

2021

ANNUAL REPORT



THE BRIDGE TO LEGAL AID



Letter from the Executive Director

2021 was a year of immense growth for CARPLS. Our dedicated staff went above and beyond in 2021 to provide resources that helped people weather the storm during the pandemic and know how to move forward. We have a team of hardworking, empathetic, and talented attorneys, paralegals and administrative staff who bring their diverse perspectives and education to break down barriers to access to justice.

CARPLS has emerged as a main point of contact for a growing number of legal aid networks across the state. We grew our team by more than 50% and expanded our longtime and newer projects and programs to help more people in need. Last year, we introduced the Virtual Municipal Court Advice Desk and our new Spanish Language Services initiative. CARPLS also now operates five hotlines locally and statewide, serving a wide range of constituents: the CARPLS hotline, the Cook County Legal Aid for Housing & Debt program (CCLAHD), the Illinois Armed Forces Legal Aid Network (IL-AFLAN), New Leaf Illinois, and Eviction Help Illinois, which in combination received over 250,000 calls in 2021.

CCLAHD launched in November 2020 in collaboration with the Cook County Board of Commissioners, the Office of the President, the Circuit Court of Cook County, the Cook County Sheriff's Office, the Chicago Bar Foundation, and other community partners. CCLAHD has served over 15,000 Cook County residents to date and connected many thousands more to critical resources like rental assistance. CCLAHD and New Leaf were both based on the successful IL-AFLAN network, which effectively allows legal aid providers to better leverage their limited resources by responding to the legal needs of the community as a single, connected network.

CARPLS and the Chicago legal aid community have strongly advocated for a less adversarial and punitive approach to certain civil legal aid issues for years and welcomed new processes. Our work, along with our amazing partners, has helped to reduce economic fallout from COVID-19 and preserve families and neighborhoods.

To aid in the understanding of our clients' experiences and better address their needs, CARPLS engaged our Racial Justice Committee (RJC) to assist in recruiting new staff. The RJC helped us in the search for our new Community Engagement Coordinator, a position first in CARPLS' history. The RJC has also continued to support the work of our staff, encourage community engagement opportunities, provide presentations on monthly themes, support continuing legal education for our team, and plan collaborations with partners.

CARPLS is playing a key role in developing a more collaborative approach to meeting the needs of the community. Our goal is to ensure that we connect legal aid programs and ensure better access to our legal services. 2022 will be a momentous year as we approach one million legal consultations provided. And then we will continue working for the next million.

Allen C. Schwartz
CARPLS Executive Director



Client Demographics

56%

are women

47%

are African
American

21%

are Latinx

13%

are veterans
and military
service
members

11%

live in
subsidized
housing

29%

are caring for
one or more
children

10%

are 65
or older

CARPLS by the numbers

JULY 1, 2020-JUNE 30, 2021

85%

of all cases are
resolved with CARPLS
attorneys in house

95%

of our clients would
recommend us
to a friend

53,542+

legal consultations
provided last
year alone!

45

We partner with 45 legal
partners throughout the State

85¢

of every dollar raised
goes directly back into
client services

1/2

of our clients
are involved in
court cases

2/3

of new clients have
never spoken to
an attorney prior
to calling

1

We serve one client
at a time!

25+

years' legal experience on
average for our attorneys

1 IN 4

CARPLS assists 1/4 of
legal aid cases in Cook County

Expanding Spanish Language Services at CARPLS



In October 2021, CARPLS began its first Spanish Language Services initiative. With Supervising Attorney Patricia Cintron-Bastin leading the team, CARPLS set out to provide direct legal services and outreach to Spanish-speaking communities in Cook County.

"We've always been mindful of ways we could improve upon the legal services that we provide to our Spanish-speaking clients. In the past, we were focused on the staffing needs of the hotline and other projects. We concentrated on the legal services and not the overarching need to connect with the community," Patricia said.

We knew we needed to focus on innovative ways to meet the needs of our Spanish-speaking clients, in addition to the services that we offer through the hotline and our projects. We are currently focusing on translating emails, translating publications, providing general information, and reaching out to the Latinx community to collaborate with community stakeholders.

"Helping out my community has always been a passion of mine," Patricia says. "Often, I have felt that our Spanish clients are left adrift when confronted with a legal problem. They don't know where to turn; they don't know where to go. The ability of being able to talk with a compassionate attorney in their native language brings ease and comfort to our clients."



Planting the seed and watching it grow

Though the initiative is still very new (only eight months old as of this writing), Patricia feels the possibilities are endless.

