



## LETTER FROM THE LEADERSHIP TEAM

2021 began with hope – that Covid-19 would soon be over, that the political winds were changing, that racial and economic equality would finally be codified by law and move our country towards greater justice for all. But now we know this is what 2021 had in store for us:

- The continuation of a pandemic that wrought loss and sorrow almost beyond comprehension
- An acceleration of climate change resulting in wildfires, severe storms, and flash floods that displaced people already at the margins of society who are struggling now to rebuild their lives;
- Ongoing economic turmoil that has fueled an increasing awareness that the rich and poor in our country live in two different realities.

We know that these intersecting crises disproportionately impact low-income communities of color – and that they have come at a time of unprecedented political polarization in our country that makes them sometimes seem all but impossible to address.

Through these trying times, all of us here at Pro Bono Net have found continued unity and a sense of purpose through the certainty that our mission has never been more important: to use the power of collaboration and community-centered technology to move us closer to access to justice for all.

In the pages of this report, we celebrate the bold advocacy, creativity, and resilience in our team and our network that has fueled essential progress on many critical legal issues – housing security, economic justice, immigrant rights, and much more. The essential access-to-justice infrastructure that Pro Bono Net provides means that the people we serve have had legal information and pro bono resources throughout Covid-19 related to all of the emerging and quickly evolving issues of our time. Through Pro Bono Net's programs, people facing hardship and uncertainty have free access to:

- Government benefits for individuals and families facing lost income due to sudden unemployment or underemployment due to Covid-19.
- Child support adjustments for parents who were unable to make their regular payments during the pandemic and faced potential criminal charges as a result.
- Orders of protection for victims of domestic violence, many of whom were forced to shelter in place with their abusers during the early days of Covid-19.
- Comprehensive, up-to-date information for renters who were suddenly unable to pay their rent and faced the specter of eviction and homelessness in the midst of the pandemic.
- FEMA filings and appeals for individuals and families impacted by multiple natural disasters that were accelerating and intensifying due to climate change.
- Comprehensive legal information and an affordable path to citizenship for immigrants who have experienced threats, discrimination, and attacks on their safety in recent years, even as they were disproportionately impacted by Covid-19.

As the pandemic continues to subside, political winds shift, and justice advocates push to make laws and policies more just and equitable, widely accessible legal information and support are essential assets to the health and wellbeing of our nation.

Thank you to our many partners, supporters and friends who believe in our mission, support our work and share our commitment to equal justice. In the following pages, you will see more examples of how the last year has been a time of challenge for our country and remarkable impact for Pro Bono Net. Together we can continue to create powerful new tools and collaborations to tackle pressing justice problems as we help millions of people access life-changing legal help.

*Mark O'Brien, Executive Director*

*Liz Keith, Program Director*

*Veronica Dunlap, Director, New York Programs*

*Rodrigo Camarena, Director, Immigration Advocates Network*



Mark O'Brien,  
Executive Director



Liz Keith,  
Program Director



Veronica Dunlap,  
Director, New York Programs



Rodrigo Camarena,  
Director, Immigration  
Advocates Network

# Mission Statement

Pro Bono Net works to bring the power of the law to all by building cutting-edge digital tools and fostering collaborations with the nation’s leading civil legal organizations.

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## NATIONAL JUSTICE PROGRAMS

### LawHelp Interactive

**LawHelp Interactive (LHI) empowers those who need to resolve civil legal issues on their own to access and complete essential legal forms through a simple, step-by-step process.** Thoughtfully designed with empathy for the uncertainty and fear experienced by those without lawyers, LHI minimizes barriers and unnecessary complications and allows end users to create professional, complete, and accurate documents.

