

2017 ANNUAL REPORT



GEORGIA LEGAL
SERVICES PROGRAM®

Access to Justice and Opportunities Out of Poverty

The Georgia Legal Services Program is a nonprofit law firm whose mission is to provide civil legal services for persons with low incomes, creating equal access to justice and opportunities out of poverty.

Ms. Cramer contacted GLSP for a family violence protective order after her husband brutally attacked her. That day, he told her that one of them was likely to die. He threw a security camera at her, striking her in the head. He went to the kitchen for a butcher knife and threw it within inches of her face. Ms. Cramer was able to escape to another room in the house to secretly call the police to save her life. The police arrived and arrested her husband. GLSP Managing Attorney Sally Haskins represented Ms. Cramer in court to obtain a family violence protective order, temporary and exclusive use of the marital home, and the freedom to start a new life.

“This case is one of the more compelling family violence cases I have handled in a while. My client was completely dependent on her husband for support. She was intimidated by his family, too. She was very upset and fearful in court, because her husband’s entire family was present for the hearing. I honestly think she would have bolted for the door if I had not been with her. In these small, rural towns usually everyone knows everyone in town, and people resist acknowledging that family violence occurs in their community. My experience shows me they would rather turn a blind eye to the violence.” -- Managing Attorney Sally Haskins

GLSP’s holistic legal assistance to survivors helps to prevent them from returning to their abusers. In 2017, GLSP’s Family Violence Project closed 2,573 cases for survivors and their children, and secured \$2,082,089 for child support, housing, food stamp benefits, Medicaid, TANF, benefits (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), and other financial support.

The Georgia Legal Services Program (GLSP) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit law firm whose mission is to provide civil legal services for persons with low incomes, creating equal access to justice and opportunities out of poverty. GLSP was founded by members of the State Bar of Georgia in 1971. Our 10 regional offices across the state serve an estimated 2.5 million people in poverty, or 68% of the poverty population in Georgia. GLSP’s service region is outside metro Atlanta in 154 of Georgia’s 159 counties.

Client stories featured in this [2017 Annual Report](#) are based on actual case facts from client files, though the photographs and names of clients featured in the [Report](#) do not represent the actual clients.

Dear Friends,

Thank you for supporting GLSP.

The compelling stories of our clients' hardships, survival, and victories on the following pages are real stories of real people with critical problems that are often made worse because of the lack of income or resources available. We are proud of the outcomes we achieved for clients in 2017, to find solutions to their goals for what we all want: family safety and stability; food on the table; decent housing; access to health care; wages paid for honest work; good schools; and so much more.


We hope you enjoy GLSP's [2017 Report](#) and that you will be further enlightened of how you're making a difference. With your support and the support of our staff, a total of 125,672 people benefited from our legal services and advocacy that you helped to support.

The year was also a year of impending leadership transition with the announcement of Executive Director Phyllis Holmen's retirement from 43 years of exemplary public service, including 28 years as GLSP's outstanding executive director. We are honored to recognize Phyllis and her accomplishments.

Thank you for staying involved.

Shalamar Q Parham

Shalamar Parham
President



Mr. Bentley underwent surgery to have one of his legs amputated below the knee as a result of severe diabetes and congestive heart failure. He was a patient at Navicent Health and required rehabilitation services after the surgery, but he had no health insurance or income, and he was homeless. Mr. Bentley was referred by hospital staff to its new MedLaw program in the hospital. MedLaw is a medical-legal partnership established by GLSP, Navicent Health, and Mercer University School of Law. GLSP Staff Attorney Tara McIntosh works in the MedLaw office to provide free civil legal services to patients. Attorney McIntosh provided legal assistance to expedite Mr. Bentley's application for Supplemental Security Income. Her letter to the Social Security Administration explained Mr. Bentley's dire health problems and resulted in Mr. Bentley obtaining the rehabilitation services and benefits he needs. Mr. Bentley was one of 100 hospital patients referred to MedLaw in 2017. MedLaw is the first medical-legal partnership established in Central Georgia.

