



Advocates for Basic
Legal Equality, Inc.



Legal Aid of
Western Ohio, Inc.

Together, we do the community justice.

From the president...

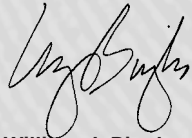
My time as president of the ABLE and LAW0 boards of trustees has been both challenging and rewarding. I have watched our law firms grow tremendously. The boards and staffs of LAW0 and ABLE have embraced change in ways that have altered the face of legal aid across the region. I offer great thanks to all who have contributed so generously to supporting our mission of helping low-income residents of northwest and west central Ohio achieve self-reliance, and equal justice and economic opportunity.

In 2005, LAW0 and ABLE, the sole providers of comprehensive civil legal services in northwest and west central Ohio, continued to expand and strengthen their commitment to equal access to justice for all. As many of you know, the high cost of private legal representation puts legal help out of reach of low-income families and individuals when they face critical legal issues.

ABLE and LAW0 advocates, along with the many other professionals it takes to run a successful law firm, possess a vibrant sense of public values and purpose. Working together with an established network of locally-based organizations and support centers, ABLE and LAW0 are able to serve the civil legal needs of thousands of low-income people in 32 counties of western Ohio.

I am thankful for the opportunity to have been in a leadership role at a critical time in the growth and expansion of these fine law firms, and to remain on the boards of trustees of LAW0 and ABLE. I take great pride in the high quality work provided by the staff in order to ensure equal access to justice for those who have no place else to turn. I am also very appreciative of the financial support of our funders and donors. Your trust in our ability to provide high quality legal work has paid off for the people who matter to us most – low income people seeking equal justice.

We appreciate your support, your trust, and your partnership.



William J. Bingle

President

2005 ABLE and LAW0 Boards of Trustees

Honoring our supporters

A recent study released by the Legal Services Corporation determined that for every client served by legal aid, at least one person who sought help was turned away because of insufficient resources. In addition, only a very small percentage of the legal problems experienced by low-income people are addressed with the assistance of either a private attorney (pro bono or paid) or a legal aid lawyer. These facts are the reason your support is so vital to our programs and to the communities we serve. Your support is critical if we are to continue to respond effectively to the ongoing demand for legal services.

We support legal aid because we believe it is our responsibility as attorneys to assist with the work and mission of securing access to justice for all. The combined mission of ABLE and LAWO is to improve the lives of low-income people in western Ohio by helping them obtain and maintain the basic necessities of life – housing, food, income, physical safety, and health care. Your support of the Campaigns for Equal Justice underscores both your understanding of these important services to the community and your generosity of spirit.

We hope you will take great pride in being listed as one of those who financially support the efforts of legal aid. This public support of the work of legal services programs means so much to our boards of trustees, our staffs, and our clients. We believe that only by working together can we truly do the community justice.

Thank you.

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“Legal Aid is important, obviously to the persons who receive the benefit of the representation by Legal Aid lawyers, because it gives them access to the legal system, which everyone must have in our country. It's important not just to the clients, and to the lawyers who work in Legal Aid, but to all of us in our society, because we live by the rule of law, it means that everyone is bound by the same rules.

We sometimes lose sight of the fact that Legal Aid representation is important to us as a society, not just to those who receive the representation.”

Chief Justice Thomas Moyer
Ohio Supreme Court



Together, we do the community justice.

In 2005, LAWO and ABLE advocates closed more than 17,000 cases. Our advocates help families escape domestic violence, avoid homelessness, obtain needed public benefits or mental health care, access basic support services, and resolve many other problems that threaten the well-being of families and their children.

Our mission is to help improve the lives of low-income people in northwest and west central Ohio by helping them obtain and maintain the basic necessities of life – housing, safety, health care, and food – in addition to enhancing family stability and security. We do this by working to resolve a full range of legal problems, including domestic violence, immigration, civil rights, employment, consumer, family issues, housing, and public benefits matters, as well as environmental protection work.

We provide a diverse range of services to the community's underprivileged and low-income members. Our law firms employ a team of highly committed, experienced attorneys, paralegals, and support personnel. We maintain a strong record of partnering with other non-profit organizations and public service agencies that share our mission.


Our work benefits children, seniors, persons with disabilities, survivors of domestic violence, immigrants, uninsured families and individuals, families facing eviction, persons moving from welfare to work, homeless children and families, persons with mental illness, residents of nursing homes, and migrant farmworkers. Most often, poverty, language and cultural barriers, low education levels, or limited access to social services are issues our clients are living with on a daily basis.

