

Equal Access

... to Safety

... to Housing

... to Health

... to Stability

... to Justice!

2018 Annual Report



PRAIRIE STATE LEGAL SERVICES

Equal Access to Justice





St. Charles Office



Bloomington Office

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A Message from Our Executive Director



Michael O'Connor
Executive Director

Dear Friends,

It was tremendous celebrating 40 years of our organization in 2017 and reflecting on the many people we have served since 1977. Our milestone, however, provides a stark reminder that for the thousands we have helped, thousands more were without assistance that we were unable to provide.

That gap is through no fault of our own. Although we have, and continue to, receive generous support from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for our Fair Housing Project, the Internal Revenue Service for our Low-Income Tax Clinic, and locally through the Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois for our Ready to Work Program, those and other funding sources have limitations on who we can serve and what legal issues we can address.

Many more in our community still need our help to keep a roof over their head, live free of abuse, and be allowed an opportunity to gain better jobs and living conditions without the fear of past mistakes haunting them, to name a few. We are ready and willing to do that work, but it is a difficult task when we are faced with those in higher places who do not understand why Prairie State Legal Services and other civil legal aid organizations are worthy of maintained, or even higher, financial support.

From my time growing up with little means in a rural part of West Chicago, Illinois, I understand the feeling to receive help when I needed it. As an attorney, I have spent my career helping others. Starting out as a managing attorney at Prairie State's Kankakee Office, I have seen the need from those in our community who seek our help and the joy when someone advocated for them without judgement or pity.

As Prairie State's executive director, I am proud to see how much we have grown since my time in Kankakee—in coverage and people. I am encouraged to know that increased funding from the Victims of Crime Act, or VOCA, allows us to add more staff to assist victims of domestic violence, human trafficking and sexual abuse; and being part of the Illinois Armed Forces Legal Aid Network, or IL-AFLAN, will provide civil legal aid to our veterans and their families as they transition to civilian life.

While it is my hope that any threats that deter us from continuing our progress and work subside, such issues provide a reminder of why we need your support more than ever. You play a critical role in helping Prairie State give a voice to the voiceless and become an advocate to those who would not have one without our help.

As for me, I am committed to continue the work we have done to help provide equal access to justice to those in need. I am not alone, as nearly 200 Prairie State employees—staff and attorneys—along with a host of volunteer attorneys and others also are ready to work. We welcome you to join us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael O'Connor". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

About Prairie State Legal Services



Prairie State Legal Services, Inc. is a civil legal aid organization that provides civil legal services to low-income families, older adults (60+), victims of domestic violence, and people with disabilities. Prairie State has 12 offices serving 36 counties throughout northern and central Illinois.

Prairie State focuses services on legal problems that impact the ability of our clients to meet their basic human needs, including physical safety, access to health care, adequate income and housing.



Mission

The mission of Prairie State Legal Services, Inc. is to ensure equal access to justice and fair treatment

under the law by providing legal advice and representation, advocacy, education, and outreach that serve to protect basic human needs and enforce or uphold rights.



Kankakee Office

Why Civil Legal Aid?



Civil legal aid ensures equal access to justice for all—regardless of income. Every day, Illinoisans are denied the basic rights to which they are entitled under the law simply because they can't afford a lawyer.

The availability of civil legal aid can make all the difference to our neighbors who are fighting to stay in their homes, escape domestic violence, secure veterans' or disability benefits, or address many other legal challenges that go to the heart of their security and well-being.

We serve 36 counties in Illinois where approximately 690,000 people live in poverty—most of whom you may never know. But they are a lot like you. They have families, hopes and dreams. They are your neighbors. They live in the communities you call home. Our communities are a better place for all of us when help is available to those who need it.

Civil Legal Aid...

Helps People By ...

- Maintaining safe and adequate housing
- Retaining medical or disability benefits
- Obtaining restraining orders to keep abusers away from children



Saves Money By ...

- Preventing foreclosures and homelessness
- Helping clients remain healthy and lowering the costs of healthcare
- Reducing the number of unrepresented litigants and lowering court costs



Saves Time By ...

- Reducing unnecessary courtroom appearances
- Providing advice and legal information quickly
- Referring clients to other community resources

Office Locations

Prairie State Legal Services serves 36 counties in northern and central Illinois. We have 12 offices located throughout our service area.