"We are honored to be a part of this important medical-legal partnership with Navicent Health and Mercer University School of Law to bring free legal help to patients who need peace of mind knowing they have access to a lawyer for critical areas affecting their health, treatment, recovery, such as poor housing conditions, lack of core benefits, domestic violence, and other problems."

— Executive Director Phyllis Holmen

Mr. Smith was living in an apartment infested with rats and mice.

He reported the problem to the onsite property manager, but nothing was done to eliminate the vermin. Mr. Smith contacted GLSP for help. One of GLSP's Eviction Prevention Project attorneys, Cedric West, wrote a letter to the onsite property manager and requested that the complex address the rat and mice infestation. The property manager purchased do-it-yourself products, which did not eliminate the problem. Attorney West then wrote a demand letter to the property management, and he was able to reach an agreement to have the tenant moved to a new apartment free of rats and mice. Mr. Smith has a home that is decent, sanitary, and free from all vermin.

GLSP's Eviction Prevention Project has eight attorneys who provide representation to low-income tenants in the counties of Bibb, Chatham, Floyd, Glynn, Hall, Muscogee, Richmond, and Whitfield. One additional attorney interviews all callers and refers them to the local EPP attorney for representation or provides advice and brief service. The goals are to prevent evictions, address substandard housing conditions and enforce housing code, recognize housing discrimination and assist tenants seeking reasonable accommodations and equal rights under the Fair Housing Act, and other significant issues to help stabilize families. The project is funded with a \$2,215,000 two-year grant awarded in 2017 by the Georgia Bar Foundation with settlement funds from the *U.S. Department of Justice v. Bank of America* mortgage fraud lawsuit.

Tommy is a young child who has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

His mother's meager earnings of \$250 monthly do not support the medications that he needs. She applied for renewal of Medicaid benefits for Tommy through the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS), but her application was wrongfully terminated due to alleged non-compliance, and DFCS had not responded by the timeframe given to her. Tommy's mother contacted GLSP's Benefits Hotline for assistance. Time was of the essence, since Tommy was running low on his medications. Supervising Paralegal Pranaya Rana contacted DFCS that day and requested prompt review of Tommy's renewal application. Within two days, Tommy's Medicaid benefits were reinstated just in time for a refill of his ADHD medication prescription. The coverage also made it possible for Tommy to see a dentist. The Medicaid benefits saved the household \$3,000 in annual medical expenses.

In 2017, GLSP's Benefits Hotline assisted 841 clients to obtain core benefits valued at \$3,000,000. We have filed more than 4,000 benefits applications and renewals since the inception of the Benefits Hotline in 2012. At least 91% of Hotline clients have monthly incomes below 150% of the federal poverty level. Our work is improving the quality of health and wellbeing for children with special needs, the elderly, and people with disabilities.



As a high school senior, David actively participated in ROTC,

and he had an unblemished discipline record. He was sent to a school disciplinary hearing for allegedly fighting on school grounds. At the hearing, David provided evidence that he was acting in self-defense. The disciplinary hearing officer found David guilty of the incident and imposed expulsion with the opportunity for David to attend an alternative school. A private attorney, who was contacted by David's mother about the problem, referred her to GLSP. GLSP Supervising Attorney Eugene Choi appealed the school's decision through the local school board to the State Board of Education, which upheld the school's decision. Attorney Choi then appealed to the Superior Court. While the appeal was pending, Choi represented David in an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) meeting with the school to advocate for support services David needs that the alternative school does not provide for his learning disability. The IEP team agreed to place David back in his general school with the supports and accommodations he needs. David graduated from high school with his class and is now attending college. The Superior Court ruled that the local school board did not properly consider David's self-defense claim and reversed the punishment. David's school record is cleared of the infraction.

With the help of a GLSP lawyer, David beat the odds as a young man of color who was at risk of the school-to-prison pipeline that funnels young African-American and Latino men, in particular, out of the public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Many of these students have learning disabilities or histories of poverty, abuse, or neglect.

