



Achieving Equal Access to Justice
for the Disadvantaged and Underserved

Community Legal Services of Philadelphia
Annual Report FY2013

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"As the needs of our clients continue to grow, access to civil justice is more important than ever. CLS has always played a critical role in providing that access, and will continue to do so."
—Michael LiPuma, Esq., President, Community Legal Services Board of Trustees

Fifty years ago, *Gideon v. Wainwright* guaranteed the right to counsel for low-income criminal defendants. While that decision helped people accused of a crime, poor people who need a lawyer for civil matters have no such guarantee. In this “civil justice gap,” people who face homelessness, hunger, or abuse have no legal right to representation.



Imagine that your landlord illegally evicts you, and you become homeless. You are the victim of an abusive nursing home. Your employer pays you less than minimum wage or does not pay you overtime, or just stops paying you altogether. You do business with a predatory lender and your house is in foreclosure. In all of these situations, you are not guaranteed legal representation.

All over Philadelphia, thousands of low-income people face circumstances like these. Community Legal Services helped 12,300 people in similar situations this year, but only 20% of low-income households who need a lawyer are actually able to obtain representation.

Many in the legal community have worked together to address this justice gap. Community Legal Services helped lead the Philadelphia Bar Association’s Civil Gideon Task Force since its inception. This year we have taken another important step: participating in statewide hearings about the importance of legal aid. The impetus for the hearings came from legal services leaders articulating the impact of continued cuts in funding from traditional sources. The clients featured in this annual report all participated in the hearings, testifying about how CLS helped them access justice and secure basic necessities.

This year has been a good example of how CLS continues to achieve in spite of funding challenges; we ended the year with memorable highlights and successes. Over the course of the year, we opened our new-from-the-ground-up North Philadelphia Law Center (see *feature on page 12*), negotiated the opportunity to get Medicaid reinstated for

100,000 people whose coverage was erroneously dropped, helped tens of thousands of children in day care get nutritious meals, and contributed to the passage of a bill to address outrageous delays for those in need of unemployment compensation. You can read about these victories and more on our redesigned website, which launched in May. On top of that, our advocacy work has been featured in a variety of national media sources, including NPR, MSNBC, BBC America, The Washington Post, and The New York Times.

People and organizations that support CLS are an invaluable part of our success. From the Capital Campaign, to our annual Bar Campaign, to spreading the word about the work that we do, you have been true champions for justice. Many of our supporters are attorneys who started law school with the public interest sector in mind, and found a different path—but still dedicate a significant share of their labors to increase access to justice by funding the mission of Community Legal Services.

As the 50th year since *Gideon v. Wainwright* ends, we begin to look forward to our own 50th anniversary in 2016. To date, CLS has served more than a million clients who could not afford to pay for legal representation, and who would have faced a variety of devastating outcomes without dedicated, knowledgeable attorneys on their side. Our advocates have worked tirelessly to fight for our clients’ most basic needs: food, shelter, and safety.

We are proud of the work we’ve done and are redoubling our efforts as we look toward our half-century mark. Thank you for supporting our work and for helping to ensure equal access to justice.

Catherine C. Carr, Esq.
Executive Director

HEALTH

When Army veteran Damon Clay was stationed overseas in the dead of winter without proper clothing or equipment, he suffered serious injuries that changed his life.

He was treated for frostbite in his feet and was honorably discharged. Mr. Clay received a small disability pension from the Veteran's Administration (VA), but the amount was negligible and fluctuated from month to month.

Mr. Clay worked several jobs after his time in the Army, but his condition worsened, and he was forced to resign. Mr. Clay was also experiencing symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. He was living solely on his pension when he received a letter from the VA saying it would be cut in half.