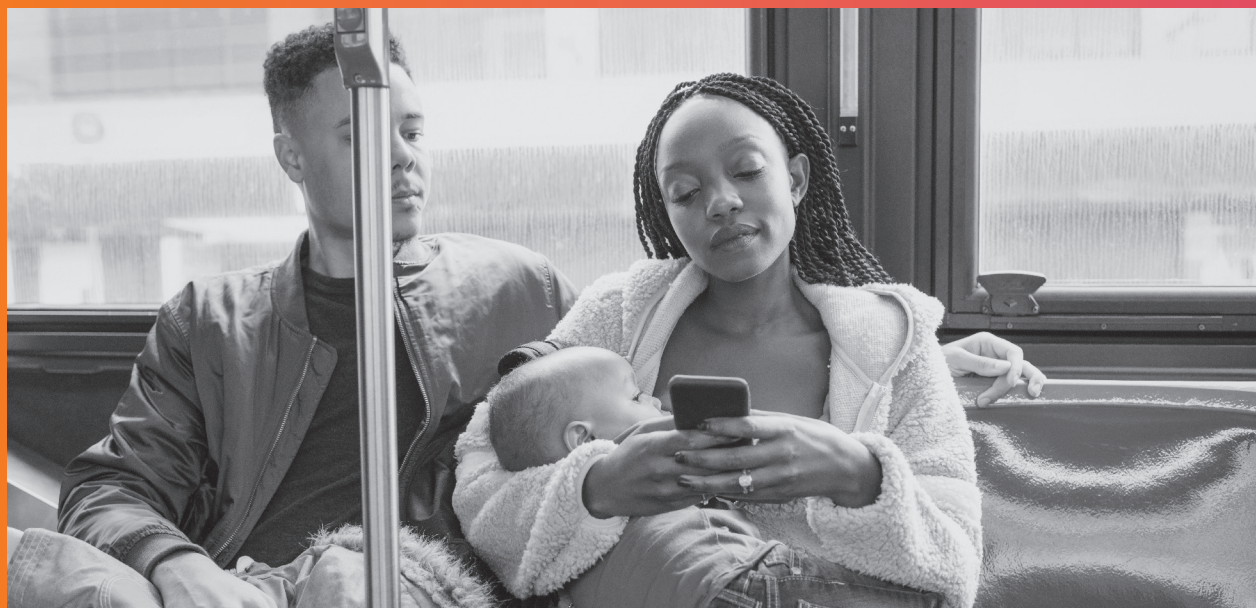
In addition to self-represented litigants, nonprofit community organizations – including domestic violence shelters, libraries, Trans support community groups, and benefit advocacy groups – as well as court systems across the country, count on LHI to make it easier for diverse communities facing a wide range of issues to create their own forms for free, ensuring that everyone

has an opportunity to present their case and requests to decision makers in a clear and complete manner.

No other nonprofit legal document assembly platform comes close to the scale and reach of LHI. In 2021, LawHelp Interactive served more than 1.1 million interviews, resulting in more than 900,000 free legal documents and court forms assembled - an average of close to 2,500 documents every day of the year. This was the highest volume year in the platform's history. Top issues for which those without lawyers use LHI to create free forms include: family law, domestic violence, child support and income support petitions, eviction and credit card defense, and wills and probate, to name just a few.

### HIGHLIGHT

An independent evaluation of LHI released in 2021 found user satisfaction rated very high by those who turned to LHI for help: 96% of end users reported their needs very or somewhat well met, and 96% would use LHI's services again. This high rate of satisfaction came at a time of elevated need: 75% of survey respondents said it was harder to access courts as a result of the pandemic, 46% said it was harder to access legal advice and assistance, and 44% reported using LHI as a direct result of COVID-19 or the related economic crisis. In response to these difficult circumstances, LHI stepped up by improving email functionality in the LHI system so that users could send their documents to courts or agencies remotely, providing e-signature options, and supporting partners in creating clearer e-filing instruction to share with end users.





## LHI User feedback

“It meant the world and will allow me to start a new life.”

“Thank you for making a hard time in my life more manageable.”