In addition to providing legal assistance for individual clients, we represent groups of clients with common legal problems when it is the most efficient and cost-effective way to resolve these problems. We conduct community legal education and trainings, including providing pro se materials and guidance for those not facing emergency situations – as well as providing advocacy and assistance on a number of systemic issues affecting our client communities, all of which benefit many thousands of poor people.

Legal Aid Line of Western Ohio

In 2005, most of our clients applied for assistance through Legal Aid Line, a telephone and web-based intake and brief service system created to provide more people with streamlined access to legal services.

Legal Aid Line can be accessed 24-hours a day, seven days per week from any telephone or public computer, a social worker's office, or from a home-based personal computer through the internet at www.legalaidline.org. This state-of-the-art system serves as a critical point of access for clients who need free legal help, including advice, brief legal service, and, where applicable, a referral for further representation. In 2005, Legal Aid Line received 27,679 requests for assistance, of which 7,376 were from Lucas County; 7,199 were from Montgomery County; and 13,104 were from our rural counties.



“I think people who work here are committed and dedicated to the kinds of services that we provide and they feel good everyday knowing that they're providing those services to people. We have a saying here that we're a life line, so the fact that we're throwing out that life line is just something that makes us feel good about what we do.”

Cynthia Elliot
Managing Attorney
Legal Aid Line of Western Ohio

“My landlord was doing a lot of little things that I felt he shouldn’t do...but, I thought he had some authority over me...”

Ele and her three young sons rented a home in Toledo after moving to Ohio from Vermont. She turned to legal aid for help when her landlord started eviction proceedings against her. The eviction notice came shortly after Ele approached the housing authority with her suspicions that the landlord overcharged her for rent and was refusing to make repairs in the home. The attorney’s assistance made Ele aware of her rights as a tenant – and awarded her the time she needed to find a new home.

“The hardest part was having my sons know what was going on – they were worried that they would have to leave school and that we might be homeless. My lawyer, Mary Ellen, assured me that it was going to be okay. She was not just a lawyer representing a client, she’s my friend and she’s my rock. ...at that time, and even now, she’s my Rock of Gibraltar.”

Ele
Lucas County



ABLE and LAWO 2005 Significant Accomplishments

- Established an LAWO office in Mansfield, Ohio to provide legal services to Ashland, Crawford, and Richland county residents.
- Worked with the Toledo Municipal Court Judges and City Council members to implement a \$10 increase to civil filing fees in Toledo Municipal Court to fund the hiring of two attorneys to handle housing and consumer law cases. The Civil Legal Assistance Services (CLAS) Project office is located directly in the Toledo Municipal Court.
- The LAWO Dayton office expanded its service with the creation of a senior law team. This team is working on Juvenile and Domestic Relations custody cases that involve grandparents or other Kinship Care providers who are age 60 or older.
- ABLE received its third Internal Revenue Service grant to operate a Low Income Taxpayer Clinic (LITC), helping the working poor to resolve tax controversies with the IRS and to provide tax information to workers for whom English is a second language.
- LAWO Toledo was awarded a short term community based Prevention, Retention, and Contingency (PRC) contract by the Lucas County Department of Job and Family Services. The \$55,888 contract allowed LAWO advocates to provide outreach, legal needs assessment, and legal aid services to low-income families on-site in the DJFS offices.
- LAWO Dayton received a grant from the Montgomery County Human Services Levy specifically for frail seniors who cannot afford private legal counsel and who are in urgent need of legal services related to safety, access to medical care/medications, or shelter.
- The Defiance office of LAWO continued to work with community leaders to establish a Family Justice Center in a six-county area surrounding Defiance. In 2004, \$1.3 million in funding from the U.S. Department of Justice was provided to establish the center in order to provide comprehensive and coordinated services to individuals and families experiencing domestic violence.
- Dayton AmeriCorps and housing attorneys established a presence within the homeless community by conducting outreach and intake at local homeless shelters.
- LAWO Toledo provided a series of Pro Se Divorce Clinics for Wood County residents.
- With the establishment of a volunteer coordinator in 2005, ABLE's Nursing Home Advocacy Volunteer program has grown substantially. Thirty-two volunteers provided 1,022 hours of service.
- The AmeriCorps Pro Bono Legal Corps Project had a record year in recruitment of volunteer law students and attorneys. Pro bono recruitment in rural counties increased greatly, with several counties now having referral procedures in place and accepting cases. In addition, Continuing Legal Education events were held in Shelby, Richland, Miami and Allen counties. All were successful in increasing attorney participation in Pro Bono representation.
- ABLE received a grant from the Midwest Immigrant and Human Rights Center to establish an immigrant detention project that provides legal rights presentations and legal assistance to immigrants being detained in area jails.
- Completed comprehensive strategic planning process and established a Board-Staff Planning Committee to oversee implementation.
- Placed a computer for client use in each rural office.
- Purchased new call-back software for Legal Aid Line that enables applicants to be automatically called back rather than remain on hold.
- Completed the first year of an Ohio Community Service Council, AmeriCorps Homelessness Prevention and Housing Opportunity Project. Currently, 18 AmeriCorps attorneys and advocates provide legal information, education, and general assistance to low-income residents and the homeless in an effort to help them acquire affordable housing.
- Completed Phase II of ClientsWIN, a web-based intake system that was created to provide 24 hour online access to clients.

