



ProBono
NETWORK

JUSTICE • SERVICE • IMPACT



Celebrating 10 Years
2011 to 2021

A Message of Gratitude: Thank You!

What a difference 10 years makes.

It all began in 2011 as an informal meeting of attorneys gathered in Donna Peel's kitchen. Most had entered new phases in their legal careers: They were caring for family, considering retirement, or transitioning to new jobs. They all were looking for a way to use their experience to bridge an increasing gap in the need for free legal services in Illinois. Fast-forward 10 years. The need for free legal services continues to grow, and PBN has grown with it.

In 2021, PBN celebrates 10 years of creating meaningful change in our community. Our mission-driven commitment to clients and volunteers has not wavered. Over the past two years, as a global pandemic upended much of how we all live and work, and as long-standing racial injustices were catapulted to the foreground of our collective consciousness, PBN met challenges

with resolve, and with the same creativity and dedication upon which we were founded. We adapted our projects to offer services online that formerly were provided only in person, added projects to address new and increasing needs, and redirected resources to reach more underserved residents, with special focus on those directly impacted by racial inequities.

We are humbled and honored to lead PBN as we embark upon our second decade. We extend heartfelt thanks to the volunteers, partner agencies, staff, consultants, board members, advisory council, donors, and other friends for their ongoing commitment and support, without which PBN's work would be impossible. We also want to thank our clients for showing us what real perseverance looks like. They inspire us, now more than ever, to bring justice to those in need.



Jay Harris, President
Board of Directors



Linda Rio
Executive Director

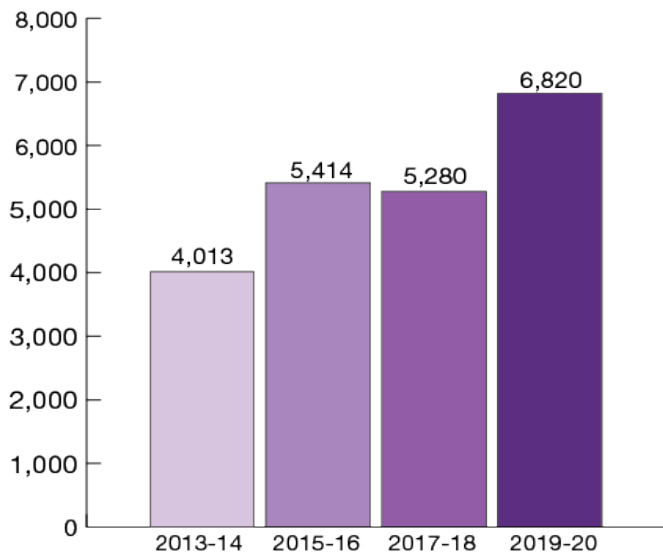
Since 2011

400+ PBN volunteers donated
25,000+ hours to more than
4,500+ clients for more than

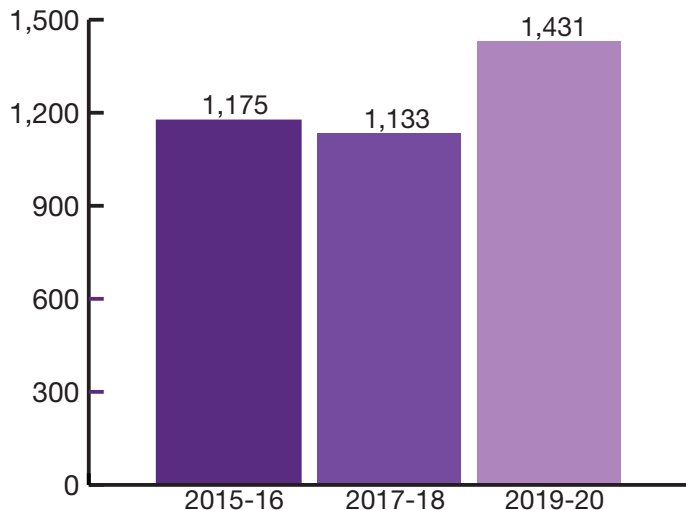
\$6.25 million in free legal services.

Impact Over 10 Years

25,000+ Volunteer Hours 2013–2020



4,500+ Clients Served 2015–2020



Partner Agencies

PBN identifies gaps in legal representation, then develops projects with local legal aid agencies to close those gaps. These are the partner agencies PBN has worked with since 2011.

African American Christian Foundation
Ascend Justice
Cabrini Green Legal Aid
CARPLS
Center for Disability and Elder Law
Chicago Bar Association
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless
Chicago Legal Advocacy for
Incarcerated Mothers
Constitutional Rights Foundation
Chicago
Illinois Legal Aid Online
Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing
Legal Aid Chicago
Legal Council for Health Justice
Metropolitan Family Services
Legal Aid Society
National Immigrant Justice Center
Prairie State Legal Services
Public Interest Law Initiative
The Resurrection Project
Sarah's Inn

Total number of volunteer hours and clients served is representative of the full 10 years.
Graph data covers the years indicated.

PBN Mission

Transforming lives
by increasing access
to legal representation



PBN Model Increases Access to Legal Aid

More than 85 percent¹ of the civil legal needs of low-income Americans go unmet every year.