"My position is the first of its kind. While the initiative is in its initial stages, I am very excited regarding the possibilities and positive outcomes this initiative can have in the Latinx community," Patricia said.

Right now, the Spanish Language Services team is focusing on ways they can replicate the collaboration between CARPLS and our partner Taller de José, where we have dedicated appointments set up with clients to merge legal and social service resources.

18% of Chicago speaks Spanish as their primary language. Even though our hotline call numbers for the Spanish-speaking community are below 10%, a lot of that has to do with barriers.

"Part of my role as Spanish Language Supervisor will also involve meeting those in the community face to face so that they understand CARPLS is here for them in their time of need," Patricia said.

Patricia's dream would be to have a dedicated, bilingual extended hours hotline, only for Spanish-speaking clients. Ultimately, she believes slow and steady wins the race. Patricia wants to get to know some of the other partners to see where there could be further collaboration in order to establish a firm connection with the Latinx community.

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Each year, we help thousands of people who can't afford an attorney find answers to their everyday legal problems free of charge, through our main hotline and the issue-specific projects we manage.

For Cook County residents, they can call our flagship hotline at 312-738-9200.

Our experienced attorneys and partners are here to offer solutions, often resolving issues in a single call.



Eviction Help Illinois is a state-funded network of nonprofits providing free legal aid, mediation services, and other resources, in response to the eviction crisis.

855-631-0811 or visit evictionhelpillinois.org



COVID HELP provides free legal information, 24/7, to Illinoisans on housing issues such as eviction, debt, bankruptcy, foreclosure, guardianships, unemployment, and many more issues.

covidhelpillinois.org



CARPLS attorneys counsel veterans, military personnel and their families on civil legal issues statewide and connect them with further legal services with our 20+ partners around the state.

855-452-3526 or visit ilaflan.org



Through this Cook County program, CARPLS helps people with evictions, foreclosures, and unresolved debt issues and connects them with services that divert them from the courts.

855-956-5763 or visit cookcountylegalaid.org

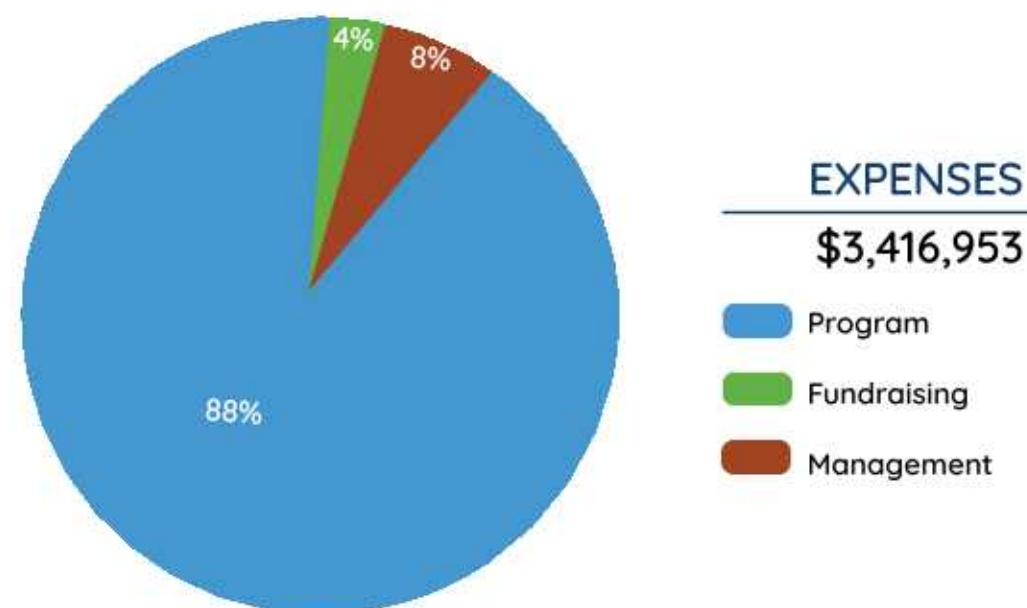
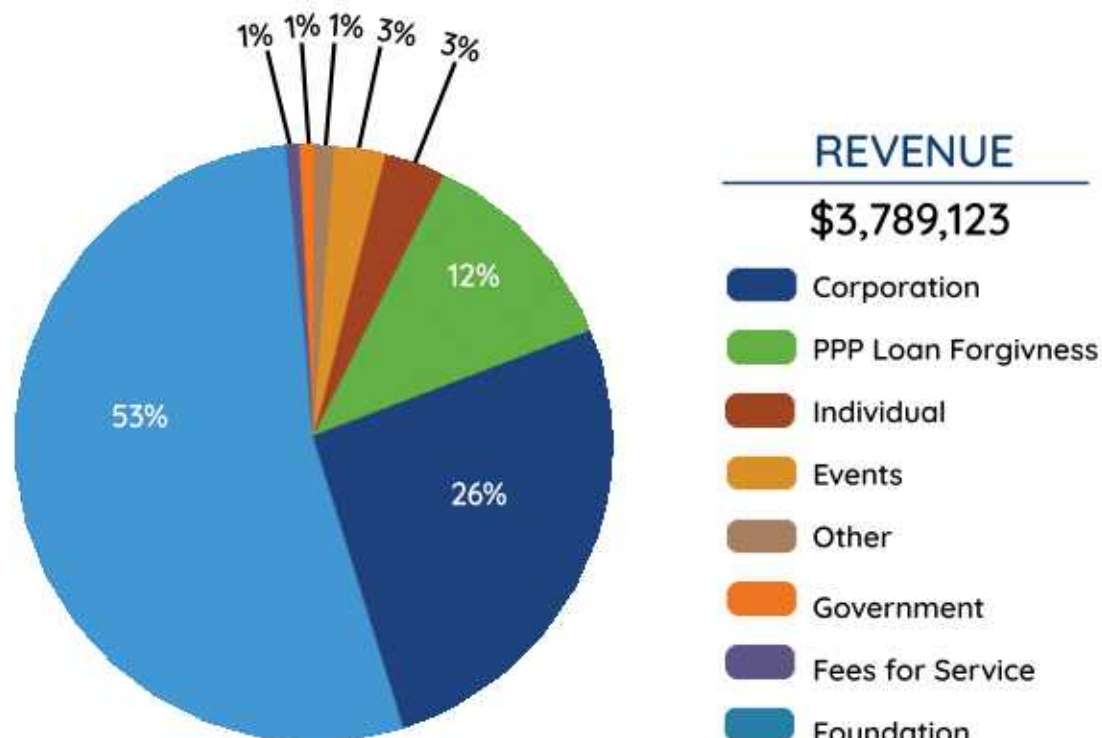