“The most rewarding part of my job is being able to help my clients in resolving their problems. Being their voice in court. For instance, with a divorce or a domestic violence client, freeing them from their spouse, who has been abusing them for years. In eviction cases, being able to help clients retain their subsidized housing, when the landlord is being unfair. In conditions problems in housing cases, where the conditions are bad, helping them get what they deserve.”

Kaser Bhatti
Attorney – LAWO



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“I remember how scared I was. I would say to my attorney, ‘When he gets the papers, I don’t know what I’m going to do. What if he gets mad? What if...what if he blows?’”

Stacy and her infant son were in a volatile situation. This young mother was dealing with an unstable marriage and mounting bills. Feeling isolated, Stacy turned to a family member who directed her to LAWO. There she found several allies. Legal aid attorneys provided the free legal assistance Stacy needed to file for bankruptcy, divorce her abusive husband, and gain custody of her child.

“When I went to see these attorneys, I had been going through it alone and hoping somebody would hold my hand. They did, and I’m fine. I’m better for it. I’m a better mother, and I’m a better person for what I’ve done.”

Stacy
Lucas County



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“Legal aid makes justice tangible. We Pledge Allegiance to the Flag, and we end with ‘justice for all.’ But legal aid assures that there will be justice for all. It’s fundamental to our American way of life.”

Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur



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“It's very satisfying to be able to help a community group solve their problems. It's particularly satisfying when you see the community come together to solve a problem, learn a lot, and feel stronger and more capable when you are finished working with them. That's really satisfying, because you know that they're going to be able to go on and address other issues in the future and contribute to making the overall community a much better place to live.”

Ellis Jacobs
Attorney – ABLE

“I was not aware that legal aid would handle a benefits case... I was made to feel that it was my responsibility to find out why the state was not paying my Medicare premiums.”

While on full disability, Kenneth became eligible to receive state assistance with monthly Medicare premiums. Although he had been accepted into the program in 1999, he continued to pay the cost of his Medicare coverage six years later, as he waited for the aid to begin. Growing more and more discouraged, his community support specialist directed Kenneth to legal aid for help. In less than one year, a benefits specialist represented Kenneth at a hearing, where he was awarded a full settlement for premiums dating back to 1999. The funds allowed Kenneth to pay off balances on several credit cards and a significant portion of child support he owed.

“Legal aid fights for people like me. They don’t treat you like a second-class citizen. They treat you fairly.”

Kenneth
Montgomery County



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for Equal Justice
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“I was on public benefits, and my life wasn’t together. I wanted to go back to work, but I needed advice. A counselor said I should call legal aid for help.”

Natasha was supporting herself with public benefits. Depression set in as she struggled with the idea of securing a job that would permit her to get off public assistance – and possibly losing her assistance altogether. A mental health counselor encouraged Natasha to call LAWO to speak to an advocate. The advocate explained the benefits of returning to work and the impact Social Security and disability benefits, such as getting reimbursed for child care expenses. Today, Natasha works with nursing home and hospital patients as she pursues becoming a nurse aide. She has a new outlook on the future.

“I have a positive attitude now...legal aid has made a big difference in my life.”

Natasha
Shelby County



Volunteers

Without question, volunteers have a positive impact on the lives of those in need of civil legal assistance. Through contributions of time and talent as attorneys, legal interns, paralegals, and in other professional service areas, the following individuals have generously assisted ABLE and LAWO in their mission of providing equal access to justice for all.

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2005 Access to Justice Awards Dinner

The annual Access to Justice Awards Dinner recognizes individuals, law firms, and organizations for their extraordinary service in the public interest. All event proceeds benefit ABLE, LAWO, and the Toledo Bar Associations Pro Bono Legal Services Program, enabling their efforts to provide much needed legal services for the poor.

