

Prairie State Legal Services

2014 Annual Report



Prairie State Legal Services

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Prairie State Legal Services provides free **legal services** for **low-income persons** and those age 60 and over with serious civil legal problems who need legal help to solve them. We operate 12 **office locations** serving 36 counties in northern Illinois. 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.

That's who we are and why we exist. But, the most important measure of any organization is what they accomplish, and Prairie State and our supporters have much to be proud of:

In 2014, Prairie State Legal Services completed 14,921 cases for clients with 30,973 persons in these households. Legal representation in court, administrative hearings, and negotiations resulted in:

- **517 cases where we obtained protective orders for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and family abuse.** The court orders protected against future abuse, but often resolved issues of child custody, visitation, support, possession of the home, and prevention of harassment.
- **466 divorce cases were completed including many for victims of domestic violence providing** important court orders to finalize custody, support & visitation, and terminate the legal relationship with the abuser.
- **306 cases in which we prevented wrongful evictions or stopped illegal lock-outs by landlords.** These households contained **979** household members. These cases are important to help families avoid imminent homelessness.
- **41 (non-divorce) cases in which we obtained favorable resolution of child custody issues.**
- **81 cases where we prevented mortgage foreclosures and enabled household members to retain their homes.** 42 additional mortgage foreclosure cases protected the rights of the household and obtained financial settlements desired by the family.
- **33 cases resulted in guardianships of disabled adults.** In these cases, the adult did not have the capacity to make decisions needed for their care.
- **92 cases obtained or maintained medical benefits wrongly denied or threatened with termination by the government.** Many involve critical healthcare or personal care services for persons with severe disabilities.
- **19 cases prevented the involuntary discharge of nursing home residents.** Discharges usually occur when the bill is not paid (often due to financial exploitation by family members) or when the resident's disabilities present difficulties for the nursing home.

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- **82 cases enabled low-income households to live in affordable housing**, overcoming denials of admission to public housing or obtaining/maintaining housing subsidies.
- **106 cases in which we obtained or retained Social Security or SSI benefits for clients with disabilities or obtained/maintained food stamps or TANF (welfare) benefits**, to avoid hunger and otherwise meet basic human needs.
- **190 cases resulting in court monthly awards of child support.** Awards exceeded \$1,218,261 for 402 children.
- **10,519 cases in which we provided legal advice as the primary service to help clients understand their legal rights and responsibilities.**

Prairie State works to expand on these services through special grants and through the work of volunteer attorneys. In 2014, these additional services included:

- **Preparation of 566 powers of attorney documents**, allowing clients to select agents to make decisions, including for their healthcare, should the need for that arise.
- **Preparation of 175 wills.**
- **Representation successfully resolved 11 education cases**, involving admission to school, prevention of unwarranted discipline, and availability of alternative education.
- **Legal representation enabled 13 families to adopt children.**
- **Legal representation resulted in a favorable outcome in 93 tax cases on behalf of low-income taxpayers**, successfully resolving controversies with the Internal Revenue Service. Clients recovered **\$121,498** in overpaid taxes that the IRS returned. We also avoided (abated or reduced) client's tax liability in the amount of **\$1,910,519.**
- **Legal representation helped obtain \$313,344 in annualized monthly public benefits for clients in need.**

We offer our sincere thanks to all of our donors and funders who recognize the vital importance of fair and equal access to justice for members of society. Your support has helped change lives and make our communities a better place for all, and we consider you partners in all that has been accomplished.

Sincerely,

Michael O'Connor
Executive Director

Prairie State Legal Services

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Prairie State Legal Services

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Financial Statement 2014

Revenue

Legal Services Corporation	32.0%
United Ways	6.8%
Lawyers Trust Fund	15.3%
Special Projects/Grants	34.1%
Older Americans Act	6.3%
Contributions	4.8%
Other	0.7%

Total **\$11,291,635**

Expenditures

Personnel	83.1%
Occupancy	6.5%
Supplies and Postage	1.7%
Telephone/Internet	1.3%
Law Library	1.0%
Travel & Training	2.3%
Other	4.1%

Total **\$11,166,240**

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Thanks to our donors!

Each year, dozens of partner organizations commit their resources in order to help us provide legal services for populations and communities throughout our service area. In 2014, the following partners helped ensure access to justice for tens of thousands of clients in northern and central Illinois.