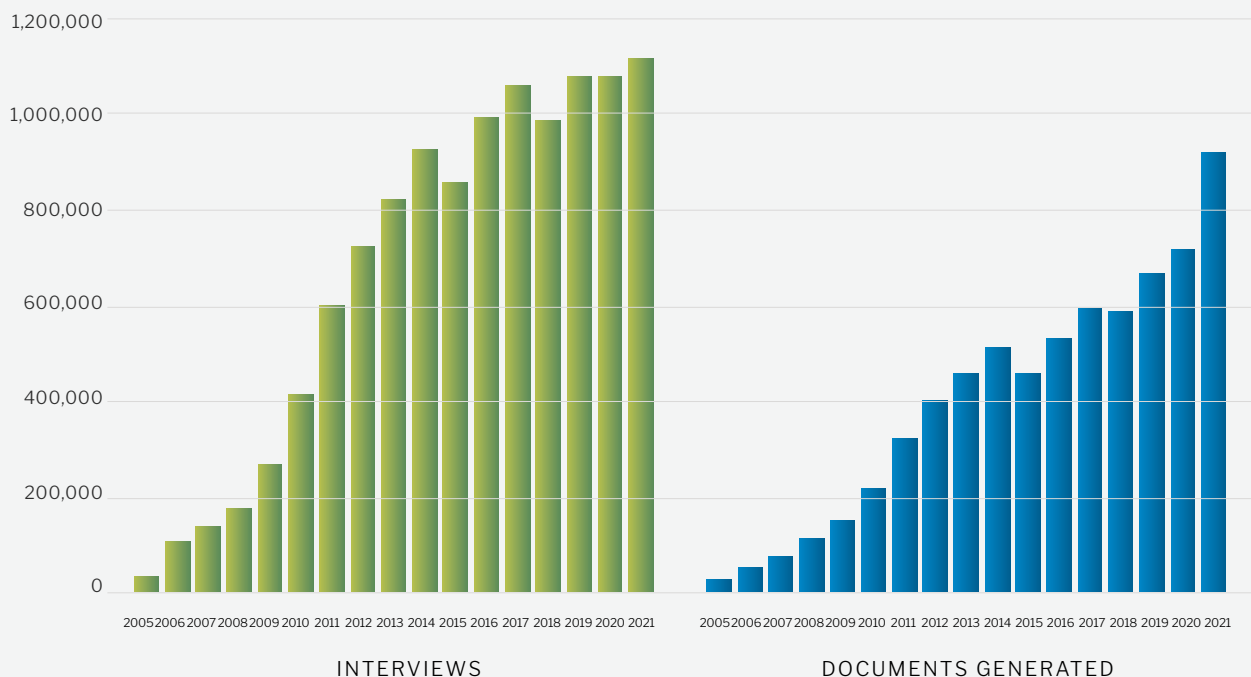
“It meant everything! Thank you for providing this information free of charge.”

“This form may have saved my small business. It definitely saved my sanity in dealing with all this along with being shut down due to COVID-19!”

In a recent report on operations of the California Court System during COVID-19, a Self-help Center Director had this to say about LHI:

“The silver lining to the pandemic, such as it is, is the way people are really using and getting used to using the LawHelp Interactive programs. Honestly, it’s the single most important tool in providing access to justice right now.”

## LHI Usage Since 2005



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## LawHelp.org

**LawHelp.org, Pro Bono Net's network of statewide legal information portals in 20 states, helps low-income individuals learn about their legal rights, access self-advocacy tools, and find trusted legal aid programs in their local area.** More than 20,000 people use the LawHelp network's resources each day to find solutions to their legal issues in areas such as preserving family stability, maintaining suitable housing, and overcoming debt. LawHelp.org was developed and is maintained by Pro Bono Net in partnership with hundreds of nonprofit

legal aid, pro bono, and court-based programs and community organizations across the country. In the fall of 2021, Pro Bono Net began rollout of a significantly redesigned LawHelp user experience, beginning with LouisianaLawHelp.org. The new design features a mobile-first user experience and significant usability improvements to help people more quickly to find and use legal rights resources and referral information. The redesigned platform will be live across our network in early 2022.

### HIGHLIGHT

In 2021, the most highly used legal rights resources across the LawHelp network related to housing stability, unemployment claims and appeals, guidance on finding legal help and free online forms, and family law issues. Usage of tenants rights resources surged in many states when the federal eviction moratorium ended in August, and the LawHelp network played a key role in helping to connect thousands of vulnerable renters with financial and legal assistance to maintain their housing stability. LawHelp.org was highlighted in more than a dozen national and regional media news stories as a resource for people at risk of eviction, including CNBC and Telemundo, and was regularly cited by leading housing rights advocates as a go-to resource for people at risk of displacement.



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## Remote Legal Connect

**Pro Bono Net's Remote Legal Connect platform removes physical barriers to accessing justice by allowing legal services providers, pro bono initiatives, courts, and community partners to rapidly build and manage a remote legal support program to increase access to legal assistance for communities in need, regardless of location.**

The need for this service was already high for rural communities, people with disabilities, the elderly, and other vulnerable and marginalized populations. The COVID-19 reality significantly changed the way legal services and support are delivered, and the concurrent public health and economic crises have resulted in a surge in legal needs – and Pro Bono Net's Remote Legal Connect platform, now in use in five states, is helping to meet those needs.