CARPLS works with 20+ partners around the state to help people start the process of clearing cannabis arrests and convictions.

855-963-9532 or visit newleafillinois.org

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JULY 1, 2020-JUNE 30, 2021



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There are many ways to make charitable gifts to CARPLS that maximize your financial and tax benefits and leave a lasting and meaningful legacy. Please contact Michelle Patterson, Development Director, at mpatterson@carpls.org if you plan to make any of the following gifts.

Bequests - You may make a bequest to CARPLS by directing in your will and/or other documents that certain assets be transferred to CARPLS after your death. We encourage you to discuss your bequest plans with your attorney or financial advisor.

Life Insurance Policies - You can name CARPLS as the beneficiary or contingent beneficiary of a life insurance policy, which can reduce the taxable value of your estate.

Retirement Plan Assets - Funds held in retirement plans (including 401ks and IRAs) at death can often be subject to income and estate taxes reducing the amount left to heirs. You can name CARPLS as a designated beneficiary in the plan or IRA document or direct that an IRA distribution be made directly to CARPLS.

Charitable Remainder Trust - You can provide annual payments to one or more individual beneficiaries for a term specified in the instrument creating the CRT. At the expiration of the term, any property remaining in the CRT is distributed to one or more charitable beneficiaries.

Charitable Lead Trust - You can set up a trust that pays an annuity to one or more charitable organizations for the term specified. At the expiration of the term, any property remaining in the CLT passes, free of additional transfer taxes, to one or more designated non-charitable beneficiaries.

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- Make a one-time gift or become a recurring donor by going to our website at www.carpls.org/make-a-donation/ and contribute to sustaining the organization.
- Inquire about becoming a CARPLS Board member or joining the Professionals Board. Email Michelle Patterson, Development Director, at mpatterson@carpls.org.
- Collaborate with us on events. Are you a partner legal aid or social service organization that would like to work with CARPLS? Reach out to us at info@carpls.org.
- Follow us on social media. Search CARPLSLegal on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn and share our posts!
- Read our blog at www.carpls.org/blog and reach out to us about submitting an article or op-ed at info@carpls.org.
- Share our newsletters with your network! You can see our recent news at www.carpls.org/media.

For other questions, reach out to Nicole NeSmith, Communications Director, at nnesmith@carpls.org.



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