



2020

ANNUAL REPORT



www.arlegalaid.com
1-800-9 LAW AID

LSC | America's Partner
for Equal Justice
LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

The COVID-19 pandemic upended our world and inflicted enormous suffering on the people we're charged to serve. Our clients and staff were presented with unique challenges. We learned to navigate a new normal and carry forward with our lives as best as we could. Loved ones were lost, hidden strength was mustered, resilience ruled the day, and together we pushed toward the light at the end of the tunnel.

The way Legal Aid responded to the pandemic was the bright star of my 30 years here. The courage shown by our staff and clients in meeting and conquering adversity has overwhelmed me with pride. Pride in the spirit of our diverse staff and clients. Pride in outcomes that maintain dignity and advance justice. Pride in all of us for pushing aside sometimes overwhelming dismay to advocate for and achieve a better world to live in.



The staff in our Domestic Justice group helped 1,804 survivors of domestic violence and 2,403 children in their care achieve safety and security in their lives. This included 427 orders being entered to protect survivors from their abuser.

Our Housing group saw a surge of request for assistance with Landlord/Tenant and Fair Housing cases. We delayed or prevented hundreds of evictions during a time of great vulnerability and addressed an increased volume of systemic housing discrimination issues.

There were several pandemic related issues addressed by our Economic Justice group, including access to desperately needed unemployment and SNAP benefits. At the same time, the group continued to seek good health and a dignified lifestyle for our clients through ongoing Medicaid litigation.

Our Consumer group helped seal hundreds of criminal records, improving employment and housing opportunities, and challenged systemic and predatory practices throughout the program that adversely impact the communities we serve.

Our Low-Income Taxpayers clinic had a banner year, serving a record number of clients and putting more than a million dollars cash in their pockets. Our Beyond Opioids project kicked off in September and has already served hundreds of clients, helping make families stronger and recovery a reality by addressing civil legal needs of those impacted by Opioid/Substance Use Disorder.

Facing the gravest threat to well-being in a generation, we helped almost 7,000 clients with an impact on over 19,000 household members, the most clients assisted in several years. Many of our cases had a larger impact in the client community on the state and national level. We will continue working to make a more just world, a goal made all the more imperative by the pandemic's intensification of poverty and inequality.

Through the selfless work and dedication of our staff, and with the support of the community, we continue to be one of the leading public interest law firms in the country. Thank you for everything you do to help us achieve our mission, make our communities stronger, and make the lives of those we serve more fulfilling and productive.

With appreciation,

Lee Richardson, Executive Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lee Richardson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Welcome to
Arkansas
 THE NATURAL STATE

UNMET LEGAL NEEDS



1 in 4 Arkansans qualify for civil legal aid.
[American Community Survey, 2019]



taxes



domestic violence



housing



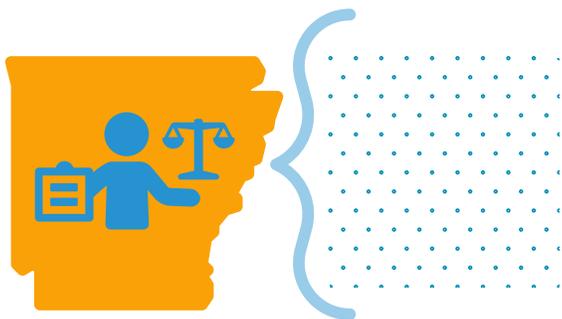
71% of low-income households experienced at least **1 civil legal problem**.
[Access to Justice, 2019]



86% of civil legal problems report receiving **inadequate or no legal help**.
[Access to Justice, 2019]



There is **one legal aid attorney** for every **10,253 eligible** Arkansans.



Arkansas has the fewest attorneys per capita in the country with **one attorney** per every **426 Arkansas residents**.
[American Bar Association, 2020]



In 2020, there has been a **5.9% decrease of active attorneys** in Arkansas.
[National Lawyer Population Survey]



LEGAL AID IN ARKANSAS

Arkansas started its first legal services program in **1965** — the Legal Aid Bureau of Pulaski County. Since then there have been multiple mergers that led to the programs we have today.

Legal Aid of Arkansas was created by the merger of Legal Services of Northeast Arkansas, Ozark Legal Services and East Arkansas Legal Services in January of **2002**.

At the same time, **the Center for Arkansas Legal Services** merged with Western Arkansas Legal Services and Legal Services of Arkansas. These two public interest law firms now provide civil legal aid to **all 75 counties in Arkansas**.

In **2003**, the **Arkansas Access to Justice Commission** formed after the Arkansas Bar Association House of Delegates and the Access to Justice Working Group petitioned the Arkansas Supreme Court to create the commission.

