

2024 Legal Service Innovation Award



Disaster Unit Team

L to R: Courtnei Carter, Hailey Barnett, Hershel Robinson, Kelley Millet, Christopher Breaux, Christine Northcutt, Donna Fields. (Not pictured - Jeffrey Trosclair, Chelsea Simon, and Jonell Dupre)

Acadiana Legal Service Corporation (ALSC) has launched the "Justice Bus," a mobile office that provides vital legal aid in disaster-stricken areas of Louisiana. Covering 42 parishes—75% of which are "legal deserts"—the Justice Bus addresses the lack of accessible legal resources for survivors of FEMA-declared disasters. The two mobile units are equipped with generators, internet, charging stations, laptops, and workspaces. ALSC has deployed the buses twice for disaster response after Hurricanes Beryl and Francine and continues to provide critical legal services to survivors of Hurricanes Laura, Delta, and Ida.

Since its deployment, the buses have traveled over 13,300 miles, reaching more than 1,100 individuals across 21 parishes and offering services related to housing, public benefits, and family law. Through collaboration with Southeast Louisiana Legal Services (SLLS), ALSC expands access to legal services for those in need, ensuring equal justice for all.

2024 Legal Service Excellence in Advocacy Award



Marie A. Wright is the managing attorney for the General Law Unit at Southeast Louisiana Legal Services (SLLS) in Hammond, handling a range of legal issues including bankruptcies, successions, wills, evictions, and consumer law across multiple Florida Parishes. A Southern University Law Center graduate, she has dedicated her career to public interest law since joining SLLS in 1997. Ms. Wright is known for her commitment to underserved communities, frequently traveling to rural areas and visiting clients in their homes to ensure access to justice. She has provided legal assistance to nearly 19,000 people, securing almost \$15 million in economic benefits. Beyond her legal practice, she actively educates the public through outreach events and has trained many law students and legal aid professionals. Her community involvement also includes staffing FEMA Disaster Centers, offering legal clinics, and participating in housing fairs and "Wills for Heroes" events, often on weekends.

2023 Legal Service Innovation Award



One Stop Homeless Legal Clinic Project

From left to right: Michelle Jack, Intake Specialist, Tranice Poiter, Staff Attorney, Colin Munn, Staff Attorney, Blake Allen, VIP Co-Managing Attorney, Jennifer Webre, VIP Co-Managing Attorney. Not Pictured Shanelle Staten, VIP Intake Specialist

SLLS' Veterans & Innovative (VIP) Unit under Supervising Attorney Jennifer Webre's leadership has expanded the reach of its Capital Area One Stop Homeless Legal Clinic Project. The project is an innovative onsite medical-legal partnership model serving vulnerable populations. For the past five years, three SLLS staff have been fully embedded to provide a range of legal services to the unhoused population to stabilize their lives and increase their ability to obtain and maintain housing and improve their health. Legal work primarily involves Social Security disability cases, food stamp cases, expungements, and other critical unmet legal needs to help increase the stability of Baton Rouge's unhoused residents.

2023 Legal Service Excellence in Advocacy Award



Emily Edwards, a native of Avoyelles Parish, attended high school at Marksville Senior High School in Marksville Louisiana, where she graduated in 2009. Emily then graduated from Northwestern State University in Natchitoches with honors, earning a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and criminology. She attended the Southern University Law Center receiving her Juris Doctorate in 2017. Emily had the pleasure to serve as the Legislative Aide to Senator Sharon Hewitt in the 2017 Legislative Session. Emily practices in a variety of law fields including personal injury, worker's compensation, and all areas of family law.

Emily enjoys her role in the Avoyelles Parish community as a member of the Avoyelles Arts Council, and member of the Chamber of Commerce, participating in a majority of the community events, and being an active participant in her church.