The legal aid community cannot meet the large and increasing demand for its services. And many attorneys want to provide pro bono legal services, but they lack a workable model to do so. Pro Bono Network (PBN) provides the link between attorneys who want to help and the needs of the clients and legal aid community. We remove barriers and provide the support structure to make it easier for volunteer attorneys to help low-income people receive critical legal services. We work with attorneys, many of whom are taking time off to care for children or elderly family members, have retired, or who work in legal settings unable to provide the support they need. PBN's model facilitates access to justice for more clients, and access to workable volunteering opportunities.

PBN is helping more people to get the legal aid they need.

Over the past 10 years, PBN has recruited and supported 400 volunteer attorneys who have contributed 25,000 volunteer hours to help 4,500 clients which equates to approximately \$6.25M in free legal services.



Making a Difference

Champion of Justice Award

PBN received the 2021 Champion of Justice award from Ascend Justice for our commitment to individuals and families impacted by gender-based violence and the child welfare system.

Volunteers of the Year

PBN volunteers have been recognized for their contributions to pro bono legal services in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 by Legal Aid Chicago.

Pro Bono Leader

PBN was recognized as a Pro Bono Leader by the American Bar Association (ABA) Center for Pro Bono.

In 2020, our volunteer attorneys helped 126 individuals needing pro bono legal advice via its Free Legal Answers™ online portal. PBN also received this award in 2019.

Distinguished Service Award

During its Light Up the Loop awards event in 2021, CDEL recognized the contributions of PBN and our volunteers through their Distinguished Service Award. We received the honor in 2016 as well.

Pro Bono Initiative Award

In 2016, the Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI) recognized PBN with its Pro Bono Initiative award for our outstanding contributions to public interest law and pro bono legal work in Illinois.

Friend of the Year

In 2013, the Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing (LCBH) recognized PBN for the advocacy provided to clients in tenant-landlord disputes.

Volunteerism Award

In 2012, PBN was recognized by the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago (CRFC) with its Volunteerism Award.



Sheila Pont, Donna Peel, and Julie Renehan with the Pro Bono Initiative Award from PILI.

“I volunteer with PBN because the work and support makes it easy for me to alter the life paths of my fellow humans for the better. The work we do and the stories we change have a lasting impact on our clients and ourselves.”

~ Shama, Attorney Volunteer, Former Board Member

The Ripple Effect of Representation

**“I know that if
it wasn’t for
Pro Bono Network,
I would not
be where I am
or who I am today.”**

~ Kenia, Immigration Client



TW // sexual assault, child abuse

My story is hard to tell, but I choose to tell it. Not a lot of people are aware there is power in their words and experiences, and I know my case is not the only case. If I can encourage volunteerism or give hope to others to fight for themselves or advocate for others, I want to speak up. Because of the help that was given to me, I will give them strength. I know that if it wasn’t for Pro Bono Network, I would not be where I am or who I am today.

I was less than one year old when I came to the United States with my mother, who was fleeing a violent situation. When I was about five, my step dad’s nephew temporarily moved in with us. He sexually assaulted and abused me for about a year. He would lure me into our basement with candy or come into my room. When my mom discovered what happened, she worked closely with law enforcement to try to have him arrested, but he fled.

I experienced anxiety and depression, and had to learn how to handle my feelings in therapy.

There were times I remembered how he smelled or something else awful, and it would momentarily paralyze me.

“There would be times I remembered how he smelled, or something else awful, and it would momentarily paralyze me.”

In high school, I felt even more lost and without a clear pathway for my future. I began looking for ways to obtain legal residency in the U.S. and learned about the U Visa. I was uncertain about pursuing a U Visa because I knew it would be difficult to recall all of my past trauma to prove that I was a victim of crime. I sought help from a legal aid agency, which put me in contact with PBN and volunteer attorney Patti Marino.

Patti was my rock throughout the process. I had to recount and document all of the abuse

and put it on display. Going to the police station to ask for your rape report is not easy. Patti literally took my hand, walked me through the process, and did everything she could to make me comfortable.



Volunteer attorney Patti holds a photo of Kenia and her mother.

Having assistance to apply for my work authorization while waiting for a decision on my case helped to ease the burden. This allowed me to juggle a 50-hour a work week with full-time classes, making it possible to pay for college. Honestly, I think it was due to my experience with PBN that I was able to keep going. I knew I had people advocating for me and cheering me on.

Beyond the legal work, working with PBN has given me so many valuable life skills, like communicating professionally via email, on the phone, and in meetings. These skills have helped me in my career.

“Working with PBN has given me so many valuable life skills, which have helped me so much in my career.”

I am now a program administrator for Fast Lane Automotive Training which focuses on skills training for the underserved and underrepresented, helping people returning to their communities and families after being incarcerated. Once they receive training

and certification, they are able to obtain employment and even work toward starting their own businesses. I am also working on my accounting degree.

“What surprised me the most, is the ripple effect of representation. An impact was made on everyone connected to me.”

During my experience with PBN, what surprised me the most was the ripple effect of representation. Not only was their impact positive on me, but also on everyone connected to me. After my mother and I both received U Visas, we were both able to become permanent U.S. residents. We could travel to Mexico and see our family for the first time in more than 20 years. For my mom to see her father after decades of being apart, and for me to meet all of my family meant the world to us. Sadly, my grandfather passed away in January 2021 from COVID, but we are grateful that we had the opportunity to spend time with him before he passed, especially my mom.