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“The value of legal aid programs to this or to any community is to provide access to our system of justice — for everyone, not just those who can afford access. By providing open access to our system, for all persons regardless of their economic or social status in life, we guarantee a respect for the law on the part of all of our citizens, and therefore the rule of law will always prevail.”

Judge Walter H. Rice
U. S. District Court, Southern District of Ohio



Partners in Equal Access to Justice

Legal aid has maintained long standing partnerships with pro bono legal services programs, including the Western Ohio Volunteer Lawyer's Project (VLP) and the Toledo Bar Association Pro Bono Legal Services Program. Both programs provide opportunities for attorneys to volunteer their services to low-income people.

In addition to providing direct services on cases, volunteer lawyers also participate in outreach programs, make community education presentations, and co-counsel cases with other volunteers and staff attorneys. Legal Aid of Western Ohio, Inc. (LAWO) provides \$66,000 to the Toledo Bar Association for the Pro Bono Legal Services Program and \$110,992 to the Western Ohio Volunteer Lawyers Project. ABLE and LAWO also collaborate with these two programs on fundraising programs, community legal education programs, and volunteer lawyer recruitment.

One of the most important benefits of doing pro bono work is the direct contribution to the principle of justice for all. Last year, the following legal professionals in northwest and west central Ohio willingly and graciously gave their time and expertise to those who could not otherwise afford an attorney. ABLE and LAWO applaud these men and women who gave back to the community so generously.

Together, we do the community justice.

Pro Bono Attorneys

Pro Bono legal work directly advances the principle of 'justice for all.' In 2005, the following attorneys willingly and graciously gave their time and expertise to northwest and west central Ohio residents who could not otherwise afford legal representation in civil cases. ABLE and LAWO commend these women and men who give back to our communities so generously.

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We can't do it without you.

ABLE and LAWO's client services are supported by public and private funding. Below are the names of the funders and the programs they support:

Area Agency on Aging, PSA 2

Legal assistance to senior citizens in Champaign, Clark, Darke, Greene, Logan, Miami, Montgomery, Preble, and Shelby Counties.

Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio, Inc.

Ombudsman Program advocating for residents of nursing homes, adult care facilities, and consumers receiving in-home care services.

Ohio District 5 Area Agency on Aging

Legal assistance to senior citizens in Huron, Seneca, Wyandot, Richland, and Crawford Counties.

PSA 3 Agency on Aging

Legal assistance to senior citizens in Allen, Auglaize, Hancock, Hardin, Putnam, Mercer, and Van Wert Counties.

City of Toledo Department of Neighborhoods

Federal Community Development Block Grant funds supporting legal assistance in housing and related matters for low-income Toledo residents.

Clement O. Miniger Foundation

Support of the Homelessness Prevention and Housing Opportunity Project in Lucas County.

County Corps

Legal education, outreach, and assistance to very low-income families, elderly and disabled residents of Montgomery County with housing issues.

Equal Justice Works

AmeriCorps Pro Bono Legal Corps Project to recruit and support volunteer law students and attorneys.

Findlay-Hancock County Community Foundation

Support of the Homelessness Prevention and Housing Opportunity Project in Hancock County.

Greene County Department of Job and Family Services

Legal assistance to residents eligible for County assistance.

The Impact Fund

Litigation expenses for the clients of the Responsible Destruction of Chemical Weapons of the Miami Valley v. Perma-Fix of Dayton environmental justice case.

Internal Revenue Service

Low Income Taxpayer Clinic to assist people with controversies on federal income tax matters.

Kettering Fund

Legal assistance for victims of domestic violence.

Legal Services Corporation

Support of LAWO region-wide services.

Lucas County Mental Health Board

Advocacy on behalf of consumers within the mental health system, including outreach visits to area mental health agencies and community groups.

Lucas County Department of Job and Family Services

Program to remove legal barriers to employment and self-sufficiency.

Maumee Valley Presbytery

Legal assistance to migrant workers.

Miami County Department of Job and Family Services

Legal assistance to residents eligible for County assistance.

Miami County Foundation

Continuing Legal Education (CLE) presentations in Miami County.

Midwest Immigrant and Human Rights Center

Immigrant Detention Project to provide legal rights presentations and legal assistance to immigrants being detained in the Seneca County Jail.

Montgomery County Department of Job and Family Services

Legal assistance to residents eligible for County assistance.

Newman's Own Foundation

Legal assistance to victims of domestic violence.