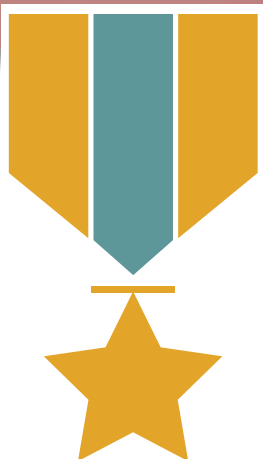
"I would fill out forms stating that my condition had not improved, but it seemed like they did not listen to me. The process was so confusing, I always became frustrated and gave up."

Mr. Clay went to the VA office to explain his condition, but to no avail. He heard about CLS and met with an attorney, who filed an appeal of the decrease in his pension. The attorney also connected Mr. Clay with a counselor to help with his PTSD.

"I had not been seeking treatment for PTSD and was focused mostly on my frostbite injuries ... Today I am doing much better. I receive treatment every week at the VA. I now volunteer to help other veterans; I counsel them and talk to them on the phone."

Mr. Clay received six weeks of inpatient treatment for his PTSD. During that time, his attorney gathered his medical information and worked diligently with the VA staff to secure a fair pension. Mr. Clay hoped his attorney could prevent the cut to his monthly pension; he was thrilled to learn that his attorney was able to get the original pension amount quadrupled. Additionally, he received a lump sum for the payments the VA should have been making to him over the years.

"I am not afraid to leave my home anymore. I am able to spend time with friends and family. I am the happiest I have been since leaving the Army. My quality of life has increased immensely..."



"Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) by a terrifying event. Symptoms may anxiety, as well as uncontrollable tho



“My quality
of life has
increased
immensely
since seeking
help from
Community
Legal Services.”

is a mental health condition that's triggered
include flashbacks, nightmares and severe
thoughts about the event.”

— Mayo Clinic

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"For those individuals at risk, their families and our communities at large, we really need to have a call to arms, Gideon's trumpet must sound, to provide necessary legal counsel for all those most in need."
 —Honorable Annette M. Rizzo

Awards: July 1, 2012–June 30, 2013

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Andrew Hamilton Award
 Presented by Public Interest Section,
 Philadelphia Bar Association
 November 2012

Catherine C. Carr, Esq.

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 University of Pennsylvania Law
 School
 October 2012

Kathleen Creamer, Esq.

Lawyer on the Fast Track
 Presented by The Legal Intelligencer
 November 2012

Debby Freedman, Esq.

The Lee Palmondon Volunteer Award
 Presented by Living Beyond Breast
 Cancer
 April 2013

Elizabeth C. Goodell, Esq.

2013 Excellence Award
 Presented by the Pennsylvania
 Legal Aid Network
 March 2013

Rasheedah Phillips, Esq.

2013 Next Generation of Women
 Leaders: Rising Stars
 Presented by Councilwoman
 Blondell Reynolds Brown,
 Philadelphia City Council
 June 2013

Kerry Smith, Esq.

2013 Excellence Award
 Presented by the Pennsylvania
 Legal Aid Network
 March 2013

Rebecca Vallas, Esq.

Induction into National Academy
 of Social Insurance (NASI)
 January 2013

Pam Walz, Esq.

Distinguished Public Service Award
 Presented by First Judicial District
 of Pennsylvania
 October 2012

Awards Presented by Community Legal Services at the Breakfast of Champions

Equal Justice Awards

Cynthia Harmon
Mark S. Schwartz, Esq.
Gail Thompkins

Champion of Justice Awards

Raynes McCarty
Joseph A. Tate, Esq.

Hall of Fame Award

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“Right away, [my CLS attorney] showed interest in my case and was eager to try to help me ...”



CLS broke down barriers to employment for 430 clients last year.



After 22 years of working in retail sales, Michelle Evans decided to pursue her goal of becoming a social worker.

She enrolled in classes and obtained her Associate's degree from Community College of Philadelphia in 2007. She then got her Bachelor's degree in social work from Temple University and earned her spot in Temple's Master's program. Ms. Evans accomplished all of this while raising and supporting her family.

"I want to help children and families in need of supportive services. I spent 22 years working in retail sales but changed careers in 2003 to work in behavioral health and human services."

