

Social workers provide extended support for about 300 people in 2023, program continues to expand

Colorado Legal Services opens over 1,000 cases again in October

Nov. 28, 2023 (DENVER) – Colorado Legal Services, Colorado’s statewide legal aid nonprofit, opened 1,049 cases in October to provide legal help to low-income Coloradans, according to [its monthly report released today](#). Of the nearly 10,000 cases opened this year, more than 300 included the involvement of social workers through a newly created and expanding interdisciplinary model. Social workers help ensure well-rounded support for clients.

“While we help many people who are in crisis keep their homes and families intact, our organization has seen an increasing need to help clients find additional resources to help them avoid these crises in the future,” said Matt Baca, executive director of Colorado Legal Services. “In 2021 we expanded our team to include social workers who are experts in connecting people with vital community tools.”

Just over two years after adding a single social worker to the team and seeing great success, Colorado Legal Services expanded the program, which now includes five social workers. They primarily work with Denver and Colorado Springs clients who are older or in need of housing assistance, offering guidance and emotional support in addition to the legal advice and representation our attorneys provide. Social workers have training to help clients better engage in the legal process; identify needs such as mental health treatment, substance use disorder treatment, social support, and financial advice; and find resources in the community to ensure their stability after their case is closed.

“One client who is often on my mind is an older man who, when we first began helping him, only needed a telephone and a lease recertification,” said Megan Collop, manager of Client Support Services at Colorado Legal Services. “But as his legal case slowly moved through the system, we visited him frequently and noticed

small changes with each interaction—his plants coming back to life, the cleanliness of his apartment, doctors’ visits completed that had been put off—and it serves as a reminder to our team that our success isn’t only measured in number of people served, but also how many smiles we’ve elicited, how many sighs of relief we’ve heard, or how many times we’ve seen a client stand up a little straighter.”

For people facing homelessness, for instance, that added support can mean the difference between finding a place to live and losing their belongings and shelter. One social worker helped another client see the severity of their situation, and to find a storage unit and movers to help them keep their belongings while they decided where to live.

“I appreciate all the help because I was at a point where I was frozen in place and was not able to move without your help,” the client said. “So, I just want to make sure that I appreciate that very much and now I’m on my own and I can push myself.”

In October 2023, the [Colorado Attorney General’s office announced](#) a \$410,000 grant to Colorado Legal Services to expand the use of the interdisciplinary legal support model that includes social workers to include service to survivors of domestic violence who live outside the Denver metro area.

The top concerns from Coloradans in October were housing (496), family and safety (213), and consumer (134) matters. Housing matters could include defending against evictions; negotiating rent agreements with landlords to help people stay in their homes; helping tenants learn their rights regarding security deposits and conditions impacting the habitability of their homes; and directing clients to rental assistance and community resources. Family and safety matters include representation of domestic violence survivors in divorce, custody, and protection order matters.

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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