Basic Needs
Meaningful Results
When times are tough, people living in poverty are hit the hardest.

In these challenging times, more than ever, low-income people are coming to CLS for help.

At CLS, our legal units work closely together so that a family in crisis can receive help with some of the greatest challenges in their lives, from the threat of losing their home to keeping their children safe and healthy. It is our job to make sure people in need do not face these crises alone. This annual report shares the stories of just three of our many clients, for whom CLS’ representation has meant the ability to maintain what matters most—their families, homes, health, and resources. At the most basic level, CLS’ expert knowledge and skillful application of law helps prevent hunger and homelessness.

Like our clients, CLS has been affected by the difficult economic environment that surrounds us. Yet we continue to strive for excellence in our work, to protect and help our clients and improve the lives of those who have nowhere else to turn. As demand for our services increases and funds decrease, we constantly work to improve our efficiency. While we do not believe that an already efficient agency can really “do more with less”, we repeatedly step back and think about how to do as much as we can with less.

With so many people in need, CLS’ work is more important than ever, and with such high demand for our work, so is your support. We invite you to join us in helping those who need it most, bringing us one step closer to achieving our goal of equal access to justice for all.
I was working two jobs, so I went to Child Care Information Services (CCIS) to apply for child care subsidies. CCIS told me I needed to give them documentation, so I did. I spent months calling and waiting to hear back from them. CCIS said they were backed up with applications so it would take a while. I called again and CCIS told me I was denied because I didn’t submit the paperwork, even though I did.

While this was happening, half my paycheck was going straight to paying for childcare. I ended up paying thousands of dollars in childcare costs, which made it hard for me to pay my bills. I was worried about keeping my utilities on and a roof over our heads. I didn’t know what to do so I went to CLS.

CLS helped me file an appeal and got me a hearing before a hearing officer, but the hearing officer told me I missed the appeal deadline. I re-applied to the CCIS, but this time I ended up on an eight-month waiting list. CLS got me a second hearing, but I was denied again.

Finally, CLS appealed my case to Commonwealth Court. The Department of Public Welfare finally agreed to settle the case and decided to give me $11,000 to reimburse me for my past childcare costs. I don’t know how I would have taken care of my family without CLS’ help.

CLS helps more than 4,352 clients receive the public benefits to which they are entitled, helping to eliminate unnecessary or unlawful delays and denials.
While in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, one of the babies tragically developed meningitis which resulted in cerebral palsy and mental retardation.

Over the next two years, my sister worked hard to care for both children. To her surprise, she was accused of medical neglect and was told she missed some medical appointments for her special-needs child. She was told that she faced losing custody of the babies she loved.

CLS learned that my sister had not been medically neglecting her child. The child had been in the hospital at the time of some of the appointments, and other appointments had been missed because my sister had taken the child to the emergency room for treatment.

My sister’s CLS lawyer also realized that the hospital, the Department of Human Services, and the in-home service provider contracted by DHS had not realized that my sister could not read and she had not always understood their instructions. CLS requested that services and communication be given to my sister in a way that addressed her illiteracy.

Since then, my sister is able to meet her child’s medical needs, and her court case is closed. CLS helped my sister keep her child in her care, and keep her family together.
Community Legal Services thanks the following donors for their generous support of our 2011 Bar Campaign.

**BAR CAMPAIGN**

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For their generous support of our 2011 Bar Campaign.

**Community Legal Services**

- Champions of Equal Opportunity Award
- Presented by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

**Community Legal Services: Employment Unit**

- Leaders in Human Relations: Nonprofit Organization
- Presented by the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations

**Kathleen Creamer**

- Unsung Heroine Award
- Presented by Women’s Way

**Sharon Dietrich**

- ACLU Pioneer Award
- Presented by the American Civil Liberties Union

**CHAMPION OF JUSTICE AND EQUAL JUSTICE AWARDS**

The Champion of Justice and Equal Justice Awards are given annually by Community Legal Services to recognize those who have made extraordinary efforts to ensure equal access to justice for all, regardless of income.

**Equal Justice Award**

- Everett A. Gillison
- Deputy Mayor, City of Philadelphia

- Mary Richardson Graham
- PLAN Excellence Award
- Presented by the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network

- George D. Gould
- David Bryson Award
- Presented by the National Housing Law Project

- Thu B. Tran
- Philadelphia Bar Foundation Award
- Presented by the Philadelphia Bar Foundation

- Pam Walz
- Spirit of CARIE Award
- Presented by CARIE

- Suzanne Young
- Top Women Lawyers in NE
- Presented by Amtrak

- Ballad Spahr LLP

- Champion of Justice Award

- David Bryson Award
- Presented by the National Housing Law Project

- Philadelphia Bar Foundation Award
- Presented by the Philadelphia Bar Foundation

- Spirit of CARIE Award
- Presented by CARIE

- Top Women Lawyers in NE
- Presented by Amtrak

- Arrive Magazine

-oplan Excellence Award
- Presented by the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network

- Equal Justice Opportunity Award
- Presented by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
In April, I was given an agreement to get current on my mortgage. I had to pay $5,000 down, and the rest over one year to be caught-up. I sent them the $5,000 down payment so I could keep my house from going to sheriff's sale. The bank cashed my check and kept my money, but they didn't stop the sheriff's sale.

I came to CLS for help. CLS filed a bankruptcy for me so I could catch up on my mortgage and keep my home from going to sheriff's sale while they figured out what happened to my money. I was able to manage the bankruptcy for three years. I held a job and made regular bankruptcy payments. One day while I was working as a mail carrier, I was bit by a dog. The dog bite was extremely painful and caused severe nerve damage. I couldn't work and I couldn't make my bankruptcy payments.