2021 Legal Service Innovation Award



Orleans First City Court Eviction Diversion Project

L to R: Craig Foundas, Office of Community Development, City of New Orleans; Tyra Johnson Brown, Office of Community Development, City of New Orleans; Marjorianna Willman, Office of Community Development, City of New Orleans; Chief Judge Veronica E. Henry, First City Court, Parish of Orleans; Elizabeth Harvey, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services; Kristina Bison, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services

In February, Orleans First City Court, the City of New Orleans, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services, and the Louisiana Fair Housing Action Center launched Louisiana's first court-based eviction diversion program. The program seeks to prevent homelessness by aiding both tenants and landlords through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. The project features on-demand legal assistance for tenants, an information desk for landlords and tenants, prioritization for tenants facing eviction for emergency rental assistance programs, and early notification at the time of filing. In the past six months of the program, 122 landlords received information about rental assistance to help avoid eviction, 114 tenants were enrolled as SLLS clients at the help desk, 57 tenants received legal information, and at least 249 evictions were prevented.

2021 Legal Service Excellence in Advocacy Award



Morgan Lamandre, Founder and Director of the legal services program at Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response (STAR), which focuses exclusively on meeting the needs of sexual assault survivors. Morgan has been involved with the organization since 2007, beginning as a volunteer hospital advocate and becoming a full-time staff member in 2013. Since establishing the legal services program at STAR in 2015, Morgan and her team have assisted hundreds of survivors with the wide variety of legal issues beyond pursuing criminal charges, including financial/consumer law, immigration, housing, education, employment, safety and protective orders, privacy, and beyond. Through Morgan's leadership, STAR provides free legal services to sexual assault survivors throughout 15 parishes in Central and South Louisiana. Morgan has also served on various task forces to address sexual assault in Louisiana and has drafted and testified in support of several bills that address sexual violence before the Louisiana Legislature.

2020 Legal Service Innovation Award



Lagniappe Law Lab (LLL), established in 2019, is a non-profit organization that uses technology, design-thinking, and operation principles to narrow the access to justice gap for people who cannot afford legal representation. At the height of the coronavirus pandemic, LLL worked tirelessly to create online legal information applications that help people prevent eviction, access COVID-19 stimulus funds and unemployment, and support the small businesses community during the downturn. Through this process, LLL created the COVID-19 Economic Impact Navigator, the Rent Relief Generator, and the CARES Act for Small Business Tool. Lagniappe Law Lab worked with the American Bar Association to launch the COVID-19 Economic Impact Navigator, which has been used 750 times. The Rent Relief Letter Generator has been used 2,200 times. When people cannot afford legal assistance or find a trusted source for information, they can seek assistance through these apps, shared by local organizations, for free help. Providing legal information about what to expect, how to obtain stimulus funds/rental advocacy/small business assistance, and how to use this information to plan for basic necessities during the lockdown has been crucial for vulnerable populations in Louisiana and Lagniappe Law Lab has made this information available through its innovative online applications.

2020 Legal Service Excellence in Advocacy Award



Amanda J. Golob has been a practicing public interest attorney since starting in 2009 as a Disaster Fellow with Southeast Louisiana Legal Services (SLLS). After six years in SLLS's Housing Law Unit, Amanda was promoted to managing attorney and under her leadership, the unit has become a trusted and reliable source of service and information that the public has turned to, especially during the public health crisis. Amanda's team has been featured in state, local, and national media over 40 times since March 2020 to shine light on the eviction crisis.

Amanda engages in direct case work, policy advocacy, and community legal education and continues to work non-stop as the Unit's caseload increased 300% since the onset of COVID-19. Amanda's leadership and team has impacted thousands of people through Facebook live events, trainings for judges, and strong advocating strategies to protect tenants. Over her career and her own casework, Amanda has protected the housing rights of nearly 5,000 people and secured or prevented loss of over \$4.2 million in economic benefits connected to housing.