ROCKFORD/ADMINISTRATION

Serving Boone, Carroll, Jo Daviess, Ogle, Stephenson and Winnebago Counties

303 N. Main Street, Suite 600, Rockford, IL
Phone: 815.965.2902, Toll Free: 800.892.2985

MCHENRY

Serving McHenry County

5320 W. Elm Street, McHenry, IL
Phone: 815.344.9113, Toll Free: 877.480.3020

WAUKEGAN

Serving Lake County

325 W. Washington Street, Suite 100, Waukegan, IL
Phone: 847.662.6925, Toll Free: 800.942.3940

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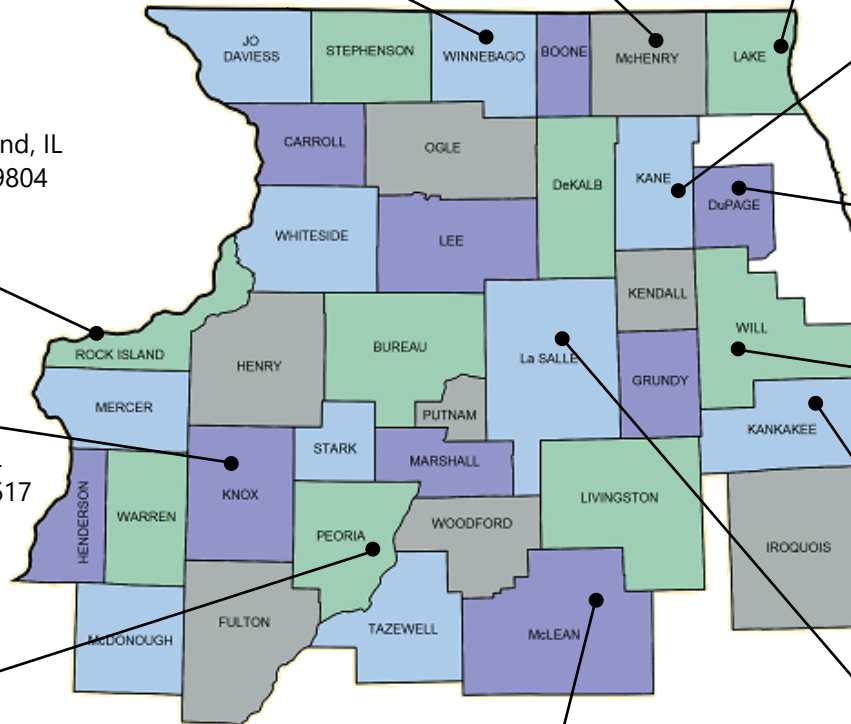
Serving Livingston, McLean and Woodford Counties

201 W. Olive Street, #203, Bloomington, IL
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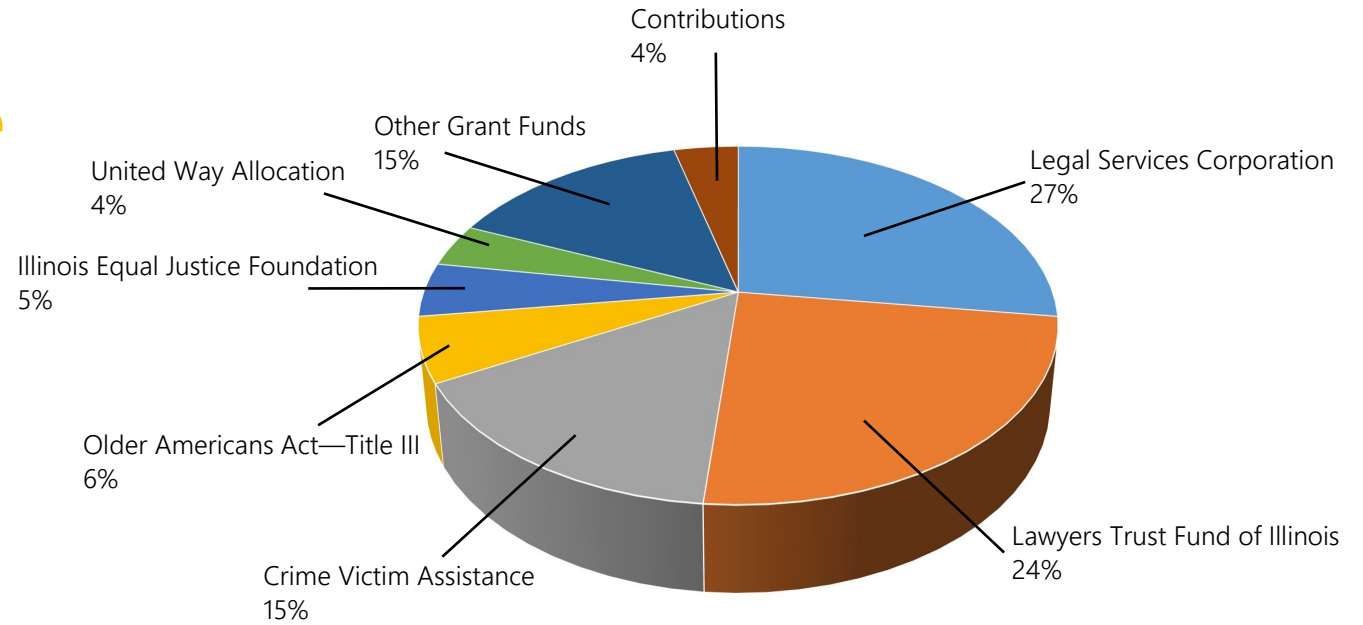


