

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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***Maine Civil Legal Services Fund Commission***

***Report to the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary***

***121<sup>st</sup> Legislature, Second Regular Session***

***February 1, 2004***

***Commissioners:***

***Robert M. Marden, Esq.***

*(Appointment through 1/1/06)*

Marden, Dubord, Bernier & Stevens

44 Elm Street

P.O. Box 708

Waterville, ME 04903-0708

873-0186

***Barry K. Mills, Esq.***

*(Appointment through 1/1/05)*

Hale & Hamlin

10 State Street

P.O. Box 729

Ellsworth, ME 04605-0729

667-2561

***Janis Cohen, Esq.***

*(Appointment through 1/1/04)*

45 Eastern Promenade

Portland, ME 04101

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#### ***121<sup>st</sup> Legislature, Second Regular Session***

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### **Introduction**

The Maine Civil Legal Services Fund was established by the Legislature in 1991, following the 1990 report of the Maine Commission on Legal Needs, and in response to reductions in funding that jeopardized access to legal services in Maine. Over the past several years the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund (MCLSF or the Fund) has played a critical role in sustaining access to justice for Maine citizens in need. The Maine Civil Legal Services Fund Commission is pleased to submit the 2003 annual report of MCLSF to the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary for its review. The report details the activities of the five legal services providers supported by the Fund: Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic, Legal Services for the Elderly, Maine Equal Justice Partners, Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Inc., and Volunteer Lawyers Project.

### **Commission Allocation Decision**

The three-member Commission authorized the distribution of \$928,230 in 2003. The allocation and distribution of funds were as follows:

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Allocation</b>	<b>Distribution</b>
Maine Equal Justice Partners (MEJP)	\$150,000	\$150,000
Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP)	\$50,000	\$50,000
Pine Tree Legal Assistance (Pine Tree)	65%	\$473,350
Legal Services for the Elderly (LSE)	25%	\$182,057
Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic (CLAC)	10%	\$72,823

### **Thousands of Low-Income Maine People Served**

The legal services providers supported by the MCLSF provided direct services and/or representation to over 40,000 individuals in Maine in 2003. They assisted people in a wide range of civil legal matters; including housing, health care, family issues, employment, education, consumer issues, income maintenance, and individual rights. Hundreds of thousands of Maine's low-income families were also served by the providers' work in administrative advocacy and class action litigation, which seeks to achieve systemic reform in

programs and public assistance such as MaineCare (Medicaid), TANF, food stamps, general assistance, unemployment benefits, and child protection.

Each of the providers augments its work to meet the needs of its client population through far-reaching efforts in outreach and education. Collectively, the five providers reached thousands of individuals – both low-income constituents and provider and agency staff who assist these clients – with training and education sessions on specific topics of concern. They also disseminated over 500,000 informational resources, legal forms, and applications –either directly or through the Internet. The web has proven to be an increasingly useful tool in providing education, resources, and direct client assistance. ‘Visits’ to the providers’ websites increased substantially; there were 846,162 visits to the websites of Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Maine Equal Justice Partners, Volunteer Lawyers Project, Legal Services for the Elderly, and HelpMELaw in 2003 – a 40% increase over the number recorded in 2002. Individuals visiting the sites are searching for information about specific programs, services, and benefits, as well as forms and other self-help assistance. Over 200,000 client education and self-help articles were downloaded from the Pine Tree Legal Assistance site, alone. Additionally, over 400,000 interactive court and legal forms were downloaded from this site.

### **MCLSF Sustains Access To Justice In Maine**

Funds from MCLSF are integral to preserving access to justice in Maine. They provide core support to each of the five organizations, which enables them to maintain their base of legal services in Maine. Further, MCLSF funding demonstrates sustainability to other funders that may be willing to support specific services and initiatives of each of the providers. To that end, the providers have been increasingly resourceful over the years in identifying grant opportunities and securing funds that can be used to support specific projects and maximize access to legal services throughout the state. Funding from such discretionary sources can be unpredictable but, coupled with the stable support of MCLSF, the legal services providers have been able to provide services statewide and conduct initiatives targeted to specific populations in need.