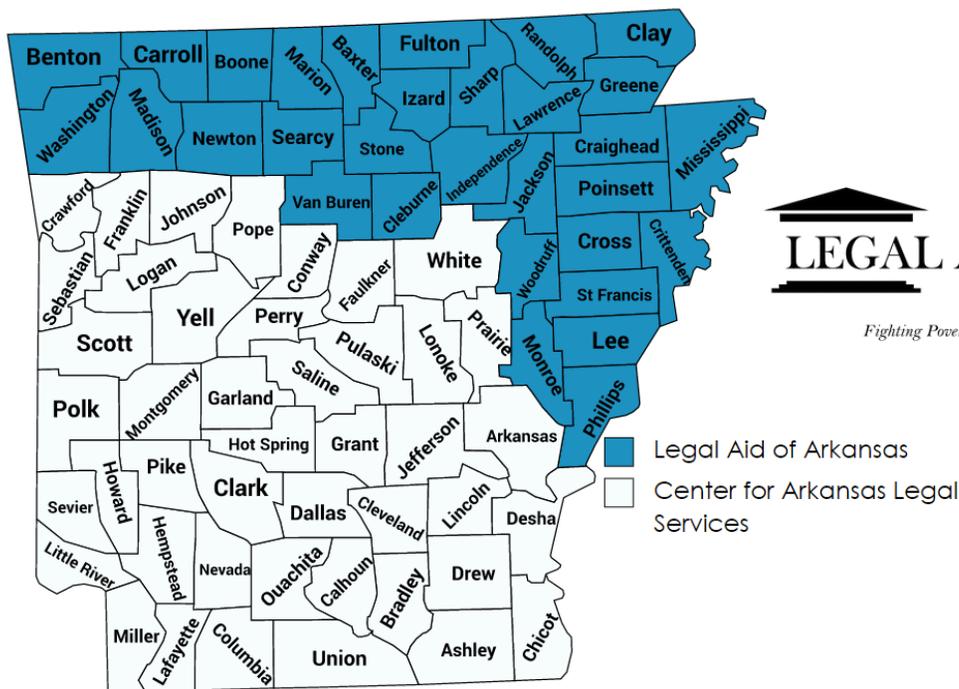
The **Arkansas Access to Justice Commission** and **The Center for Arkansas Legal Services** work together with **Legal Aid of Arkansas** to further pursue the mission of championing equal access to justice for all.

Statewide website | arlegalservices.org
Center for Arkansas Legal Services | arkansaslegal.org
Arkansas Access to Justice Commission | arkansasjustice.org

LEGAL AID OF ARKANSAS

Legal Aid of Arkansas is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization that provides **free legal services** to low-income individuals residing in the state of Arkansas in civil (non-criminal) cases.

Legal Aid has offices in **9** locations and serves **31 of the 75** counties in Arkansas.



Fighting Poverty, Maintaining Dignity, Assuring Justice

The **mission** of Legal Aid of Arkansas is to champion equal justice for low-income individuals and communities and to remedy the conditions that burden and marginalize them.

Our **vision** is to improve the lives of low-income Arkansans by championing equal access to justice for all regardless of economic or social circumstances.

A REVIEW OF LEGAL AID OF ARKANSAS IN 2020

ALTHOUGH, MANY THINGS HAVE CHANGED IN THE PAST YEAR, ONE THING THAT SEEMS TO REMAIN CONSTANT IS A COMMON DESIRE TO DO SOMETHING – ANYTHING – TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