"This case shows that through GLSP's advocacy, we can change the lives of students who have been denied justice and give them positive opportunities to succeed in their futures. David beat the odds with GLSP's involvement." — Supervising Attorney Eugene Choi

In 2017, the Georgia Supreme Court affirmed in a GLSP education case – the first school discipline case decided by the Court – unanimously on several important legal protections for students involved in disciplinary proceedings. The Court held that self-defense is indeed applicable in a school discipline setting and that a student need not use magic words to invoke the defense. The Court confirmed that the blind enforcement of zero tolerance fighting policies, which do not consider a student's right to self-defense and subject victim children to expulsion from school, are unlawful.

Without the help of a GLSP lawyer, David might have a different story to share, and particularly one that is similar to the stories of millions of young men, especially of color, who are victims of the school-to-prison pipeline that funnels children out of the public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Many of these children have learning disabilities or histories of poverty, abuse, or neglect.

GLSP receives special funding to represent seniors on issues involving medical care, consumer rip-offs and protection of vital assets such as the home place, advanced directives, or access to benefits. Sometimes the case involves a struggle against exploitation by the senior's own family members.

Ms. Walker's golden years grew dark when her home became at risk of foreclosure.

She contacted GLSP about a foreclosure notice she received despite having receipts for regular loan payments. Managing Attorney Karen Geiger discovered the loan servicing company was charging Ms. Walker 400% more for homeowner insurance than she could have obtained from the market, and this expense was causing her escrow, and therefore, her monthly payments to rise significantly from the monthly payments she thought she owed. The loan servicing company's harassing phone calls demanding Ms. Walker to pay different amounts of money made it difficult for her to work effectively with the company to resolve the problem. Ms. Walker stated she had gone without food, lost weight, and endured sleepless nights worrying about keeping her home. Attorney Geiger was able to stop the foreclosure, get market rate homeowner insurance, stabilize the escrow, and set up bank deductions from Ms. Walker's bank account to avoid further delinquencies. Ms. Walker passed away a few months after her case closed.

"I was touched and motivated by the sacrifices my client made to keep her house while facing down scores of calls giving her contradictory information and threatening foreclosure. Sometimes justice comes in standing up for the little guy (in this case a diminutive, feisty, independent woman), to cut through the barriers created by incomprehensible laws, regulations, or policies." — Managing Attorney Karen Geiger

Ms. Ramirez contacted GLSP's Spanish Intake Program (SIP)

seeking help with a notice she had received from DFCS indicating her family's Food Stamp benefits had been reduced and there was no explanation in the notice about why the benefits were cut. SIP serves as an essential first point of initial contact for Spanish-speaking callers to GLSP. SIP referred Ms. Ramirez to GLSP Staff Attorney Nancy DeVetter. Attorney DeVetter contacted DFCS on behalf of Ms. Ramirez and discovered that the Food Stamps benefits were cut because a family member had become a college student, making him ineligible for benefits. In addition, DFCS had included household income that was not being received anymore and would not give the family credit for medical bills. Attorney DeVetter's advocacy resulted in DFCS agreeing to increase the family's benefits and issue \$540 in retroactive benefits. DeVetter also provided advice about the Medicaid programs for which the family is eligible.

"It's so important for Spanish-speaking clients to have support in navigating DFCS programs, which are confusing even without language access issues. This client in particular has had repeated problems communicating with DFCS workers to understand the changes they made in her case, which are never clearly explained and have been erroneous multiple times. This time, they delayed resolving her issue without reason, adding to the family's frustration." Thankfully, the case is resolved, the family's food resources are increased, and they have retroactive benefits to help stabilize the household." — Staff Attorney Nancy DeVetter

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires recipients of federal financial assistance to take reasonable steps to make their programs, services, and activities accessible by eligible persons with limited English proficiency.



GLSP Executive Director Phyllis Holmen

announced her retirement to the board of directors and her staff in June 2017. The board of directors formally recognized Phyllis as a GLSP Champion of Justice at the State Bar Center for her 43 years of exemplary public service, including 28 years as GLSP's executive director.