For example, MCLSF-funded providers have an impact throughout the state through:

- Pine Tree offices in Presque Isle, Bangor, Lewiston, Machias, Augusta, Rockland, and Portland.
- Volunteer Lawyers Project offices in Portland and Bangor.
- VLP hotline, staffed by more than 60 volunteers.
- VLP Family Law Helpline and the Consumer Debt Helpline.
- VLP’s Lawyer of the Day program in Bangor, in which attorneys refer VLP cases to their peers for *pro bono* representation.
- Legal Services for the Elderly offices in Augusta, Bangor, Lewiston, Presque Isle, and Scarborough.
- LSE hotline, providing brief advice and counsel, information, and referrals.
- LSE’s initiatives, in partnership with community organizations and governmental entities, to educate and train law enforcement personnel, emergency medical

technicians, and other first responders about elder abuse prevention, identification, response techniques, referral sources, and prosecution.

- Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic services, representing low-income individuals in Cumberland, York, Androscoggin, Southern Oxford, and Sagadahoc counties.
- Maine Equal Justice's extensive research and analysis – specifically legal expertise in Medicaid law – in the development of the Dirigo Health plan, which will provide health care coverage to thousands of low-income Maine people.
- MEJP's administrative advocacy that has resulted in expanded access to health care, educational supports for families on TANF who want to pursue secondary education, and improved access to food stamp benefits for thousands of low-wage families.
- LSE's and MEJP's collaborative initiative, *Mapping MaineCare*, which provides training on MaineCare and prescription drug benefits for seniors and people with disabilities to social service providers and agency staff throughout the state.
- MEJP's *Covering Kids and Families* initiative (in partnership with Maine Primary Care Association and Consumers for Affordable Health Care, which provides training on MaineCare eligibility and benefits available to children and adults to agency staff and providers throughout the state.

And through targeted initiatives:

- Pine Tree's Migrant Farmworker Unit conducted outreach to migrant farmworkers in over 97 different labor camps
- Pine Tree's Native American Unit staff conducted outreach to all four Maine tribes; the Penobscot Indian Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribe, Houlton Band of Maliseets, and the Aroostook Band of Micmacs.
- Pine Tree provides client education and self-help information – both materials and web-based - in multiple languages, including Spanish, French, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Arabic, Khmer, Somali, and Chinese. Pine Tree also has a bilingual voicemail system in southern Maine that provides access to callers in 8 languages other than English.
- Pine Tree launched a new Kids Legal Aid Project.
- LSE's Legal Access Project – a partnership with Maine's community health centers – strives to expand access to legal services to 'hard-to-reach' seniors in rural Maine.
- CLAC began a Prisoner Assistance Clinic, with funding from the Maine Bar Foundation, and under contract with the Department of Corrections, to assist prisoners with civil legal matters, such as family, custody, consumer and other issues.
- CLAC provides legal assistance to victims of domestic violence in Lewiston and South Paris, through a grant from the Department of Justice, Violence Against Women office.
- Maine Equal Justice, in partnership with the Maine Civil Liberties Union and private attorneys, negotiated better due process and fairer administrative procedures for thousands of people affected by the child protective system who never go to court.
- MEJP helped establish a Peer Support Advocacy program for TANF, ASPIRE, and Parents as Scholars participants.
- MEJP developed a settlement with the state to establish a system to provide due process to families and children relating to denials, terminations, or reductions of community-based Medicaid-funded services.

## **Coordination Among Legal Services Providers**

Maine's legal services providers have a longstanding commitment to working collaboratively to achieve access to justice in Maine. The organizations combine resources and share expertise in responding to clients in need and developing solutions to systemic reform. Consistent with this philosophy, the providers work in partnership to address funding needs and to respond to new and emerging issues that require support. They have prepared joint applications to secure funds for their shared priorities and have initiated many collaborative initiatives through the years, some of which are described in the reports that follow.

As illustration of this cooperative approach, the five providers funded by the MCLSF have mutually agreed upon the funding request for their respective organizations since 1998 and have submitted their applications to the Commission under a joint cover letter. During 2003 Maine's legal services providers joined forces in a new initiative – to develop a joint fundraising campaign targeting Maine's lawyers. With the recognition that new and additional sources of funds are necessary to help make access to justice a reality for low-income people in Maine, the legal community formed the Campaign for Justice. The legal services providers negotiated and signed a Joint Fundraising Agreement, launching a statewide annual campaign to raise funds from lawyers beginning in 2004. It is hoped that this campaign will enhance funding for legal services in Maine and help offset declining revenues from other sources of support.