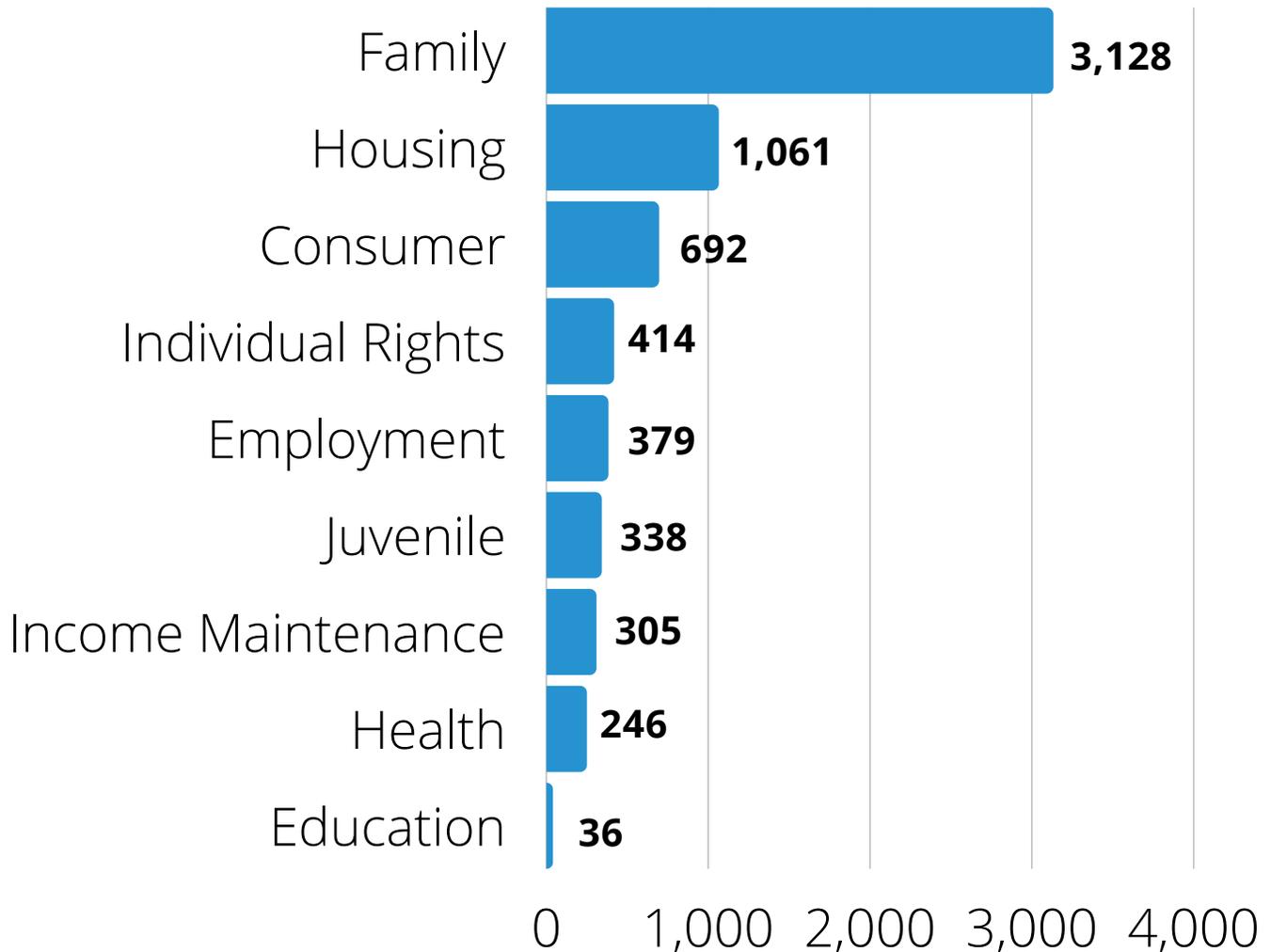
Greneda Johnson, Pro Bono Director



2020 AT A GLANCE

6,971 cases closed impacting **19,028** people including **8,531** children.

Ranging from:



LEGAL AID OF ARKANSAS WORKGROUPS

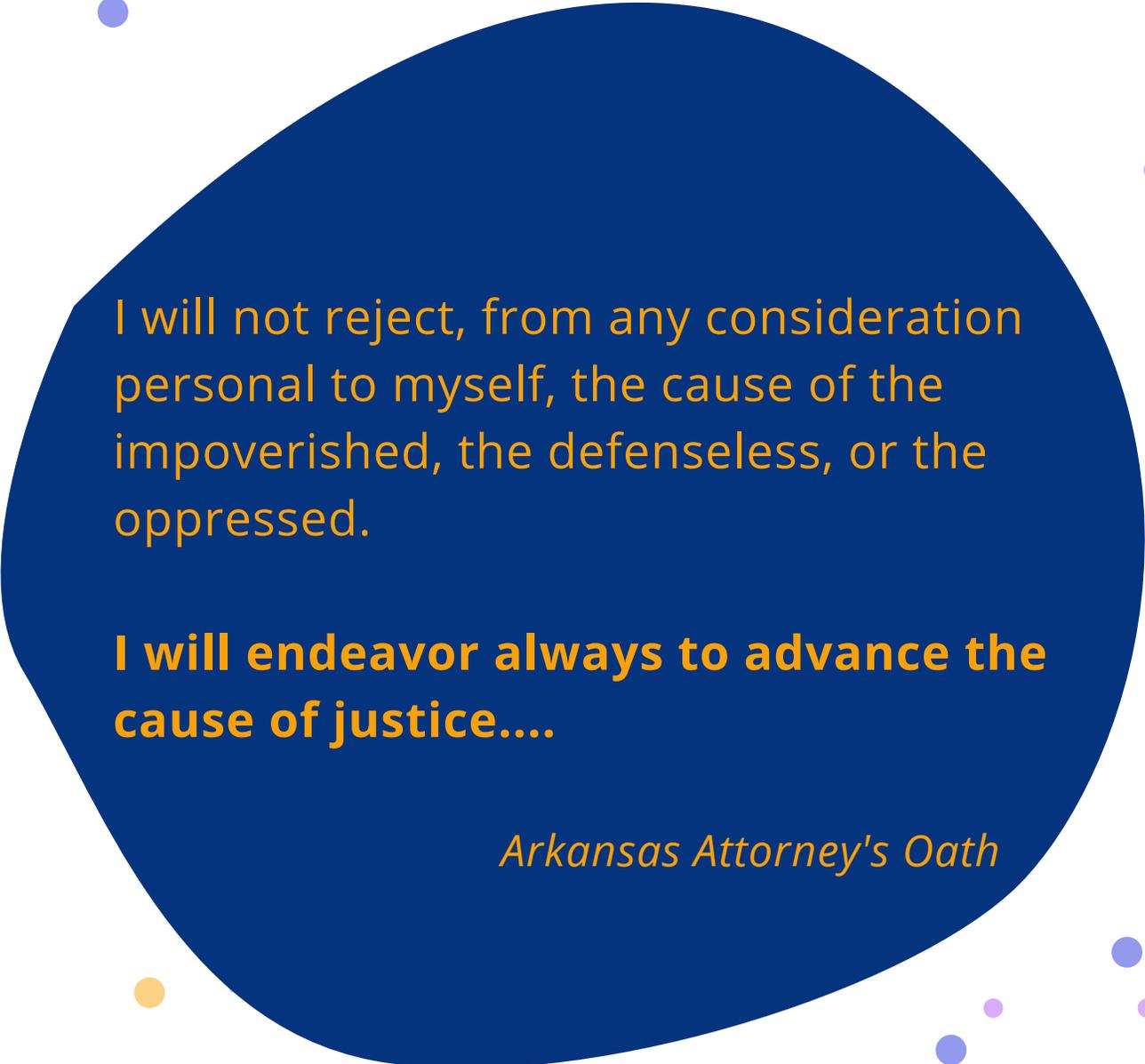


The Domestic Justice workgroup helps with obtaining and enforcing orders of protection and a variety of family law issues, including divorces and child custody cases, where there is an immediate or ongoing risk of harm to the child.

