



HELPING COMMUNITIES REBUILD

LEGAL SERVICES NYC 2022 ANNUAL REPORT



Legal
Services NYC
DEMAND JUSTICE

A photograph of the Statue of Liberty and the New York City skyline across the water, viewed from a boat. The image is partially obscured by a purple overlay on the left side where the text is located.

**LEGAL SERVICES NYC'S ADVOCACY PUT
\$21,300,000 BACK IN THE HANDS OF VULNERABLE
COMMUNITIES THIS YEAR THROUGH CASH
BENEFITS, SETTLEMENTS, AND DIRECT SAVINGS.**

LEGAL SERVICES NYC

Legal Services NYC was founded in 1968 as part of the War on Poverty, an expansive set of initiatives introduced in the 1960s under President Lyndon B. Johnson. What started as a loose confederation of neighborhood-based legal services programs has grown into **THE NATION'S LARGEST CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES PROVIDER**. Our citywide force of more than 600 staff helps more than 100,000 low-income New Yorkers annually.

FOR LOW-INCOME NEW YORKERS FACING A LIFE CRISIS, LEGAL HELP IS OFTEN THE MOST EFFECTIVE TOOL IN RESOLVING IT. Roughly 1.6 million city residents are currently living below the poverty line—a mere \$25,000 for a family of four. They are often made more vulnerable by discrimination, immigration status, age, or disabilities.

FOR THE LAST 50 YEARS, our dedicated staff has challenged systemic injustices and made real, tangible improvements in the lives of communities across the city. This work includes preventing evictions and preserving housing; demanding access to high-quality education, health care, and economic security; ensuring safety and stability for survivors of domestic violence and immigrants; and fighting for the dignity and respect of all New Yorkers, including LGBTQ communities, New Yorkers with disabilities, and people of color.

WITH DEEP ROOTS IN COMMUNITIES IN ALL FIVE BOROUGHS, LEGAL SERVICES NYC HAS HANDLED MORE THAN TWO MILLION CASES SINCE OUR FOUNING. We are proud of what we have accomplished and look forward to continuing to expand the scope of our work with the generous support of our individuals, partners, and communities across the city.

A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DEAR SUPPORTERS,

As New York City continues its slow recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic—now in its third year—New York’s low-income communities and neighborhoods are still struggling to survive.

ALTHOUGH UNEMPLOYMENT AND NEW INFECTION RATES ARE ON THE DECLINE, NEW YORKERS ARE FACING NEW CHALLENGES. The lifting of the eviction moratoriums has resulted in a flood of new eviction cases filed by landlords eager to push tenants out. The dwindling of rental assistance funds (such as ERAP) has left tenants vulnerable. New immigrants are struggling to find shelter and access basic necessities.

THANKFULLY, LEGAL SERVICES NYC IS ON THE FRONT LINES, READY TO HELP COMMUNITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES FIND SAFETY AND STABILITY AND NAVIGATE COMPLEX SYSTEMS TO ACCESS LIFE-SAVING BENEFITS AND RESOURCES.

After the eviction moratorium lifted, court calendars were overwhelmed with cases. In response, LSNYC banded together with other legal service providers to urge housing courts to slow down the calendaring of cases so that every tenant facing eviction who needs an attorney can get one.