### HIGHLIGHT

In late 2020, Pro Bono Net partnered with Legal Aid of Nebraska to launch Legal Aid Connect, a Remote Legal Connect-powered initiative that enables access to legal services for low-income and rural communities throughout Nebraska through virtual consultation and case management. Legal Aid Nebraska uses Legal Aid Connect to partner a large pool of urban attorneys with people in rural counties where legal assistance is scarce and inadequate to current needs. They also use Legal Aid Connect to conduct free online clinics for pro se litigants on topics such as divorce and child custody. According to Muirne Heaney, Director of Access for Legal Aid of Nebraska, "Judges report that it is easy to distinguish Legal Aid Connect clients from other pro se litigants because of how well they are prepared for the final hearings. This would not have been possible without Remote Legal Connect."

## Legal Risk Detector

**The Legal Risk Detector, developed in 2016 by Pro Bono Net in partnership with JASA/Legal Services for the Elderly, the Center for Elder Law & Justice and Georgetown University Law Center, is a web-based legal health "check-up" tool designed for use by eldercare professionals to identify, respond to, and remedy legal issues among low-income and isolated seniors.** The Risk Detector enables non-legal professionals to complete a guided interview covering financial exploitation, consumer debt, housing, abuse, healthcare matters, and other often undetected and underreported legal issues.

In 2021, Pro Bono Net continued to expand the Risk Detector. Our partnerships with leading elder organizations in New York and Florida continued to bring the benefits of the Risk Detector to older adults across each state; and the program expanded to Idaho, Indiana, Illinois and Massachusetts. With a new national emphasis on home and community-based care for older adults in the wake of the pandemic, we expect to grow these networks even further in the coming year.

### HIGHLIGHT

**A Move to Magic Valley:** A local ombudsman in rural Idaho used the Legal Risk Detector to help an elderly man remain in his care home until his advocates were able to negotiate a transfer to a facility closer to his friends and family in Magic Valley, ID. An Idaho Legal Aid Staff Attorney shared with us, "I love that the Senior Legal Risk Detector speeds up the process of a referral to Idaho Legal Aid and sends the referral directly to the client's local service office rather than the statewide intake staff."





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## Pro Bono Manager


**Pro Bono Manager is a unique social enterprise that offers law firms a customized practice management application to increase the effectiveness and reach of their pro bono programs.** The application helps firms monitor matters and identify risks, provides analytics and data to improve efficiency and inform decision making, and supports engagement with easy-to-use practice resources, opportunity matching, and personal pro bono interest profiles.

As the Covid-19 pandemic suddenly shuttered in-person services in 2020 - and continuing throughout 2021 - the need for pro bono legal services not only continued but increased significantly. During this time of heightened need, Pro Bono Manager allowed pro bono teams to tap into their program's data from any location. In 2021, Pro Bono Manager began serving six new firms, for a total of 12 firms currently in the Pro Bono Manager family.

## ProBono.net

Our flagship program, probono.net, strengthens the traditional lawyer-driven model that allows individuals to exercise their rights on complex issues. In 2021, our probono.net platform powered more than 20 regional and national pro bono mobilization and advocacy networks, including probono.net/ny, probono.net/la, legalaidprobono.org, vetsprobono.org, disasterlegalaid.org and more. More than 3,300 pro bono lawyers, legal aid advocates, law students and others joined the probono.net network to access pro bono opportunities, training materials and practice resources to strengthen their advocacy efforts on behalf of individuals facing issues such as eviction, domestic violence, recovery from climate-driven emergencies, other life-changing legal issues.



 Alycia Delmore, Pro Bono Specialist,  
Perkins Coie

Pro Bono Manager is the first application I open every day and the last I close at night. It is saving our small team hours every week and has replaced multiple separate excel spreadsheets we'd previously used for tracking various kinds of data.

## IMMIGRATION ADVOCATES NETWORK

**The Immigration Advocates Network (IAN) is a national nonprofit leader in developing technology solutions to increase access to justice for immigrants and strengthen the capacity of advocates and organizations serving them.** IAN facilitates more effective and efficient collaboration in the immigrants' rights sector, remains on the cutting edge of current immigration law and policy, and works hand in hand with partner organizations to bring new tools and resources to the field. Whether it's by supporting Legal Permanent Residents with naturalization, helping undocumented communities know their rights, supporting immigrant women, or facilitating access to legal assistance nationwide, IAN works to take on big problems and bring new technologies and resources to where they are needed the most.