The Master's program required Ms. Evans to complete an internship for which she needed a clean record. Not until she applied for the internship did she discover that she had been placed on the child abuse registry 13 years prior. Ms. Evans was unjustly accused of child abuse but was unaware of being placed on the registry. Anxious to resolve this issue after attempting to handle it herself, she came to CLS.

"Right away, [my CLS attorney] showed interest in my case and was eager to try to help me ...

[My attorneys] worked diligently on my case, and they both showed up for court with me."

The Department of Human Services agreed that the child abuse flag on her record was unwarranted and did not contest the removal of her name from the child abuse registry. Once her record was clear, Ms. Evans was able to move forward with her internship in pursuit of her degree.

"[My CLS attorneys] had a great deal of concern for my problems and they both showed compassion towards me. They did a very good job of representing me in my situation."

Ms. Evans is on track to receive her Master's degree by the end of this year. She is relieved that this roadblock to her future has been removed and is eager to begin her career in social work.

"I have recommended that several of my friends and family members, who, like me, cannot afford the high cost of a paid lawyer, seek help from Community Legal Services."



CLS' Legal Units



AGING AND DISABILITIES UNIT

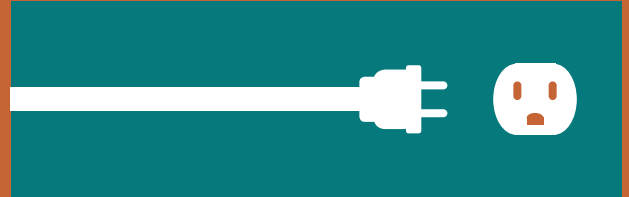
Aging and Disabilities Unit specializes in representing seniors and people with disabilities in a wide range of public benefits and consumer matters, including challenges to denials of Medicaid, Medicare, or disability benefits, decisions by managed care organizations to deny care, and violations of residents' rights and quality-of-care requirements in nursing homes and personal care homes.

EMPLOYMENT UNIT

Employment Unit represents clients with employment-related problems, including tackling barriers to employment, seeking unpaid wages, and preserving jobs. The unit advocates at the national and state levels on low-income workers' rights issues such as preventing overbroad disqualifications of workers with criminal records.

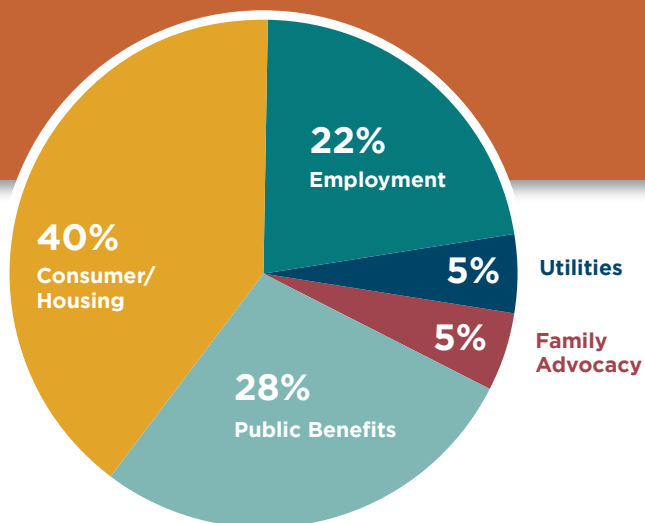
ENERGY UNIT

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.



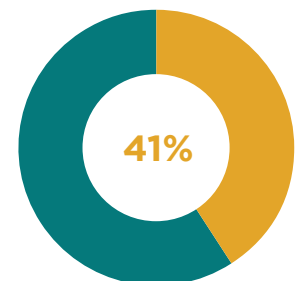
FAMILY ADVOCACY UNIT

Family Advocacy Unit represents individual parents, involved with the Department of Human Services, who are seeking to keep their children at home or to have them returned from foster care to a safe home. The unit provides assistance and trainings to community groups, organizations and lawyers. The unit also advocates on the national, state and local level for improvements in child welfare practices, services to families, and the dependency court system.