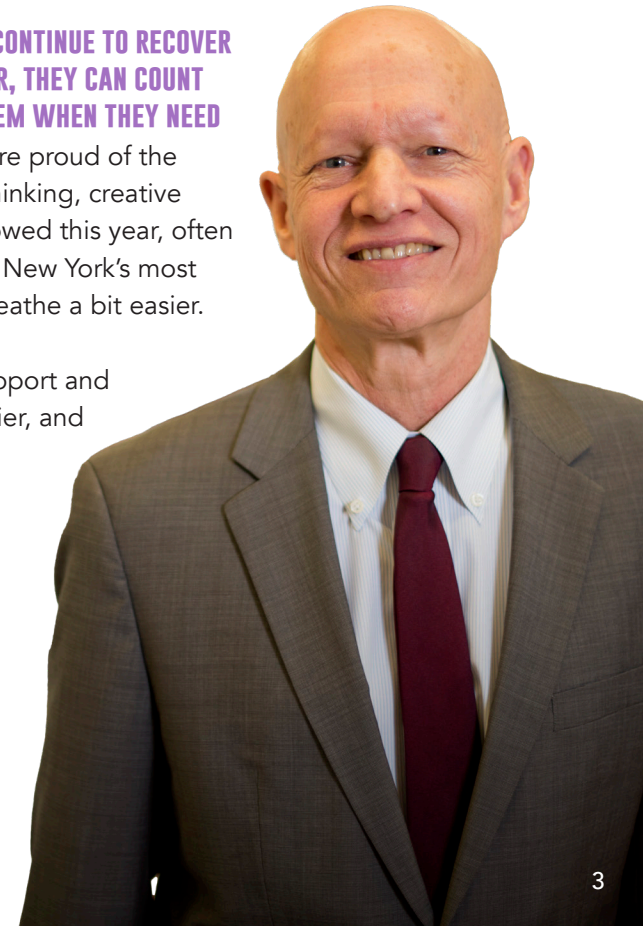
Immigrants fleeing persecution and hardships in their home countries arrived by the thousands in New York City, seeking safety and shelter. While the city is still struggling to figure out how to house them, LSNYC advocates quickly mobilized to help communities access the public benefits they needed to survive, even creating posters and fact sheets to hand out at shelters.

AS COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE CITY CONTINUE TO RECOVER AND PUT THEIR LIVES BACK TOGETHER, THEY CAN COUNT ON LEGAL SERVICES NYC TO HELP THEM WHEN THEY NEED HELP THE MOST. I could not be more proud of the incredible dedication, strategic thinking, creative problem solving that our staff showed this year, often at just a moment’s notice, so that New York’s most marginalized communities can breathe a bit easier.

Thank you, as always, for your support and we look forward to a safer, healthier, and happier 2023.



Raun J. Rasmussen
Executive Director



WHO WE SERVE

NEW YORKERS HELPED
ACROSS ALL 5 BOROUGHES



WHAT WE DO

Through our offices in all five boroughs, Legal Services NYC (LSNYC) fights for the rights of the low income members of our communities. We coordinate our services across practice areas to address legal problems faced by historically poor and persecuted populations, including immigrants, veterans, people of color, LGBTQ individuals, people living with HIV/AIDS, and people with disabilities. Our multifaceted work includes:

PROTECTING HOUSING & PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

56,947 NEW YORKERS HELPED

LSNYC prevents thousands of evictions and foreclosures every year. We force landlords to repair unsafe and unsanitary housing conditions and protect tenants against harassment. Our advocacy preserves affordable housing and prevents the displacement of poor families caused by gentrification.

SAFEGUARDING INCOME & FIGHTING CONSUMER FRAUD

26,270 NEW YORKERS HELPED

We ensure access to benefits for people with disabilities, veterans, the elderly, and others. We put a stop to employers' practices that deprive workers of compensation, and fraudsters' schemes that often target low-income individuals and families.

HELPING IMMIGRANTS & STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

22,699 NEW YORKERS HELPED

Every year, we help thousands of immigrants and their families gain asylum and get on a path to citizenship. Our attorneys and social workers also secure safe and stable environments for victims of domestic violence and their children.

SECURING ACCESS TO EDUCATION & HEALTH CARE

2,211 NEW YORKERS HELPED

Our work to protect students' rights includes stopping inappropriate school discipline, and ensuring students with special needs get the services they need. LSNYC helps uninsured New Yorkers access public health benefits, and safeguards patients' housing, finances, and health care coverage.



600 STAFF MEMBERS served approximately 49,000 cases that benefited 107,000 vulnerable New Yorkers



\$27,500,000 in cash benefits, settlements, and savings to our clients



\$165,600,000 in NYC taxpayer savings



4,850 VOLUNTEERS at scores of law firms and companies donated more than 69,000 pro bono hours helping New Yorkers



1,577,000 NEW YORKERS who now understand their rights through our trainings, workshops and community educational events



68,500 HOTLINE CALLS answered by staff fluent in 10 languages



“WE ALL FOUGHT HARD TO MAKE THE RIGHT TO COUNSEL A REALITY AND WE MUST ALL WORK TOGETHER NOW TO MAKE SURE WE CONTINUE TO MAKE GOOD ON OUR PROMISE OF FREE LEGAL REPRESENTATION FOR ALL TENANTS WHO NEED OUR HELP.”