Phyllis is a Chicago native whose career with GLSP began after she completed law school at the University of Illinois College of Law in 1974, and relocated to Georgia for a job as a staff attorney with GLSP in 1974. Holmen rose through the ranks of GLSP, eventually becoming GLSP's third executive director in 1990. Holmen has served on the State Bar of Georgia Board of Governors for 25 years and nearly 20 years on the State Bar of Georgia Executive Committee. She served on the Georgia Supreme Court Indigent Defense Commission and helped to draft legislation that resulted in a completely new statewide system of appointed counsel for indigent defendants. Holmen served on Governor Roy Barnes' Judicial Nominating Commission, helping to select judges for Georgia's appellate courts. Holmen has served on the American Bar Association's Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants, and on the board of directors, and held leadership positions with the National Legal Aid and Defender Association, the National Senior Citizens Law Center, the Poverty and Race Research Action Council, the American Bar Association President's Task Force on Access to Civil Justice, and the Judicial Council of Georgia's Pro Se Litigants Committee. Holmen co-founded the Women's Policy Group, which advocated for progressive policies for Georgia's women for more than 20 years. Holmen has been recognized by Georgia Trend magazine as one of Georgia's "Legal Elite," and by the Atlanta Business Chronicle among Atlanta's "Who's Who in Law and Accounting."

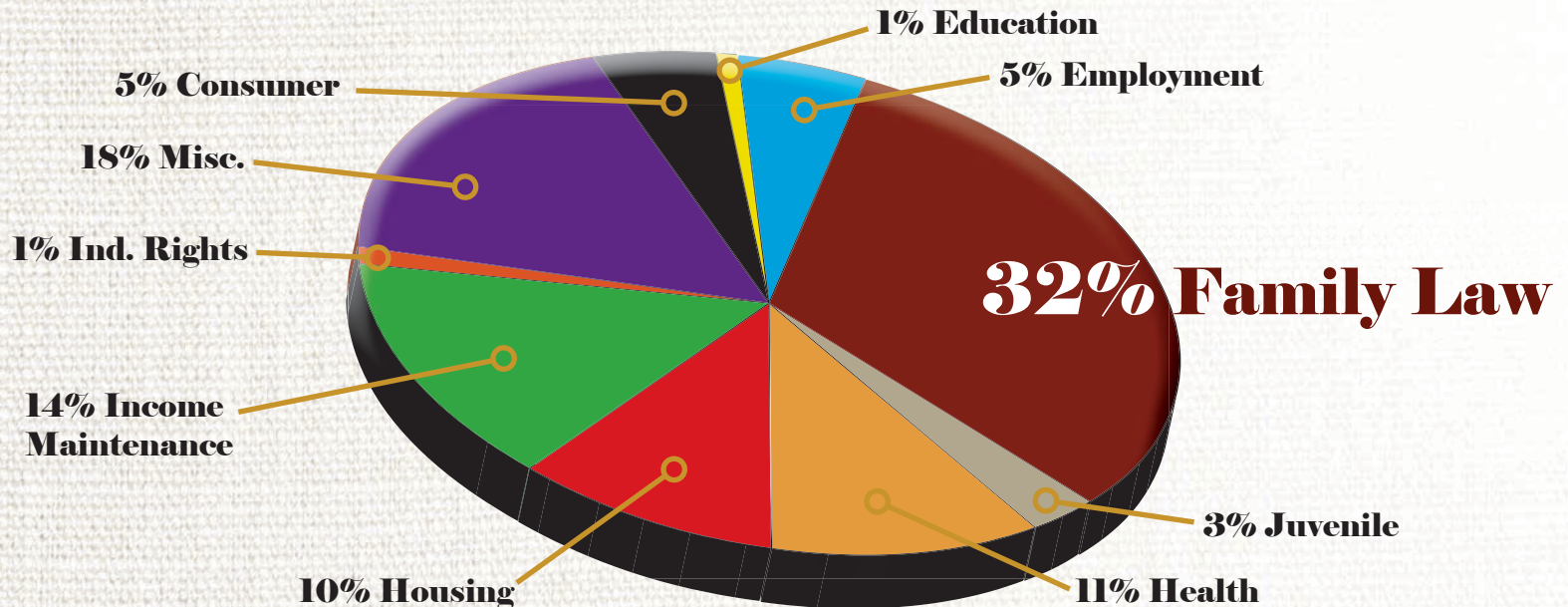
Phyllis is the recipient of numerous awards and recognitions to include a Lifetime Achievement Award from the ALM publication of the Daily Report (2016); the Commitment to Equality Award to GLSP from the State Bar of Georgia Committee to Promote Inclusion in the Profession (2015); the prestigious Hodson Award to GLSP for Outstanding Public Service from the Government and Public Sector Lawyers Division of the American Bar Association (2014); the R.E. Thomas Civil Rights Award to GLSP from the Gate City Bar Association (2014); GABWA's Zenith Award to GLSP for Service to the Community (2013); the Milner Ball Working in the Public Interest Student Achievement Award from WIPI Law Conference of the University of Georgia School of Law (2008); the Elbert P. Tuttle Jurisprudence Award from the Anti-Defamation League (2008); the EPIC Inspiration Lifetime Commitment to Public Service Award from Emory Public Interest Committee, Emory University School of Law (2007); the Distinguished Alumna Award from the University of Illinois College of Law (2006), the first legal aid lawyer to be honored; the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Atlanta Bar Association 2005; the Traditions of Excellence Award from the State Bar of Georgia's General Practice and Trial Section of the State Bar of Georgia (2005); the Kathleen Kessler Award from the Georgia Association of Women Lawyers (2002); and the CHRISal Vision Award from CHRIS Homes (2002).



