



**LEGAL SERVICES**  
OF GREATER MIAMI, INC.

Building a Community of Equal Justice

2021

## ABOUT US

Last year we served our community while it was enduring the pandemic as well as the economic and racial justice crises – all of which disproportionately impact the low-income community. Although 2020 had more challenges and sadness than many of us can process, we demonstrated our resilience, ingenuity, and commitment to improving our community.

Overnight, we adjusted our delivery model, collaborated with our partners to reach our community, and continued to advocate for clients while keeping our team and clients safe. We are proud of our efforts to ensure access to justice and thereby ensure access to safe and affordable housing, healthcare, education, vital government assistance and greater economic opportunity. At the same time, we also reflected on our efforts to promote an equitable and inclusive community and began a journey to improve our advocacy and engagement to promote these values.

The economic, social and racial inequities endured by many in our community have been laid bare. The clear picture that emerged is an opportunity to engage in dialogues, advocacy and partnerships that would not have been possible a short time ago. At Legal Services, we are ready and committed to challenging systemic inequities and advocating for social, racial and economic justice for all.

We appreciate and value your support and thank you for being our partner in Building a Community of Equal Justice.



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

Monica Vignes-Pitan  
*Legal Services*  
*Executive Director*



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Manuel Dobrinsky".

Manuel Dobrinsky  
*Legal Services*  
*Board President*

# ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS

## 2020: At a Glance

19,822

People Helped

4,316

Cases Handled

## Financial Benefit to Clients

\$7,561,486

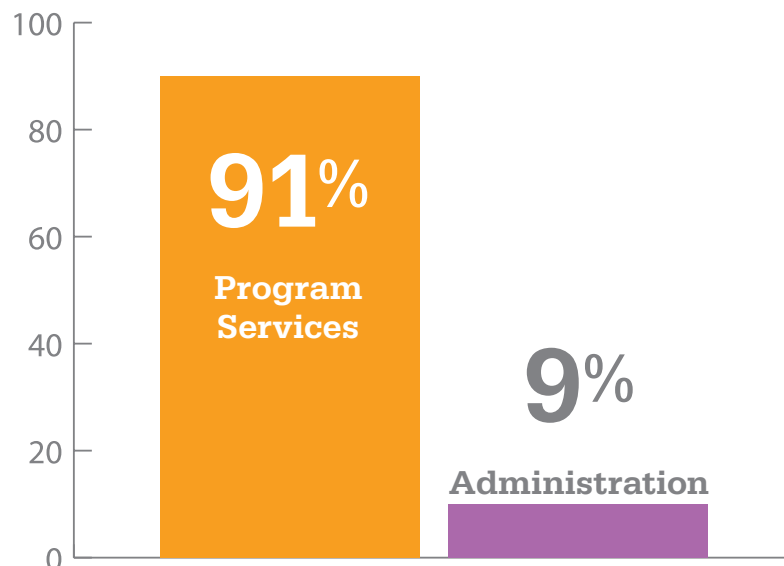
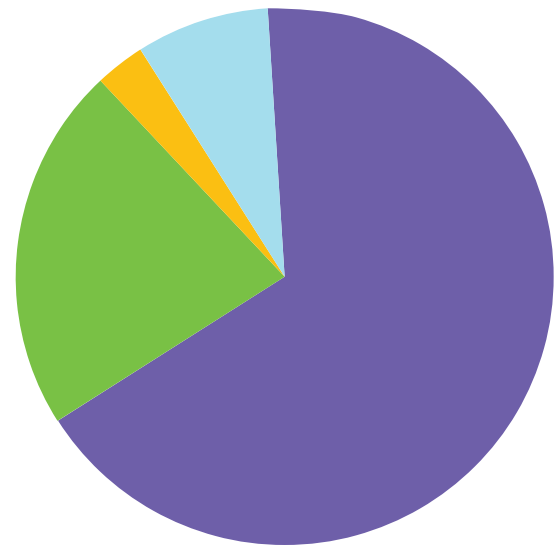
Funds Recovered/Avoided  
& Housing Preserved

