



**Funding
Access
to Justice**

ANNUAL REPORT

2025

CONNECTICUT BAR FOUNDATION





2025 Report of Professor Anika Singh Lemar & Executive Director Angela Schlingheyde

1: LEADERSHIP SNAPSHOT

As we reflect on 2025, we are grateful for your partnership and support and honored to present the 2025 Annual Report of the Connecticut Bar Foundation (CBF).

2025 brought significant challenges for the civil legal aid community, but also important opportunities to strengthen access to justice in Connecticut. CBF released its **Legal Needs Assessment and Economic Impact Report**, continued providing general operating grants to **11 legal aid organizations**, launched an **emergent needs fund** to address federal funding losses and policy changes that are inhibiting our legal aid organizations' capacity to serve our most vulnerable residents, and **expanded programming focused on education and systemic change**.



Granted in general operating funds to 11 organizations

\$21M

2

Reports published on Connecticut's civil legal needs

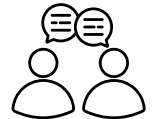


Distributed in Emergent Needs Funding

\$500k+

13

Events focused on education and systemic change



2: POVERTY IN CONNECTICUT

In 2025, the Interest on Lawyer's Trust Accounts (IOLTA/IOLA) program continued to generate strong revenue. Together with two Judicial Branch grants, these funds allowed CBF to increase support for **11 civil legal aid grantees** and provide needs based scholarships to Connecticut's **three law schools**. IOLTA revenue represented **30% of overall funding**.

These funds are critical. CBF's Legal Needs Assessment found that **72% of Connecticut's low-income residents, over 400,000 people, experienced a civil legal need, yet nearly 2 in 5 who sought help could not obtain it**. "Low-income" is defined narrowly and excludes the 420,483 Connecticut residents who are below the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) Threshold. Although these residents are above the federal poverty level, they cannot afford basic expenses and are often forced to choose between necessities such as food, utilities, transportation, and medication. They also cannot afford private legal representation. Together, the poverty population and those below the ALICE Threshold represent 40% of Connecticut's population.^[1]

^[1] [The State of ALICE in Connecticut, 2025 Update on Financial Hardship, United for ALICE, United Way, Connecticut](#)



400,000+ low-income people



Experienced a civil legal need in 2024



BUT: 2 in 5 people who sought help could not obtain it



3: FIDUCIARY RESPONSIBILITY & RESPONSIVENESS IN TIMES OF NEED

Demand continues to outpace capacity, and CBF remains committed to assessing grantee needs, while balancing long-term financial stability. Although interest rates have declined over the last six months and additional cuts are expected in 2026, CBF continues working with banks to encourage leadership rates that maximize IOLTA revenue. **Currently, we have 19 Leadership Banks.**

Maintaining a reserve of IOLTA funds, alongside Judicial Branch grants, has provided essential stability for Connecticut’s civil legal aid system.

This reserve has enabled CBF to respond quickly to significant federal funding losses affecting our grantees during a period of profound political and economic uncertainty. Many organizations are confronting reduced federal support while also responding to rapidly changing policies affecting civil rights, the rule of law, and access to justice.

These changes have required organizations to expand capacity not only to sustain core services, but also to interpret, respond to, and when necessary, challenge new federal actions. In response, CBF established an emergent needs fund for its existing grantees and **distributed \$507,944 in additional funding in 2025.** Requests for 2026-2027 have already been submitted, and CBF anticipates that these challenges will continue for several years, particularly affecting communities of color that already face disproportionate barriers to justice.

CBF’S 19 IOLTA LEADERSHIP BANKS



Leadership Banks pay higher interest rates on IOLTA/IOTA accounts, increasing access to justice for CT residents who cannot afford an attorney

- Bank of America
- The Bank of New York Mellon
- BankUnited, N.A.
- Beacon Bank
- DR Bank
- Flagstar Bank, N.A.
- Ion Bank
- JP Morgan Chase Bank, N.A.
- Key Bank
- M&T Bank
- Metropolitan Commercial Bank
- NBT Bank
- New Haven Bank
- Nutmeg State Financial Credit Union
- PeoplesBank
- Santander Bank, N.A.
- Thomaston Savings Bank
- Torrington Savings Bank
- Westfield Bank