### Ready to Stay

**Ready to Stay is a national coalition working to help immigrants and advocates prepare for immigration reform.** The coalition hosts ReadytoStay.org, a hub that immigrants can turn to for accurate and reliable support surrounding information relevant to their immigration status and changes in immigration processes. Launched in July 2021 and built and powered by Pro Bono Net, this online platform hosts critical information regarding immigration issues such as DACA renewals, Temporary Protected Status applications, Immigration Advocates Network's directory of tens of thousands of trusted legal service providers, and more. Because undocumented immigrants are often cautious of reaching out for assistance with issues relevant to immigration status due to fear of bad faith actors, Ready to Stay is committed as a grassroots effort to support immigrants and community-based organizations.

### ¡Reclamo!

¡Reclamo! is an innovative bi-lingual English/Spanish digital legal tool that addresses the rampant crime of wage theft. Co-designed with project partner Make the Road New York, ¡Reclamo! allows organizers and workers to identify if they've been victims of wage theft and to file simple wage theft claims. ¡Reclamo! enables the most vulnerable workers, including immigrant and low-wage workers, to confidently and safely enforce their rights and recover their stolen wages from any smartphone or computer – without an expensive attorney or mastery over the wage claim process. Beta tested and refined throughout 2021, ¡Reclamo! will be launched in 2022 as a fully-realized wage theft claim app to be shared and used by workers and workplace justice advocates nationally.

### HIGHLIGHT

¡Reclamo! is a 2021 winner of the Workers Lab Innovation Fund Award. Winners of this prestigious award were selected from a diverse pool of nearly 400 applicants from across the country with ideas at all stages of development and from all types of organizations.



 Jeshua John, Program Manager,  
The Workers Lab

The Workers Lab is excited to have ¡Reclamo! as one of our 2021 Innovation Fund winners. Their worker-informed digital tool is combating wage theft head-on while making it easier for workers to independently identify their risk and start the process to recover wages. We applaud this innovation and look forward to seeing their impact grow in the service of workers.