CLS helped 8,564 new clients during Fiscal Year 2013, while continuing to work with thousands more, for a total caseload of approximately 12,292.

"As a Commonwealth, we should be treating civil legal services for indigent individuals and families as an important government service, like roads and police service and courts."
—The Honorable Ronald D. Castille



41% of CLS clients have children living with them

HOMEOWNERSHIP AND CONSUMER LAW UNIT



Homeownership and Consumer Law 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 banking issues affecting low-income families.

HOUSING UNIT

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

Language Access Project works to ensure CLS services are available to Philadelphia communities with limited ability to speak, read, write, or understand English. The unit addresses legal issues specific to this population and collaborates with other units to represent individuals and families in challenging language barriers to benefits, services, and access to justice.

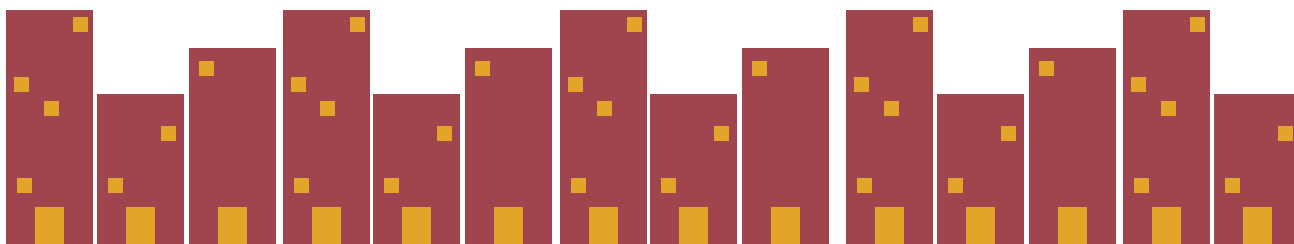


PUBLIC BENEFITS UNIT

Public Benefits Unit represents clients seeking or facing termination of public benefits such as cash assistance, SSI disability, food stamps, or health insurance.

The unit provides education and outreach services and advocates for improvements to the programs that provide these benefits at the federal, state and local levels.

"Community Legal Services [is] the single most important organization to prevent homelessness." —Sister Mary Scullion



Of the 30,000 evictions actions in Philadelphia each year, 85% of landlords have an attorney present. In public housing eviction cases, a Housing Authority attorney is always present.

In stark contrast, only 3–5% of tenants in these eviction cases have legal representation. —Source: Philadelphia Municipal Court

SAFETY

James Daly worked as a house painter until he began passing out frequently from dizzy spells.

When he fainted and hit his head on the job, he sought medical help. He spent months getting a battery of neurological tests and was eventually transferred to a nursing home for rehabilitation. During his treatment, the nursing home determined that Mr. Daly no longer required their services, despite that he was still unable to walk and had severe vertigo. On a Friday, Mr. Daly, who had previously been staying with a friend, found out that he would be sent to a homeless shelter the following Monday.

“I was panicked that if the nursing home sent me to the shelter, I wouldn’t get the rehabilitation and other care that I needed.”

On the morning he was supposed to be evicted, Mr. Daly got connected with a CLS attorney who quickly faxed an appeal to the Department of Public Welfare. Just an hour later, they received an order back barring the nursing home from evicting Mr. Daly until further notice. By law, nursing homes can discharge residents involuntarily only in certain circumstances. They must also give residents a written notice 30 days in advance.

“When [my attorney] called and told me that they would not be discharging me that day, I was very relieved. I had been afraid that I would end up on the street in my wheelchair.”

In an attempt to follow protocol, the nursing home soon gave Mr. Daly a letter that he would be discharged in 30 days. Mr. Daly’s attorney also appealed this notice, arguing that he would not receive proper medical care in a homeless shelter. The nursing home finally agreed to let Mr. Daly stay, but tried to evict him yet again in the middle of his treatment. His attorney stepped in once more, and the threats stopped.