The Consumer Protection workgroup focuses on asset, income, and resource protection. It protects consumers from unfair trade and debt collection practices. It files petitions to seal criminal records to remove barriers to employment and housing.

The Housing workgroup fights housing discrimination under a variety of federal, state, and local laws. It defends tenants facing civil eviction suits and homeowners facing foreclosure suits.

The Economic Justice workgroup protects rights related to public benefit programs (Medicaid, SNAP, Unemployment Insurance, Social Security), special education services, and employment, including the enforcement of laws outlawing discrimination and wage theft.



I will not reject, from any consideration personal to myself, the cause of the impoverished, the defenseless, or the oppressed.

I will endeavor always to advance the cause of justice....

Arkansas Attorney's Oath

CLIENT STORIES

Ms. Jones*, a 69 year old women with various health conditions that made her unable to meet all of her care needs at home, had been previously receiving in-home care through the ARChoices Medicaid program. Based on a new computer-based assessment system, DHS terminated her from the program. Ms. Jones contacted Legal Aid of Arkansas for help and met with Kevin De Liban, a staff attorney. **Through the assistance of Kevin, she was able to keep her ARChoices Medicaid care to help her with tasks like using the bathroom, getting around, having food to eat, and keeping her house clean.**



Kevin De Liban, Attorney

Ms. Stone* and her boyfriend needed a larger car to safely transport their three children. After deciding on their new vehicle, the contract was inflated by \$3,000 at the time of signing. Not shortly after purchasing the car, it broke down on the side of road, leaving Ms. Stone and her family without transportation. The car company refused to fix the new car without additional payments, and then proceeded to sue the family when they withheld payment. **Susan Purtle, a staff attorney from Legal Aid of Arkansas stepped in to represent Ms. Stone and was able to dismiss the car companies complaint, saving Ms. Stone and her family \$12,000 she would have owed if a judgment was entered.**



Susan Purtle, Attorney

After a tragic accident, Ms. Summers* niece had passed away, leaving behind her 3 year old daughter, Clare*. There was nobody else available or interested in obtaining guardianship of Clare, so Ms. Summers took action. She called Legal Aid of Arkansas and received assistance from Anaicka Ortiz-Reed, a staff attorney, to attain temporary guardianship of Clare while a registry searched for a father. **The temporary guardianship allowed Ms. Summers to add Clare to her HUD housing so Clare could immediately settle in. After the registry search was completed and no father was found, Ms. Summers was granted permanent guardianship.**



Anaicka Ortiz-Reed, Attorney

A Marshallese tenant contacted Legal Aid because his family was facing immediate eviction. Mr. John* had lost his job due to COVID-19 and was forced to use rent money to pay for groceries for his family. Knowing this was a critical situation, Legal Aid staff worked hard to preserve the family's housing. Legal Aid determined that the tenant's landlord had sued in violation of the CARES Act as the property was subject to a federally backed mortgage. **Legal Aid attorney, Jason Auer, was successful in getting the case dismissed and helping the family regain their stability.**



