

# 2023 Impact Report



**We are working together to build a better and more just tomorrow.**

Through the power of your giving, Legal Aid SMC opened 1,402 cases for low-income clients in San Mateo County last year. When families were faced with unlawful evictions and older adults were cut off from critical medical services, you made sure we were there for them. Our team was prepared to answer their questions, explain their situations plainly, teach them to advocate for themselves, and represent them when they couldn't navigate complex systems on their own. When financial hardship put legal help out of reach, your generosity made a world of difference.

**Together we are using the law to make the social safety net work.**

Over the last year, our program teams have been hard at work resolving individual cases and fixing systems that fail the people they are meant to serve. By pairing real case data with advocacy, we achieve lasting changes that make it easier for low-income communities to access resources that provide economic security. We made sure that patients learn about financial assistance available from their medical providers and made it easier for youth to get police reports they needed to apply for immigrant protections after being the victim of a crime.

And that's what makes your impact so significant. Your ongoing support doesn't just help individuals and families, it repairs the social safety net that makes our communities stronger for everyone.

**Thank you.**

M. Stacey Hawver  
Executive Director



Find us online!



## Family Stability

Through pro bono partnerships with local law firms, we're able to take on cases for clients we otherwise wouldn't have the capacity to serve. In 2021, several attorneys from a large firm teamed up to represent one such client seeking a restraining order. Marco, a young father, requested help when the mother of his son began stalking and harassing him. She frequently mentioned abandoning their child and even threatened to kill Marco.

The mother's attorney initially agreed to settle the issue of custody out of court while the restraining order would go to hearing. But shortly before the hearing, she hired a different attorney who refused to negotiate. They even went so far as to deny that Marco was the child's father. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for survivors of domestic abuse to continue to face harassment through extensive litigation in the courts when the abuser can no longer interact with them personally. These actions weigh heavily on survivors, taking an emotional toll on them and draining their finances.

But Marco's team of pro bono attorneys did their best to support him and his son. They convinced the judge to grant a restraining order along with sole custody in spite of the opposing attorney's aggressive tactics. Without the invaluable assistance of his attorneys, Marco might have struggled to persevere through the legal threats of his abuser.

## Emergency Response

In January, tragedy struck the farmworker community of Half Moon Bay when an armed employee took the lives of seven workers and wounded an eighth. The surviving farmworkers and their families were sheltered at a local hotel during the initial investigation. County officials mobilized the nonprofit community to offer resources, calling on Legal Aid SMC to meet with the families and assess their legal needs.

Seven staff members, including Executive Director Stacey Hawver, spent a day meeting with the families. Expecting to hear about working and housing conditions, instead we heard from nearly every farmworker that their top priority was getting permission to work. For the next few months, our teams talked to the survivors, gathered documents, and researched immigration relief available to survivors of mass shootings. Local law firms Cooley, Morrison Foerster, Fenwick & West, and Morgan Lewis reached out to offer their help. Pro Bono Director Stephanie Bilinski and Directing Attorney Jenny Horne are working with volunteer attorneys who will help the farmworkers and their families fill out applications for immigration relief based on their cooperation with law enforcement and labor regulators. Through your support and partnerships with local law firms, we're able to help families throughout their immigration journey—and every step they take brings them closer to economic security.

Special thanks to our Pro Bono Partners, who volunteered over 5,008 hours to help low-income families

