



LEGAL  **SERVICES**
OF GREATER MIAMI

Building a Community of Equal Justice

2020

ABOUT US

Born out of The War on Poverty and the Civil Rights movement, Legal Services of Greater Miami has pursued economic and social justice for poor and low wage workers in our community for over 50 years. During that time, we have made great strides in removing barriers to a secure and stable life faced by poor and low wage workers.

The Legal Services advocacy team includes seasoned attorneys who devote their careers to serving our neighbors in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties. Our current team has combined legal experience of over 400 years. Annually we provide education and advocacy to almost 20,000.

When we opened our doors in 1966, the idea that attorneys would challenge the institutions, practices and laws that created systemic injustices for the poor was a novel experiment. Today, Legal Services is a cornerstone of our community and recognized as a leader in addressing systemic injustices created by poverty. The start of a new decade is an opportunity to both look back on the impact of our work in the community and focus on the work that lies ahead.



We appreciate and value your support in ensuring that our nation's pledge of Justice for All is a promise fulfilled. Thank you for being our partner in Building a Community of Equal Justice.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Monica Pitan".

Monica Vignes-Pitan
Executive Director

ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS

2019 Facts & Figures at a Glance

20,162

People Helped

4,851

Cases Handled

Financial Benefit to Clients

\$8,965,800

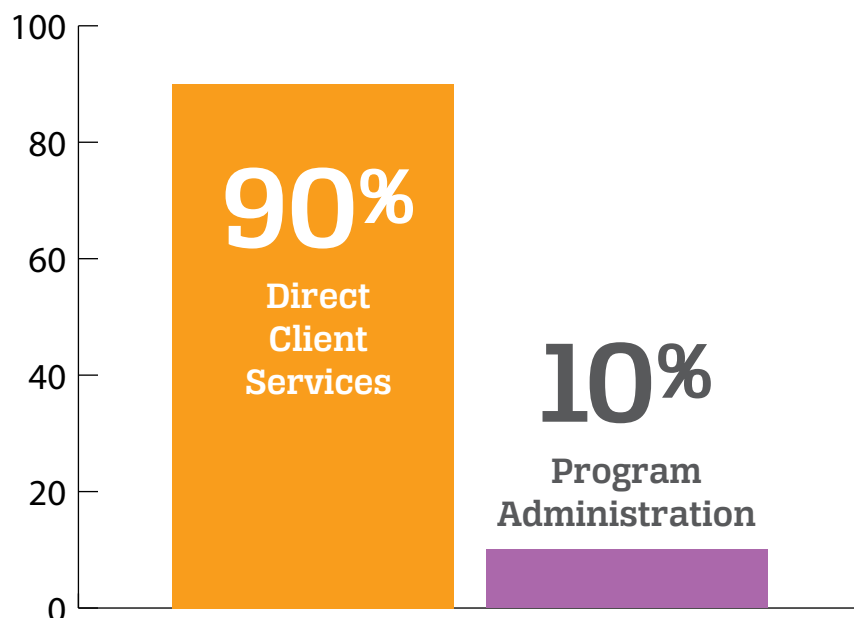
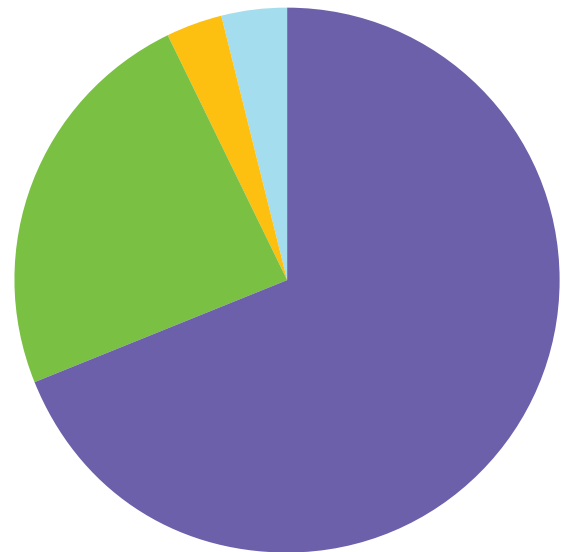
Funds Recovered/Avoided
Housing Preserved

897

Housing Units
Preserved/Created

Funding Sources

- Federal: \$5,187,113**
- Foundations/Donations: \$1,765,200**
- State/County: \$239,672**
- Other: \$285,015**



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PAST DECADE

2010



\$89 Million Awarded to Neighborhood Stabilization Program in Distressed Miami-Dade

Through our advocacy, \$89 million in Neighborhood Stabilization Program funds were awarded to a consortium of six nonprofit developers and a local municipality.