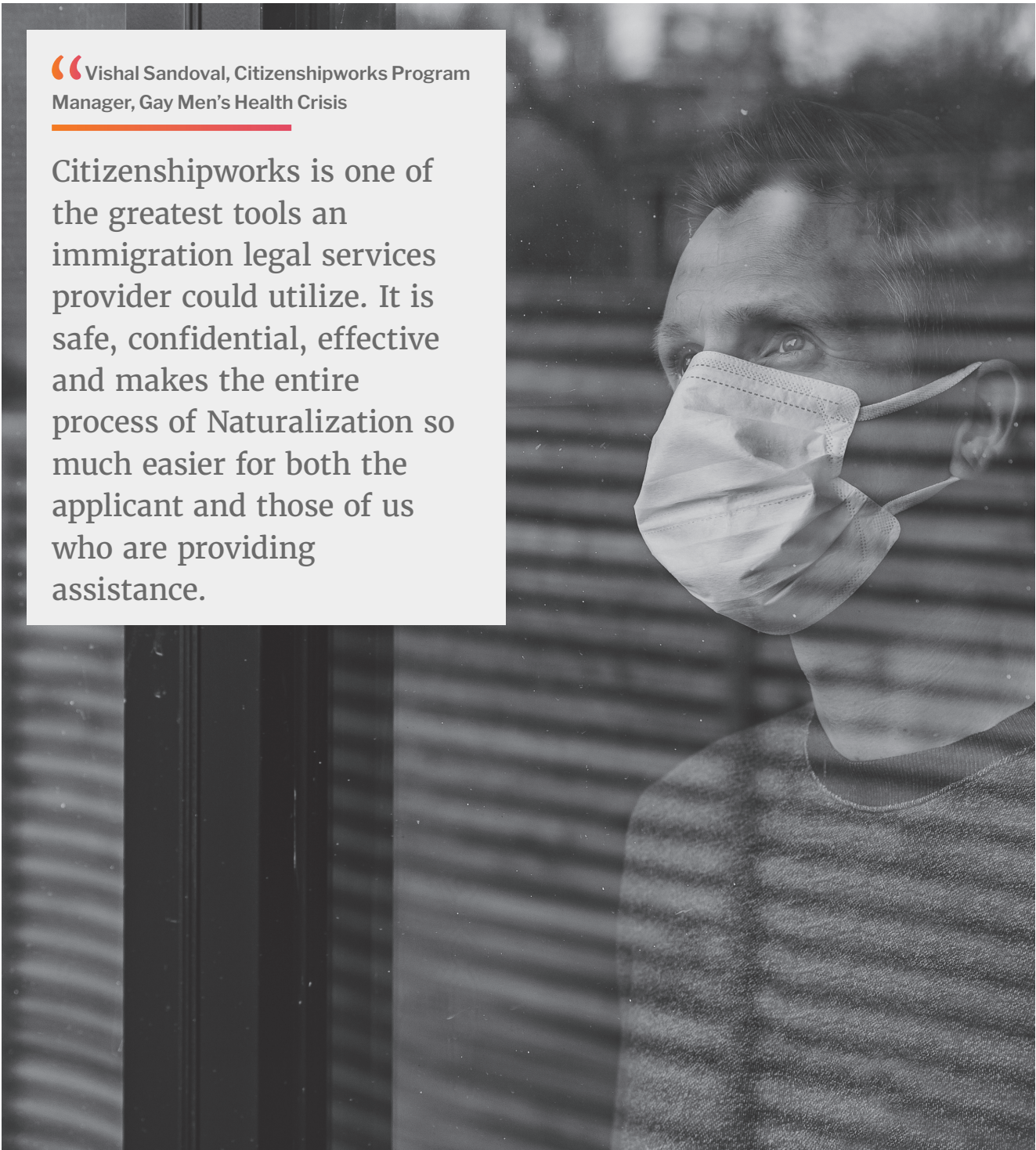



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## Citizenshipworks – 10 Years of Building on the American Dream

**In 2011, the Immigration Advocates Network, including all of our allies in the immigrant justice movement, came together to develop a solution for non-lawyers to easily assist immigrants with their naturalization application.** Our goal was to make the naturalization process free, safe, and simple. Since then, our naturalization tool Citizenshipworks has helped over

50,000 immigrants with their naturalization application, helped immigrants save millions of dollars in legal fees, and is used by over 200 non-profit organizations nationwide. In 2021 alone, Citizenshipworks helped more than 3,000 immigrants with their applications, saving them more than \$3.3 million in legal fees.



 Vishal Sandoval, Citizenshipworks Program Manager, Gay Men's Health Crisis

Citizenshipworks is one of the greatest tools an immigration legal services provider could utilize. It is safe, confidential, effective and makes the entire process of Naturalization so much easier for both the applicant and those of us who are providing assistance.



## NEW YORK PROGRAMS

### LawHelpNY.org

LawHelpNY, and its Spanish language mirror site AyudaLegal, serves New York's most under-resourced communities, both urban and rural, where access to legal services and information are limited. LHNy increases access to justice by providing and promoting access to high-quality information about:

- Pro bono legal services throughout New York State
- Legal rights on a broad range of civil legal issues
- The New York State court system
- Advocacy groups, government offices, and social service organizations that assist and uplift low-income and vulnerable New Yorkers

Since its inception, LawHelpNY has been uniquely positioned to link individuals to resources and legal professionals through our online platform, ensuring that no individual is cut off from help due to economic or geographic restrictions within the state. From the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and continuing on throughout 2021, we have addressed the needs of a new segment of New Yorkers who were not previously identified as vulnerable. In 2021, more than 600,000 visitors - over 11,000 people a week - accessed LawHelpNY's extensive know-your-rights library, providing New Yorkers with essential plain language information

about their legal rights that allow them to protect their housing, safety, public benefits, families and more.

### LiveHelp

LiveHelp, LawHelpNY's bilingual chat program, is one of the most accessed legal resources in the state. It helps more than 10,000 people each year access direct services, legal information, triage tools and DIY forms, and enables people to identify, prevent, or mitigate legal problems. Trained volunteers staff LiveHelp from 9 AM-9 PM on weekdays, making this service, available in English and Spanish, readily accessible to low-income working clients, individuals in rural areas, or people who may be homebound, elderly, or living with disabilities. With the onset of COVID-19, LiveHelp experienced unprecedented surges as New Yorkers struggled with an array of complex legal problems. To respond to the demand, LawHelpNY recruited hundreds of law student volunteers and trained them to serve as operators. Moreover, LawHelpNY recently expanded its services by creating three additional operator slots per day.