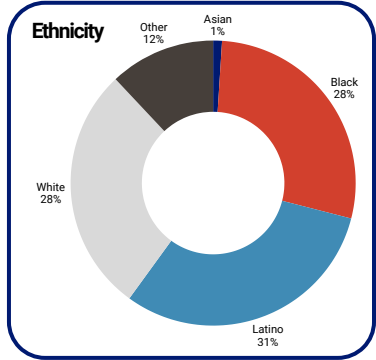
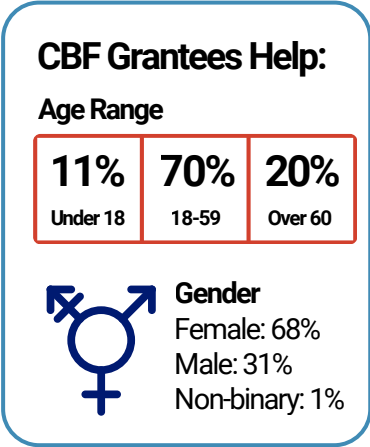
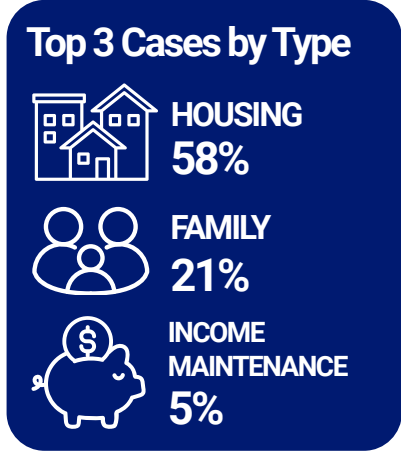
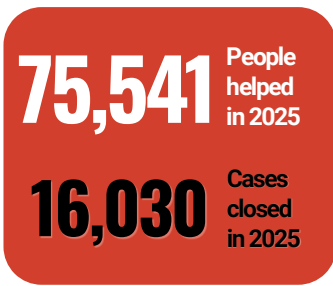
2025 GRANTS

| 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	\$318,708	\$522,958	\$78,684	\$920,350
The Children’s Law Center	\$100,344	\$187,630	\$28,230	\$316,204
Connecticut Fair Housing Center	\$249,732	\$143,047	\$21,522	\$414,301
Connecticut Legal Rights Project	\$277,320	\$504,607	\$75,926	\$857,853
Connecticut Legal Services	\$3,491,964	\$6,264,775	\$942,610	\$10,699,349
Connecticut Veterans Legal Center	\$248,940	\$143,824	\$21,640	\$414,404
Greater Hartford Legal Aid	\$1,393,176	\$2,794,925	\$420,531	\$4,608,632
Lawyers for Children America	\$47,172	\$102,732	\$15,458	\$165,362
New Haven Legal Assistance Association	\$1,030,680	\$2,014,301	\$303,074	\$3,348,055
Open Communities Alliance	\$116,520	\$79,472	\$11,956	\$207,948
Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut	\$87,600	\$163,852	\$24,654	\$276,106
Technology Grant for CTLawHelp	\$149,734			\$149,734
Emergent Needs	\$300,000	\$207,944		\$507,944
Pro Bono Coordinator Grant		\$422,700		\$422,700
LEGAL SERVICES FUNDING TOTAL	\$7,811,890	\$13,552,767	\$1,944.285	\$23,308,942

In 2025, CBF funded 11 organizations that delivered vital legal services to low-income Connecticut residents

- Center for Children’s Advocacy
- The Children’s Law Center
- Connecticut Fair Housing Center
- Connecticut Legal Rights Project
- Connecticut Legal Services
- Connecticut Veterans Legal Center
- Greater Hartford Legal Aid
- Lawyers for Children America
- New Haven Legal Assistance Association
- Open Communities Alliance
- Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut



4: ADDITIONAL CBF CIVIL LEGAL AID PROGRAMS

In 2025, CBF continued administering **two important right to counsel programs** which the General Assembly established in 2021. The **Right to Counsel in eviction proceedings** has assisted 23,769 individuals from 9,624 households. Clients receiving extensive services avoided disruptive displacement in 85% of the cases and in 44% of cases, attorneys were able to prevent an eviction filing. Keeping individuals housed as affordable housing inventory shrinks is critical to stabilizing our communities.

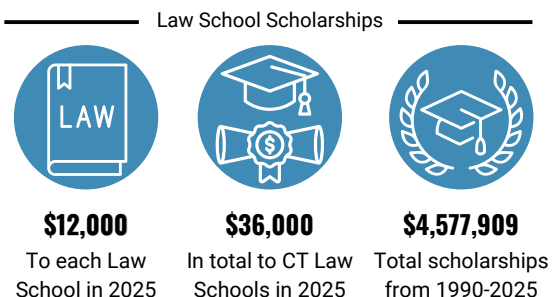
The second **right to counsel program, the Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) program**, increases access to counsel for low-income survivors of domestic violence seeking to apply for a temporary restraining order. In 2025, the program delivered strong protective outcomes: 68% of represented applicants received a final restraining order after hearing, compared to national statistics of 32% for self-represented litigants. Applying for a TRO is one of the most dangerous times for a victim of domestic violence as it can escalate the abuser’s violent behavior. Having access to legal counsel dramatically improves a victim’s ability to secure safety.

