECTING ASSETS**

CARPLS client Keith was recently unemployed and only receiving unemployment benefits. Keith's wife is disabled but not yet receiving any disability income, and he took money out of his IRA to pay their bills while he was unemployed. These funds were frozen with \$6,800. Keith wasn't sure where to turn, and then he called CARPLS. The CARPLS attorney advised Keith to claim his wildcard exemption and ask for a short continuance to prove the remaining funds were from his IRA. Keith said of our services: "CARPLS gave me more confidence in my knowledge of the situation. It also eased my anxiety."

### MUNICIPAL COURT

*Richard J. Daley Center, 50 West Washington Street,  
Room CL 16 (Concourse Level)*

CARPLS lawyers assist self-represented litigants on evictions, consumer/contract issues or tort matters.

**CLIENT STORY: A SURPRISING TURN**

Harold was renting a condo without a written lease that went into foreclosure. The various notices he received completely befuddled him, and he didn't know who to contact or what to do. Then, he called CARPLS. The CARPLS hotline attorneys helped him understand his legal rights, and one of our help desk attorneys drafted a motion to ensure Harold had enough time to move out of the apartment. Harold said, "You have provided me with accurate and timely advice. CARPLS has consistently delivered exactly what I needed when I needed it."

### DOMESTIC RELATIONS

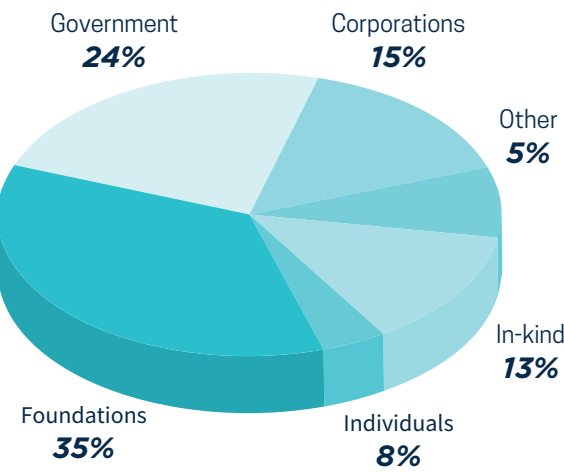
*Richard J. Daley Center, 50 West Washington Street,  
Room CL16 (Concourse Level)*

CARPLS attorneys assist self-represented litigants on family law matters (including divorce and guardianship issues), draft pleadings for appropriate litigants and make referrals in more complicated cases.

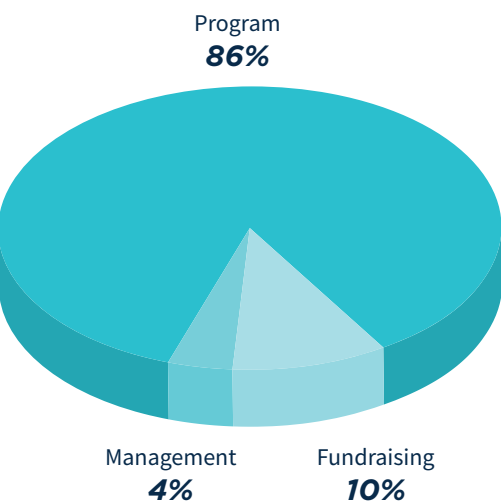
**CLIENT STORY: VALUABLE GUIDANCE IN A HARROWING SITUATION**

Beth suffered repeated instances of physical and verbal abuse by her husband. Now, thrown out of her home without income, Beth called CARPLS to figure out her options. The CARPLS attorney connected her to immediate domestic violence and legal resources and walked her through her options. Beth said, "The attorney I spoke with genuinely made me feel as though he cared about the unfortunate predicament I was in. He spent lots of time explaining things to me and giving me valuable guidance."

# 2018 FISCAL YEAR FINANCIALS



## REVENUE & OTHER SUPPORT



## EXPENSES

## REVENUE & OTHER SUPPORT

Foundations	\$947,000
Government	\$630,000
Corporations	\$389,312
Individuals	\$215,829
In-kind Contributions	\$352,115
Other Income	\$122,088
TOTAL	\$2,656,344

## EXPENSES

Program	\$2,408,752
Fundraising	\$280,698
Management & General	\$113,293
TOTAL	\$2,802,743

## CHANGE IN NET ASSETS (\$146,399)

## CASH

Start of Fiscal Year	\$520,972
Net Cash Flow	\$143,434
End of Fiscal Year	\$664,406

## STAFF

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CARPLS 2018 Associate Board annual trivia event/ Steinholding contest

# WAYS TO INVEST

## INVESTING IN CARPLS

There are many ways you can invest in CARPLS’ mission, from spreading the word to volunteering to making a donation. However you choose to partner with us, your support is a strong investment with a good return for our clients, our justice system, and our community.

## DONATE

With the growing need for our services, CARPLS relies on the generosity of private and corporate donors to make our work possible, in addition to the traditional legal aid and government funding we receive. Please consider donating to CARPLS today and make your investment count.

## LEAVE A LEGACY

Your planned gift—such as a bequest from your estate to CARPLS—will ensure that our clients have direct access to legal advice for generations to come. We are happy to provide information on planned gifts or bequests such as making CARPLS a beneficiary of your charitable trust, individual retirement account or life insurance policy.

## OTHER WAYS TO PARTNER WITH CARPLS

- Become a CARPLS volunteer attorney
- Make referrals to CARPLS’ services
- Consider ways your company, law firm, or organization could partner with CARPLS
- Inquire about an Associate Board membership

*If you are interested in donating to CARPLS or learning more about our organization, please contact Tanya Pietrkowski at 312-421-4014 or [tpietrkowski@carpls.org](mailto:tpietrkowski@carpls.org).*

Your support is greatly appreciated.

## CARPLS WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT OUR STAFF



- On average, our attorneys have **25** years of experience
- On average, our attorneys have worked at CARPLS for **14** years
- Full time attorneys provide **3,300** consultations annually

