

Colorado Legal Services sees uptick in number of Coloradans seeking help to obtain IDs

Identification documents vital for those who are unhoused and are seeking housing, employment, or other services

Aug. 21, 2023 (DENVER) – Colorado Legal Services this year recorded an increase in Coloradans requesting help obtaining identification documents, which are vital for those who need to find housing, jobs, and other necessities, according to [its first monthly report released today](#). Colorado Legal Services is Colorado’s statewide legal aid nonprofit. The CLS ID Project represented 481 people in the first half of 2023 on identification issues. That number puts the organization on track for another record year, as CLS opened 676 cases in 2022, 571 in 2021, and 556 in 2020.

Of those clients who volunteered demographic information when seeking ID assistance, the majority said they are unhoused.

The [ID Project](#), which is a collaboration among CLS, Metro Caring, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, and Denver Department of Human Services, also distributes vouchers that pay for ID fees. The CLS arm of the partnership distributed 572 so far in 2023. Many people who ask for help simply cannot afford the cost (\$12.67 state ID, \$33 state driver’s license, \$20 state birth certificate), and others face more difficult obstacles to obtaining an ID, including the need to go to court or secure documents through complicated, out-of-state processes. The barriers faced by people experiencing homelessness become even more overwhelming when [they lack identification](#).

“When we apply for almost anything—apartments, jobs, medical assistance—we must provide proof of who we are,” said Matt Baca, executive director of Colorado Legal Services. “As indicated by the recent emergency declaration Denver Mayor Mike Johnston issued on homelessness, helping people avoid losing housing and ensuring they have resources to obtain it are critical. Colorado Legal Services helps people with little to no income get IDs, learn their rights as tenants, avoid wrongful eviction, and face other legal challenges that can lead to homelessness.”

CLS helps clients navigate the system, though a lack of resources can sometimes lead to delays in helping low-income Coloradans.

“Most of our clients are those who get stuck in a loop, because people need an ID to get most of the documents that are required to get a Colorado ID, so we are able to help breakup that logjam for clients as legal representatives,” said Casey Sherman, supervising attorney for the ID Project at Colorado Legal Services. “And many of our clients are experiencing homelessness. Without assistance navigating the system and paying the required fees our clients are often unable to take control of their circumstances.”

In addition to the ID Project, CLS also represents Coloradans in poverty who are facing eviction, foreclosure, and other housing challenges.

About us

Colorado Legal Services is Colorado's statewide nonprofit legal aid program providing civil legal assistance—which does not include criminal or traffic matters—to low-income individuals and older Coloradans throughout the state. Its 13 offices provide free legal assistance in a broad variety of legal areas, including eviction defense, consumer protection, services to survivors of serious crime and human trafficking, representation for domestic violence survivors, and many others.

Almost 1.4 million Coloradans qualify financially for CLS's services. CLS's current staff of 85 attorneys and 48 paralegals is supplemented by a robust private attorney involvement program. Learn more at www.coloradolegalservices.org.

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