**- Raun Rasmussen,
LSNYC executive director**

PUSHING HOUSING COURT TO SLOW DOWN EVICTION CASES

LSNYC, in partnership with tenant rights groups and legal service providers, is pushing housing courts to slow down the calendaring of eviction cases given the overwhelming volume of cases and lack of attorneys to represent clients. New York’s Right To Counsel (RTC) law has been highly effective at keeping tenants in their homes. Over the last four years, 84 percent of tenants who received representation under Right To Counsel won their cases and stayed in their homes. But during the pandemic, the City abandoned RTC’s staggered rollout by zip code, instead opening up RTC citywide, including

those households earning more than 200 percent of the federal poverty line, to keep New Yorkers safely housed during the pandemic. RTC providers met the challenge, representing all tenants who needed help in response to the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, even with constant changes in the law. Now providers are at capacity, and are pushing the courts to cap the calendaring of cases to allow for competent, client-centered representation.

SPRINGING INTO ACTION TO HELP TENANTS AFTER DEADLY FIRES

LSNYC ADVOCATES JUMPED INTO ACTION AFTER A FATAL FIRE IN THE BRONX THAT KILLED 17, MAKING SURE TENANTS HAD ACCESS TO URGENT CARE, SHELTER, AND SUPPORT.

In Harlem, following a deadly fire at 1833 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Blvd. that claimed three lives and displaced families, LSNYC advocates were on the scene to help tenants sue their landlord to speed up repairs.

Tenants were displaced for several months and some were forced to find new housing on their own, some staying in shelters temporarily.

While the cause of the fire remains unknown, tenants point to conditions in the building that contributed to its spread and have rallied around a common goal — to get their landlord to repair damage in the building and bring their neighbors home.



“I WANT THIS LANDLORD TO RECOGNIZE MY HUMANITY AND MY LOSS AND FIX THIS BUILDING SO I CAN COME HOME.”

– Papa Kante, a tenant who lost his wife and daughter in the fire

A hand holding a credit card in front of an ATM screen. The background is dark and slightly blurred, showing the ATM interface with a green screen and some buttons.

PROTECTING CONSUMERS AGAINST UNLAWFUL BANK PRACTICES

AFTER LSNYC CLIENT SIRABA KEITA AND HER FOUR CHILDREN WERE DISLOCATED FOLLOWING A DEADLY BRONX FIRE, MS. KEITA USED HER BANK CARD AND WAS SURPRISED TO FIND THAT CHASE BANK HAD FROZEN HER ENTIRE SAVINGS ACCOUNT DUE TO AN OLD DEBT.

Although New York law protects up to \$3,600 from such a freeze, Chase had unfairly frozen her entire account, which included more than \$5,000 from her Child Tax Credit. Thankfully, she found LSNYC attorney Mary McCune, who was able to help recover her money, but the unlawful practice of freezing a consumer's entire bank account remains widespread—as do the hoops consumers must jump through in order to recover their money.

**“THIS WAS ALL MY LIFE. I DIDN'T MEAN FOR IT TO
END UP LIKE THAT. I'M NOT A BAD PERSON.
I [JUST] CAN'T PAY.”**

- Ms. Keita, Client

**“I SAVED MY MONEY FOR A RAINY DAY, AND THEN
IT'S A RAINY DAY AND I CAN'T GET THE UMBRELLA.”**

- Ms. Woodyear, Client



HELPING NEWLY ARRIVED IMMIGRANTS ACCESS LIFE-SAVING BENEFITS

AS IMMIGRANTS AND ASYLUM SEEKERS CONTINUE TO ARRIVE IN NEW YORK CITY, LSNYC'S STAFF JUMPED INTO ACTION TO MAKE SURE IMMIGRANTS COULD ACCESS THE HELP AND RESOURCES THEY NEED AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

The Bronx's Public Benefits Unit quickly created a webpage, poster and postcards with helpful information (in English and Spanish) on how to apply for public benefits such as cash assistance, Medicaid, and WIC, eligibility requirements, what documents they might need, and where to apply.

Likewise, immigration unit and other staff partnered with elected officials, community groups, and advocates to host resource fairs and Know Your Rights workshops to assist asylum seekers with changes of address, scheduling ICE check-ins, and checking the status of their immigration court cases.