Feeling physically and emotionally connected with extended family was something I would have never known had it not been for the help and care PBN provided. Before I started this process, I couldn't imagine having a career, not to mention making long-term goals for myself. I am evidence of how this organization can completely change someone's life.

Kenia's mother and grandfather celebrate reuniting after more than 20 years.



Serving Seniors

Senior Clinics

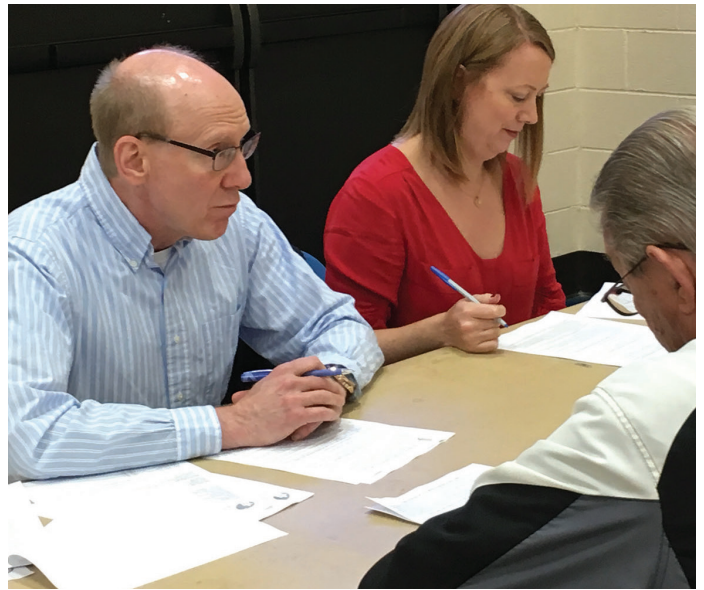
PBN volunteer attorneys provide peace of mind to hundreds of underserved seniors in Cook and DuPage counties by offering assistance on a range of legal issues, from landlord-tenant disputes and commercial fraud to drafting powers of attorney, wills, and other end-of-life documents.

Social Security Benefits Reconsideration

Applying for Social Security benefits can be complicated. Further, the initial denial rate is greater than 80 percent² and, without legal assistance, most denials are upheld during the appeals process. PBN volunteer attorneys help improve these odds for clients by assessing Social Security records, reviewing and gathering additional medical evidence, and submitting written arguments to claims adjudicators.

Wills

PBN volunteer attorneys help ensure the end-of-life wishes for low-income seniors are recorded through a process involving client interviews, explanation of available options, and collection of relevant information.



“PBN’s Senior Clinic was the most valuable activity offered where I live.”

~ Jim, Client

“CDEL depends on PBN for its community-based programs. Working with PBN means clients are treated with dignity and respect...”

PBN’s mission allows us to fulfill our mission.”

*~ Caroline Manley, Executive Director,
Center for Disability and Elder Law*

Serving Families

83% of victims represented by an attorney successfully obtained a protective order, versus **32%** without representation.³



“The client told me how much PBN had helped her by being calm, empathetic, and clear in explaining the legal process.”

~ Donna, Attorney Volunteer

Adult Guardianship

Guardianship offers a solution to help adults who are not capable of making decisions on their own, such as where to live or when to seek medical treatment. PBN has two projects helping people navigate this complex court process. In one, volunteer attorneys assist clients in drafting documents for people seeking to become guardians for family members; in the other, they file and represent clients through the final hearing.

Divorce

Divorce can be a critical step in moving on from a difficult or dangerous marriage. Even after deciding to pursue a divorce, following it through to the end can be challenged by burdensome costs, paperwork, and the complexity of the legal processes involved. PBN volunteer attorneys help clients get the closure they seek by learning about their situations, completing court filings, and managing cases through to the end.

Domestic Violence and Orders of Protection Litigation

When someone is looking to leave an abusive relationship, getting an order of protection may be a critical step—and an intimidating one. PBN provides coordinated access to free legal services for those seeking such orders. PBN volunteer attorneys work with clients whose cases are handled at suburban courthouses, representing them through their hearing for a plenary order of protection.

Incarcerated Mothers Clinic

Almost 60 percent of women in state and federal prisons and nearly 80 percent of women in local jails have minor children.⁴ To reduce the destabilizing and harmful effects on children of parental incarceration and to give mothers the best chance of maintaining intact families, PBN volunteers meet with incarcerated moms to advise them on family-related issues and, when appropriate, do necessary legal research and complete associated documents.

Serving Communities

Expungement

After paying their debt to society, people with criminal records should have a chance to lead productive lives and care for their families. However, a record can impede such efforts, thwarting the ability to get a job, pursue an education, and find a place to live, even decades later. PBN's project helps individuals seeking to move on from their pasts clear their records, as permitted by state law. Volunteer attorneys assist by collecting information and documents, completing forms, and filing petitions.

Lawyers in the Classroom

PBN brings volunteer attorneys into classrooms in underserved communities to work with second- through eighth-grade students, teaching them about the U.S. Constitution, the American legal system, and how they can become involved in law-related careers.