Aurora Mental Health & Mental Retardation Services	Fairbury United Way	Rock Island 708 Mental Health Board
American Bar Association	Fox Valley United Way	St. Charles Township
Bloomington Township	Galesburg Community Foundation	State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company
Bureau County United Way	Arthur & Gesena Griffin Trust	The Trust Estate of Eunice J. Richmond
Caterpillar Foundation	Grundy County United Fund	U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development
Catholic Charities	Heart of Illinois United Way	U.S. Department of Justice
Central Illinois Agency on Aging	Herbolsheimer Foundation	United Way of Boone County
Chicago Department of Public Health	Illinois Attorney General's Office	United Way of Central Kane County
City of Aurora Neighborhood Redevelopment Division	Illinois Bar Foundation	United Way of DuPage County
City of DeKalb	Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority	United Way of Eastern LaSalle County
City of Peoria Neighborhood Development Division	Illinois Department on Aging	United Way of Illinois Valley
City of North Chicago	Illinois Department of Children and Family Services	United Way of Iroquois County
City of Rockford Department of Human Services	Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity	United Way of Kankakee County
City of Waukegan	Illinois Department of Human Rights	United Way of Knox County
Community Foundation of Central Illinois	Illinois Department of Human Services	United Way of Lake County
Comprehensive Community Solutions, Inc.	Illinois Equal Justice Foundation	United Way of Lee County
County of McHenry Tax Levy	Internal Revenue Service	United Way of Livingston County
Cornell University	Joliet Township	United Way of McDonough County
Doris and Victor Day Foundation, Inc.	Kendall County Tax Levy	United Way of McHenry County
DeKalb County Community Services Department	Kishwaukee United Way	United Way of McLean County
Donovan Trust	Lake County Department of Planning and Development	United Way of Northwest Illinois
DuPage County Community Development Commission	Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois	United Way of Northwest Suburban
DuPage County Division of Human Services	Legal Services Corporation	United Way of Ogle County
Dwight Community Chest	The Jerome Mirza Foundation	United Way of Pekin
East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging	Northeastern Illinois Area Agency on Aging	United Way of Rock River Valley
	Northwest Illinois HIV Care Connect	United Way of the Quad Cities Area
	Northwestern Illinois Area Agency on Aging	United Way of Will County
	Rauch Family Foundation 1, Inc.	University of Illinois
	The Retirement Research Foundation	Warren County United Way
		Western Illinois Area Agency on Aging
		Will County Treasurer
		Winnebago Community Foundation

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\$10,000 or more

Caterpillar Foundation
Lake County Bar Foundation
McLean County Bar Association
Peoria County Bar Association
S. Edward Marder Family Foundation in honor of the Chris and Linda Marder Family
State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company
Wheaton Bank & Trust Company

\$5,000 to \$9,999

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Arthur & Gesena Griffin Trust
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Westervelt, Johnson, Nicoll & Keller, LLC
Will County Bar Association
(Mary) Connie Zukowski in memory of Richard R. Zukowski

\$2,500 to \$4,999

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Goldstein Family Foundation
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Herbolsheimer, Henson, Duncan, Gift, Eiten & Hintz, P.C.
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William R. Kohlhase
Suzanne and William Lindsay
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Hon. Gerard J. and Elizabeth Rickert
Rock Island County Bar Association

\$1,000 to \$2,499

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Anonymous (6)
Baizer Kolar & Lewis, P.C.
Robert S. Baizer

\$1,000 to \$2,499 continued

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Nicholas Bertschy and Lucinda Uphoff
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Hon. John P. and Marilyn Freese
Aaron S. Galloway
Alexandra M. Goddard in memory of Charlotte A. Martin
Deborah L. Goldberg in respectful memory of Rita Strubbe and Celia Rose, in honor of the amazing Larry Smith
James P. Ginzkey
Hon. Mary P. Gorman

Prairie State Legal Services wishes to extend our sincere thanks to Herb Franks, hundreds of Herb's family and friends, and to Franks, Gerkin & McKenna. Herb's friends and family contributed more than \$33,000 to Prairie State Legal Services at a dinner in his honor.

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\$1,000 to \$2,499 continued

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Prairie State Legal Services wishes to extend our sincere thanks to our generous staff. More than two-thirds of Prairie State Legal Services staff are donors. Together they gave more than \$18,000 in 2014.

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\$250 to \$499 continued

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