Because I couldn't make my bankruptcy payments, my bankruptcy ended and I was in danger of once again having my home go to sheriff's sale. CLS postponed my sheriff's sale by filing for a court mediation conference and then helped me apply for the Emergency Homeowners Loan Program. I was initially denied federal mortgage assistance but CLS asked for a reconsideration and it was approved.

I am proud to say that I am no longer behind on my mortgage and I am currently in my home with my family. CLS' work gave me the time I needed to get back on track with my finances and save my home for my family.
COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES

comprises nine legal units specializing in particular areas of civil poverty law. Each unit represents individual clients, works on changing policy when it sees problems that affect many of our clients, and provides community education on legal issues to clients, professionals, and advocates.

In 1966, The Philadelphia Bar Association established CLS as an independent, 501(c)(3) organization to provide free legal services, in civil matters, to low-income Philadelphians.

Since its founding in 1966, CLS has served more than one million clients who could not afford to pay for legal representation, and who would have faced a variety of devastating ends without dedicated, knowledgeable attorneys on their side.

AGING AND DISABILITIES UNIT
Specializes in representing seniors and people with disabilities in a wide range of public benefits and consumer matters, including challenges to denials of Medicaid, Medicare, or disability benefits, decisions by managed care organizations to deny care, and violations of residents’ right and quality-of-care requirements in nursing homes and personal care homes.

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UNIT
Represents small and start-up community associations, faith-based institutions, social service organizations, nonprofits, and businesses to improve the quality of life and the economic viability of Philadelphia’s low-income neighborhoods. The Child Care Law Project (CLLP), a special project of the CED Unit, is devoted to representing child care providers.

CONSUMER/HOUSING UNIT
Represents homeowners in disputes, residential mortgage foreclosures, fraudulent consumer practices, and issues with banking or check-cashing agencies. The unit uses advocacy and litigation to address the predatory lending crisis, abusive mortgage practices, and other fringe banking issues.

EMPLOYMENT UNIT
Represents clients with employment-related problems, including claims on fair wages, family and medical leave, discrimination, and barriers to employment. The unit advocates at the national and state levels on low-income workers’ rights issues such as maintaining the protections of the unemployment compensation system.

ENERGY UNIT
Works to keep the utilities on for families by protecting the rights of low-income utility customers on service and payment issues, representing group clients on utility rate change cases and serving as the Public Advocate in representing all Philadelphia Gas Works residential customers.
FAMILY ADVOCACY UNIT
Advocates for parents to keep their children at home or have them returned from foster care to a safe home, and provides assistance and training to other family advocates. The unit monitors and advocates for improvements in dependency court and foster care.

HOUSING UNIT
Represents private, public, and subsidized housing tenants in matters involving eviction, illegal lockouts, and substandard housing. The unit also uses systems advocacy and litigation to address issues ranging from lead paint elimination, to federal housing policy changes, to tenant eviction laws.

LANGUAGE ACCESS PROJECT
Works to ensure that Community Legal Services is accessible to Philadelphia communities with limited or no English speaking ability, and that legal issues specific to this population are addressed. Advocates to enforce laws which require that interpretation and services be provided where necessary necessary for these communities to access public services and the court system.

PUBLIC BENEFITS UNIT
Represents clients facing the denial or termination of health care benefits or public assistance. Provides education and outreach services, and advocates regionally and nationally on welfare, disability, and healthcare issues. The unit includes the Advocating on Behalf of Children Project, which helps disabled children access disability benefits and medical care.
CLS’ center city office at 1924 Chestnut Street and our neighborhood office at Broad Street and Erie Avenue serve approximately 18,000 clients each year.

Our clients come from every zip code in Philadelphia, and are of all ages, racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Generally, our clients are the poorest of the poor. From July 2010 to June 2011, more than 16,887 people came to CLS in need of our help. Of these clients, 9,925 had an income below 75% of the federal poverty guideline, or $16,762 per year for a family of four. 14% of these clients are elderly, and 42% of these clients are members of families with children.

More than one third of these clients were served at our North Philadelphia neighborhood office. Although CLS used to have many neighborhood offices, our office at Broad Street and Erie Avenue is the only one that remains. The neighborhood surrounding our North Philadelphia office is one of the most impoverished communities in Philadelphia, and CLS is committed to staying there and serving this community, as we have done for more than 30 years.

In order to do this, CLS is constructing a new building at Broad Street and Erie Avenue where we will provide essential legal aid to even more low-income people for many years to come, in a building the community can be proud of. The new Law Center will allow CLS to serve our clients in a space designed with their privacy and dignity in mind, a place that makes very concrete and real the American promise of “access to justice for all.”

EACH YEAR

CLS serves clients at or below 125% of the federal poverty guideline (in 2011, $27,937 per year for a family of four).
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The CLS’ STAND UP for JUSTICE Campaign is raising funds to build a new North Philadelphia Law Center. Building the Law Center will make CLS’ services available in a permanent, modern, and dignified setting for the first time in the history of CLS’ 30-year history at Broad Street and Erie Avenue, while also giving us much-needed room to grow.

By joining with us in CLS’ first-ever capital campaign, you will secure our ability to meet the legal needs of low-income Philadelphians right where they live—not just today, but for generations to come.

For more information about the Stand Up For Justice campaign, or to discuss a campaign gift, please contact CLS’ Development Office at 215-981-3792 or development2@clsphila.org.