The funds were used to create or renovate **1,255 affordable housing units**, with Legal Services providing transactional legal work for the non-profit developers.

FACT



Affordable housing is defined as costing about 1/3 of the household income. Approximately 61.5% of tenants in Miami-Dade County live in unaffordable housing under this standard. And 55.6% of those renters are spending more than half of their income on housing.

Source: Miami-Dade County Affordable Housing Blueprint: Needs Assessment, Jorge M. Perez Metropolitan Center at FIU, September 2019

2012



Major Victory for Children with Autism Covered by Medicaid

The Florida Medicaid Program denied Applied Behavioral Analysis therapy for children with autism. The State claimed that the therapy was experimental despite a mandate that it be covered under private insurance. Legal Services along with co-counsel

challenged the state rule, and in a rebuke of the State of Florida, a federal judge ruled that children covered by Medicaid and diagnosed with autism are entitled to the same access to this vital therapy as children covered by private insurance. **More than 8,000 children in Florida benefited by this court ruling.**

This case had a **national impact** because while most states mandate that private insurance companies must cover this therapy, at that time most state Medicaid programs did not mandate coverage.

2013

Low Income Tenants Protected from Unlawful Rent Collection Practices

The U.S. Attorney successfully prosecuted several civil False Claims Act cases filed by Legal Services to stop Section 8 landlords from illegally requiring tenants to pay them extra rent. These cases were brought under the False Claims Act, 31 U.S.C. 3730(b).

This was not only a legal victory for the low-income tenants in this case but also served as a deterrent to other landlords who do not comply with federal housing requirements.

FACT



There are 14,396 section 8 housing vouchers in Miami-Dade as of 9/2019.

Source: <https://affordablehousingonline.com/housing-authority/Florida/Miami-Dade-Public-Housing-and-Community-Development/FLO05>



Disabled Veterans Benefit from Food Stamp Policy Change

When a homeless veteran receiving disability benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs lost his food stamps for failing to comply with new work requirements imposed by the State, Legal Services challenged the new rules. The State agreed to a global settlement, changing its policy to properly exempt veterans receiving VA disability benefits from the work requirements.

As a result, **the federal agency released a policy guidance to all 50 states instructing them that receipt of VA disability benefits should exempt a veteran from food stamp work requirements.**



Max food stamp benefit amount for 1 person in 2020 is \$194.

Source: <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/a-quick-guide-to-snap-eligibility-and-benefits/>

FACT



Relocation Agreement for Displaced Public Housing Tenants

In September 2019, Miami-Dade announced it would close two public housing buildings. Legal Services represented the Annie Coleman 14 Resident Council to negotiate a relocation agreement for the displaced tenants.

Under the agreement, all displaced tenants have the right to return to any new redevelopment, receive Section 8 vouchers to use for interim housing, and the County agrees to pay all moving

costs, application fees, and security deposits until the redevelopment is completed and the new housing opens.

Additionally, the County committed to use the relocation agreement in future public housing closures. This is significant because the **agreement goes far beyond what is required by federal law** and what public housing tenants generally receive during similar relocations. **It is now a model for the type of relocation benefits public housing authorities should be providing.**

2010-2019

221,107 People Helped

46,895 Cases Handled

\$57,655,154 Funds Recovered/Avoided/Housing Preserved

INVEST IN A COMMUNITY OF EQUAL JUSTICE

Annual Support: Chesterfield Smith Society

The Chesterfield Smith Society recognizes annual support. The Society continues the legacy of the great Chesterfield Smith (1917-2003), a lifelong advocate for Legal Services for the Poor. Smith encouraged all lawyers to “do good by doing right” - by providing pro bono legal services and supporting organizations that work to ensure that all persons have access to justice in our civil legal system without regard to their ability to pay. Giving Level is \$350 to \$4,999.

Sustained Giving: The Leadership Circle

The Leadership Circle recognizes sustained giving over a three-year period. Members of the Leadership Circle have made a substantial commitment to sustaining the highest quality cutting-edge legal services as the needs of our community continue to grow. Giving Level is \$5,000-\$100,000.

Planned Giving: Legacy Society

Legacy Society recognizes donors that make charitable bequests to Legal Services in their will or living trust, ensuring that Legal Services can continue to break down the barriers of poverty for the most vulnerable in our community well into the future. Legacy Society donors connect their compassion and concern to their financial and estate planning in order to transform the future for someone in need.

Legal Services Event Sponsors

Legal Services Event Sponsors are an elite group of supporters from the business, legal and civic community. In addition to recognition at the event, event sponsors are showcased on the Legal Services website, social media, and in our print media which reaches the more than 5,000 people.

**For more information on how you can become a supporter, please contact:
MViguesPitan@legalservicesmiami.org**







Special Thanks to our Major Grantors



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