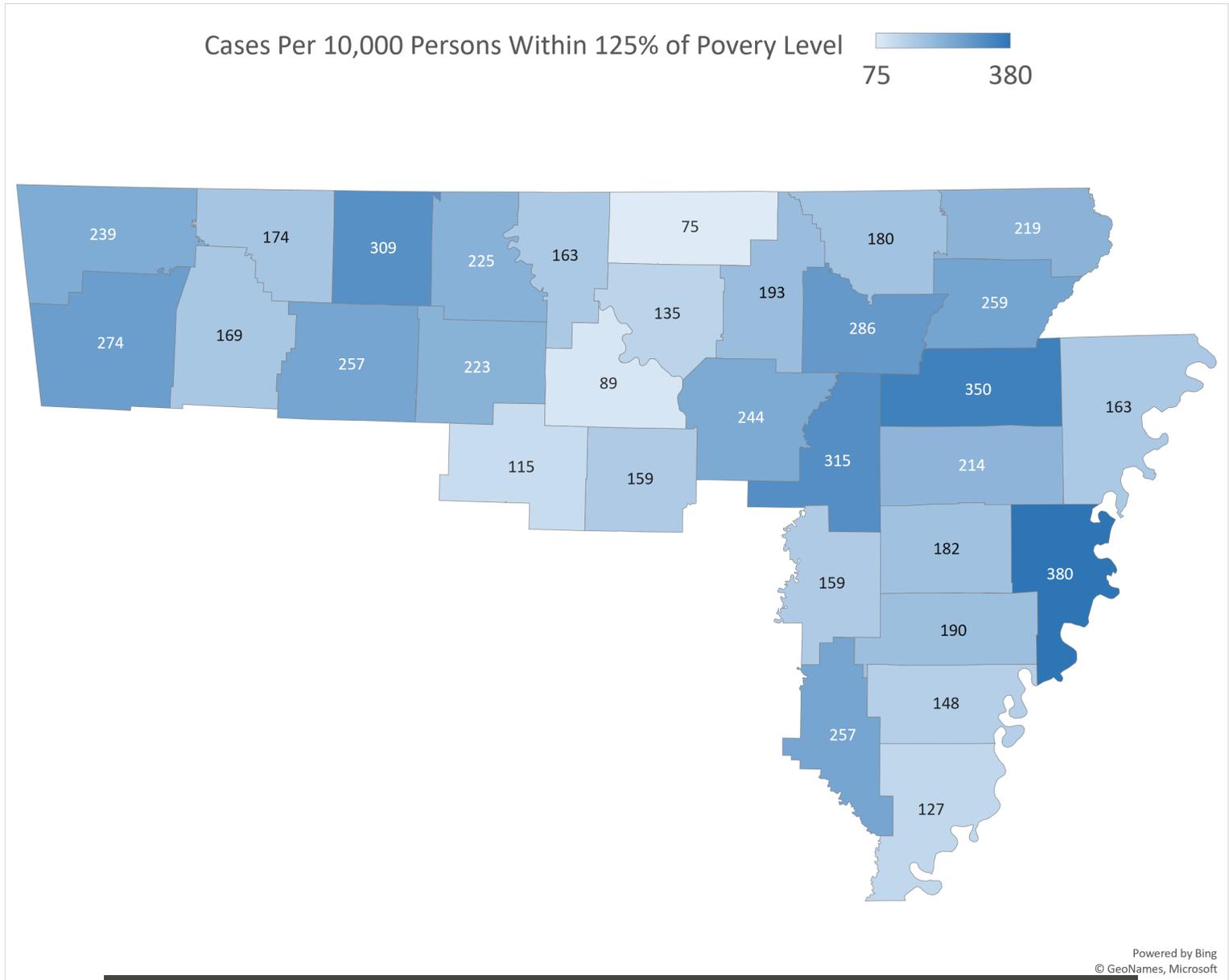
Jason Auer, Attorney

*Clients names have been changed to respect their privacy and safety.



CASE BREAKDOWNS

Despite these difficult times, Legal Aid of Arkansas attorneys have met the challenge to provide legal assistance during the pandemic.



Economic Justice Cases

10%

Housing Cases

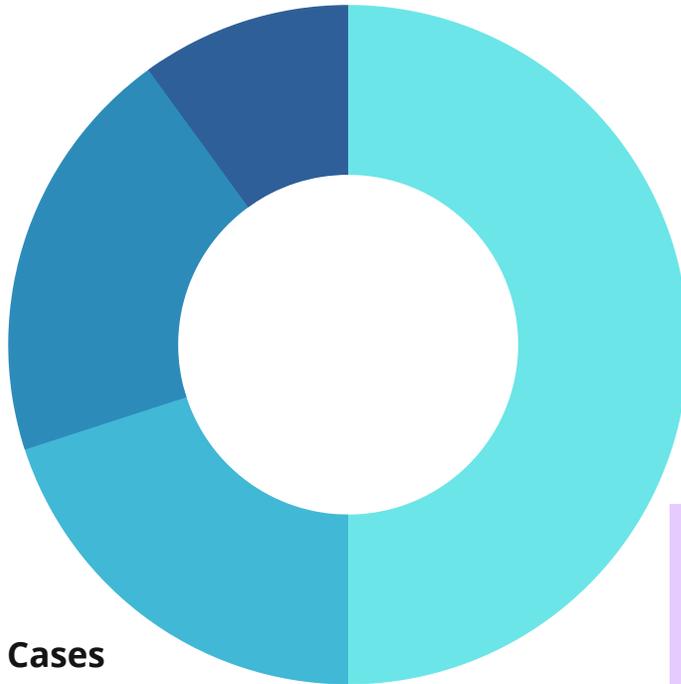
20%

Domestic Justice Cases

50%

Consumer Protections Cases

20%



These core areas reflect Legal Aid's strategic focus to support families; preserve homes; maintain economic stability; ensure safety, stability, and health; and to identify and address the needs of vulnerable populations.