Online Legal Counseling

For some low-income Illinois residents, the only place they can access free legal advice is online.

PBN volunteers, supported by subject matter experts, research and respond to questions posted on the ABA's Free Legal Answers portal.

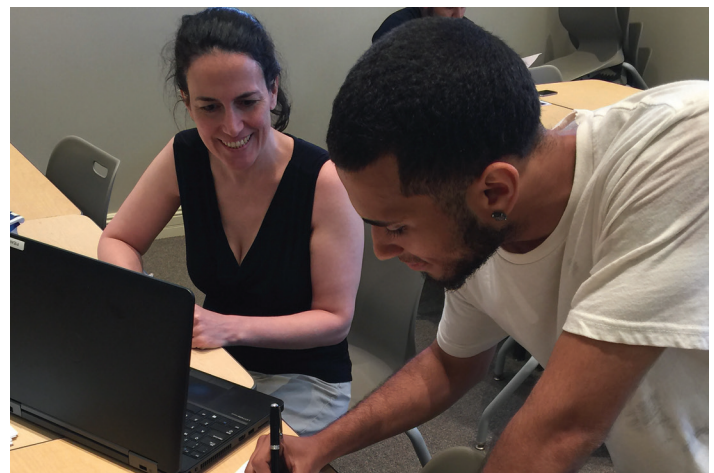
Tenant Advocacy and Eviction Assistance

Our volunteer attorneys provide critical help with landlord-tenant conflicts, working to de-escalate disputes and avoid unnecessary litigation. Attorneys work with clients to explain their rights and communicate with opposing parties to resolve disputes. Volunteers also staff a virtual help desk in the Kane County Eviction Court, providing legal information and helping litigants to understand their rights.



Veterans' Clinics

Illinois is home to an estimated one million veterans and active service members, whose needs for free legal help continues to grow. PBN volunteer attorneys staff legal clinics for low-income veterans to answer legal questions and draft documents, offering discussion on issues ranging from end-of-life documents (powers of attorney, living wills, etc.) to family law and credit issues.



Illinois has **1,189 unique laws** that collectively act to **limit people with a record** from accessing housing, employment, education, and other opportunities.⁵

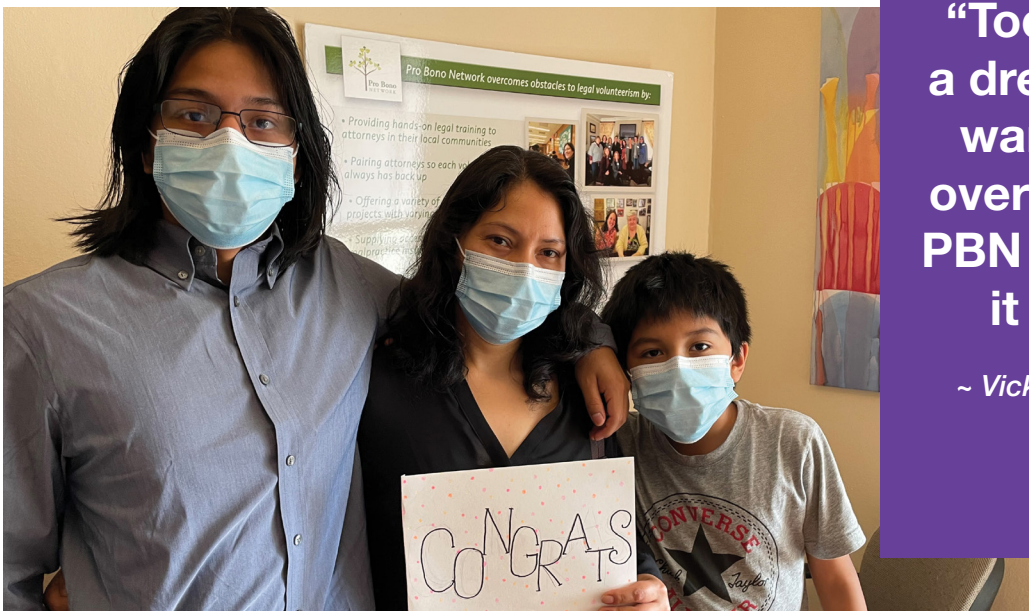
Serving Immigrants

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

PBN works with individuals who came to the United States as children and are now undocumented. DACA allows them to apply for legal status in the United States, seek employment, and go to college. Volunteer attorneys and translators work with clients to collect necessary documentation and complete the lengthy application, supporting their efforts to continue accessing education and building futures here.

U Visa Immigration

Undocumented immigrants report only 17 percent of the crimes committed against them.⁶ Using protections provided under the federal Violence Against Women Act, PBN's project supports clients who report who report and cooperate with law enforcement on the crimes committed against them. Volunteer attorneys assist eligible clients to file for their U Visa, which grants them permission to live and work in the United States and can provide a pathway to lawful permanent residency.