SUING THE DOE TO ENSURE STUDENTS OF COLOR GET AN EDUCATION DURING REMOTE LEARNING

LSNYC'S EDUCATION TEAM, ALONG WITH ARNOLD & PORTER, SUED THE NYS/NYC DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION FOR FAILING TO PROVIDE WORKING TECHNOLOGY, INTERNET, AND INSTRUCTION TO FAMILIES OF COLOR DURING THE PANDEMIC, DENYING THEM ACCESS TO AN EDUCATION IN VIOLATION OF THE NYS CONSTITUTION AND THE NYC HUMAN RIGHTS LAW.

The lawsuit, filed on behalf of five families, seeks to force the DOEs to provide families with working technology moving forward, compensatory educational services to make up for lost education, and damages for the out-of-pocket expenses incurred to access an education.

"For far too long, New York City's most vulnerable students have lost out on their right to a sound and basic education," said Tara Foster, a senior attorney at Legal Services NYC.

"The pandemic and the approach to remote learning has had far-reaching and devastating impacts on low-income students and families of color and has laid bare the deep gap in educational opportunity afforded to them as compared to their more privileged counterparts."

"YOU HAVE NO IDEA PSYCHOLOGICALLY WHAT THIS DID TO MY CHILD. AS A MOTHER, THIS BROKE ME. I DID EVERYTHING I COULD. I DID EVERYTHING I DID TO TRY TO HELP HER."

- Marie, a parent, said about her daughter who was held back a year



LSNYC WINS FIGHT TO KEEP BRONX BUILDING RENT STABILIZED

LSNYC'S TENANT RIGHTS COALITION SUCCESSFULLY FOUGHT LANDLORD EMERALD EQUITY GROUP'S ATTEMPTS TO DEREGULATE SIX RENT-STABILIZED BUILDINGS IN THE BRONX, PRESERVING AFFORDABILITY AND KEEPING HUNDREDS OF TENANTS IN THEIR HOMES.

In April, tenants received notices from the Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR), the state agency that regulates rent stabilized apartments, informing them that their landlord filed an application to deregulate the buildings, citing a J-51 tax credit that allows landlords to deregulate buildings in exchange for rehab work in certain circumstances. However, LSNYC

advocates discovered that the rehab was paid for with public funds that actually prohibit buildings from being deregulated. After raising this fact with DHCR, the agency rejected the landlord's application and ordered them to offer tenants rent-stabilized leases. Tenants are now fighting for much needed repairs and utility payments.



“THIS IS A HUGE VICTORY FOR TENANTS, BUT OUR FIGHT IS NOT OVER. OUR LANDLORD HAS NOT PAID UTILITIES FOR MONTHS AND NOW WE ARE SUFFERING BECAUSE OF THIS DISHONESTY. THE BUILDING IS AT HIGH RISK OF GETTING THE SERVICES SHUT OFF, WE WON'T HAVE ELECTRICITY IN THE COMMON AREAS OF THE BUILDING OR COOKING GAS. WE WILL CONTINUE THE FIGHT!”

- Julius Bennett, a tenant leader at 1230 Woodycrest Avenue

HELPING LGBTQ UKRAINIAN IMMIGRANT WIN ASYLUM

LSNYC, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH GIBSON DUNN, FOUGHT HARD TO HELP A GAY UKRAINIAN CLIENT WIN ASYLUM.

After years of bullying, Archie fled Ukraine to Kazakhstan, where he began a thriving photography business. However, after leaving a gay bar one night, his taxi driver brutally attacked him. Archie fled to the U.S. and filed for asylum, but initially lost because his asylum officer didn't believe the country conditions in Ukraine were severe enough. LSNYC and Gibson Dunn continued to work with the client and prepared for a final hearing. However, before the hearing even began, the DHS attorney conceded the case after reviewing the evidence and the Immigration Judge granted Archie asylum. Archie is in a wonderful relationship and has a bright future thanks to Gibson Dunn and his LSNYC team.