CBF LAW SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIPS

The Law School Scholarship Program, based on financial need, began in 1989 when the Connecticut General Assembly passed Public Act 89-196 that authorized CBF to provide funding for scholarships.

Since **1990**, CBF has made equal, annual grants to:

- Quinnipiac University School of Law
- UConn School of Law
- Yale Law School

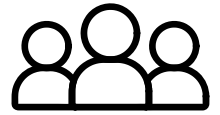


5: FELLOWS PROGRAMS - EDUCATION & SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Our James W. Cooper Fellows program remains an essential part of CBF's work, and in 2025 we welcomed **26 new Fellows**. Collectively, the Fellows supported programming focused on education, access to justice, and systemic change. In partnership with the Connecticut Judicial Branch and the Connecticut Bar Association, CBF launched our Access to Justice Speaker Series exploring both the challenges and opportunities involved in closing the justice gap. CBF also hosted a symposium on Women in the Law examining progress within the profession and areas where additional work is needed. Through the History of Attorneys of Color Project, CBF presented a film highlighting the careers and experiences of trailblazing Connecticut attorneys from the Black, Asian Pacific, Hispanic, and South Asian communities.

CBF also continued its commitment to education through the 25th Annual Quintin Johnstone Statewide High School Essay Contest, which received over 100 submissions. The 2025 topic was "From Flags to Factions, Examining Student Expression and School Policy." Meredith Sullivan of Wilton High School was named the statewide winner. The runners-up were Malena Noboa-Egas, from West Haven High School, and Abigail Meyers, from Greenwich High School. The awards presentation was held at the Connecticut Supreme Court.

26 New Fellows Inducted in 2025



PROGRAM TOPICS

Access to Justice



History of Attorneys of Color



Women in Law



6 THE LEGAL AID NETWORK AND COMMUNITY

As hiring and retention challenges continue to strain the civil legal aid system, building a pipeline of dedicated legal aid attorneys remains essential. CBF proudly administers the Herbert and Nell Singer Foundation Connecticut Public Service Fellowship. In 2025, the Fellowship was awarded to Attorney Kaceyee Klein to work at The Center for Family Justice. Attorney Klein will strengthen the Center's connections with LGBTQ+ communities in Eastern Fairfield County and expand trauma-informed, client-centered legal services to LGBTQ+ individuals with limited financial resources in family law matters including transgender and gender nonconforming youth/young adults seeking court orders to protect them from transphobic domestic or gender-based violence.

CBF's Board of Directors is comprised of legal and financial professionals who are dedicated to improving access to justice. We extend our sincere thanks to outgoing board member Attorney Calvin Woo for nine years of service and welcome new board member, Jennifer Marchand, Executive VP, COO, and Treasurer of Torrington Savings Bank. CBF also acknowledges the continued support of the Connecticut Judicial Branch, Quinnipiac University School of Law, UConn School of Law, Yale Law School, and the CBA. Finally, we are deeply grateful to CBF's wonderful staff, along with all Board members and Cooper Fellows, for their ongoing work on behalf of **CBF's mission to ensure access to justice for all.**

CONNECTICUT BAR FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF MEMBERS

OFFICERS:

Anika Singh Lemar
Board President

Edward J. Heath
Vice President

Lina Lee
Secretary

Stephen L. Lewis
Treasurer

Board of Directors

Hon. Robert A. Richardson	Yamuna Menon
Hon. Joette Katz (Ret.)	Vincent Pace
Hon. Barry F. Armata	Sonia Pedraza
Hon. Karen DeMeola	Asker A. Saeed
Hon. Cody N. Guarnieri	Paul Slager
Hon. Cecil J. Thomas	Isabella Squicciarini
Hon. Victoria Woodin Chavey	Namita Tripathi Shah
Arthur T. Corey	Kristen Jacoby
Jonathan Harding	Jennifer Marchand

Ex-Officio Directors

Hon. Raheem Mullins
Hon. Barry F. Armata
Dean Brian Gallini
Dean Eboni S. Nelson
Dean Cristina Rodriguez
Lina Lee

Directors Emeriti

Joseph D. D'Alesio
William Logue
Frederic S. Ury

Staff

Angela Schlingheyde, Executive Director
Ashleigh Backman, Deputy Director & COO
Randy Muenzner, Finance Director
Bruce Hiltunen, Senior Consultant
Emma Bayer, Grants Manager
Carolyn Arnold, Communications & Grants Coordinator
Alaina Underwood, Programs Manager
Keelie Ni, Executive Assistant & Program Coordinator
Frankie Fana, Accountant
Gina J. Casella, IOLTA Administrative Assistant