

Partners in Justice



Volunteer Lawyers Network
uses the power of volunteers
to protect and enforce the
legal rights of low-income
Minnesotans.



annual report
FISCAL YEAR 2018-2019



Community members worked with VLN volunteers to expunge
evictions from their housing record.

Inset (at left): Our More Representation Minneapolis partnership
with Mayor Jacob Frey exceeded our service hours goals.



*“Lawyers, in their work here,
see clients as their whole selves.”*

—Patina Park, Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center

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The Power of Partnerships

VLN was founded, in part, on the simple idea that we can do more together than we can on our own. In 1966, a small number of like-minded lawyers came together to offer free legal advice to people experiencing poverty. Volunteers met with clients at four community centers which, along with funder The Pillsbury Company, became the organization’s first community partners. This humble start was only the beginning of building partnerships.

Partnerships make VLN a stronger, more responsive, and more equitable organization. Our partnerships with our legal services partners allows us to leverage the expertise and resources of other organizations to expand the reach and effectiveness of our services. Through our partnerships with the courts, we provide powerful access to justice to thousands of people. By partnering with community service organizations, VLN effectively and competently reaches clients and communities most in need of legal help. Finally, our partnership with the Hennepin County Bar Association helps us provide meaningful volunteer opportunities to the private bar.

Over the years, as VLN has grown, so have the scope and nature of our partnerships. However, that simple idea remains the same: we can have a bigger impact on the lives of our clients and our communities together than we can by ourselves.

Thank you for your continued support of VLN. I look forward to our continued partnership in the years to come.

—Thomas Walsh, VLN Executive Director



Minnesotans prepare to become citizens with classes at COPAL, taught in part by VLN staff.



Mary Abraham has visited the MIWRC clinic for two separate cases in the past 10 years.

VLN Legal Clinic at Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center Celebrates 25th Anniversary

This year, VLN’s longest-running legal clinic, located at the Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center (MIWRC), celebrated its 25th anniversary. MIWRC empowers American Indian women and their families through an array of social and educational services.

Patina Park, President and CEO of MIWRC, emphasizes the importance of treating clients as whole people, rather than just the sum of their hardships. She feels that VLN’s legal clinic is another part of that holistic approach. “Lawyers, in their work here, see clients as their whole selves,” Park says. “And that’s how they’re met and talked to.”

Mary, who works in the kitchen at the MIWRC, has used the legal clinic a few times. She first sought help when her granddaughter needed an Order for Protection. Mary’s volunteer attorney accompanied her downtown to help her navigate the confusing process and even represented her in court.

“I felt safe and I felt confident because he was right there with me,” she says, describing her experience. Later, Mary returned to the legal clinic at MIWRC when her granddaughter’s Order for Protection needed modifying. Again, a volunteer attorney was there to help Mary navigate the complex legal process.

Mary sees the need for legal resources in her community. “My people, we have hardships already,” she says, “and without this free legal clinic to help guide us through the system, I would have lost my granddaughter.” Mary feels grateful for the attorneys who volunteer their time to help. “They’re really needed here, and I’m really glad that they come as volunteers, because the people who come can’t afford these services,” Mary explains. “They come because they don’t know where to go, and the legal clinic points them in the right direction.”

VLN is proud of its ongoing partnership with the Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center as they work to empower more women like Mary by providing vital resources to underserved communities.

“My people, we have hardships already. Without this free legal clinic to help guide us through the system, I would have lost my granddaughter.”

—Mary Abraham, VLN pro bono client

711 attorneys took a new case during FY18-19: 9,148 services were provided, including 6,206 provided at clinics and events, and 1,785 provided via telephone legal advice.

VLN Volunteers go the Extra Mile

Last year, more than 700 legal professionals provided 9,148 services to our clients. VLN honored two of these extraordinary volunteers during our annual Riverfront Celebration.

2019 VLN Volunteer of the Year



Nysha Cornelius

Nysha Cornelius is an attorney at Paschal Nwokocha & Chukwu Law Offices. She graduated from Hamline University School of Law, where she obtained her Juris Doctor and a Certificate in Alternative Dispute Resolution in May 2013.

Nysha is a first-generation Mexican-American who is ever mindful of the sacrifices her parents made to open the doors to her legal career. In addition to her immigration practice, Nysha also represents individuals in District Court for family and criminal matters.

Nysha is the Chair of the New Member Division Committee of the Minnesota/Dakota American Immigration Lawyer Association (AILA) and Vice Chair of the Minnesota State Bar Association's Immigration Law Section. Nysha has volunteered on a regular basis with Volunteer Lawyers Network since 2013.

According to the staff who nominated her for this award, Nysha is an exemplary volunteer and advocate for VLN clients. Her current caseload includes four cases that require a commitment of about ten years per case. These cases are particularly challenging in the current climate of immigration policy, so Nysha's ability to communicate and work with clients across cultures and language is extremely beneficial for VLN clients.

Nysha is a consummate professional. She is one of the first responders when we make a request for help. She is highly responsive in completing VLN administrative requirements. She is kind and uplifting.