When Mr. Daly was finished with his treatment, an organization called Liberty Resources helped him find an apartment where he now lives.

“I am so happy that I have my own place. I feel like a different person. If I had not had a lawyer to explain my rights and stop the nursing home from discharging me, I don’t know where I’d be now.”

“Equal access to legal representation is one of the most critical justice issues we face today.”

“If I had not had a lawyer to explain my rights and stop the nursing home from discharging me, I don’t know where I’d be now.”

— **Senator Stewart Greenleaf**





“This is a beautiful building. It’s about time we had something so beautiful in our community.” —North Philadelphia Law Center client

This year Community Legal Services celebrated the grand opening of its North Philadelphia Law Center, located at 1410 W. Erie Avenue.

For \$8.5 million, with help from the state, city, charitable donors and key partners, CLS built a new 18,500-square-foot structure on an empty lot, contributing stability and vitality to the busy shopping and transportation hub of North Philadelphia.

The new building has many eco-friendly elements that CLS expects will result in LEED gold certification: a vegetated roof, solar shading, a courtyard to increase natural light, bike racks and showers for bike commuters, and other energy-efficient features throughout. The building is also close to public transit and fully ADA-accessible, which is especially important because CLS sees many aging and disabled clients.



Photo: Cutting the ribbon for Community Legal Services' new North Philadelphia Law Center at 1410 West Erie Avenue are, from left: PA Rep. Dwight Evans (D-Philadelphia); Philadelphia City Councilwoman Cindy Bass; Philadelphia Mayor's Chief of Staff Everett Gillison; PA Sen. Shirley Kitchen (D-Philadelphia); CLS Executive Director Catherine Carr; CLS Board Past President Barbara Sicalides; Regional Housing Legal Services Executive Director Mark Schwartz; and PA Sen. Jay Costa (D-Allegheny). (Photo by Judy Hasday)



"[North Philadelphia Law Center] isn't showy architecture. Its strength comes from its determination to make sure those with the least are treated as graciously as those with the most. In a neighborhood not used to new things, its very existence offers the hope that decay and blight are not forever."

*—Inga Saffron, Philadelphia Inquirer
Architecture Reporter*

*“I could not
have won my
case without
the help of
a lawyer.”*

CLS helped connect 242 senior citizens with vital



Harbee Johnson, 84, suffered severe frostbite while in combat during the Korean War.

His hands and feet were completely frozen during the long, cold winters, and he spent a month in the hospital while overseas. After the war, Mr. Johnson returned to Philadelphia and worked in construction. Over the years, the pain from the frostbite became unbearable, and he could no longer work.

“I developed painful arthritis with deformities in the joints in my hands and feet. I had to wear braces for my ankles, then I got special orthopedic shoes and I use a cane. The arthritis has twisted the joints in my hands and it’s hard for me to use them.”

Mr. Johnson began receiving Social Security, but his monthly payments were so low that his income was at the poverty level. He could not afford life’s basic needs. Because he could not pay his mortgage, his house went into foreclosure. Mr. Johnson took out a reverse mortgage to keep his home, which was also in dire need of structural repairs that he could not afford to make.

“I was constantly worrying about how I would pay my property taxes, and my fire insurance was cancelled because I wasn’t able to pay the premiums ... I had water running down the walls inside my house because of busted plumbing.”

After years of hardship, Mr. Johnson applied for service-connected disability benefits from the Veteran’s Administration (VA). However, his application

was denied a year later because the person who assisted him did not instruct him to provide medical evidence of his frostbite injuries. He filed an appeal and received another letter saying his claim was denied, but that he could appeal in Washington, D.C. Mr. Johnson knew he needed a lawyer and came to CLS for help.

“The VA told me that all of my Army medical records had been destroyed in a big warehouse fire in 1973, so they had no record that I ever had frostbite.”

