



CONTRA COSTA
SENIOR LEGAL SERVICES

ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR
2023-2024

JUST imagine

You live on a fixed income and your landlord has unlawfully raised the rent.

An unexpected health crisis forces your grandfather to rely upon a family member's care, and they start to neglect him.

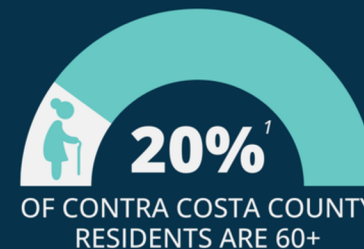
Your mother fell for a scam and is at risk of losing a lot of money she can't afford to go without.

All of these scenarios are more common than you think. Since 1976, CCSLS has worked to uphold elder rights and voices in our community. By offering free legal services, we provide critical support to seniors who do not have other resources or opportunities to obtain legal aid.

Over the year, we worked with 813 clients who were facing serious legal challenges. Because we focus entirely on senior issues, our staff and volunteers give 100% of their attention to elders in our community, making sure they feel heard, respected, and walk away with a sense of agency.

"We've found that the presence of our CCSLS attorneys can make a tremendous difference in outcomes for our clients. Attorney representation can be a deciding factor in obtaining settlement money or restraining orders, rolling back illegal rent increases, facilitating required accommodations, and in cases when eviction is required, our help can often get more time to create a 'soft landing' as clients transition to different living arrangements. Our advance planning services can give elders peace of mind as they age, knowing their end-of-life wishes are in place and will be respected. One cannot always quantify the value of keeping one's home, remaining safe, or having peace of mind."

— **Victoria Snyder**
Director of Legal Services



CCSLS IS THE **ONLY**
LEGAL AID ORGANIZATION
DEDICATED SOLELY TO
SUPPORTING CONTRA
COSTA COUNTY



"This service was monumental. I was able to survive one of the worst situations of my life."

OVER THE PAST YEAR
WE WORKED WITH

813 CLIENTS



your impact: SHELTER

Older adults in Contra Costa County face a higher risk of housing instability for several reasons. Many live on fixed incomes, which makes it hard to afford rent increases. Disabilities, like mobility challenges, also make moving especially difficult. These factors can put older adults at risk of homelessness, often for the first time in their lives, when their housing is threatened. Contra Costa Senior Legal Services helps support housing security by assisting clients in keeping their current homes or negotiating for more time to move when needed.

A Court Watch conducted by East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (EBASE) in 2022 found: ¹



COMPARED TO ONLY
7% OF TENANTS



**18% OF
EVICTIONS**
WERE OF RESIDENTS
65 AND OLDER

Housing insecurity is one of the **most common challenges** our clients face.



¹. THIS COURT WATCH WAS CONDUCTED BY EBASE AT SELECT CONTRA COSTA COUNTY COURTS FROM MAY TO OCTOBER 2022

SUCCESS STORY



We assisted Charles*, a low-income senior with disabilities whose rent wasn't being appropriately calculated.

Our attorney communicated with the housing authority in Antioch, and was able to get Charles' share of the rent reduced to accurately reflect his true and current monthly income.

Now Charles has a more stable living situation and a little more money to live on each month.

**Name & photo changed to protect confidentiality*

CLIENTS SAY

"I would be living on the streets if not for the CCSLS attorney, and the team behind her. It's too much to answer how grateful I am for CCSLS!"



your impact: SAFETY

Personal safety is a basic human need. Contra Costa Senior Legal Services promotes personal safety for older adults in our county by helping our clients obtain restraining orders against their abusers. Civil restraining orders can prevent further physical, emotional, verbal and/or financial abuse.

APPROXIMATELY
96%
OF ELDER ABUSE
CASES ARE
UNREPORTED¹


202,549 CASES¹
OF ELDER AND DEPENDENT
ADULT ABUSE ARE REPORTED
PER YEAR IN CALIFORNIA

**1 IN 10
AMERICANS**²

AGE 60+ WILL
EXPERIENCE SOME
FORM OF ELDER
ABUSE THIS YEAR

Over the year, we worked on **153 cases related to safety of older adults.**


**19% OF OUR
CLIENTS**
COME TO US
FEELING UNSAFE


WE HELPED
CLIENTS OBTAIN **75
RESTRAINING
ORDERS**





**55% OF OUR
CLIENTS ARE
DISABLED**



**88% OF OUR CLIENTS ARE
LOW INCOME**
BY HUD STANDARDS

1. ELDERABUSEAWARENESS.C4A.INFO 2. WWW.NCOA.ORG/ARTICLE/GET-THE-FACTS-ON-ELDER-ABUSE

SUCCESS STORY



CCSLs assisted Sophia* to obtain and enforce a Temporary Elder Abuse Restraining Order with **an immediate move-out order against her son**, who was abusing her emotionally due to his own alcoholism and mental illness.

Before the hearing, our attorney helped Sophia negotiate a settlement agreement to ensure that the son would obtain extensive mental health treatment and agreed to an immediate move-out if, after he returned home, he reverted to his abuse. This settlement allowed Sophia to remain in good standing with the Homeowner's Association, who had threatened her housing because of her son's abusive behavior.