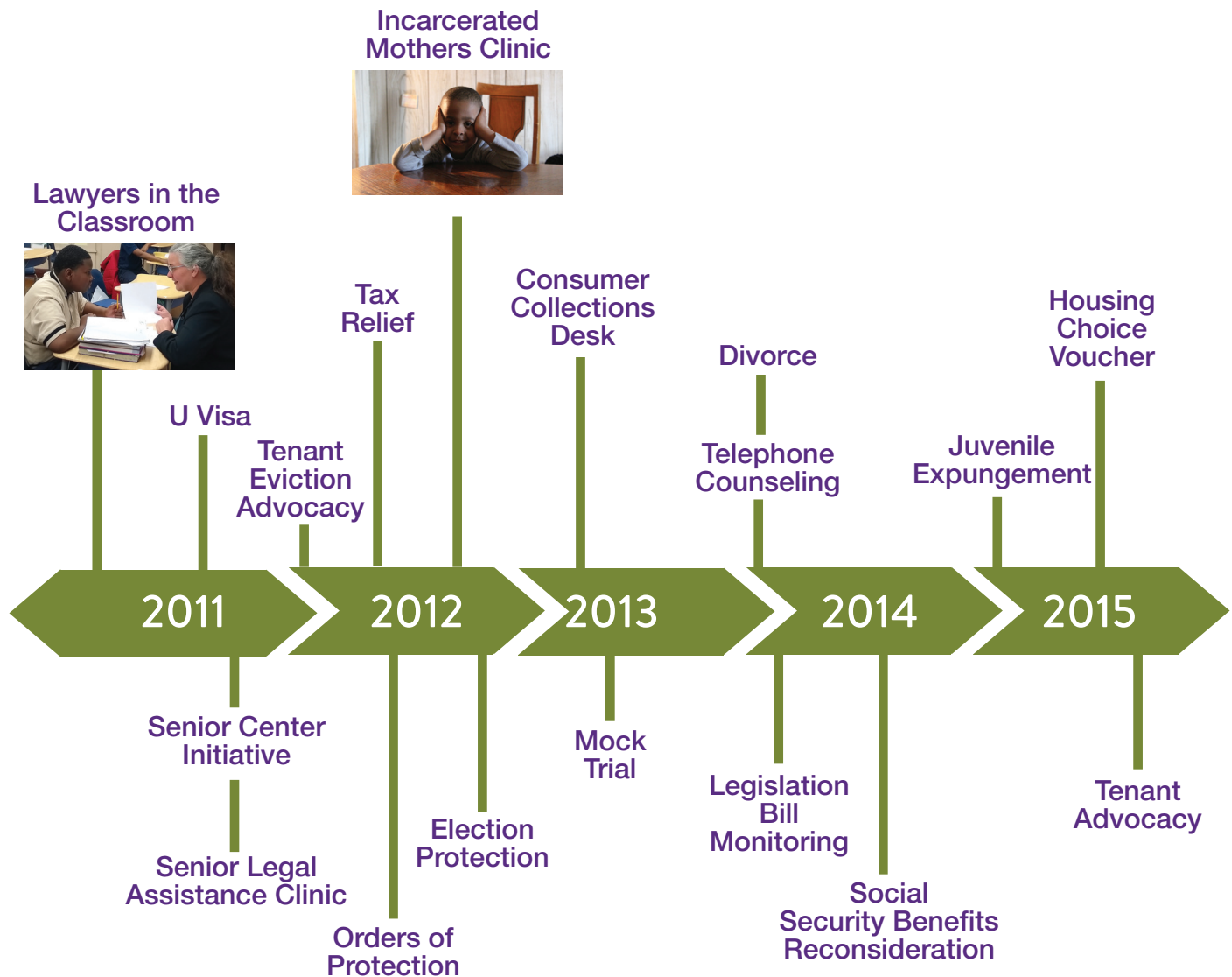


“Today feels like a dream. I’ve been wanting this for over 20 years, and PBN actually made it come true.”

~ Vicky, Immigration Client



10 Years of Building Projects



"Clients often come to PBN with very difficult situations, and while we can't resolve all of their problems, they are happy that there is someone who will listen and help in some way."