In 2021, LiveHelp's 119 trained volunteer operators contributed over 4,685 hours of pro bono assistance, helping 10,288 New Yorkers in addressing their legal needs. One grateful LiveHelp user said, "You are amazing. You don't even know how much I appreciate this."

## HIGHLIGHT

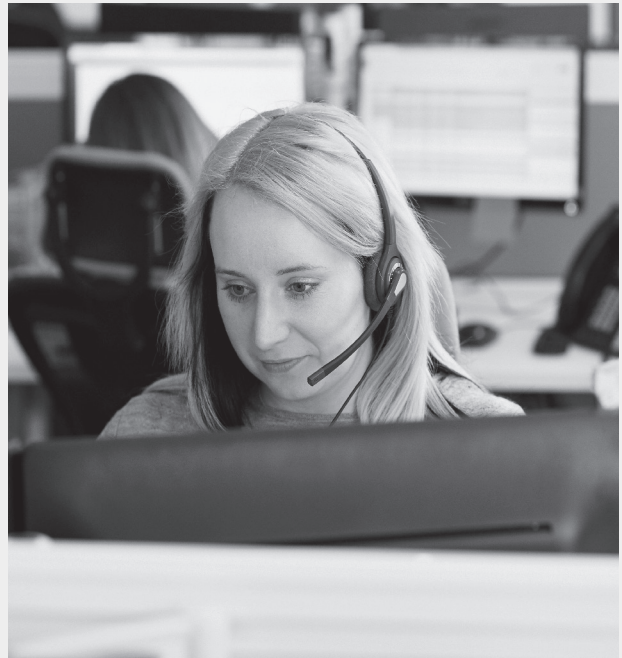
### The President's Volunteer Service Lifetime Achievement Award

Dennis Brink served Pro Bono Net for three years as an Americorps VISTA Volunteer, providing more than 5,500 hours of volunteer service, and he is a 2021 recipient of the President's Volunteer Service Lifetime Achievement Award. As a volunteer, Dennis performed outreach for and ran trainings on LawHelpNY's tools and resources for nonprofits



throughout New York to improve their legal assistance to their constituents. Dennis also worked to assist LawHelpNY with its LiveHelp program. Throughout his time as a VISTA, Dennis recruited over 300 LiveHelp volunteers who served over 10,000 hours and assisted over 20,000 low-income residents address their legal issues. In 2021, Dennis transitioned to the full-time role of Community Support Associate for LawHelpNY. Thank you for your service, Dennis!

“A person I spoke to said I was the first person who had actually listened to him share his problem. He said thank you and was very appreciative that I had taken the time to understand his situation. That experience made me realize that sometimes we can help chat users merely by listening to them.”



“I was working with a grandmother who had been recently caring for her daughter’s child after her daughter had passed away. The grandmother was asking me about guardianship and I just so badly wanted to jump through the computer and give her a hug! It later enforced that rewarding feeling when I was able to help her and relieve her stress in any way.”

“A child was one of the people that I spoke to, and he wanted to emancipate from his abusive guardian. That day I was able to help him find the right contact information at the court houses, provide him with pro bono attorneys in his area and help him find a way out. Helping him and knowing that the items that I was giving him would drastically change his life was one of the best experiences of my life.”

“My experience has transformed my thoughts about engaging in pro bono service. Having experienced first-hand how great of an impact pro bono work has on the lives of others in need, I know that pro bono service will be an annual priority for me in the future.”

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## TenantHelpNY.org

Launched in January 2021 in response to COVID-19, this Pro Bono Net platform serves as an online resource center for tenants facing eviction, many of them newly impoverished due to the pandemic. TenantHelpNY includes statewide content for tenants outside of New York City, training materials for pro bono attorneys, and a directory of legal services organizations. With funding from the New York State Office of the Attorney General, Pro Bono Net collaborates with six organizations – Legal Services of the Hudson Valley, Legal Aid Society of Mid-

New York, Legal Aid of Northeastern New York, Nassau Suffolk Law Services, Legal Assistance of Western New York, and the Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project – to create and maintain TenantHelpNY. All TenantHelpNY partner organizations are using funding to strengthen their pro bono housing programs, to train volunteer attorneys for the eviction defense of tenants impacted by the pandemic, and to manage the long term impact of the COVID-19 crisis on housing law.