## **Conclusion**

In an era of growing needs and fluctuating resources, the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund is a vital component of Maine's legal services system for the poor. As illustrated throughout the reports that follow, each of the legal services providers continues to provide exceptional services to those individuals in need throughout the state, maximizing the assets available to them, and leveraging other resources when possible. They are committed to maintaining the stability of a network of services and an infrastructure of support that can only be sustained by the combined efforts of all five providers. The legal services providers are deeply appreciative of the support from the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund, which helps preserve access to justice in Maine.



## **2003 Annual Report to the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund Commission Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic**

The Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic is pleased to submit this narrative report on the developments and services provided in 2003.

Established in 1969, the Clinic is run by the University of Maine School of Law and provides legal services to low-income individuals in Maine. It is staffed by third year law students specially licensed under the Rules of Court to practice under faculty supervisors who are experienced members of the Maine Bar. The Clinic's mission is two-fold: educating law students through an intense, high-quality clinical and mentoring experience while providing pro bono legal services to indigent Maine citizens.

The Clinic represents low-income individuals at the trial and appellate level in Cumberland, York, Androscoggin, Southern Oxford and Sagadahoc Counties as well as before state agencies in Augusta. The Clinic handles civil and criminal cases, including family matters, consumer cases, debt collection, benefits cases, criminal and traffic defense, and a variety of other civil matters.

The Clinic staff conducts the initial screening of clients to determine eligibility; the student attorneys complete the intake process. Because the Clinic is not able to help all eligible individuals, other considerations in accepting the case are:

- client need
- the availability of a student attorney
- the availability of alternate sources of legal services or assistance
- the Clinic's ability to provide quality representation
- the amount of Clinic resources required to represent the client in the matter
- the educational value of the case.

The Clinic's income guidelines are essentially 125% of the federal poverty guidelines, although the faculty supervisor may exercise discretion to accept a client whose income is slightly over that level after consideration of the factors above.

### **Program Report**

Although I have continued as Acting Director for the Clinic for the third year, the University of Maine is currently in the process of hiring a full-time tenured professor to be the Clinic Director, and that person should be here by this time next year. As I noted in the last report, Attorney James Burke joined us as a visiting professor for spring 2002, and I am pleased to report that he rejoined us in spring 2003 to run the Prisoner's Assistance Clinic. He also supervised general practice students over the summer and during the fall 2003 semester.

The Clinic continues to have a committed and hard working staff. Our office manager, Diane Arbour, was awarded the Downing Award this year for her dedication to pro



bono legal services. Our administrative assistant, Samantha Philbrick, has become a valuable member of the team. We are happy to have their continued assistance.

As noted in the last report, weekly seminars for the students now continue throughout the semester. These weekly seminars have added additional training as well as dedicated time for reflection and collegial interchange, and we intend to continue this component of the program into the future.

In January 2003, pursuant to a contract with the Department of Corrections and with a discretionary grant from the Maine Bar Foundation, we started a Prisoner Assistance Clinic. Prisoners have family, custody, consumer, and other similar cases just as the rest of population does. They can not access any of the existing avenues of assistance, however, and in the Prisoner Assistance Clinic law students go to the prison every week to provide legal assistance to prisoners with civil legal matters. This is a three credit clinical course instead of a six credit course, and places emphasis on interviewing, counseling and unbundled services. I am pleased to report that thus far the program seems to be a complete success, and the civil legal needs of our prison population are receiving appropriate attention.

We are also pleased to report that we received a continuation of our grant to provide civil legal assistance to victims of domestic violence in Lewiston and South Paris from the Department of Justice, Violence Against Women Office. The continuation grant is for a two year period. Under this program, all clinic students attend at least two days of the protection from abuse docket calls in Lewiston, and represent any victims there who need representation. That program receives top marks from the students, the courts, and clients alike. The grant continuation process was very competitive, and ours is the only program in Maine to receive continued funding this year.