of Cases Still Open

1,331

of Cases that Could Not Be Served

5,037

of Closed Cases

7,444

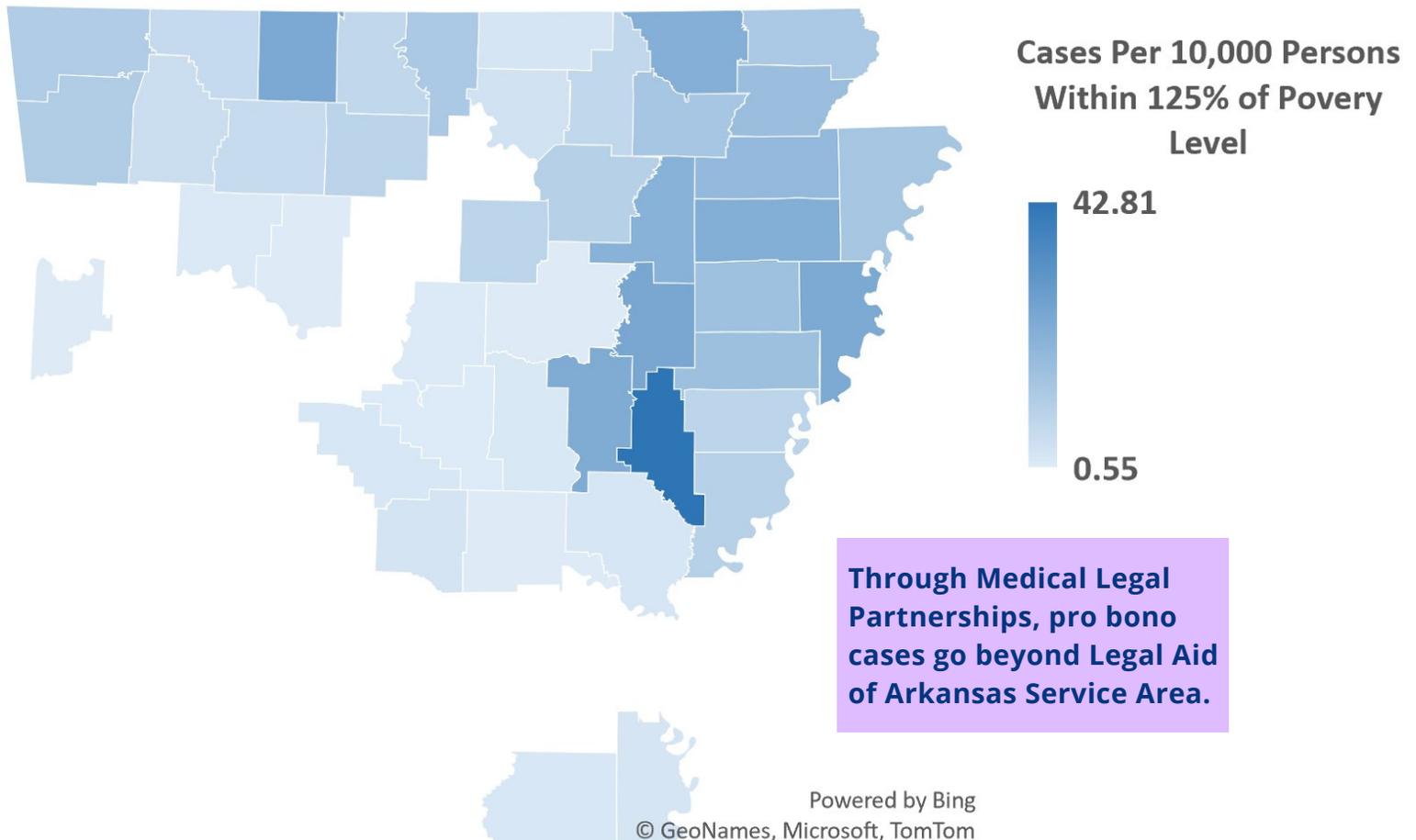
of Case Requests

12,929

0 5,000 10,000 15,000

PRO BONO

386 *pro bono* cases closed across **43** counties



Pro Bono Attorney of the Year

Fuller Bumpers

Fuller Bumpers has been advocating for families and individuals for over 12 years! His donation of **110 hours** helped those who otherwise would not have had access to legal services.

“ We had countless attorneys and law students reach out to the Pro Bono team to offer help in any way that they could, whether it was help with eviction defense to estate planning.

Greneda Johnson, Pro Bono Director

”

Pro Bono Events

**Super Saturday
Estate Planning
Clinics**

Served

15 clients

Produced

44 documents

Pro Bono Volunteers

9 attorneys

2 law students

**Single Parent
Scholarship
of Benton County**

Served

24 clients

Produced

82 documents

Pro Bono Volunteers

11 attorneys

9 law students

**Inaugural Virtual
Expungement
Clinic**

Served

30 clients

Produced

136 documents

Pro Bono Volunteers

10 attorneys

8 law students

JUSTICE PROJECTS

BEYOND OPIOIDS

Beyond Opioids is a new justice project that provides free civil legal services to eligible clients impacted by the **opioid crisis and other substance use disorders** in Arkansas.

For more information,
visit:

www.beyondopioids.org

Beyond Opioids is a consortium of **prevention, treatment, and recovery service providers** led by the two legal aid programs in Arkansas: Center for Arkansas Legal Services (CALs) and Legal Aid of Arkansas (Legal Aid).



Since September 2020, **523** substance use disorder intakes have come in, this is **13.6%** of total intake cases. **81%** of total cases have been **Domestic Justice** focused, with **7.5%** of total cases focused on **housing**.

LOW INCOME TAXPAYER CLINIC

The Low Income Taxpayer Clinic **ensures the fairness and integrity of the tax system for taxpayers who are low income or speak English as a second language.**



247 cases closed / 308 cases opened

They provide representation, resources and education on rights, and they **actively advocate and identify issues** that may be unjustly facing low-income Arkansans within the IRS tax system.

FAIR HOUSING PROJECT

The Fair Housing Project of Legal Aid of Arkansas works to **eliminate housing discrimination** and to ensure **equal housing opportunity for all** people through education, outreach, public policy initiatives, advocacy, and enforcement.

Conducted 55 fair housing tests

Provided representation in state or federal courts on 8 cases

If you believe you have been discriminated against, please call the fair housing helpline at 1-870-338-9834.

MEDICAL LEGAL PARTNERSHIPS



Legal Aid of Arkansas is engaged in Medical-Legal Partnerships (MLP) throughout Arkansas with a variety of health care providers. MLP's team lawyers and paralegals work with health care teams in medical settings to **detect, address and prevent health-harming social conditions for people and communities**. The goal is for attorneys and medical staff to work together to achieve lasting positive health outcomes for low-income patients and clients.

- Mid-Delta Health Systems and Friday, Eldridge & Clark
- Arkansas Children's Hospital
- Mid-South Health Systems

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES



Legal Aid of Arkansas works to mitigate Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) by **prioritizing cases where households have children under 5 years old**.