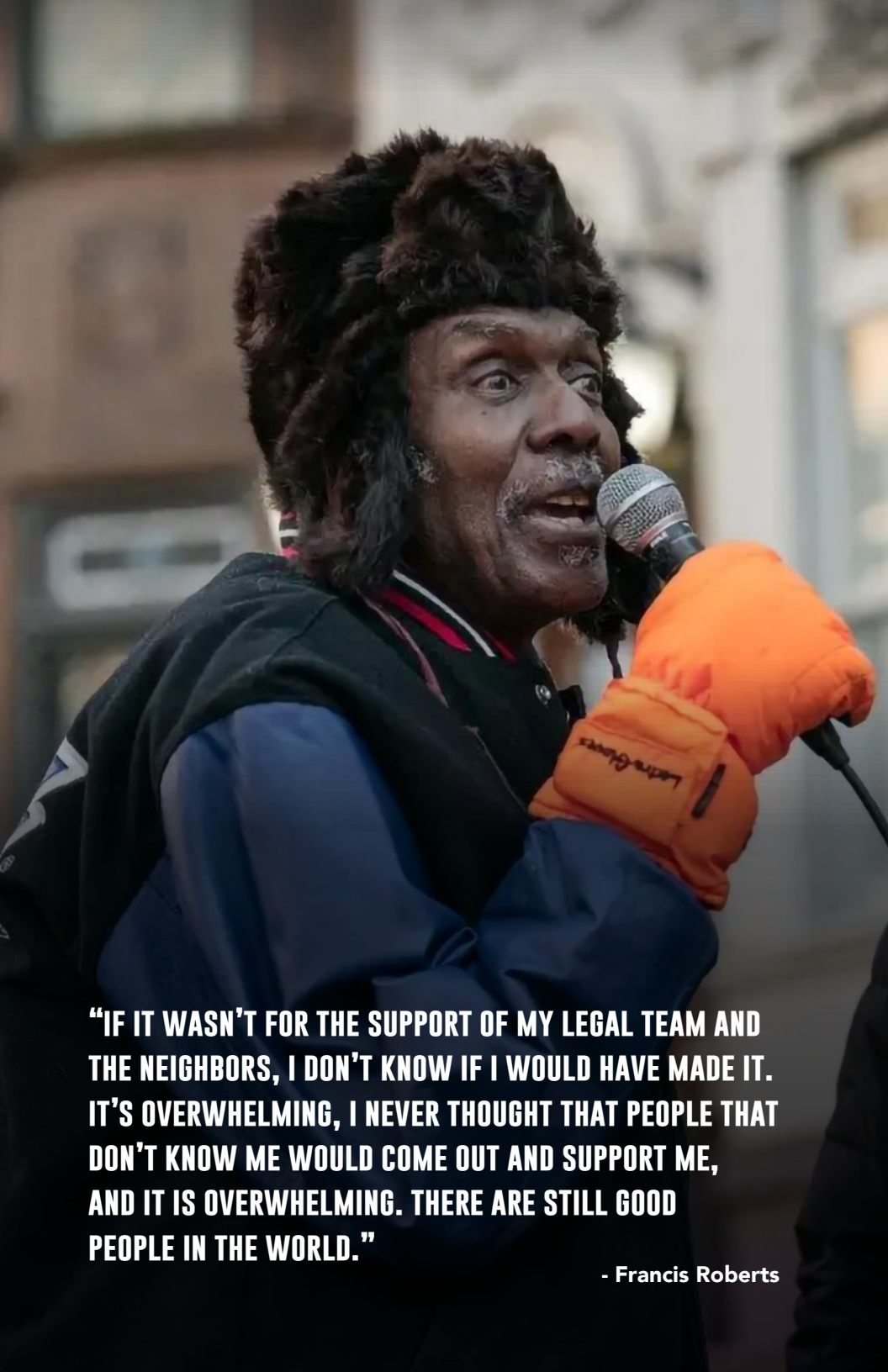


GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

THIS YEAR, LSNYC'S SOCIAL WORKERS MOBILIZED AND DISTRIBUTED MORE THAN \$185,000 IN EMERGENCY RELIEF FUNDS TO CLIENT SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

The funds, part of the federal Pandemic Emergency Assistance Fund, helped survivors buy essential items like food, clothing, and household goods. With little to no advance warning, LSNYC's social workers assembled a steering committee to create and execute a distribution plan: creating an application template, coordinating with LSNYC's finance department and other city agencies, tracking the funding, and making sure our clients were informed and able to apply. It was a huge undertaking, and LSNYC's dedicated social workers, paralegals, finance staff, and others put in the hours to make sure our clients were able to benefit from these emergency funds.