Finally, thanks to the capital fundraising effort by Dean Khoury of the University of Maine School of Law, the Clinic building was renovated in the summer of 2003. The renovations included some additional work space for students, an additional faculty office, a ramp, and full handicapped accessibility throughout the first floor.

### **Student Participation**

In 2003, we graduated a very small class of law students, which had an effect on the number of students enrolled in the Clinic. Since then, however, the Clinic has been fully enrolled with a waiting list. To summarize, there were 9 students in the Prisoner's Assistance Clinic, 25 students in the General Practice Clinic, and 4 full time student interns hired over the summer, for a total of 38 students involved in the Clinic in 2003.

### **Direct Services Provided**

The staff conducts the initial telephone intake when someone calls the Clinic to seek help. Often there is no opening or someone does not qualify for other reasons; to the extent possible those people are given brief assistance and referrals on the telephone (or in person for walk-ins). If the staff concludes after the initial intake that the person would qualify for our services and there is an opening, that person is set up for a student attorney to interview, and the student will open a case file. These are the General Practice cases.

In addition, the Clinic represents hundreds of people in Lewiston and South Paris in Protection from Abuse cases, funded by the Department of Justice grant from the Violence Against Women Office referenced above. Under the same grant, the Clinic works with the Abused Women's Advocacy Project in Lewiston and South Paris to provide legal advice and counsel and paperwork assistance on a walk-in basis in Lewiston.

Finally, students enrolled in the Prisoner's Assistance Clinic receive requests for services from prisoners in the Maine Correctional Center (MCC) and other prison locations. The students go to MCC every week with their supervisor to meet with all eligible prisoners and provide assistance, advice, limited and full representation to the prisoners.

In summary, the Clinic provided direct services and representation to 850 people in 2003. This is an increase of 21% over 2002, largely due to the addition of the Prisoner's Assistance Clinic. In addition, the Clinic staff received telephone calls from approximately another 1289 eligible people who had to be turned away or referred.

The numbers of people served in 2003 in each category are as follows:

*(1) Brief assistance and telephone referrals and contacts:*

The following numbers are still estimated to be underreported by approximately 10% or more:

No openings and unable to assist: 1176

Family	493
Criminal	109
Other	467

Referral: 113

Family	32
Criminal	17
Other	64

Ineligible: 42

Financial	25
Location	17

(2) *Cases opened in the Clinic:*

The Clinic began 2003 with 73 open general practice cases. Another 216 cases were opened in 2003; this includes some matters of brief assistance and exchanges of correspondence, many in the criminal law arena. The number of open general practice cases at the end of 2003 was 80. The breakdown by type is as follows:

73 cases open at the start of 2003:

44	family	60%	(26% criminal, 74% civil)
19	criminal	26%	
10	other civil	14%	

216 cases opened in 2003:

135	family	63%	(29% criminal, 71% civil)
63	criminal	29%	
18	other civil	8%	

80 cases open at the end of 2003:

55	family	69%	(26% criminal, 74% civil)
21	criminal	26%	
4	other civil	5%	

(3) *Victim representation in Protection from Abuse cases in Lewiston and South Paris*

Under the domestic violence grant from the Department of Justice, the Clinic represented 262 victims in 2003 in protection from abuse hearings in Lewiston and South Paris. These are not cases included in the general practice cases counted above.

(4) *Walk in assistance*

In addition, approximately 107 people were given legal advice, counseling and assistance in filling out paperwork on a variety of civil matters on a walk in basis at the Abused Women's Advocacy Project in Lewiston. This program was funded exclusively through the Department of Justice domestic violence grant.

(5) *Prisoner Civil Legal Assistance*

In 2003, the Clinic received 232 requests for legal assistance from prisoners. These requests are not included in any of the above categories. Of these requests, 165 were from the Maine Correctional Center in Windham, and the remaining 67 were from all of the other prisons in Maine combined. Of the 232 requests for legal assistance, 40 were ineligible because the request involved a criminal issue or an issue of prison conditions or prisoner rights, all of which are excluded from the scope of our agreement with the Department of Corrections. All of the eligible prisoners' requests for civil legal services were met with at least advice and counseling if not limited or full representation.