Ohio Community Service Council

Homelessness Prevention and Housing Opportunity Project to provide legal assistance to low-income clients with legal problems related to the ability to obtain or maintain safe, affordable housing.

Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation

Support of ABLE and LAWO region-wide services, Legal Aid Line, and the migrant program.

Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services

Legal assistance to victims of domestic violence in 14 LAWO rural counties.

Reynolds & Reynolds Associate Foundation

Support of the Homelessness Prevention and Housing Opportunity Project in Montgomery County.

Richland County Foundation

Support of the Homelessness Prevention and Housing Opportunity Project in Richland County.

Social Security Administration

Benefits planning and information on Social Security Work Incentives. (Project BRIDGE)

Stranahan Foundation

Support of the Homelessness Prevention and Housing Opportunity Project in Lucas County.

Toledo Community Foundation

Support of the Homelessness Prevention and Housing Opportunity Project in Lucas County.

Turner Foundation

Support of the Homelessness Prevention and Housing Opportunity Project in Clark County.

United States Department of Justice

Legal Assistance to Victims Project – legal assistance to victims of domestic violence and collaborative relationships with shelters and victim assistance agencies.

United Way of Defiance County

Legal assistance to low-income residents of Defiance County.

United Way of Fulton County

Legal assistance to low-income residents of Fulton County.

United Way of the Greater Dayton Area

Legal assistance to low-income residents of Montgomery, Greene, and Preble Counties through programs that assist families, the disabled, and the elderly, and provide education on legal rights and responsibilities to youth.

United Way of Greater Toledo

Legal assistance to low-income residents of Lucas, Wood, and Ottawa Counties.

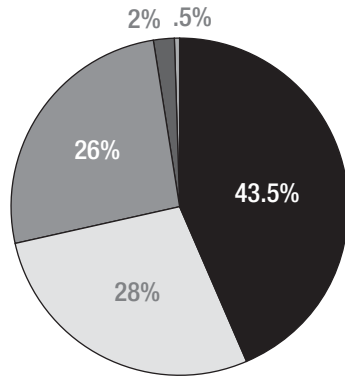
United Way of Williams County

Legal assistance to low-income residents of Williams County.

2005 Combined Record of Service

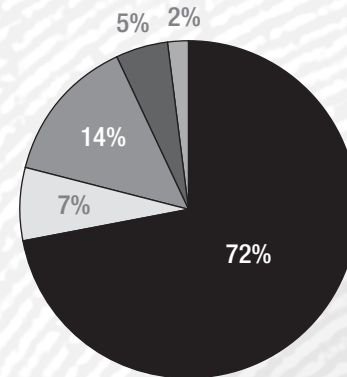
- 17,830 closed cases
- 44,252 individuals benefited across 32 Ohio counties
- \$4,036,968* in monthly benefits
- \$3,926,782* in lump sum awards

* obtained benefits and awards in areas of child support, spousal support, unemployment compensation, supplemental security income, debt write-off, disability assistance, food stamps, and damages.



Support & Revenue

■ Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation (OLAF)	\$3,750,060
□ Legal Services Corporation (LSC)	\$2,445,246
■ Other grants and contracts	\$2,212,892
■ Fundraising and special events	\$162,418
■ Miscellaneous interest and other income.....	\$48,125
<hr/>	
Total	\$8,618,741



Expenses

■ Compensation and benefits	\$6,249,985
□ Contract services.....	\$628,347
■ Operating costs	\$1,224,978
■ Travel, Support, and Training	\$444,467
■ Miscellaneous	\$148,567
<hr/>	
Total	\$8,696,344

2005-2006
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Dayton, Ohio

David Ward (Emeritus)
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Presque Isle, Michigan

Kathryn Watson
Toledo, Ohio

Rebecca West-Estell
Attorney-at-Law
Toledo, Ohio

Mary Wiseman
Attorney-at-Law
Coolidge Wall Co. LPA
Dayton, Ohio

*Served as President in 2005

** Served in 2005

Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc.

Administrative office
520 Madison Avenue, Suite 740
Toledo, OH 43604
419.255.0814
Fax 419.259.2880
Toll-free 1.800.837.0814
TDD 419.259.2883

www.ablelaw.org
Offices in Dayton and Toledo, Ohio

Legal Aid of Western Ohio, Inc.

Administrative office
520 Madison Avenue, Suite 640
Toledo, OH 43604
419.724.0030
Fax 419.321.1582
Toll-free 1.877.894.4599
TDD 419.259.2883

www.lawolaw.org
Offices in Dayton, Defiance, Fremont,
Lima, Mansfield, Sandusky,
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