2018 Financial Statement

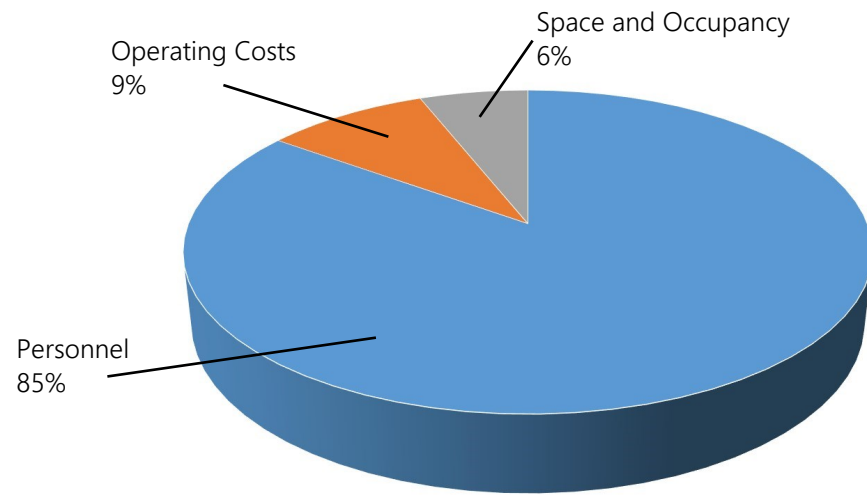
Total 2018 Revenue \$13,679,426*

* Sometimes we receive grants that do not correspond to our fiscal year. The income includes funds awarded for expenses to be paid at a later date.

When we have income exceeding expenses we place such funds in reserve to help us through challenging times such as when government agencies delay payments or funding reductions. This planning provides continuity in services for our existing clients for whom we have made commitments to serve.



Total 2018 Expenditures \$12,783,465



2018 Donors/Grantors

\$100,000+

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 Heart of Illinois United Way
 Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority
 Illinois Equal Justice Foundation
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 Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois
 Legal Services Corporation
 Northeastern Illinois Area Agency on Aging
 Northwestern Illinois Area Agency on Aging
 Office of the Illinois Attorney General
 U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development

\$50,000+

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 DuPage County Community Development Commission
 McHenry County Government Center
 United Way of Metropolitan Chicago
 United Way of the Quad Cities Area

\$25,000+

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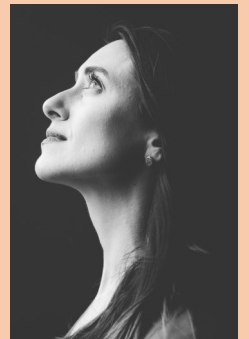
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Your support helped people in 728 cases secure orders of protection from their abusers.

Thank you for funding legal services that allow people to live in safety!



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Thanks to you ...

Our attorneys worked on 1,092 cases to keep families from being evicted from their homes.

Thank you for funding legal services that help families in need retain their homes and stability!



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Did you know?

Our volunteers (like the ones pictured above) secured court awards totaling more than \$556,710 in annual child support or maintenance for our family law clients referred to them, and \$153,732 in one-time property allocations. These awards will provide essential help to these clients to care for their families.

See the list of our volunteers on pages 21-25.

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