## **Conclusion**

Approximately 11.4% of the Clinic's budget came from the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund in FY 2003.<sup>1</sup> In these difficult budgetary times the MCLSF continues to provide critical support for the Clinic's work. Through the Clinic, the Fund directly supported the training of young lawyers in Maine's strong pro bono tradition, and enabled hundreds of Maine's poor to have access to justice in Southern Maine.

Very truly yours,

Valerie Stanfill, Esq.  
Acting Director

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<sup>1</sup> The 2003 fiscal year for the School of Law ran from July 1, 2002 through June 30, 2003.

# LSE Report

## **2003 Annual Report to the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund Commission Legal Services for the Elderly**

Legal Services for the Elderly (LSE) is pleased to submit this annual report on LSE's services and accomplishments in 2003. As in the past, the vital support of the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund ('MCLSF' or 'Fund') ensured that needy seniors in Maine had access to justice, thereby enabling them to live independently and with dignity. The Fund continues to support all of LSE's services, which range from extended representation to outreach and education. MCLSF provided critical matching funds which LSE used to obtain federal and private grant money to maintain and expand services.

### **Client Services**

Since its establishment in 1974, Legal Services for the Elderly has provided free, high quality legal services to Maine's socially and economically needy seniors, aged 60 and over. LSE offers clients several levels of service: extended representation by staff attorneys in LSE's five local offices in Augusta, Bangor, Lewiston, Presque Isle, and Scarborough; brief services, advice and counsel, and legal information through the LSE Hotline; and client education and clinics.

In 2003, 5,149 Maine seniors relied on Legal Services for the Elderly for representation, assistance, and information on a broad range of legal problems and questions, including:

- Physical Abuse
- Financial Exploitation
- Guardianship Defense
- Nursing Home Eligibility and other Long Term Care matters
- Medicare and Social Security
- MaineCare, Food Stamps, Prescription Drugs, HEAP, and other public assistance programs
- Consumer Fraud
- Debt Collection
- Housing
- Financial and health care powers of attorney
- Other civil matters.

LSE reached thousands of needy seniors, their family members, and caregivers by providing extended representation through its staff attorneys; brief services, advice and counsel, and health insurance information through the Hotline; and community educational presentations. In addition, many thousands of Mainers were able to get up-to-date and accurate information from LSE's client education materials and on LSE's website on such topics as Health Care Decisions, Medicare and MaineCare, Probate and Wills, and Elder Abuse. This was accomplished with a small staff dedicated to client services – 4.5 full time

equivalent (FTE) staff attorneys, 2.6 FTE Hotline attorneys, one legal assistant, and two paralegals.

Maine has a growing senior population, ranking fifth in the nation in terms of the percentage of total state population aged 60 and over – 18.7% or 238,099 Mainers are 60 or over. (U.S. Census 2000) Many Maine seniors also live in poverty or near-poverty. Of the 211,000 Mainers aged 65 or older, nearly one in five (19.1%) have incomes below 125% of the federal poverty level. (U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2002)

Geographically, LSE's clients were distributed as follows in 2003<sup>1</sup>:

	COUNTY STATISTICS <sup>2</sup>		LSE STATISTICS	
	% of Maine's 60+ Population	% of Maine's 65+ Population below 100% FPL	Clients Served	% of Clients Total Served
Androscoggin	8%	9%	311	10%
Aroostook	7%	10%	325	10.5%
Cumberland	19%	14%	594	19%
Franklin	2%	2%	36	1.2%
Hancock	4%	4%	150	4.8%
Kennebec	9%	9%	278	8.9%
Knox	4%	3%	39	1.3%
Lincoln	3%	3%	42	1.4%
Oxford	5%	5%	92	3%
Penobscot	11%	11%	510	16.4%
Piscataquis	2%	2%	44	1.4%
Sagadahoc	2%	2%	41	1.4%
Somerset	4%	5%	90	2.9%
Waldo	3%	3%	73	2.4%
Washington	3%	6%	137	4.5%
York	14%	12%	339	10.9%
Total	100%	100%	3,101	100%

<sup>1</sup> Note: These figures for clients served represent unduplicated clients, excluding health insurance counseling clients. As noted above, LSE serves clients with economic needs and social needs. Without statistics on the number of "socially needy" seniors, the poverty statistics provide a general picture of the geographic distribution of LSE's services and of seniors who may have the greatest need for legal services.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census 2000

The following chart breaks down the number of cases handled in 2003 by general case area. A more detailed chart of case types follows this narrative.