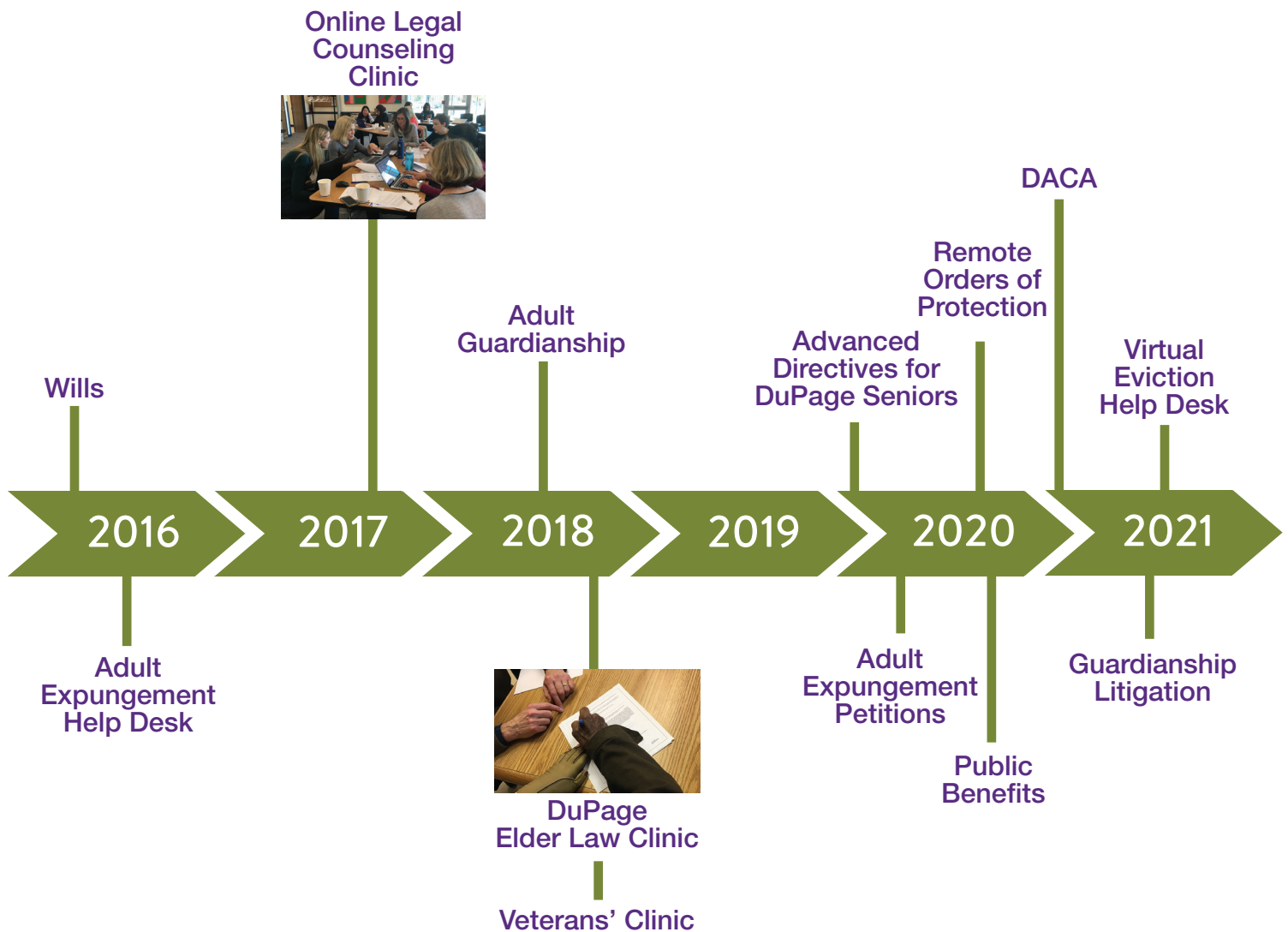
~ Tim, Attorney Volunteer

"I recently met with my first expungement client. The reward for me was telling him we would be filing his petition."

~ Mary, Attorney Volunteer

& Increasing Access to Legal Aid

Timeline is inclusive of currently active projects as well as those that have been retired.



"It felt really good to help more than 20 elderly clients in a matter of hours with their end-of-life documents and give them peace of mind."

~ Marisa, Project Manager

"The client said that she finally has mental peace from her prior abusive life, and expressed her deep gratitude to PBN."

~ Linda, Attorney Volunteer



Finding Safety and Wellness After Divorce



“My PBN attorneys are beautiful people.”

~ Daniel, Divorce Client



Meet Daniel, who moved here from Mexico with his family when he was a small child. Daniel describes himself as a good kid who struggled for years with his sexual orientation.

He decided to move out and build a life for himself, working two jobs to make ends meet. Daniel started dating, and eventually found himself in a relationship. He and his partner dated for about a year, then decided to get married in February 2019.

Daniel says the relationship took a dangerous turn when his husband started using drugs and regularly abused Daniel both physically and verbally, although he was always careful to not leave marks and/or bruises where they were easily visible to others. Daniel and his husband's friends tried numerous interventions, but his husband would relapse, and the abuse would become more frequent and increasingly violent. After his final relapse, Daniel said his husband flew into a rage and stormed around their apartment looking for a hammer “so that he could do away with me.”

Daniel fled barefoot from the apartment and ran into the cold, looking for anyone who could help, as his husband chased him. He ran into a train stop, where a station worker hid him in the information kiosk and called the police. Daniel credits her with saving his life. The police took him back to his apartment and when his

husband returned, Daniel says his husband blamed everything on him, “He was brutal,” and very skilled at manipulation and making Daniel feel guilty for being the “reason” he used drugs. Even after getting an order of protection against him, Daniel's husband continued to harass him, contacting his employers and putting his job at risk.

Unsure of where to turn next, Daniel reached out to his doctor for help. Recognizing he wasn't in a good place mentally or physically, she mentioned the possibility of getting divorced, and started making some calls to legal aid agencies on his behalf. This eventually led him to PBN and volunteers Andrew and Patrick in February 2020.

Daniel appreciated Patrick and Andrew's openness, patience, and persistence and was floored by their genuine and constant concern for his safety and well-being, noting “With every communication and interaction they asked, ‘How are you doing? Do you feel safe?’” He concluded by saying, “They are beautiful people.”

“It has given me a sense of perspective. Prior to PBN, I had never been exposed to many of the issues that a large portion of our society faces every day.”

~ Patrick, Attorney Volunteer

Both Patrick and Andrew appreciate the opportunity to give back to clients like Daniel as well and the ability to move on and live their best lives. Patrick notes, “It has given me a sense of perspective. Prior to my work with PBN, I had never been exposed to many of the issues that a large portion of our society faces every day.” First-time volunteer Andrew added, “Volunteering with PBN has helped me feel like I am giving back to society while also learning new skills and areas of the law.”