# 1,402 Cases Opened



Serving clients in **more than 10 languages**



Over **4,100 tenants** educated about their housing rights



Provided legal aid to **396 clients with a disability**



**192 outreach events** to connect families to information



**632 Households with children** supported



Over **47 evictions** stopped to keep families housed



**150 Pediatric Residents** trained to recognize legal issues affecting their patients' health



**\$458,900 Saved and \$471,000 Recovered** for clients

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**\$153,000**

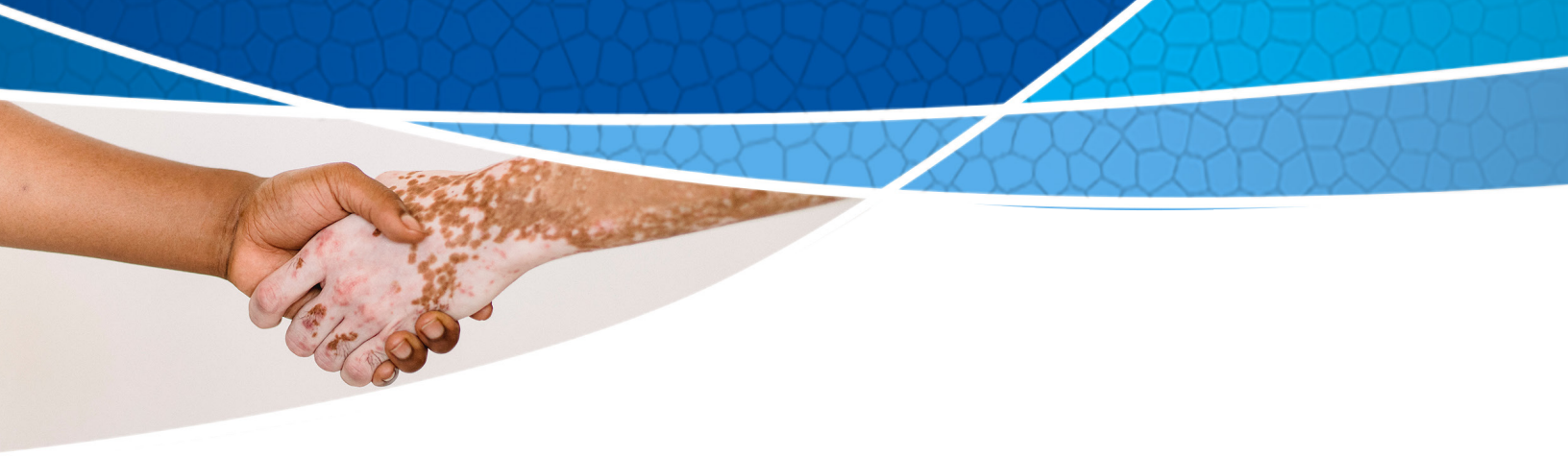
San Mateo County  
Median Income

**\$27,300**

Our Clients'  
Median Income

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These numbers represent cases opened between April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023



# THANK YOU

Legal Aid SMC opened 1,402 cases last year to help children, families, and seniors. Because of your generosity, our low-income neighbors can continue to count on us to access legal services and representation when they need it most. Your commitment to justice connects our clients to important resources and improves the safety net systems meant to help them, making local families and our communities stronger.

*See a list of our generous supporters at [legalaidsmc.org/supporters23](https://legalaidsmc.org/supporters23)*

## Thank you to our Pro Bono Partners!

We are proud to announce that thirty-eight dedicated pro bono attorneys who work with us at Legal Aid SMC were awarded the Wiley W. Manuel Certificate for Pro Bono Legal Services! The award was established by the California State Bar in 1989 and named for the first Black Justice of the California Supreme Court, recognizing those who have generously donated over fifty hours to assisting clients from our low-income community.

*We invite you to see the full list of our pro bono partners at [legalaidsmc.org/pro-bono-partners](https://legalaidsmc.org/pro-bono-partners)*

We were excited to highlight several of our pro bono partners at the 26th Annual 'And Justice For All' Awards Luncheon this May. Stephanie Bilinski, our Pro Bono Program Director, presented Deborah Heller with the Dorothy M. Wolfe Award. Deborah first came to Legal Aid SMC in October 2020 to find out how she could support our clients. Since then, she has taken on thirteen cases including restraining orders for survivors of domestic violence, conservatorships, and guardianship cases when children lost their parents during the pandemic. She has never shied away from difficult cases and clients speak highly of her, describing feeling supported and empowered by Deborah.

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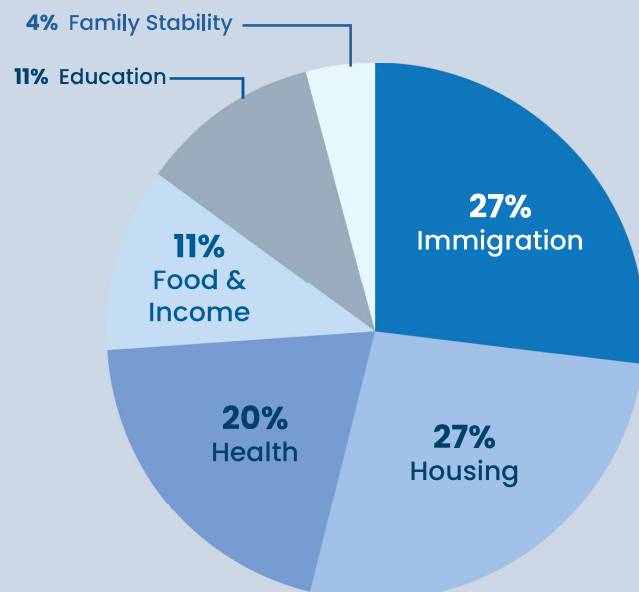
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**Revenue**



**Expenses**

**Legal Aid Society of San Mateo County**  
**The Natalie Lanam Justice Center**  
**Sobrato Center for Nonprofits - Redwood Shores**  
**330 Twin Dolphin Drive, Suite 123**  
**Redwood City, CA 94065**  
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