<b>LSE Client Service Statistics by General Case Type for 2003</b>	
Consumer/Finance	614
Employment	26
Family	128
Health Care / SHIP	641 / 1,957
Housing	604
Income Maintenance	81
Individual Rights	119
Probate	718
Miscellaneous	261
Total Cases	5,149

As in the past, the greatest demand for LSE services is for consumer issues (debt collection, home repair, automobile purchases), housing (public and private, evictions), health insurance (Medicare, MaineCare, prescription drugs), and aging preparedness (probate, powers of attorney, advance directives, wills). The area office staff attorneys provided extended representation in elder abuse, guardianship defense, long term care, predatory lending, and housing cases as well as other civil matters. The clients served are among the most needy and vulnerable seniors.

In addition to direct client representation, LSE has provided legal information through its website. As of November 2003, there were 43,199 “site visits” to the LSE website. Visitors to the website are able to read and download client information articles on powers of attorney, financial exploitation, advance directives, MaineCare estate recovery, MaineCare eligibility for nursing home coverage, and others. While it is impossible to tell who is accessing this information, it is safe to assume that the majority is seniors and those who work with or care for seniors.

### **Improving Access to Legal Services**

In late 2002, LSE launched the Legal Access Project (LAP), an innovative partnership with Maine’s community health centers. Maine has 30 community-based health centers located in rural, even remote, parts of the state where the majority of Maine’s seniors live. Nearly 15% of the patients of community health centers in Maine are 65 or older, meaning that one out of ten rural Maine seniors (age 65 and over) use community health centers. Seeing community health centers as logical and strategic partners, LSE envisioned an opportunity to reach “hard-to-reach” seniors in their own communities. LSE seized the



opportunity to use the enormous potential of this novel partnership to expand its presence in rural Maine.

As a part of LAP, LSE produced a series of ten accessible self-help legal information pamphlets entitled “Know Your Rights.” This series is written in plain English at a fifth grade level and graphically designed for readability, using the services of a literacy expert and graphic designer. “Know Your Rights” brochures will be available at community health centers where they will be prominently displayed. The topics are long-term care, MaineCare estate recovery, advance directives, powers of attorney, joint bank accounts, debt collection, wills, grandparents’ visitation rights, surviving spouse issues, and home repair disputes. The series is now available on LSE’s website.

LAP developed a “Legal Health Check-Up” to help seniors identify legal issues and needs. Seniors will fill out the check-up, answering questions about aging preparedness, health coverage, home repairs, and debt collection. The forms can be mailed into the LSE Hotline where an attorney will review them and will follow up with a call to the senior to discuss his or her legal needs.

The director of the Legal Access Project also participated with the Elder Law Section of the Maine State Bar Association to conduct a presentation and clinic on advanced directives. This clinic was held in the Augusta area. It was so successful that it launched a series of similar advance planning clinics. Clinics have been held in Lewiston, Porter, and Calais.

In October 2003, LSE was awarded a two-year grant from the Department of Justice to develop the Elder Justice Project. This project will focus on training law enforcement personnel on elder abuse identification, prosecution, and prevention. LSE will work with Family Crisis Services, the Southern Maine Agency on Aging, and Adult Protective Services to conduct regional trainings and to develop local inter-disciplinary teams to respond to elder abuse in their communities.

### **Education and Outreach**

LSE continues the very important work of conducting education and outreach to the general public and social service organization about elder abuse and financial exploitation. Violence against the elderly is a problem that has been largely hidden from public view. LSE has been working with other organizations to make the public more aware of elder abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation. LSE has joined with community organizations (e.g., Southern Maine Agency on Aging, Family Crisis Services) and governmental entities (e.g., Adult Protective Services, City of Portland Department of Public Health, Cumberland County Commissioners) to educate and train law enforcement personnel, emergency medical technicians, and other first responders about the signs of elder abuse, response techniques, and referral resources. LSE is one of the founding members of the Elder Abuse Institute of Maine whose mission is to promote the awareness of elder abuse and increase resources to address this issue.