2019 Legal Service Innovation Award



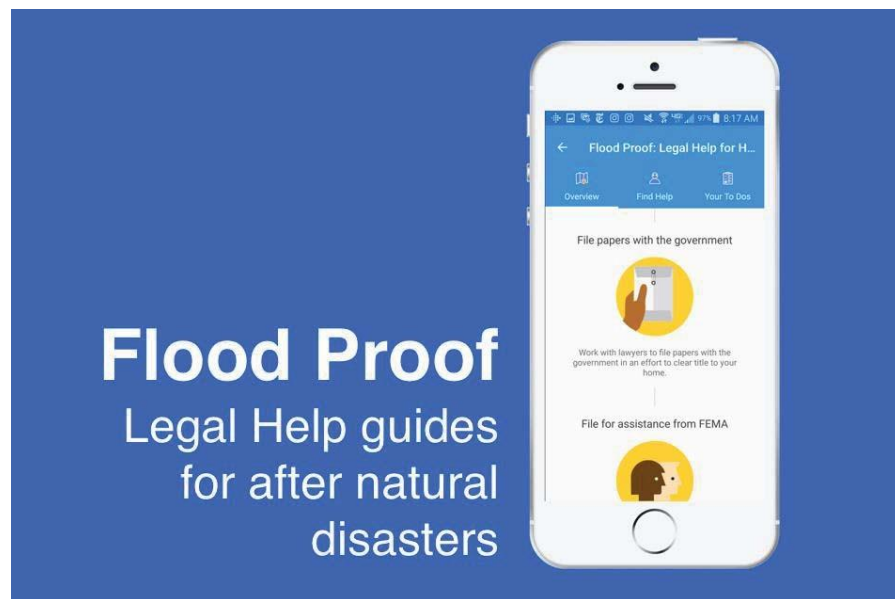
The Reentry Legal Clinic was launched in February 2019 by Southeast Louisiana Legal Services, The First 72+, Orleans Public Defenders, the City of New Orleans RISE Program, and the Justice and Accountability Center. The Clinic brings together attorneys, students and law enforcement officials once a month to assist formerly incarcerated people with their most pressing civil legal issues, such as outdated “ghost” warrants, driver's license suspensions, child support debt and TWIC card denials. By addressing their civil legal needs, the Clinic ensures that participants can successfully transition back into the community rather than becoming further ensnared in court cases, fines and fees that often lead to recidivism. In order to both conserve limited attorney resources, as well as promote education in the community, the Clinic operates on a “pro-se empowerment” model. By equipping participants with knowledge about substantive legal issues as well as criminal and civil procedure, the Clinic helps people help themselves, providing direct legal representation only when necessary. Additionally, the Clinic welcomes back prior participants to volunteer and support other formerly incarcerated people navigate the tenuous and all too often frustrating reentry process. In less than one year, the Clinic has served 51 clients and provided over 250 hours of pro bono legal assistance. Their program offers an innovative model of how attorneys can leverage access to civil justice to create positive change in the criminal justice system and the community.

2019 Legal Service Excellence in Advocacy Award



Joshua L. Holmes joined the U.S. Army Reserves in high school and was deployed to serve in U.S. Army in Europe during college. During law school, Holmes organized a National Day of Solidarity with the Student Hurricane Network after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. He helped recruit thousands of law student volunteers to the Gulf Coast and advocated for a Gulf Coast rebuilding surge at the 2008 Democratic National Convention. Holmes has practiced as a public interest attorney since 2009, investigating and enforcing claims of privacy violation and of gender and disability-based discrimination in housing, healthcare, employment and education. Holmes is the past editor-in-chief for the *Louisiana & HIV Human Rights Reporter*, a past board member of the City of New Orleans' Human Relations Commission, and a past chair of the Louisiana AIDS Advocacy Network.

2018 Legal Service Innovation Award



The Flood Proof Project Southeast Louisiana Legal Services

The area serviced by Southeast Louisiana Legal Services (SLLS) is extremely vulnerable to natural disasters. Since the August 2016 floods in the greater Baton Rouge area, SLLS has led a collaborative “Flood Proof” project to help disaster impacted homeowners prepare for and recover from natural disasters. SLLS and its partners – Louisiana Appleseed, Southern University Law Center, Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert School of Law, the Baton Rouge Bar Association, ABA Center for Innovation, and Stanford University – launched this innovative project to help homeowners sustain and/or preserve recovery assistance and other economic benefits. The app developed for this project has now been replicated twice and is being modified in 2019 to enhance its use as a disaster resiliency tool. The “Flood Proof” Project has provided extensive community outreach, civil legal aid, and volunteer attorney assistance to communities adversely affected by natural disasters in Southeast Louisiana and is developing an incubator project for new attorneys. The “Flood Proof” Project is a highly successful and replicable model for quickly bringing together multiple partners to facilitate disaster recovery.

