

## Legal Aid Provides for Fairness and Justice

Civil legal aid in Oregon ensures fairness in the justice system. It provides **essential services** to low income and vulnerable Oregonians who are faced with legal emergencies. Legal aid protects the livelihoods, health, and safety of Oregon families.

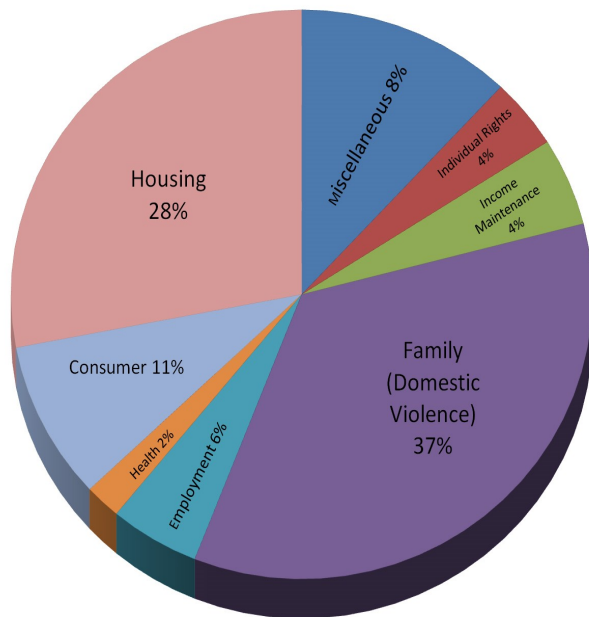
### When low-income Oregonians lack the resources for needed legal help, they are effectively shut out of the justice system.

To the average person, our legal system is a maze—that’s why lawyers are trained to guide their clients through the system. Legal aid helps people who have nowhere else to turn for legal help.



## Legal Aid Provides

- free civil legal services to more than 22,000 low-income and elderly Oregonians each year
- brochures, court forms, and self-help materials to help people navigate our justice system
- a website with accessible legal information available to all Oregonians
- help to victims of domestic violence and their children to keep them safe
- resources to help stabilize families and prevent a further slide into poverty



The above chart shows the types of cases legal aid handles. Note that 65% of cases involve physical safety and keeping people in safe housing.

## Oregon’s Justice Gap

- There is currently funding to meet 15% of the civil legal needs of the poor.
- National standards recommend 2 legal aid lawyers for every 10,000 low-income individuals for a minimally adequately funded legal aid program. Oregon currently has 2:17,000—about 60% of the targeted goal.
- The **Task Force on Legal Aid Funding**, which included elected officials and leaders in the legal community, concluded that we need to **double the resources** for Oregon’s legal aid programs in order to **have minimally adequate funding**. Funding for legal aid is a state, federal, and private partnership.

The Campaign for Equal Justice, founded by Oregon lawyers in 1991, supports Oregon’s legal aid programs. Three non-profit corporations work together as a part of an integrated delivery system designed to provide relatively equal access statewide. There are two statewide programs, Legal Aid Services of Oregon and the Oregon Law Center; and one countywide program, the Center for Non-Profit Legal Services (Jackson County). Legal Aid Services of Oregon receives LSC funding. Any cut in federal funding has a negative impact to the integrated delivery system in Oregon.

# See the Difference Legal Aid Makes for Oregonians in Need.



The single most important factor in preventing domestic violence is the presence of a legal aid office in a community.

When Joan's ex came to her home, violent and paranoid, she got her son Matty to safety and filed for a restraining order. When he kept returning and tormenting her and her neighbors, Joan's landlord tried to evict her with only 24 hours' notice. With nowhere to go, she felt like the world was falling down around her. She went to the legal aid office, where a lawyer calmly picked up the phone to explain to the landlord that victims of domestic violence cannot be evicted because of the

*"My legal aid lawyer knew the exact laws and was so professional. I was surprised that someone as smart as that would use her skill to help people like me." -Joan*

actions of their abusers. Joan has a right to stay safe in her home. The landlord immediately withdrew the eviction and Joan and her neighbors remain vigilant as she continues to build a stable and safe life with the legal protections that are rightfully hers.

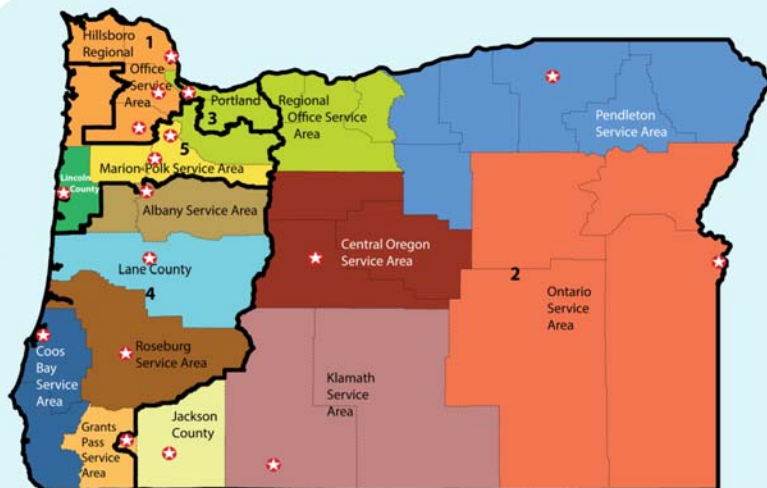
28% of the 22,000 folks served in Oregon last year needed help with housing issues.

Allen and his wife Penny are both 63, with four grown daughters. After working for a large company for almost 20 years, Allen was suddenly "downsized." He received unemployment benefits while he looked for a job, but after more than a year of searching, it became clear that they would soon be living off of Social Security. Since that wouldn't be enough to pay the mortgage, he decided to cash out his pension and pay off the balance on their home. He reported the pension distribution to the state. Then they got



*"We are just very thankful that legal aid existed, so we could get help in an area that we had no expertise in. [Representing myself] would have been like trying to cure myself of cancer without the help of physicians and surgeons." -Allen*

some bad news: the Employment Department said he'd have to pay back all the unemployment benefits. Worse, Penny had just been diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer. That's when Allen called legal aid. Legal aid successfully challenged the case on the basis that Allen was a dislocated worker and this is an exception to retirement distributions. Today, the mortgage is paid off, and Penny is in remission.



- Legal aid provides essential civil legal services to all 36 Oregon counties.
- Because the need is so great, legal aid focuses on basic stability for our neighbors: food, shelter, and physical safety.
- Civil legal aid has bipartisan support for a reason: Americans believe in justice for all, not just for those who can afford it. When it's your health, home, or family on the line, legal protections give you a fair shot.

Learn more at [www.cej-oregon.org](http://www.cej-oregon.org).