Mr. Johnson’s CLS attorney argued that the VA should have assisted him in getting medical evidence, instead of ignoring his statements about his injuries. The VA agreed to reopen his case for review at the local office. Mr. Johnson’s attorney helped him get a statement from his doctor about the extent of his frostbite injuries, and the VA finally awarded him benefits. He also won back benefits for the time it took to approve his application. Because of these benefits, Mr. Johnson is no longer living in poverty.

“With this money, I was able to fix all the problems with my house and pay back all of the money that I owed. I was also able to stop worrying constantly for the first time. I could not have won my case without the help of a lawyer.”

public benefits last year



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*Managing Attorney—
Employment & Public
Benefits Units*

Katherine Gomez, Esq.
*Managing Attorney—
Family Advocacy Unit*

Amy Hirsch, Esq.
*Managing Attorney—
North Philadelphia
Law Center*

Lisa Verges Dunlop
Director of Development

Michael T. Bowen, Esq.
*Director of Information
Technology*

**"For every \$1 of aid in Pennsylvania,
\$11 in quantifiable economic outcomes and savings
were realized for Pennsylvania."
—Source: Pennsylvania IOLTA Board**

Statement of Activities

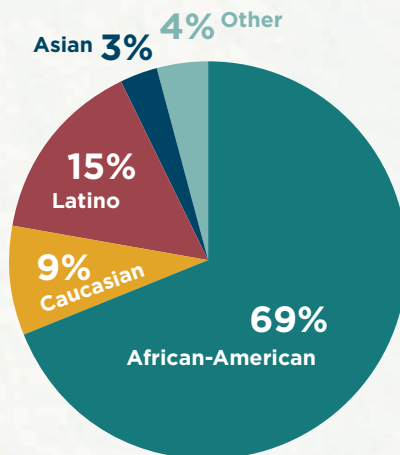
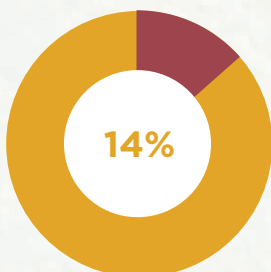
JUNE 30, 2013

	TOTAL	CAPITAL CAMPAIGN	GENERAL OPERATIONS
REVENUE & OTHER SUPPORT			
Contracts & Grants	\$ 9,883,659	3,192,675	6,690,984
Charitable Gifts	\$ 3,463,168		3,463,168
Attorney Fees	\$ 908,008		908,008
Interest Income	\$ 59,055	58,335	720
Subtotal Revenue	\$ 14,313,890	3,251,010	11,062,880
EXPENSES			
Program Services	\$ 8,915,673	234,776	8,680,897
Management and General	\$ 1,324,598		1,324,598
Fundraising	\$ 435,384		435,384
Total Expenses	\$ 10,675,655	234,776	10,440,879
Change in Assets	\$ 3,638,235	3,016,234*	622,001
NET ASSETS			
Beginning of Year, restated	\$ 5,458,463	1,956,885	3,501,578
End of Year	\$ 9,096,698*	4,973,119*	4,123,579

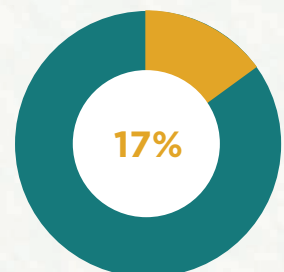
*Figures contain RACP grant restricted for payment of construction expenses.

The demographic breakdown of CLS constituency is as follows:

Approximately 14% of CLS clients, representing 40 different language groupings, are not primarily proficient in English.