"I went to law school with a vision of making a difference in the world. I am grateful to have enjoyed a wonderful career doing exactly what I wanted to do." – Phyllis J. Holmen

126,572 people were provided services!

- **8,709** case closings of which 32% involved family law cases
- **10,007** people were provided community education programs, pro se assistance, referrals to other agencies, and more
- **10,443** calls to intake paralegals to assist callers with income eligibility and other screening information to guide us in helping with the legal problem to be resolved
- **97,413** calls were handled by our receptionist group to determine if callers' legal problems fall within our scope of services and service region



Financial Overview

NET ASSETS - BEGINNING of YEAR \$ 2,719,752

2017 INCOME

Legal Services Corporation	\$ 8,604,175
Older Americans Act	\$ 1,107,437
Judicial Council of Georgia	\$ 1,608,515
State Bar of Georgia Campaign for Georgia Legal Services Program	\$ 432,763
Georgia Bar Foundation	\$ 825,301
Department of Justice	\$ 231,241
State Bar of Georgia Pro Bono Project	\$ 212,216
Criminal Justice Coordinating Council	\$ 172,945
Other	\$ 874,434
TOTAL	\$ 14,069,027

2017 EXPENSES

Salaries	\$ 8,038,481
Fringe Benefits	\$ 3,222,765
Space	\$ 993,788
Equipment	\$ 173,671
Contract Services	\$ 344,980
Travel	\$ 328,929
Telephone	\$ 227,880
Supplies	\$ 173,671
Library	\$ 57,015
Audit	\$ 42,500
Professional Liability & General Insurance	\$ 47,397
Litigation	\$ 26,706
Other	\$ 235,239
TOTAL	\$ 13,913,022

NET ASSETS - END of YEAR \$ 2,875,757

\$156,005 Increase in Net Assets

GLSP 2017 Honor Roll

"And Justice for All" State Bar Campaign for the Georgia Legal Services Program, Inc.®

A Salute to our Donors!

Thank you for your generous contributions of \$150 or more to the "And Justice for All" State Bar Campaign for the Georgia Legal Services Program from 4/1/17 – 3/31/18. With all of your support, we had raised a total amount of \$571,925 from the Campaign.