Straight-A Student with Big Plans



"I hope other young people can work with such helpful attorneys to have a better future."

*~ Angela,
Immigration Client*



Every high school senior should have big dreams for their future, but Angela felt hopeless and too afraid to set goals. Angela and her family emigrated from Mexico to the United States when she was only a year old. As time went on, Angela's family faced financial and other issues which kept them from maintaining their U.S. status while simultaneously making a return to Mexico impossible.

Once the DACA program was reinstated, Angela—a straight-A student interested in becoming a nurses' assistant or an ultrasound technician after college—sought help with the immigration legal process, which brought her to PBN. She says of the experience, "I hope other young people can work with such helpful attorneys to have a better future."

Translator Empowers Clients

PBN volunteer translator Patty H. understands more than Spanish, and uses her experience to empower other women clients. For Patty, it's personal, because most of the cases she's translated for have involved domestic violence and immigration issues.

Her mother came to the United States as an immigrant and didn't speak English. She endured violent abuse while married to Patty's father. Patty says as a child, she felt powerless.

As an adult, she experienced emotional and verbal abuse while in a relationship of her own. Volunteering as an interpreter for Spanish-speaking women in similar situations, Patty draws on her experience to empower them.

For Patty, it is gratifying to walk out of meetings with clients and have them say they are now optimistic about their future and that of their children. She notes, "In a way, these women also represent my mother...They do not need



"These women don't need to feel hopeless anymore."

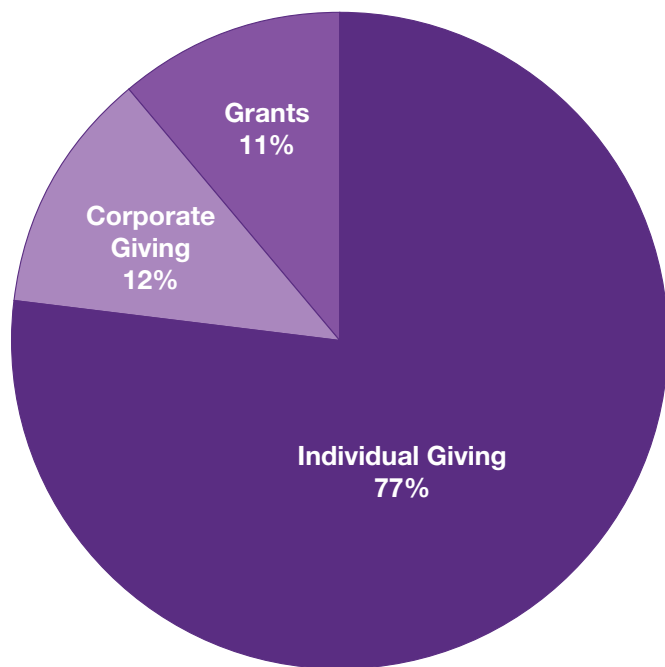
*~ Patty H., PBN Volunteer
Translator*



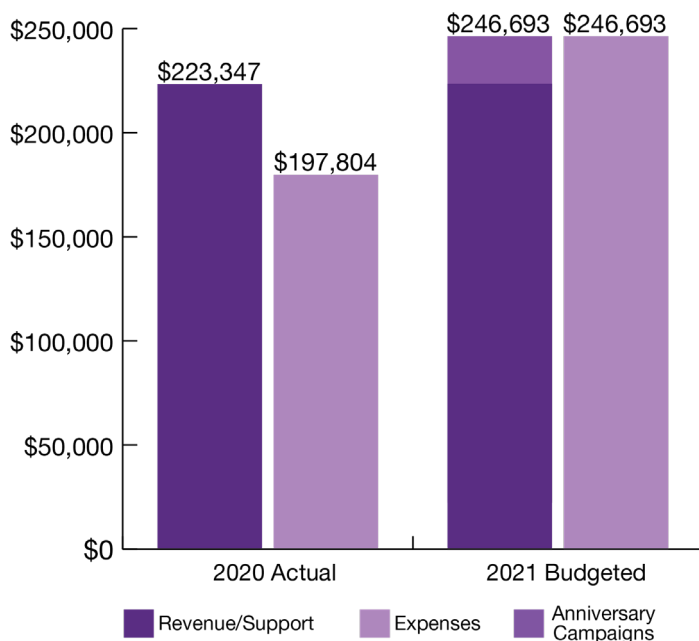
to feel hopeless anymore. They can become strong independent women and I can help them in attaining that goal."

Support

Funding Sources (2020)



Revenue and Expenses



“I love PBN’s unique model of identifying gaps in legal representation and tapping an underutilized resource—stay-at-home, part-time and retired attorneys. It’s a brilliant idea and I’m happy to support them.”

~Wendy, Donor

“PBN draws its volunteers from a truly motivated group of individuals who want and need to maintain their legal skills and they, in turn, provide much needed legal services to Illinois’ most at risk populations. It’s brilliant.”