Access to health care is a primary concern to Maine’s seniors. LSE participates in the State Health Insurance Counseling Program (SHIP) along with the Bureau of Elder and Adult

Services and Maine's five area agencies on aging. LSE's Hotline is the primary resource for Maine's Medicare beneficiaries looking for help in understanding their health insurance options, rights, and remedies.

Although direct client contact is the cornerstone of LSE's outreach and education efforts, sometimes a more effective and efficient means of getting vital information to clients is to train other service providers. For example, LSE and MEJP, along with the Maine Primary Care Association, obtained private funding for a statewide training project to educate health care and community service providers about Medicare and MaineCare eligibility and benefits for seniors and persons with disabilities. Given the many and complex changes in Medicare and MaineCare, this training project has been tremendously successful, training nearly 1,000 participants in 2003.

### **Ongoing Impact of MCLSF in Improving Client Services**

The Fund has a direct impact on LSE's ability to provide services to Maine's socially and economically needy seniors. Since its inception, the Fund has allowed LSE to stabilize and even expand its services.

- MCLSF enabled LSE to re-open an outreach office in Lewiston in 1999. However, the attorney covering the Lewiston area worked out of LSE's Portland or Augusta office. In 2003, LSE was able to expand the Lewiston attorney position from a three day a week position to a full-time position with matching funds from the United Way of Androscoggin County.
- Because of the leveraging power of MCLSF dollars, LSE is able to maintain its Hotline, which is funded partially through a federal grant that requires a substantial match. In addition MCLSF support is critical for LSE's efforts regarding elder abuse and long term care.

### **Conclusion**

**In 2003, MCLSF funding represented over 15% of LSE's total budget.** The Fund provides significant support so that LSE can stabilize many of its existing services, avoid reducing services and staff, and whenever possible to expand and enhance services. Legal Services for the Elderly is committed to working on behalf of Maine seniors to protect their safety, shelter, income, health, autonomy, independence, and dignity. The support of Maine Civil Legal Services Fund for LSE directly benefits their lives by increasing and improving access to justice, which in turn creates a better quality of life for Maine's elders.

Sincerely,

Paul Lavin, Esq.  
Executive Director

CASE TYPE	1/1 - 3/31	4/1 - 6/30	7/1 - 9/30	10/1 - 12/31	Totals
<b>CONSUMER/FINANCE</b>					
Bankruptcy	10	11	16	14	51
Collection/incl Repossession	75	79	88	69	311
Contracts/Warranties	8	15	13	5	41
Credit Access	1	1	3	0	5
Energy (other than Public Utility)	1	0	0	0	1
Loans/Installment Purchase	9	9	3	3	24
Public Utilities	1	2	6	3	12
Unfair Sales Practices	23	14	18	11	66
Other Consumer/Finance	9	15	5	9	38
General Insurance	0	0	0	0	0
Auto Purchase & Repair	7	17	20	6	50
Funeral/Burial/Arrangements	5	5	4	1	15
<b>Total Consumer/Finance</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>614</b>
<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>					
Job Discrimination	0	0	0	0	0
Wage Claims	0	0	1	1	2
Wrongful Discharge	0	3	0	2	5
Pensions	2	3	3	1	9
Other Employment	3	3	3	1	10
<b>Total Employment</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>FAMILY</b>					
Adoption	1	0	0	0	1
Grandparent Rights	1	2	3	4	10
Annul/Divorce/Separation	14	10	12	10	46
Guardianship/Conservatorship	5	5	4	13	27
Guardianship - Defense	2	4	2	4	12
Guardianship - Petition	2	3	1	1	7
Name Change	1	0	0	0	1
Custody/Visitation	1	1	3	0	5
Spouse Abuse	0	0	0	2	2
Support	0	0	0	0	0
Other Family	7	3	4	3	17
<b>Total Family</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>HEALTH/COMMUNITY BASED CARE</b>					
Medicaid	17	22	9	15	63
Medicaid - Eligibility Determination	25	27	31	24	107
Medicaid - Spousal Impoverishment	3	1	2	0	6
Medicare	2	10	3	2	17
Medicare - SLMB	0	0	0	1	1
Medicare - QMBY	1	0	4	0	5
Medicare - Medigap Insurance	0	4	0	0	4
SHIP	616	439	404	498	1957
Long Term Care Insurance	0	1	1	0	2
Health Insurance Issues	0	1	3	0	4
Home Health Care	9	10	18	7	44
Nursing Home Issues	4	3	4	2	13
Advance Directives	69	68	73	129	339
Medical Malpractice	1	1	1	1	4
Other Medical	8	12	7	5	32
<b>Total Health/Community Based Care</b>	<b>755</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>2598</b>