2019 John D. Levine Pro Bono Distinguished Service Award



Jody DeSmidt

Jody DeSmidt is a partner in the Minneapolis law firm of DeSmidt Rabuse PLLC. She was admitted to the Minnesota State Bar and the U.S. District Court – District of Minnesota Bar in 1982 and the U.S. Supreme Court Bar in 1994. Jody earned her BA degree from the University of Minnesota in 1979 and her JD degree from William Mitchell College of Law in 1982, where she was a law review editor. Jody is a member of the Minnesota State, Hennepin County and Washington County Bar Associations.

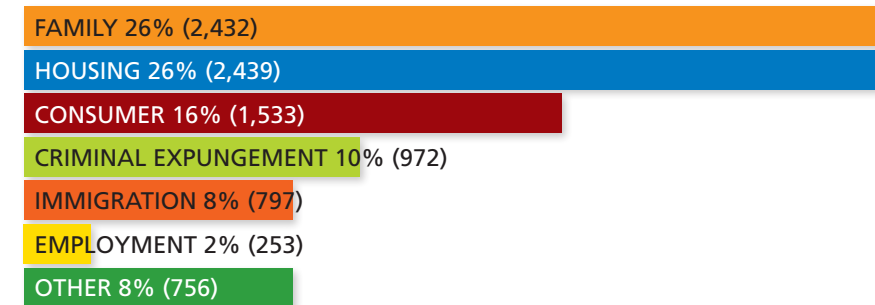
Jody devotes her practice primarily to family law, adoption, juvenile law, assisted reproductive technology law (ARTs) and appeals in those areas. Jody has been a fellow of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys since 1992 and the American Academy of Assisted Reproductive Technology Attorneys since 2009. She has been repeatedly designated as a Super Lawyer by *The Journal of Law & Politics*.

Jody is also a frequent presenter to local adoption agencies, high schools and other community and civic groups on adoption, ARTs and related issues. She volunteers for Volunteer Lawyers Network in Hennepin County assisting individuals in family and juvenile law matters.

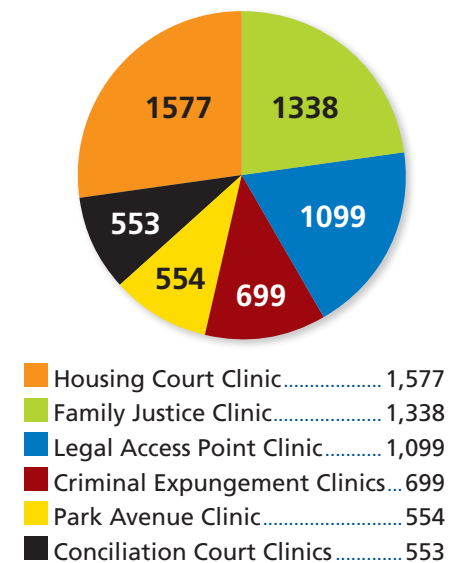
The VLN staff who nominated Jody for this award describe her as dependable and reliably consistent, no matter what is going on in her professional practice. Jody is VLN's adoption expert, she screens all adoption cases, offers her assistance to any volunteers who need mentoring, and takes cases herself.

Jody is very personable and professional in her interactions with clients. She very often will spend time beyond what she is scheduled for when doing phone advice, and she will often follow up with additional, helpful information for the client. Jody's demeanor and personality are wonderful, and she quickly and easily puts clients at ease. She takes the time to completely understand their situation and makes sure they understand her advice.