~Jen Shapiro, JP Morgan Chase & Co., and Advisory Council Member

“PBN clears away barriers to volunteering with an infrastructure to support volunteers and clients and by cultivating relationships and trust necessary for collaboration with the legal aid community. It is astonishing, really, what PBN has done with relatively modest resources... I can only imagine what might be possible with a little more.”

~Laura, Board Member

“I volunteer with PBN because they make it so easy for me to solve significant legal issues for real people. I donate because I know the money is used to help volunteers assist more people in need.”

~Jennifer, Volunteer Attorney and Former Board Member

There are many ways to support PBN. Learn more at www.pro-bono-network.org.

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Staff and Board members, 2019

Leah and Her Journey to Justice

“The PBN attorneys were a blessing to me.”

~ Leah,
Social Security Benefits
Reconsideration Client



Leah’s case was complicated by the fact that she did not have a diagnosis for the constellation of debilitating symptoms she was experiencing.

After she had seen nine different doctors without receiving a diagnosis, her PBN team advised her to see a pain specialist, who diagnosed her with Tarlov Cyst Disease, a disease so rare that it was excluded from the Social Security Administration’s list of eligible conditions.

With the new evidence of her diagnosis, her PBN team submitted an application for reconsideration in spring 2020, but it, too, was denied.

PBN did not give up on Leah. Pierry and Patti requested a hearing before an administrative law judge.

“She had multiple debilitating symptoms but no medical diagnosis that would qualify her for benefits and no physicians could identify the source of her severe pain.”

~ Pierry, Volunteer Attorney

Finally, in December 2020, Leah’s persistence, and that of her PBN team, paid off. Leah was finally approved to receive benefits.

Although her road to recovery will be long, Leah is grateful that she was able to find the resources that provided the advocacy she needed. She said, “The PBN attorneys were a blessing to me... they are absolutely wonderful people, and professional and awesome human beings.”

In 2017, Leah, a single mother of three, sustained a fall that resulted in life-changing injuries and persistent debilitating symptoms. She experienced hearing loss and near-constant migraines, and required a cane to walk. She had ongoing muscle atrophy and lingering side effects from multiple corrective surgeries.

These symptoms, coupled with the worry, loss of independence and income, and uncertainty around her family’s future, weighed heavily on Leah.

Fortunately, government programs are in place to provide support in situations like these. However, with eight of every 10 initial benefits applications denied, people often have to go through a lengthy appeals process to secure them, and the legal representation necessary to navigate the process can be cost prohibitive.

Leah needed this kind of help, and PBN came through, at no cost to her.

PBN volunteer attorneys Pierangela Murphy (Pierry) and Patti Marino filed her initial application for benefits in spring 2019. Like so many others, the initial application for benefits was denied.

Foundations & Sponsors

We are truly grateful for the continued support from our generous foundations and sponsors:

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StoneTurn
Stout
Thompson Coburn LLP
Zagone Studios



PILI Executive Director Michael Bergmann and PBN Director of Development Heena Musabji receiving a grant from the DuPage Bar Foundation.

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Volunteers

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Tatiana Abramova
Abidemi Adeboje
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Sarah Adler
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We've made every effort to include all volunteers. If we inadvertently left you off, please contact us at info@pro-bono-network.org.

Visualizing the Need and Your Impact

What Happens When You Can't Afford An Attorney?

Devastating Effects of Inaccessibility

When you're unable to afford legal representation, you can experience devastating, pervasive, and long-lasting destabilizing effects, which affect your family and community.

Loss of Employment



When you're unable to address issues like immigration status and/or prior criminal record, you may lose your job or be unable to find employment.

Loss of Housing

Rent moratoriums last only so long. When you're facing eviction, legal representation is critical.



Loss of Autonomy



You don't want the state making property, healthcare, or end-of-life decisions for you. An advocate documenting your wishes provides peace of mind.

Loss of Social Benefits

The initial denial rate for Social Security disability benefits is nearly 80 percent. Without legal assistance, most denials are upheld during the appeals process.



Nationwide, it is estimated that **71% of low-income** households experienced at least **one civil legal problem** during the past year.⁷

In Illinois, there is **1 pro bono attorney** for every **4,752 legal issues** faced by people experiencing poverty.⁸

Nearly **500,000 low-income residents** of Cook County **will have a legal need this year.**⁹

We Need Your Help

Donate and Support

Monetary Donation. When you give to PBN, you will provide justice for those in need without duplicating resources. Your gift transforms lives for a better future.

Stock Donation. When you donate stock, in addition to making an impact on the lives of others, you may also avoid paying capital gains tax.

Leave a Legacy. Your estate gift can make a difference for generations to come.

Become a sponsor. Your business sponsorship can empower attorneys with the tools to legally serve low-income individuals, and align with your organization's goals of making our community a better place.

Volunteer

Attorneys. Whether you are active, inactive, or retired, visit us online to explore opportunities, sign up for our newsletter, and contact us directly.

Translators. One of the greatest barriers to getting legal help is language. If you can interpret or translate, please join us to help even more people. Certification is not required.

Expertise. In order to grow and evolve as an organization, we need volunteers with expertise in many areas including photography, fundraising, marketing, grant writing, publicity, editing, project management, finance and many more. Volunteer today!

“You are changing lives with this important work.”

*~ The Honorable Don Harmon,
Illinois Senator and Senate President*

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