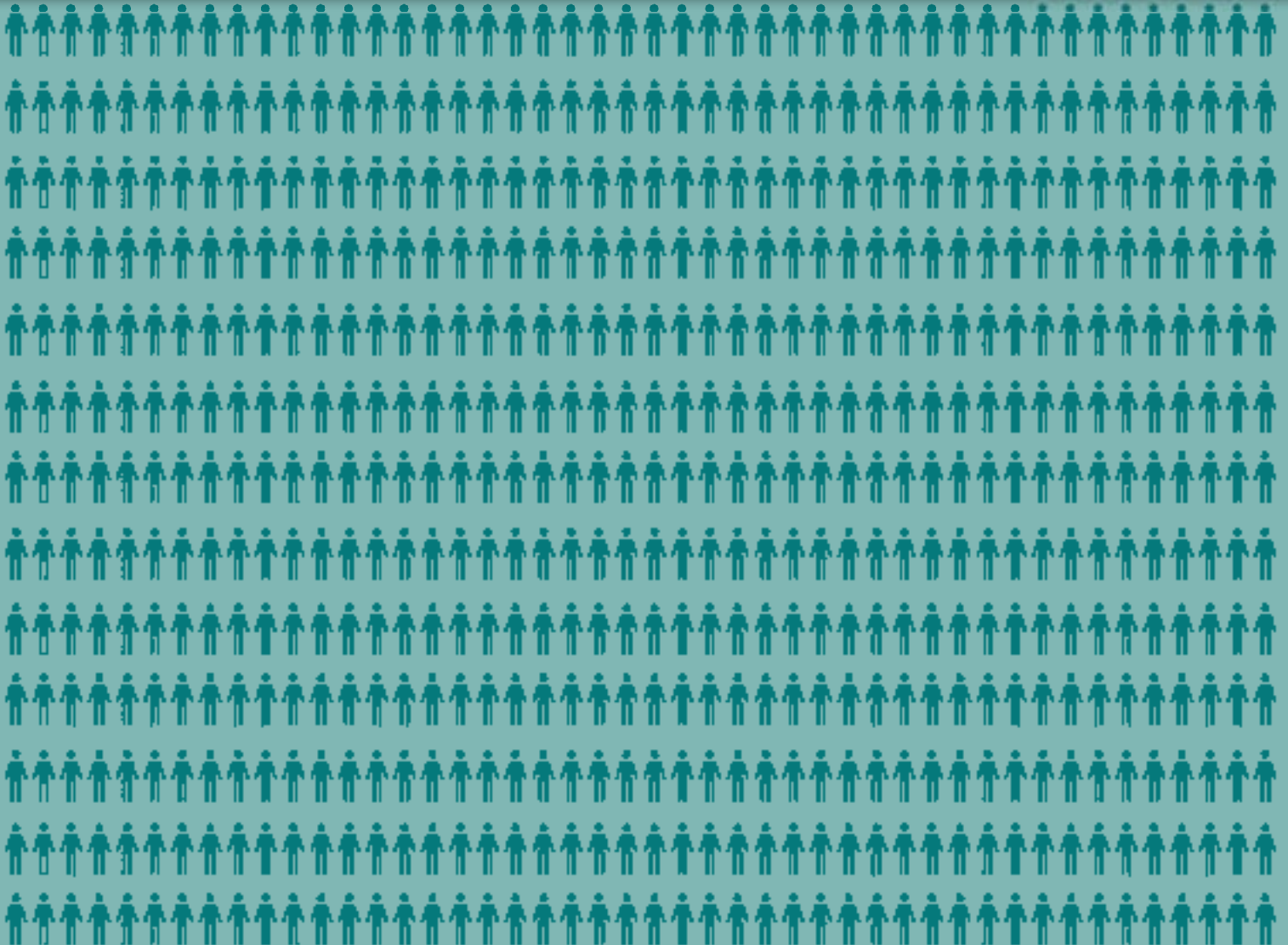
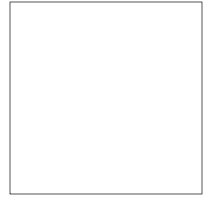
17% of CLS clients are aged 60 years or older





COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES
OF PHILADELPHIA

1424 Chestnut St.
Philadelphia, PA 19102-2505



Center City Office
1424 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102-2505
215-981-3700

North Philadelphia Law Center
1410 W. Erie Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19140
215-227-2400