2018 Legal Service Excellence in Advocacy Award



Phill Marie Edwards

(posthumously)

Acadiana Legal Service Corporation

Phill Marie Edwards earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from LSU, a Master of History from Southern University, and her Juris Doctorate from Southern University Law Center. In 1992 she began her legal career as a Staff Attorney with Acadiana Legal Service Corporation. She later became the leader of the firm's Administrative Law Unit, supervising staff in the firm's offices in Lafayette, Lake Charles, Alexandria, Shreveport, Natchitoches, and Monroe. She served as a passionate advocate for justice for the entirety of her twenty-eight year legal career.

Phill sought to make the often-incomprehensible rules and processes of various state and federal administrative agencies understandable to the 7,200 clients she represented, and zealously advocated on their behalf to secure over \$17 million in awards to them. In addition to these monetary recoveries, she was often their lifeline to health care, food, and most importantly, personal dignity.

2017 Legal Service Innovation Award



STAR® launched its legal services program in 2015 after being awarded the Legal Assistance for Victims (LAV) Grant from the Office on Violence Against Women. This funding allowed STAR to develop its specialized legal services geared towards serving non-intimate partner sexual assault survivors, as well as partner with the LSU Law Center to develop a clinical education course for law students to provide legal representation to sexual assault survivors.

STAR attorneys provide consultation and legal representation to survivors in the areas of education, employment, family/juvenile law matters, housing, privacy, public benefits, victim rights, and safety issues. Through its first two years of existence, STAR's legal team has assisted over 230 survivors in over 400 legal matters.

The legal services program is spearheaded by its visionary Legal Director, Morgan Lamandre, Esq., and includes two staff attorneys, Cherita McNeal, Esq. and Brittany Tassin, Esq., all graduates of Southern University Law Center.

2017 Legal Service Excellence in Advocacy Award



Hannah Adams is a Staff Attorney in the housing unit at Southeast Louisiana Legal Services' New Orleans office. From 2015-2017 Hannah served as an Equal Justice Works fellow, representing low income tenants living in substandard and health-threatening housing conditions in evictions, subsidy terminations, repair disputes, and affirmative lawsuits. Starting in fall 2017 Hannah began a Borchard Foundation on Law and Aging fellowship assisting seniors with rental housing-related legal issues. Hannah is a 2015 graduate from Northeastern University School of Law with a concentration in Poverty Law and Economic Justice. Prior to law school Hannah coordinated education and outreach programs at the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center for five years. She is a member of the Housing Committee and Louisiana chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, and a board member at Jane Place Neighborhood Sustainability Initiative, a community land trust that advocates for tenant rights and develops permanently affordable rental housing in New Orleans.

2016 Legal Service Innovation Award

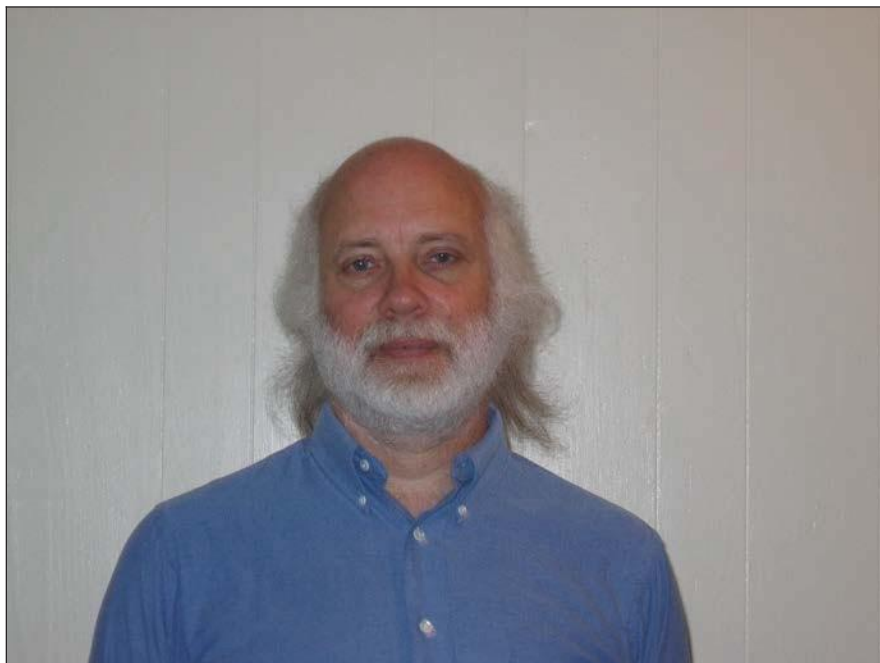


“2016 CIVIL JUSTICE TOUR”