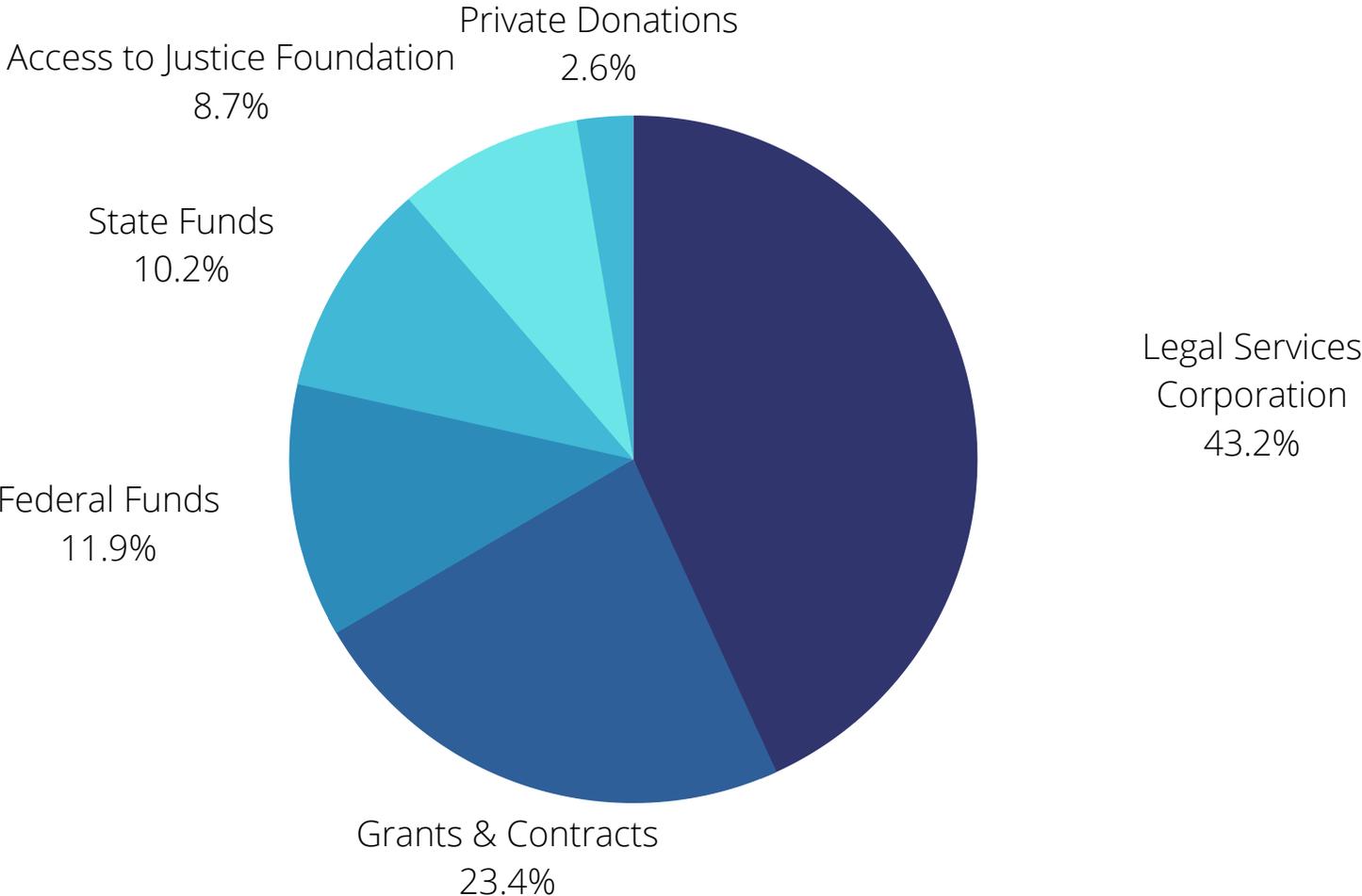
Legal Aid of Arkansas can help **prevent stress** in a child's life from causing serious physical, mental and emotional issues by helping with **Domestic Violence, Guardianship/Custody, Housing, Education, and Benefits cases**.