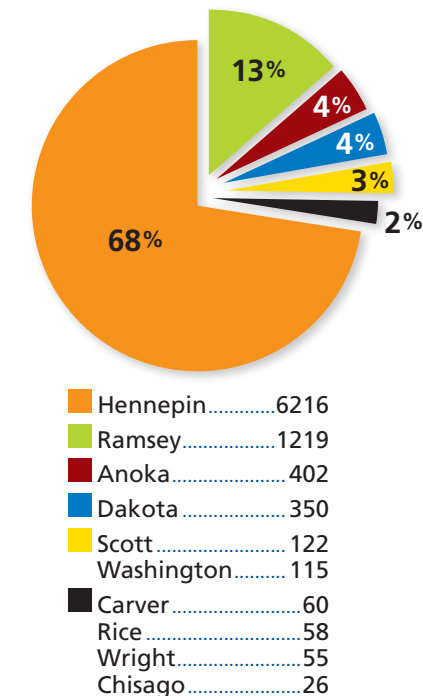
Services Provided by Category of Law



Number of Services Provided at Major Clinics



Top 10 MN Counties Served



Areas of Law Covered During Services

CONSUMER	1,533	HOUSING	2,439
Bankruptcy / Debtor Relief	778	Fed Subsidized Housing	23
Collect / Repo / Def / Garnsh.....	318	Homeownership / Real Prop.....	97
Collection Practices /		Mobile Homes.....	1
Creditor Harassment.....	87	Mort Foreclosure not Pred Lending ...	1
Contracts / Warranties	120	Other Housing	3
Loans / Installment Purch.....	9	Private Landlord / Tenant.....	2,257
Other Consumer / Finance.....	76	Public Housing	57
Public Utilities.....	1	IMMIGRATION / NATURALIZATION ...	797
Unfair Sales Practices.....	144	INCOME MAINTENANCE	51
CRIMINAL RECORD EXPUNGEMENT ...	972	Food Stamps / Commodities.....	1
EDUCATION	2	Other Income Maintenance.....	5
EMPLOYMENT	253	Social Security (Not SSDI).....	8
Employment Discrimination	23	SSDI	3
Emply Rights	107	SSI.....	6
Other Employment.....	35	State & Local Income Maint	1
Taxes Not EITC.....	5	Unemployment Compensation.....	27
Wage Claims & FLSA	83	INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS	32
FAMILY	2,432	Civil Rights	24
Adoption.....	27	Mental Health.....	1
Adult Guardianship.....	2	Other Individual Rights	7
Custody / Visitation.....	951	JUVENILE	64
Divorce / Sep / Annul.....	630	Minor Guardianship	
Domestic Abuse.....	123	Conservatorship.....	2
Name Change.....	45	Neglected / Abused / Depend	10
Other Family.....	228	Other Juvenile.....	52
Parental Rights Termin.....	23	OTHER / MULTIPLE TOPICS	596
Paternity.....	69	Advance Directives /	
Support	334	Powers of Attorney	4
HEALTH	9	Criminal Referrals.....	82
		Licenses (Drivers, Occ, Others) ...	33
		Other Miscellaneous.....	187
		Torts.....	279
		Wills & Estates.....	11
		TOTAL	9,148



You changed **19,503 lives** during FY18-19, including **7,868 children**,
through the delivery of pro bono legal services in Minnesota.*

*approximate numbers

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Services Provided at Clinics, Events, Workshops

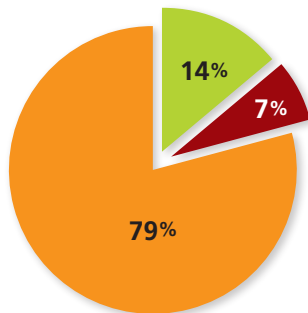
Bankruptcy.....	120
Brian Coyle.....	31
Brooklyn Legal Clinic.....	48
Cannon Valley Clinic	31
CAPSH.....	6
CLUES	84
Conciliation Court	503
Conciliation Court Appeal Clinic.....	50
Criminal Expungement - 2nd Chance Saturday....	83
Criminal Expungement - St Paul Clinic	56
Criminal Expungement Screenings.....	523
Criminal Expungement Workshops	32
Dignity Center	94
DOPA (ILSP program project)	30
Ecuador Consulate	53
Eviction Expungement.....	7
Eviction Expungement Workshop	32
Family Justice Clinic.....	1,338
Family Unity Project.....	24
HAP / MNAPABA Legal Clinic	3
Housing Clinic - Neighborhood Hub.....	1
Housing Court Clinic	1,577
Housing Clinic - Ramsey County	254
Jeremiah Clinic - Minneapolis	12
Legal Access Point Clinic	1,099
Miscellaneous Clinics.....	22
MIWRC.....	22
Park Avenue Clinic	554
Real Estate.....	18
Rural Access Clinic	3
SUS (Special Immigrant Juvenile Status) Project	44
StandDown	1
Waite House	88
Youth Law Clinic.....	24
TOTAL SERVICES	6,867



600 Nicollet Mall, Suite 390A
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FINANCIAL REPORT *July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019*

Expenses

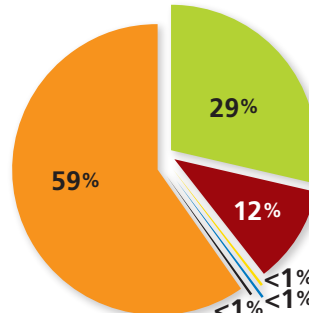


Program Services	1,071,170
Management & General	189,992
Fundraising	88,033
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,349,195

Assets

Cash & Cash Equivalents	284,806
Certificates of Deposit	349,538
Contributions Receivable	131,000
Service Grants Receivable	169,719
Prepaid Expenses	22,958
Net Property & Equipment	108,751
Other Assets	4,568
TOTAL	\$1,071,340

Income



Contributions	855,101
Service Grants	413,476
Special Events	153,600
Seminar Fees & Manuals	3,759
Interest Income	6,002
Other Income	2,648
TOTAL INCOME	\$1,434,586

Liabilities and Net Assets

Accounts Payable	5,024
Accrued Payroll	34,455
Accrued Compensated Absences	42,679
Net Assets	989,182
TOTAL	\$1,071,340

Thank you!

Thank you for helping us fight for fairness and justice for struggling families and individuals in Minnesota who deserve a chance to thrive and achieve self-sufficiency. To help VLN, please go to VLNmn.org/donate to make a secure tax-deductible donation.

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