The Louisiana Civil Justice Center (LCJC) is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. Its mission is to provide critical legal assistance for low-income, disaster-affected and other vulnerable residents across Louisiana. Founded in 2005 in the wake of Hurricane Katrina to provide disaster legal assistance to residents statewide through a toll-free legal assistance hotline, LCJC’s role in the justice community has evolved over the years to help meet the growing legal needs of Louisiana’s poverty population. LCJC focuses on developing innovative programs that can most efficiently and cost-effectively assist those in need. Through its statewide hotline, court-based help desks, medical-legal partnership, community clinics and other services, LCJC assists nearly 15,000 vulnerable individuals a year—resolving legal problems that are fundamental to their basic quality of life, such as, maintenance of housing and income, stability of a family, and the health and well-being of their children.

This year LCJC launched an ambitious project titled, “The 2016 Civil Justice Tour”. The tour, led by Program Director Amelia Hoppe, set out across the state to provide legal clinics and free legal assistance to low-income Louisiana residents. With the help of volunteer attorneys, in-person legal clinics were provided in 15 cities, in some of Louisiana’s most impoverished areas. Through the tour, LCJC was able to provide hundreds with brief legal information, advice, and resources.

2016 Legal Service Excellence in Advocacy Award



David H. Williams has been Litigation Director for Southeast Louisiana Legal Services for 10 years; was in full time private practice litigating primarily for Medicaid applicants and recipients for 10 years; and before that practiced for over ten years with New Orleans Legal Assistance Corporation, doing litigation and other advocacy concerning Medicaid, welfare, food stamps, child care assistance, unemployment compensation, and Social Security problems. He also co-counsels on Medicaid litigation, primarily class actions, with the Advocacy Center. In 1994, he received the Louisiana State Bar Association's first Career Public Interest Award and the National Legal Aid and Defender Association's Reginald Heber Smith Award for his Medicaid and other public benefits advocacy. In 2014, the New Orleans Bar Association's Mark Moreau award. He has a B.A. in Public Policy Studies and Economics from Duke University, and a J.D. from Harvard Law School.

2015 Legal Service Innovation Award



Southeast Louisiana Legal Services' "Single Stop" service center at Delgado Community College provides onsite holistic legal services, financial planning and tax preparation services to at risk community college students thereby removing barriers to completion of education and improved employment options. Expungement of minor infractions and arrest records have been shown to drastically improve an individual's employment opportunities as well as the chance to be gainfully employed. After being featured on the National Public Radio Community Impact segment, national interest in replication of this project was spurred and SLLS was asked to showcase the project in a Clearinghouse Review article educating other public interest organizations on the possibility of replication. To date, Single Stop has helped almost 1,000 students stay on track by addressing a legal crisis. The project's success led to an expansion in Dec. 2014 to Baton Rouge Community College

2015 Legal Service Excellence in Advocacy Award



Sachida Raman is a graduate of Tulane Law School and began his legal services career in 1993 with Southeast Louisiana Legal Services (SLLS) in Hammond where he handled a varied caseload and practiced in both Federal and Bankruptcy courts. He joined Acadiana Legal Services Corporation (ALSC) in Lafayette in 2000 as the Managing Attorney for the Family Law Unit. He has trained and mentored countless attorneys through his lectures and assisted thousands of individuals with their legal needs through his practice.

Sachida truly aims to improve the actual process of justice to change the lives of those less fortunate. He believes in our system of justice and strives for systemic change to provide greater access to our court system. His devotion to greater access is seen in Sachida's work as a member and chair of the Access to Justice Self-Represented Litigation Subcommittee. Sachida's work with that committee and the Lafayette Volunteer Lawyers includes development and review of form pleadings that self-represented individuals throughout the state have access to daily through most of the 6 live self help desks and 11 individual court websites. The landscape for self-represented litigants in Louisiana is much improved because Sachida's work.