558

Affordable Housing Units  
Preserved/Created

## Funding Sources

- Federal: \$5,598,481.09**
- Foundations/Donations: \$1,805,575.34**
- State/County: \$249,074.42**
- Other: \$744,645.06**



## ECONOMIC SECURITY



### Protecting Access to Government Assistance During COVID-19

Legal Services filed a Writ of Mandamus to compel Florida's unemployment agency to allow an unemployed client to file an application for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits. Our client had been attempting to apply for benefits for months. However, the agency did not provide him the means to complete and file a PUA application. The Court entered an order requiring the agency to respond to the Writ. **Immediately thereafter, the agency contacted our client, processed his PUA application, and approved \$21,000 in unemployment benefits.** Legal Services is also working with the state agency to address the systemic problems and ensure accessibility to these important benefits.

FACT



Legal Services saw a **1,124% increase in demand for representation in unemployment compensation cases.**

## HOUSING STABILITY



### CARES Act Interpretation Gives Tenants Additional Defense in Eviction Case

Legal Services represented a client who was laid off due to the pandemic and had fallen behind on his rent. He was worried that he and his family would be evicted from their home. We argued and the Court agreed that **the CARES Act requirement that a landlord give 30-days' Notice to tenants prior to commencing an eviction action should apply to covered properties not just covered tenants.** As a result, our client was entitled to the additional protections of the CARES Act and could not be evicted without adequate notice. The eviction case was dismissed, and our client secured temporary rental assistance to remain in his home. **This decision could benefit other renters in similar circumstances.**

FACT



**45% of our cases involved landlord/tenant issues.**

## NONPROFIT & SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT



**Legal Services works with the local community on economic development initiatives including developing quality, affordable housing and improving business development.**

The pandemic created great financial and operational uncertainty for small businesses, nonprofits, and the communities they serve. Our nonprofit successes included:

- Represented a nonprofit in purchasing property to build affordable housing for veterans;
- Reviewed and negotiated documentation for state funding for a nonprofit that provides early childhood advocacy; and
- Negotiated a lending agreement enabling a nonprofit to provide mortgages to low-income first-time home buyers.

Legal Services also helped small businesses during these difficult times. A small minority-owned bakery was opening right as the pandemic began and was facing legal barriers. We renegotiated a commercial lease, obtained a refund from a vendor that was not fulfilling its obligations and advised on an employment structure that ensured the company's sustainability. **Legal Services is helping communities rebuild and sustain themselves through our small business advocacy.**



*Legal Services assisted 429 small businesses & nonprofits.*

**FACT**

## RACIAL JUSTICE

**Access to justice promotes economic opportunity and revitalizes communities.**

**Much of our advocacy focuses on ensuring access to justice for the Black community.** We promote housing stability, economic security, and access to education and healthcare. In recent years, we have also grown our small business and nonprofit advocacy which helps create sustainable communities.

Legal advocacy has the power to dismantle structural inequalities in our society. To that end, **last year we created the position of Senior Attorney for Equity Advocacy to develop, coordinate, and execute our systemic equity advocacy to address racial justice inequities in all our practice areas.**

### 2017-2020

 **39%**  
Of our legal  
advocacy was on behalf  
of Black clients

 **\$12.1M**  
Funds recovered,  
avoided & housing preserved  
for Black individuals/families

 **214**  
Cases for small  
businesses & nonprofits serving  
primarily Black communities

# 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 access to justice. 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 a distinguished 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.

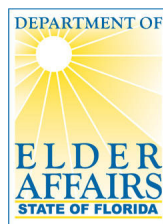
**For more information on how you can become a supporter, please contact:  
[MViguesPitan@legalservicesmiami.org](mailto:MViguesPitan@legalservicesmiami.org)**







## Special Thanks to Our Major Grantors



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