**Name & photo changed to protect confidentiality*

CLIENTS SAY

"I felt so much better getting a restraining order, and the attorney explained everything step by step to me."

your impact: SECURITY

Many people, including older adults, struggle to maintain their sense of security and wellbeing. Scammers prowl around elders, looking for ways to separate them from their possessions. Planning for one's future loss of capacity is difficult, as is planning for the end of life. Social Security and other benefits can be confusing and difficult to navigate. Contra Costa Senior Legal Services strives to relieve elders of these burdens by providing vital education, answering questions, and helping elder adults prepare the documents they need. Knowing that your economic situation is secure and that your wishes will be honored gives older adults peace of mind.

THE AVERAGE COST OF AN ATTORNEY IN CALIFORNIA IS
\$391 PER HOUR



WHILE THE AVERAGE SOCIAL SECURITY PAYCHECK IN CONTRA COSTA COUNTY IS
ONLY \$1,471 A MONTH



92%
OF AMERICANS SAY IT'S IMPORTANT TO DISCUSS THEIR WISHES FOR END-OF-LIFE CARE

BUT ONLY 32%¹
HAVE HAD SUCH A CONVERSATION

Over the year, we worked on **229 cases** related to many aspects of security for older adults - from incapacity planning, to consumer protection, to obtaining benefits, to avoiding predatory scams.

WE HELPED CLIENTS RECOVER \$104,368




WE HELPED CLIENTS SAVE \$82,877


WE ASSISTED CLIENTS WHO SPEAK MORE THAN
20 LANGUAGES

1. THE CONVERSATION PROJECT NATIONAL SURVEY, 2018

SUCCESS STORY



CCSLs assisted Ebony,* in obtaining the payment she was awarded against a defendant for failure to return her security deposit. When CCSLS notified the defendant that we were going to subpoena his financial records, the defendant agreed to pay and sent a check to the CCSLS office within two days. After seeking the return of her security deposit for nearly 16 months, Ebony had her \$3,397 check delivered to her in person by our attorney. Upon seeing the check, **Ebony burst into tears of happiness saying "I never gave up,"** and "it was wrong for them to take my money."

Ebony was right and the court agreed, ordering the defendant to not only return the security deposit but to also pay bad faith damages.

**Name & photo changed to protect confidentiality*

CLIENTS SAY

"Without your representation I would not have known what rights I have and I would have been taken advantage of."





There are literally

ARMIES OF SCAMMERS

working to take money from grandparents.



THE LAW IS SCARY

for most people & more so for the vulnerable.



The Older Americans' Act is

WOEFULLY UNDERFUNDED

the number of elders has ballooned, and attorneys are way more expensive than they were in 1965.



So many elders are

PRACTICALLY INVISIBLE

In our society, we treat people as less and less important as they age.



ten things I DIDN'T KNOW

WHEN I STARTED WORKING AT CCSLS

Matthew Hulse | Executive Director

Many powerful coalitions of

GOOD PEOPLE

are working throughout Contra Costa County



When I ask, there are those who will

TRY TO HELP



Some lawyers

DON'T CHARGE

their clients.



A nonprofit can pay staff a

LIVING WAGE



Sometimes a huge problem

CAN BE SOLVED

with a well worded letter from a lawyer.



Every elder we serve reminds me

OF MY FATHER

an attorney who tried to raise me right.



LEADERSHIP

EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN THE ORGANIZATION'S HUMAN AND TECHNOLOGICAL CAPITAL

Completed an Organizational Effectiveness Assessment by La Piana Consulting Group that resulted in several recommendations and most importantly splitting the Management into two roles – an Executive Director & a Director of Legal Services

Matthew Hulse hired as CCSLS's new Executive Director.

Victoria Snyder promoted to Director of Legal Services.

All CCSLS staff participated in three trainings covering the following topics:

- Unconscious Bias
- Working Effectively with Clients with Challenging Behaviors
- Compassion Fatigue & Administering Self Care

Staff & Board Retreat, held on Saturday, Feb 3rd, was the first ever retreat of this kind for CCSLS. A total of six board members and ten staff members met at the Orinda Library with facilitator Lester Olmstead-Rose from La Piana Consulting to meet each other and discuss the future of the organization.



BUILDING FROM *the inside out*

THIS YEAR BROUGHT SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO CCSLS IN THE AREAS OF LEADERSHIP & INFRASTRUCTURE

INFRASTRUCTURE

EFFORTS TO BUILD A MORE MODERN AND EFFICIENT CCSLS

CCSLS offers new benefits packages to staff to include Medical, Dental, Vision & 401K with a match. These new benefits were a welcome new addition and helped CCSLS recruit talent.