### HIGHLIGHT

Pro Bono Net's online resources helped tenants address complex legal issues during the pandemic. Here are just a few examples:

"I have no income due to COVID-19. I have not paid April or May rent, and my landlord has deprived me of heat, hot water, and has now locked me out. What are my legal options to keep my housing?"

"I want to know if a lease agreement applies to me if my name is not in the agreement, but I still live in the same apartment as the lease holder, who recently passed away."

"We just got a notice of termination of lease in the mail – is this legal? We are waiting for the rental assistance program to help pay our back rent, but he still wants us out..."





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## Crime Victims Legal Network – [crimevictimshelpny.org](https://crimevictimshelpny.org)

The Crime Victims Legal Network, a partnership of Pro Bono Net, NYS Office of Victim Services, Empire Justice Center, and SUNY Albany Center for Human Services Research, works to transform access, awareness, and collaboration in civil legal services for victims of crime.

The Victim Compensation Online Claim Application Guide and the Victim Compensation Claim Navigator is a tool launched in 2021 that ensures that eligible crime victims are successful in submitting their applications for crime victim compensation through the New York State Office of Victim Services Online Portal. The Victim Compensation Guide offers page-by-page tips and reminders to help victims with the application process.

## Family Offense Petition Program

The New York Family Offense Petition Program is an interactive online document assembly service, hosted by LawHelp Interactive and used by advocates and legal service providers. The program allows trained advocates to help domestic violence survivors create and remotely file an order of protection petition. First piloted in the Bronx in 2013, the program was used to create more than 9,000 orders of protection in 2021 in partnership with more than 150 organizations in all 62 counties of New York State. One user told us, “This was a life-saver (literally, I’m sure!) for drafting orders of protection during COVID!”

### HIGHLIGHT

In September 2021, Pro Bono Net co-hosted a Family Offense Petition Program training with the New York State Office of Court Administration. Over 150 people attended the live training to learn how to file a temporary order of protection petition and how to become court- approved organizations to use the program. Attendees included court staff, attorneys, social workers, and other advocates for domestic violence survivors.



Feedback from training participants:

“I do appreciate the [Family Offense Petition] program, which has become even more essential during the pandemic.”

“Very excited to have such a useful resource and a great webinar to explain it. On the topic of expanding the program, custody petitions would be a great next target for electronic filing. Thank you!”

“Thank you for the excellent program!”

## HIGHLIGHTS OF PRO BONO NET'S WORK IN 2021 ACROSS OUR NATIONAL PROGRAMS

From connecting attorneys to those most in need,  
to creating legal tools to help individuals advocate for themselves,  
we make the law work for the many and not the few.

MORE THAN  
**8.4 MILLION**  
PEOPLE ACCESSED A  
LEGAL RIGHTS RESOURCE  
THROUGH OUR 20-STATE  
LAWHELP NETWORK

LAWHELP INTERACTIVE HOSTED MORE THAN  
**1.1 MILLION**  
INTERVIEWS ON LAWHELP INTRACTIVE, RESULTING IN MORE THAN  
**900,000** LEGAL DOCUMENTS AND COURT FORMS  
ASSEMBLED, AN AVERAGE OF CLOSE TO  
**2,500** DOCUMENTS EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

MORE THAN  
**613,723+**  
USERS, AN AVERAGE OF OVER 11,000 PEOPLE  
PER WEEK, VIEWED OVER TWO MILLION  
PAGES OF LAWHELPNY'S EXTENSIVE  
KNOW-YOUR-RIGHTS LIBRARY

MORE THAN  
**3,300**  
PRO BONO ATTORNEYS, LEGAL  
ADVOCATES, AND LAW STUDENTS JOINED  
THE PROBONO.NET NETWORK

MORE THAN  
**700**  
LEGAL AID CLIENTS  
ACROSS FIVE STATES  
WERE ASSISTED THROUGH  
REMOTE LEGAL CONNECT

MORE THAN **3,000** IMMIGRANTS USED  
CITIZENSHIPWORKS TO COMPLETE THEIR CITIZENSHIP  
APPLICATIONS, SAVING THEM MORE THAN  
**\$3.3 million** IN FEES

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*bringing the power of the law to all*

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