“IF IT WASN’T FOR THE SUPPORT OF MY LEGAL TEAM AND THE NEIGHBORS, I DON’T KNOW IF I WOULD HAVE MADE IT. IT’S OVERWHELMING, I NEVER THOUGHT THAT PEOPLE THAT DON’T KNOW ME WOULD COME OUT AND SUPPORT ME, AND IT IS OVERWHELMING. THERE ARE STILL GOOD PEOPLE IN THE WORLD.”

- Francis Roberts

FIGHTING TENANT HARASSMENT IN NYC’S GENTRIFYING NEIGHBORHOODS

LSNYC’S TENANT RIGHTS COALITION IS HELPING 77-YEAR-OLD TENANT FRANCIS ROBERTS FIGHT HARASSMENT BY HIS LANDLORD WHO IS TRYING TO PUSH HIM OUT OF HIS HOME IN GENTRIFYING CROWN HEIGHTS.

The landlord, Yehuda Gruenberg, blocked the entrance to Mr. Roberts’ apartment with tents and port-o-potties, coordinated a harassment scheme with a new tenant who invites over friends who grill food in the hallway, use and sell drugs, threaten violence, pipe music through Mr. Roberts’ home, and destroy locks and removing doors, among other things. The stoop has been strewn with live chickens, tarps, trash, and raw sewage. Gruenberg also refuses to address mold, leaks, faulty electrical wiring, and other structural issues inside Mr. Roberts’ apartment.

But Mr. Roberts is fighting back with the support of a revitalized block association, the Crown Heights Tenant Union, Crown Heights Care Collective, and LSNYC’s Tenant Rights Coalition.

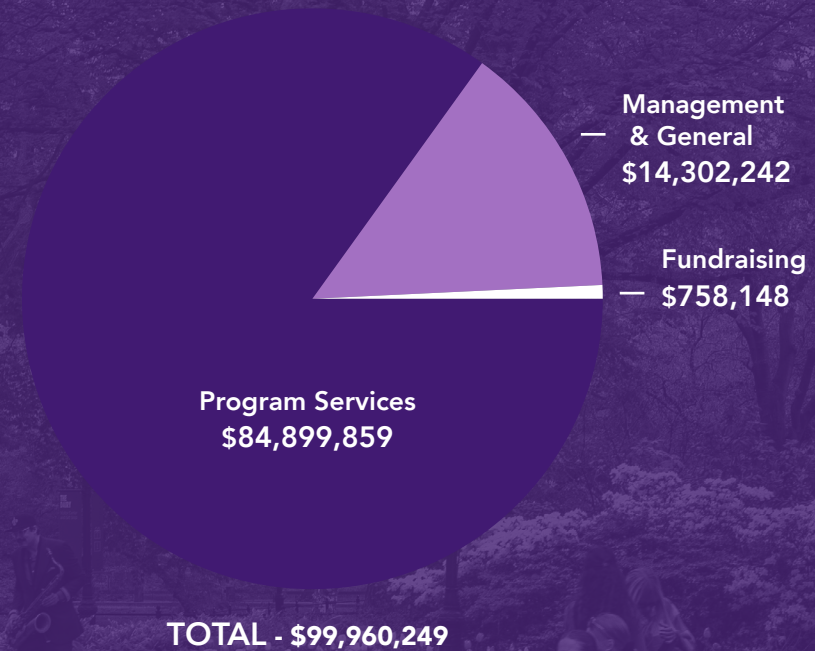
After numerous rallies, a lawsuit, and media coverage, repairs are now being made by the City of New York and LSNYC staff are starting to see more settlement offers.

FINANCIALS

REVENUE

Legal Services Corporation and Other Federal Contracts	\$15,872,742
Interest on Lawyers Accounts	\$5,375,429
New York State Contracts	\$21,814,314
New York City Contracts	\$51,306,001
Events and Individual Donors	\$2,326,211
Private Grants and Contributions	\$1,775,899
Foundations	\$674,155
Attorney Fees	\$209,810
Interest	\$15,292
TOTAL	\$99,369,854
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