We migrated to new technologies for greater efficiencies including:

- Legal Server as our new client database (replacing Kemps) this cloud-based system will enable more robust data tracking of our clients over time
- A web-based phone system that makes remote work more seamless
- A new donor database & giving platform to better track our donors and plan for online fundraising



FINANCIALS

donors and volunteers

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR THE FUNDING WE RECEIVED THIS YEAR FROM THE FOLLOWING GROUPS:

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

GOLD DONORS (\$5,000+)

Robert Bramson

SILVER DONORS (\$1,000+)

Steve Spafford Family Fund
Camarin Madigan
Deborah Levy
Eliot Adelson
Stephanie Hayes
Robert Gordon

BRONZE DONORS (\$500+)

Matthew B. Talbot
Erica Pearson
Diane Shannon
Kate Bekins
David Goldsmith

PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS

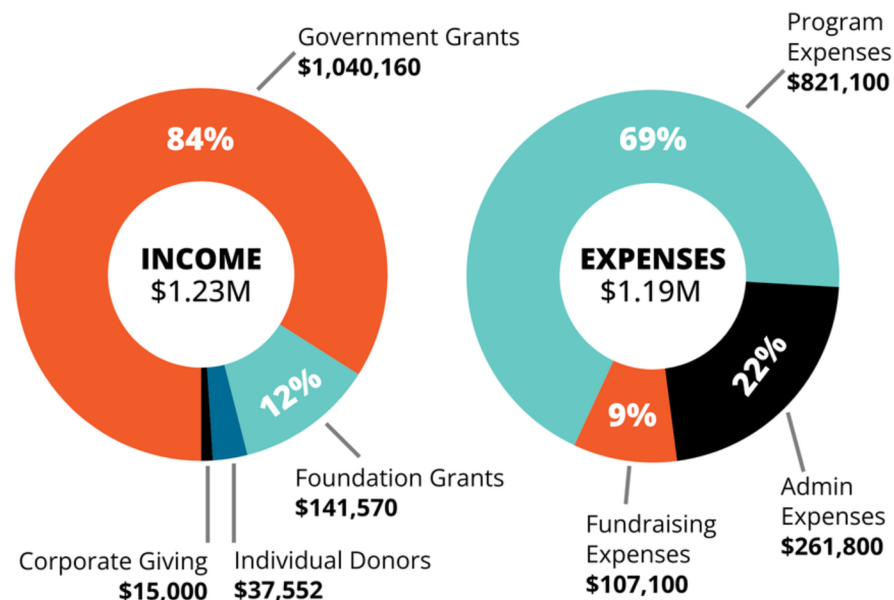
Antioch Community Foundation
Bigglesworth Foundation
Dean & Margaret Leshner Foundation
May & Stanley Smith Charitable Trust
vanLoben Sels / RembeRock Foundation

CORPORATE GIVING PROGRAMS

Chevron
Kaiser Permanente Diablo Area

PUBLIC SUPPORT

California Access to Justice Commission
+ Infrastructure & Innovation Grant
City of Antioch
City of Martinez
Contra Costa Employment Health Services Dept. & Area Agency on Aging
+ Older Americans Act (OAA) Support
+ Older Adults Recovery and Resilience (OARR) Support
+ Modernizing Older California (MOCA) Support
+ American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Support
+ Measure X
Contra Costa Community Development Block Grants
+ Contra Costa Consortium
+ City of Antioch
+ City of Walnut Creek
+ City of Concord
Keller Canyon Mitigation Fund
State Bar of California Office of Access and Inclusion
+ Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) General Support
+ Equal Access Fund Support
+ Homelessness Prevention Support
Victims of Crime Act – California Office of Emergency Services XC Grant
+ Elder Abuse Prevention Project Support



WE ARE VERY THANKFUL TO THE FOLLOWING VOLUNTEERS WHO CONTRIBUTED OVER 1,015 HOURS OF THEIR TIME & TALENT TO CCSLS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR:

VOLUNTEERS

Brad Lomas
Bryant Byrnes
Cathy Cutler
Daniela Franchini
David Arietta
Eliot Adelson
Elliott Bray
Gayatri Kannan
Graham Douds
Helen Lee

Ian Higgins
Jeannie McGreevy
Jessica Aguilar
Kevin Hanratty
Kirsia Phillips
Lucy Cain
Madeline McGrane
Matthew Hart
Maureen Callaghan
Natalie Ma

Nataly Di Cortasso
Peter Loewenstein
Rachel Davis
Sabina Sadykhova
Sol Gonzalez
Sora O'Doherty
Stephanie Hayes
Vivian Alfaro
Xiomara Lanchi





This year has largely been one of infrastructure investment: **we strengthened our staff through benefits and training, we gave the team new tools, and nearly every staff member got an upgrade in job description.**

We are poised to be more effective and efficient than ever before in reaching the vulnerable elders in our communities.



But we need your help.

We cannot afford to be the county's best kept secret when vulnerable elders are losing their homes and bank accounts. Outreach will be a key investment in the year ahead.

There just aren't enough legal aid attorneys to assist all those with no means to hire a lawyer. The only viable solution is to bring the legal community together to produce hundreds of volunteer hours, a few hours donated regularly by each and every attorney to assist the indigent. **Pro bono activation** won't happen overnight, but we can start creating a movement.

It's a job worth doing well.
It's what our parents raised us to do. It's our mission.

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