



THE POWER OF PRO BONO



Impact Report 2017

36 YEARS OF SERVICE

Since 1981, VLS has made it our mission to improve access to the civil justice system for those who need it most. By leveraging the time, talent, and expertise of pro bono attorneys, VLS is able to deliver critical legal assistance to thousands of low-income individuals – veterans, seniors, domestic violence survivors, children and their families – every year. 2017 was no different.

From providing access to civil legal services for those who cannot afford them to supporting and training attorney volunteers, VLS is transforming Central Texas through the power of pro bono.

HOW WE SERVE

\$1,488,663 Value of legal costs saved or avoided | **1,091** Pro bono cases opened

2,733 Pro bono cases closed | **230** Number of legal advice and intake clinics



528 NUMBER OF ATTORNEY VOLUNTEERS



12,747 NUMBER OF HOURS DONATED BY ATTORNEY VOLUNTEERS



\$3,314,220 VALUE OF PRO BONO CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES PROVIDED



32 NUMBER OF HOURS OF CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION OFFERED



OVER
9,000
CENTRAL TEXANS
RECEIVED OUR HELP

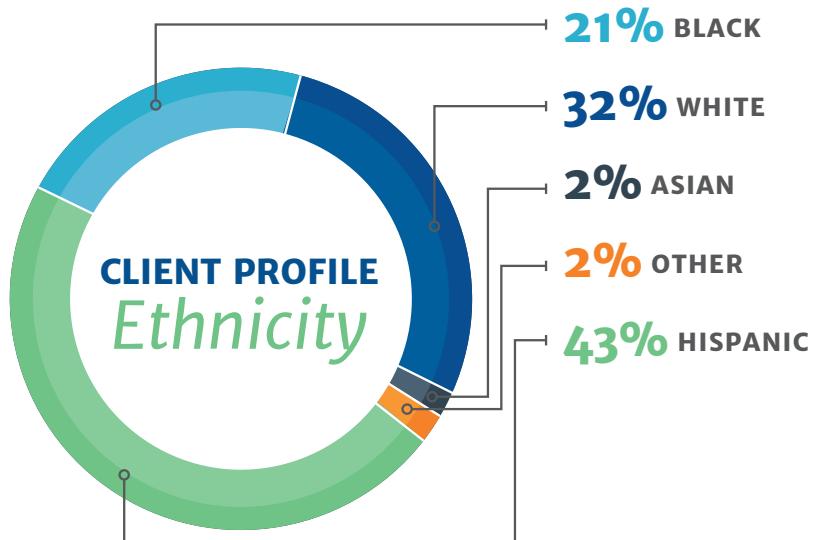


TRAVIS COUNTY:

- AUSTIN
- PFLUGERVILLE
- JONESTOWN
- MANOR
- DEL VALLE

HAYS COUNTY

BASTROP COUNTY



WHAT WE DO

Of the 2,733 pro bono cases VLS closed in 2017, approximately 32 percent involved **family law**; 21 percent concerned **torts, wills, and estates**; 20 percent were related to **housing matters**; and 9 percent were **consumer law**. The remaining 18 percent of cases included a combination of **employment and income matters, individual rights concerns, and health and education issues**.



PROTECTING FAMILIES

Escalating gang violence in El Salvador threatened Maritza and Jose's family. They regularly experienced death threats and Jose was viciously beaten because he refused to join the local gang. When the same gang began to recruit their 12-year-old son Victor, Jose and Maritza knew they had no other choice but to flee to the U.S. in hopes of making a better and safer life for their family.

For four years, Jose and Maritza lived and worked in Austin, caring for their growing family and contributing to their new community. But in early 2017, when immigration enforcement actions began to occur in Austin and across the country, Jose and Maritza started to worry about their family's safety again. They knew that, until they gained legal status, they were at risk of deportation and separation from their children. Worse yet, if forced to return to Colombia, Jose and Victor would certainly be killed by gang members. The family desperately needed somewhere to turn for advice and guidance.

As part of a community-based coalition, VLS helped Jose and Maritza understand their rights as immigrants as well as identify someone to care for their children in the event of their separation due to detainment or deportation. Jose and Maritza designated Ana, a cousin with legal permanent residency, as a caregiver for their American-born children, 15-month-old daughter Elizabeth and 3-year-old son Jonathan, as well as their now 16-year-old son Victor. In their absence, Ana will be able to care for and make decisions to help the children cope with the separation and ensure their ability to access medical care, an education, and other important needs. With VLS's assistance, Jose and Maritza have peace of mind knowing that they have done everything they can to be informed and protect their family.



PROTECTING RIGHTS

On his way to work, Ricardo was involved in a collision while driving his van. The vehicle in front of him stopped abruptly and, in an effort to avoid hitting it, Ricardo swerved and hit another vehicle. The other driver sued Ricardo for personal injury damages including physical impairment and mental anguish. Despite having liability insurance, Ricardo's insurance company refused to honor his policy. The insurance company contended that the vehicle was being used in the course of business at the time of the accident, and thus fell into a business use exception. Ricardo worked hard as a painting subcontractor to support his family of four. He had specifically explained his intended use when purchasing the policy and had been assured that he would be covered. Ricardo accepts responsibility for the accident, but he sought help from VLS because he believed the insurance company should honor its promises and insure him against these claims.

Alexander Knapp, an associate with Meyertons, Hood, Kivlin, Kowert & Goetzel, provided pro bono representation for Ricardo in an action against his insurance company. Alexander was able to negotiate a settlement which resulted in the insurance company honoring the full value of Ricardo's policy and compensating the other driver for damages.



FINANCIALS

*Statement of Activities & Changes in Net Assets
Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 2016*

REVENUE

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS BY ATTORNEY VOLUNTEERS	\$3,707,974
CONTRIBUTIONS	\$391,210
GRANTS	\$348,785
INTEREST, DIVIDENDS AND REALIZED GAINS	\$57,100
OTHER	\$3,195
TOTAL INCOME	\$4,508,264

EXPENSES

GENERAL AND ADMINISTRATION	\$83,021
PROGRAM SERVICES	\$4,381,201
FUNDRAISING	\$78,122
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$4,542,345
NET ASSETS AT BEGINNING OF YEAR	\$1,291,407
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR	\$1,313,219





Contact Information

1033 La Posada Drive, Suite 374, Austin, Texas 78752
Phone: 512.476.5550 | Fax: 512.322.0764 | www.vlsoct.org

Priscilla G. Cortez, Executive Director

Anna K. Meyers, Deputy Director

Jonathan Buck, Staff Attorney

Katie Valle, Staff Attorney

Martha Contreras, Domestic Violence Case Placement Coordinator

Addison Hill, General Law Case Placement Coordinator

Gabriela Caballero, Pro Bono Volunteer Coordinator

Cara McConnell, Annual Giving & Donor Relations Manager

Saara Silva, Program Assistant