
CONNECTICUT BAR FOUNDATION

2024
ANNUAL
REPORT



Funding Access to Justice

2024 Report of Professor Anika Singh Lemar and Executive Director Angela Schlingheyde

We are pleased to present the 2024 Annual Report of the Connecticut Bar Foundation (CBF). 2024 has been a notably busy and impactful year for CBF. In addition to our ongoing collaboration with legal services providers to ensure low-income residents across Connecticut have access to legal services, we have continued to offer a range of programming aimed at promoting education and advancing systemic change. We also launched a **statewide civil legal needs assessment in June of 2024**, with the final report anticipated in July of 2025. This comprehensive report will not only assess the current civil legal needs of low-income residents but will also provide a detailed overview of work being done across the state to promote access to justice. Additionally, it will identify gaps in access and offer actionable recommendations for improving access to Connecticut's justice system. An economic impact analysis will be included, underscoring the significant value of investing in these essential programs. We look forward to sharing this valuable report with our partners in the Connecticut Judicial Branch, including the Access to Justice Commission.

In 2024, CBF saw strong IOLTA/IOLA revenue, due to relatively high interest rates. These funds, combined with the two Judicial Branch grants, enabled us to increase support to our grantees for the 2025 funding cycle. **In 2024, revenues from the IOLTA program represented 31% of the annual grant funding distributed to legal aid organizations.** To enhance our financial stewardship, CBF partnered with Raymond James Financial Advisors in 2024 to work alongside our Finance & Investment Committee, ensuring our IOLTA funds are being invested prudently and in line with best practices. The strong financial position also allowed CBF to continue building a reserve fund.

The reserve fund will be crucial in 2025. Interest rates will inevitably decline. We have already seen cuts to the federal fund rate and further reductions are expected by the end of 2025. There are concerns of another recession. CBF will require flexibility to respond swiftly to the unanticipated funding losses of our grantees. Already, some of the legal services providers have reported federal funding cuts, highlighting the importance of being prepared for the challenges the legal aid community will face over the next few years.

In 2024, CBF continued its work in administering two important right to counsel programs, which the General Assembly established in 2021. **Since its inception in 2022, the right to counsel Eviction Defense program assisted 12,798 individuals from 5,500 households.** The representation rate for tenants has almost tripled since the program's inception and attorneys were able to prevent disruptive displacement in 85% of the cases where the client received extensive services. Our independent consultant reported the program has estimated fiscal benefits and economic impacts of \$36.6 million.

Providing access to counsel for residential tenants facing eviction helps to mitigate the destabilization of communities caused by a high volume of evictions.

The second right to counsel program is the **Temporary Restraining Order program which increases access to counsel for low-income survivors of domestic violence seeking to apply for a temporary restraining order.** This program is offered in five Judicial Districts: Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, Stamford, and Waterbury. To date, for the 2024-2025 grant cycle, there have been 1,270 clients who have received services through this program. Applying for a restraining order is one of the most dangerous times for a victim of domestic violence as it can escalate the abuser's behavior. Having access to counsel while obtaining a restraining order is critical. CBF will continue its advocacy to ensure that these programs continue to be fully funded by the General Assembly.

CBF's **James W. Cooper Fellows (Fellows)** programs provide education around access to justice issues, as well as help to facilitate systemic change, and are a critical part of our overall mission. In 2024, the Fellows presented extensive programming both in person and virtually. Examples of symposia include the thirteenth **John A. Speciale Alternative Dispute Resolution Symposium** exploring Restorative Justice & Juvenile Justice, a continuing series on **Understanding Human Trafficking** held each February, and the **Justice for All Legal Aid Symposium** which focused on the progress of legal aid over the last 10 years and innovative practices being used nationally to help increase access to justice in the future. Program participants continue to collaborate on public policy changes that will hopefully lead to positive changes to our current systems and legislation.

In addition, the CBF continued to **partner with the Connecticut Bar Association (CBA) to present new webinars in the Constance Baker Motley Speaker Series on Racial Inequality.** The series included four virtual events in 2024, some of which are available on the CBF website. We also held several Roundtable discussions, including an **in-person discussion on Transgender People and the Law**, a continuation of a conversation from 2018. This event was impactful as it was held two days after the presidential election, and it became clear many protections for the transgender community were in jeopardy. This gathering brought together attorneys and community activists to discuss actionable steps we can take in Connecticut to ensure the rights of transgender individuals are upheld.

Furthering the educational work of the Fellows, the **24th Annual Quintin Johnstone Statewide High School Essay Contest** had another successful year, with many student submissions and strong Fellows' participation to read and score the essays. The topic was the very timely "Battle of the Bytes: AI vs. Academic Integrity." Our Statewide Winner was Joseph Coppinger of Simsbury High School. The runners-up were Delaney Russell of East Hampton High School and Ioannis Oikonomou of Rocky Hill High School. The awards presentation was held at the CT Supreme Court in June 2024.

Creating a pipeline of legal aid attorneys is essential to ensure our civil legal aid organizations continue to build capacity to meet the need for their services. **CBF is proud to administer the Herbert and Nell Singer Foundation** that addresses this need through the Singer Connecticut Public Service Fellowship.

In 2024, a **Singer Fellowship was awarded to Attorney Chelsea Connery, PhD to work at the Connecticut Fair Housing Center.** Dr. Connery is working closely with tenant unions and their members in New Haven and Fairfield Counties.

She uses integrated strategies including litigation, legislative advocacy, public education, and social science research. This lawyering model involves practicing law with, rather than for, communities and helps CT Tenant's Union in developing an organizing and legal approach to collective bargaining with landlords and in exploring the development of tenant-run social housing.

