

Thousands of low-income Coloradans seek help with housing, family, consumer and other civil court matters in 2023

Colorado Legal Services reports more than 11,400 cases opened, over 8,000 closed in 2023

July 1, 2024 (DENVER) – More than 11,445 people asked Colorado Legal Services for help in civil court in 2023, according to [the annual report the organization released today](#). The report also highlights the most common categories of cases that were opened, which include housing (5,372), family and children (2,514), and consumer (1,303).

“Colorado Legal Services is an organization of brilliant, big-hearted advocates providing compassionate and dedicated legal care throughout our state,” said Matthew Baca, Colorado Legal Services executive director. “The need we are seeing in communities throughout Colorado and that we are able to address on a nonprofit, shoestring budget is breathtaking.”

Housing cases 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 children cases include representation of domestic violence survivors in divorce, custody, and protection order matters. Consumer cases include debt collection, avoiding foreclosure, and other matters.

The organization completed, or closed, 8,696 cases. The number of cases closed is always less than cases opened, because some cases opened may remain ongoing, and because we may not provide legal advice or representation in every case we open, although we do attempt to provide at least a referral or other resources.

The report also highlighted the following:

- Over \$3 million awarded to clients: While not every case involves getting money back to clients, some cases involve getting justice for clients through money awards or damages. In 2023, we secured more than \$3,600,000 for our clients.
- Over 3,000 volunteer hours: Our work is supported by the excellent work of many private or retired attorneys who volunteer their time to help Coloradans. In 2023, attorneys gave 3,212 hours of their time.
- Over 300 outreach events: In 2023, at least 2,944 people attended our at least 310 outreach events, allowing us to provide legal representation, offer legal information, and otherwise help more Coloradans.

“In 2023, we saw clients and their families keep their homes when they faced eviction or foreclosure,” Baca said. “I was proud of attorneys and paralegals who worked tirelessly to ensure the safety of survivors of domestic violence and trafficking and secure rightful and life-saving public benefits for Coloradans. I was inspired by CLS social workers who worked alongside our clients and legal teams to help those in need find their path forward. And each day intake staff greeted Coloradans in crisis with compassion and care. They, along with our administrative staff, support each other so our team can pour hours—and sometimes years—into helping Coloradans navigate a complex and challenging court system during times of great need and trauma.”

In 2023, Colorado Legal services also recognized some of the impact of staff and volunteers, including through sharing [a third-party analysis](#) estimating a staggering social return on investment of 619%. For every dollar put into Colorado Legal Services, our communities benefit to the tune of \$6.19 in economic terms in addition to the intrinsic values of dignity and justice Colorado Legal Services provides.

The organization also [highlighted its ID Program](#), which saw an uptick in people who largely reported they were unhoused asking for help obtaining identification documents, which are vital for those who need to find housing, jobs, and other necessities. And Colorado Legal Services recognized that while it helps many people who are in crisis keep their homes and families intact, the organization has seen an increasing need to help clients find additional resources to help them avoid these crises in the future. [Social workers](#), who are part of a new program started to provide holistic services, helped about 325 people in 2023, a 50% increase from

2022.

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 52 paralegals is supplemented by a robust private attorney involvement program.

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