BUDGET



Revenue

\$4.35 million

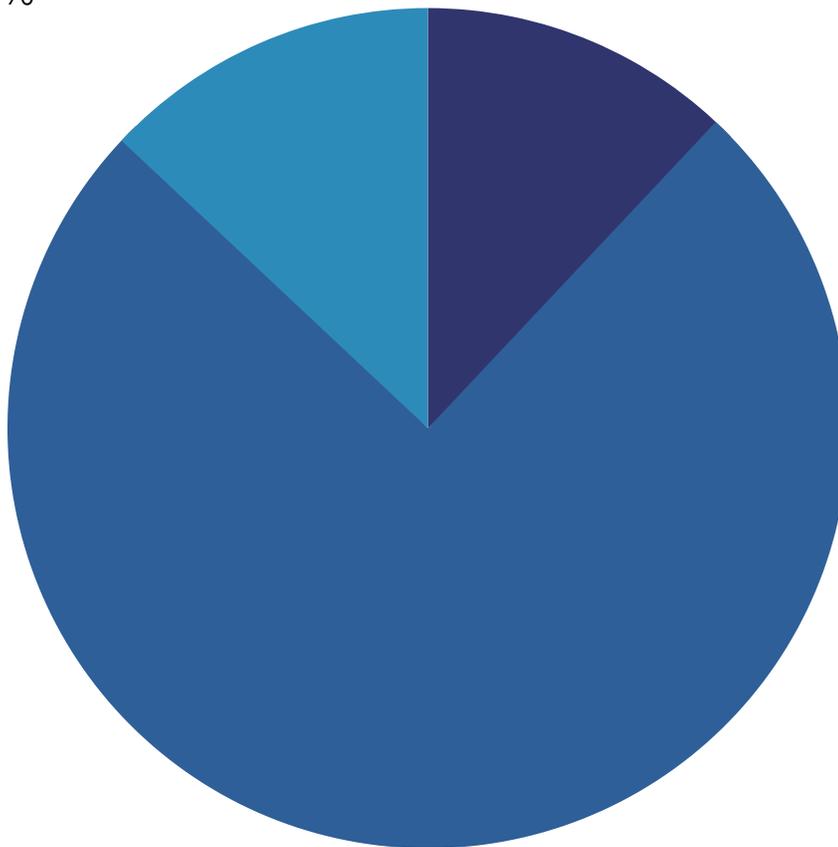


Expenditures

\$3.76 million

Operation Expenditures
13%

Administrative Staff Expenditures
12%



Attorney/Paralegal Expenditures
75%

HOW YOU CAN HELP

BECOME A VOLUNTEER TODAY!

Providing pro bono services to people of limited means can mean the difference between justice for some and justice for all. **Pro bono service is one of the most rewarding experiences in an attorney's career.**

You can register to become a pro-bono volunteer here:
<https://arlegalaid.org/how-to-help/volunteer.html>



A lack of resources is the number one reason Arkansans get turned away at Legal Aid of Arkansas. **Through your donations, you can cover what it costs for legal aid to represent a domestic violence victim, a family struggling to pay their bills, or a child in need of a stable home.**

You can make your one-time or monthly gift online today at:
<https://arlegalaid.org/donation-landing-page/donate-landing.html>

BOARD OF DIRECTORS*

*current board as of May, 2021

Benton

Lori Chumbler

Boone

Steven B. Davis

Craighead

Matt Cook

Pamela Haun

Val P. Price

Crittenden

Ron Wilson

Cross

Kevin Watts

Greene

Neal Burns

Ashlie Thacker

Independence

Daniel Brightwell

Izard

Mihailo Albertson

Jackson

Tim Watson, Jr.

Mississippi

Helen Jenkins

Phillips

Kyle Stoner

Pulaski

Bill Waddell

St. Francis

Rene Ward

Van Buren

Donna Price

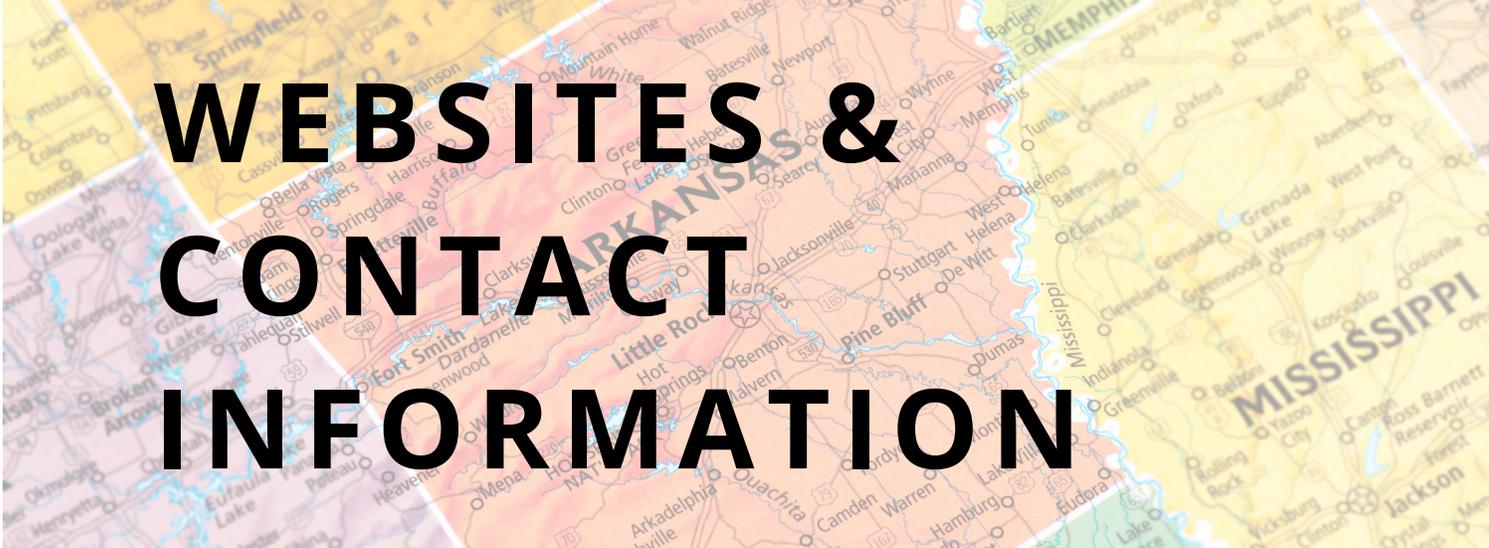
Washington

Vilma Asencio

Niki Cung

Annie B. Smith

Demetre Walker

A map of the state of Arkansas, showing major cities, towns, and geographical features. The text 'ARKANSAS' is prominently displayed across the center of the map.

WEBSITES & CONTACT INFORMATION

www.arlegalaid.org

Helpline: 1-800-952-9243

Office: 1-870-972-9224



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