Additionally, the 2023 Fellowship recipients, Attorney Emily Leen at New Haven Legal Assistance Association and Attorney Mallory James Sanchez at the Center for Children's Advocacy, both elected to continue their Fellowships for a second year.

We continue to be grateful to the Herbert and Nell Singer Foundation for providing the opportunity to expand the capacity of legal aid services in Connecticut.

Finally, **we thank outgoing board members,** the Hon. Cesar Noble, Richard Knotek, Keith Soressi and Attorney Franklin Perry for their years of dedicated service on the CBF Board, and we welcome new board members Attorney Jonathan Harding, Attorney Paul Slager, Attorney Asker Saeed, and Attorney Lina Lee, the new Executive Director at the CBA.

We also want to acknowledge the Hon. Victoria Woodin Chavey for her two-year term as Board President. She was instrumental in the creation and implementation of CBF's current strategic plan, as well as the search for the current Executive Director. Fortunately, Judge Chavey will remain a member of our Board of Directors for another three-year term, but we are incredibly grateful for her service to CBF during her tenure as President.

CBF wishes to acknowledge the continuing support of its mission provided by the Connecticut Judicial Branch, Quinnipiac University School of Law, UConn School of Law, Yale Law School, and the CBA. We especially thank CBF's wonderful staff, along with all Board members and James W. Cooper Fellows, for their ongoing work on behalf of CBF.

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Who Do You Bank With?

The following institutions pay higher interest rates on IOLTA/IOTA accounts to increase access to justice for Connecticut residents who cannot afford an attorney.

Bank of America • The Bank of New York Mellon • BankUnited, N.A. • Berkshire Bank
Flagstar Bank, N.A. • JP Morgan Chase Bank, N.A. • Key Bank • M&T Bank • Metropolitan Commercial Bank
NBT Bank • New Haven Bank • PeoplesBank • Santander Bank, N.A. • TD Bank
Thomaston Savings Bank • Torrington Savings Bank • Westfield Bank

2024 Grants

Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts/Interest on Trust Accounts (IOLTA/IOTA),
Court Fees Grants-in-Aid (CFGIA), Judicial Branch Grants-in-Aid (JBGIA),

Legal Service Providers	IOLTA/IOTA	CFGIA	JBGIA	TOTAL GRANTS PAID
Center for Children's Advocacy provides legal representation and systemic advocacy for children and youth at risk statewide.	\$21,237	\$497,003	\$71,407	\$589,647
Children's Law Center of Connecticut provides representation, as Guardians ad litem or Attorneys for the Minor Child, to children of indigent families who are embroiled in bitter custody disputes in Family Courts statewide.	\$7,620	\$178,321	\$25,621	\$211,562
Connecticut Fair Housing Center represents those who have been victims of housing discrimination.	\$5,812	\$135,959	\$19,537	\$161,308
Connecticut Legal Rights Project represents low-income people with mental health conditions to protect their legal rights in the community and in state-operated hospitals.	\$20,496	\$479,581	\$68,908	\$568,985
Connecticut Legal Services provides general legal assistance in all areas of the state except Hartford and New Haven Counties.	\$254,441	\$5,953,957	\$855,464	\$7,063,862
Connecticut Veterans Legal Center's mission is to lower the legal barriers to housing, healthcare, and income for veterans recovering from mental illness and homelessness.	\$5,843	\$136,692	\$19,641	\$162,176
Greater Hartford Legal Aid provides general legal assistance in greater Hartford.	\$113,515	\$2,656,262	\$381,651	\$3,151,428
Lawyers for Children America provides representation to poor and at-risk children in Bridgeport, Hartford, Middletown, New Haven, Rockville, Torrington, and Waterbury Juvenile Courts.	\$4,171	\$97,627	\$14,025	\$115,823
New Haven Legal Assistance provides general legal assistance in the Greater New Haven and Lower Naugatuck Valley communities.	\$81,810	\$1,914,369	\$275,056	\$2,271,235
Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut provides legal services to low-income people, including advice, brief services, self-help, referrals to legal aid providers, pro bono referrals, and community education.	\$6,653	\$155,715	\$22,371	\$184,739
Open Communities Alliance provides legal assistance to low-income families facing discriminatory barriers when trying to access affordable housing in resource-rich communities.	\$3,229	\$75,533	\$10,854	\$89,616
Technology Grant for CTLawHelp Website	\$144,130			\$144,130
Legal Services Funding Total	\$668,957	\$12,281,019	\$1,764,535	\$14,714,511

CBF Law School Scholarships

The law school scholarship program, which is based on financial need, began in 1989 when the Connecticut General Assembly passed Public Act 89-196 that authorized the administrator of the IOLTA program, the Connecticut Bar Foundation, to provide funding for these scholarships. The CBF developed plans to implement the program and started funding scholarships in 1990. From 1990 to 2024, the CBF has made equal, annual grants totaling \$4,541,909 to Quinnipiac University School of Law, UConn School of Law, and Yale Law School. The CBF is proud of its role of providing financial assistance to hundreds of law school students and helping them to achieve a legal education and become attorneys.

Grantee Spotlight:



Sarah Eagan
Executive Director
Center for Children's Advocacy

“ The **Center for Children's Advocacy** fights for the legal rights of low-income children and youth so their basic needs are met and they receive the services and supports that are critical to health, well-being and educational achievement. Its 14 attorneys provide holistic legal services to children, train health care and other providers to advocate for children, and spearhead systemic reforms through litigation, policy, advocacy and administrative advocacy. The Center serves some of the most vulnerable children in Connecticut, including children with disabilities and chronic health conditions, undocumented immigrant children, homeless youth, children in foster care, and youth in juvenile justice facilities. ”