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GLS Foundation 2017 Honor Roll

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The Georgia Legal Services (GLS) Foundation launched a \$1,000,000 capital campaign in January 2017, in recognition of the Foundation's 20th anniversary, and in honor of the late Senior U.S. District Court Judge Marvin Shoob, whose \$1,000,000 cy pres award to the Georgia Legal Services Program in 1996, led to the creation of the GLS Foundation in 1998. For more information about the capital campaign, please contact the Development Office at 404-206-5175.

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The Georgia Legal Services (GLS) Foundation was founded in 1998, as a non-profit corporation recognized as a 501(c)(3) organization by the IRS. Gifts to the GLS Foundation are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. To make a contribution, go to www.glsp.org (click on Donate Now and designate GLS Foundation), or mail your check to Georgia Legal Services Foundation, Development Office, 104 Marietta Street, Suite 250, Atlanta, Georgia, 30303.

We appreciate our donors and take great care in compiling the GLS Foundation's Honor Roll of Contributors. If we have inadvertently omitted your name, or if your name is incorrect in our records, we apologize and encourage you to contact the Development Office at 404-206-5175. Some donors have requested anonymity.

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Thank You

Phyllis, for your leadership, commitment, and dedication
to GLSP for 43 years!



**Georgia Legal Services Program
Managers Meeting, August 23, 2017**

Executive Director Phyllis Holmen (front row, center) and Litigation Director Lisa Krisher (back row, far right) led a statewide meeting of GLSP's department directors, managing attorneys, regional operations managers, and specialist attorneys who convened in Macon on August 23, 2017. The full-day agenda included discussion topics on case updates and achievements, technology updates, office budgets, poverty issues, and more.



GEORGIA LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM® 1971-2017

1971	1976	1981	1990	1996	2001
Georgia Legal Services Program incorporated by members of the Younger Lawyers Section of the State Bar of Georgia.	Georgia Clients Council is founded to serve as an advisory group to Georgia Legal Services.	Georgia Legal Services and the State Bar of Georgia establish the Pro Bono Project.	Phyllis J. Holmen becomes the fourth executive director.	Georgia Legal Services Foundation is established with a \$1 million cy pres award by U.S. District Judge Marvin Shoob from the remainder funds of a national class action.	Georgia Legal Services launches capital campaign in Macon and successfully raises funds to purchase the historic Eagles Building for its Macon Office.
2003	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Central Office of Georgia Legal Services relocates to the new State Bar Center.	Georgia Legal Services opens a field office in Athens-Clarke County due to the dire need for more and better legal services for the low-income community in that area.	Georgia Legal Services expands use of technology to improve services to clients.	Georgia Legal Services launches a Latino Outreach and Education initiative to address the impact of the economic downturn on the civil legal problems of low-income Latinos outside metro Atlanta.	Georgia Legal Services is named the beneficiary of the signature fundraiser of the Young Lawyers Division (YLD) of the State Bar of Georgia.	Georgia Legal Services launches its Champions of Justice Recognition Program in honor of lawyers and community activists for advancing GLSP's mission, their contributions to justice for all, and support of GLSP.
2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Georgia Legal Services Executive Director Phyllis Holmen is one of six legal services directors to participate in a White House forum to examine the state of legal aid nationwide.	GLSP is awarded GABWA's (Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys) Zenith Award for Service to the Community at GABWA's Founders' Awards Gala and Auction.	GLSP is the national recipient of the 2014 American Bar Association's prestigious Hodson Award.	GLSP is awarded the Commitment to Equality Award from the State Bar of Georgia Committee to Promote Inclusion in the Profession for its work to support diversity within the legal profession and for its dedicated service to diverse communities.	GLSP completed a strategic planning process in February, 2016, to develop strategies and goals to strengthen GLSP as a statewide law firm.	GLSP Executive Director Phyllis Holmen officially announced her retirement to the board of directors after 43 years of exemplary public service, including 28 years as GLSP's executive director.



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