**HOUSING**

Eminent Domain	0	0	1	0	1
Fed Sub Housing Rights	19	45	9	16	89
Homeownership/Real Property	28	35	43	30	136
Landlord/Tenant (other than Pub Hsg)	9	23	22	17	71
Other Public Housing	19	17	18	16	70
Property Tax Issues	3	3	3	11	20
Foreclosure/Forfeiture	8	7	4	7	26
Real Estate Transactions	23	20	23	14	80
Home Repairs	12	6	12	17	47
Neighbor Disputes	6	17	22	9	54
Other Housing	1	6	3	0	10
<b>Total Housing</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>604</b>

**INCOME MAINTENANCE**

Food Stamps/Commodities	1	0	2	2	5
Social Security	8	6	20	8	42
SSI	3	7	8	3	21
Unemployment Compensation	0	0	0	0	0
VA Benefits	0	0	0	0	0
Workers' Compensation	1	1	1	1	4
Other Income Maintenance	3	1	3	2	9
<b>Total Income Maintenance</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>81</b>

**INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS**

Immigration/Naturalization	1	1	0	0	2
Mental Health	1	0	0	0	1
Nursing Home Residents' Rights	0	0	0	0	0
Physically Disabled Rights	0	0	0	0	0
General Durable POA	108	99	110	106	423
Age Discrimination	1	0	0	0	1
Elder Abuse	13	15	10	12	50
Physical Abuse	1	0	0	0	1
Financial Exploitation	14	19	15	5	53
Neglect	0	0	0	2	2
Self Neglect	0	0	0	0	0
Crime Victims	1	0	0	1	2
Other Individual Rights	4	0	2	1	7
<b>Total Individual Rights</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>542</b>

<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>					
Incorporation/Dissolution	0	1	0	0	1
Indian Tribal Law	0	0	0	0	0
License (Auto & Other)	0	3	1	4	8
Torts	13	15	22	12	62
Wills/Estates	37	70	48	40	195
Estate Planning	9	15	10	9	43
Estate Administration	14	13	18	12	57
Income Taxes	2	4	8	6	20
Traffic/Criminal	2	1	7	3	13
Attorney Grievance	1	0	0	1	2
Other Miscellaneous	24	17	54	19	114
AMPs	12	24	3	0	39
Medicare Plus Choice	1	0	0	0	1
Low Cost Drug	0	0	1	0	1
<b>Total Miscellaneous</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>556</b>
<b>TOTAL CASES</b>	<b>1346</b>	<b>1295</b>	<b>1275</b>	<b>1233</b>	<b>5149</b>



## **2003 Annual Report to the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund Commission Maine Equal Justice Partners**

Maine Equal Justice Partners (MEJP) is pleased to provide the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund Commission with its annual report for 2003. With funding from the Commission, MEJP is able to provide legal representation to low-income people in Maine through several approaches: impact litigation to produce systemic reform; policy analysis to determine the effects of proposed policies and favorable options; administrative advocacy to represent the interests of low-income people with administrative bodies; and outreach and education to communicate legal rights and benefits for public programs.

MEJP's target population is low-income people in Maine with incomes below 150% of the federal poverty guidelines. We focus specifically on efforts to benefit:

- Families who receive TANF benefits – approximately 11,700 families;
- Families and individuals who are eligible for MaineCare (Medicaid) benefits – approximately 210,000 people;
- Elderly and disabled individuals who are eligible for prescription drug assistance;
- Families who are eligible for food stamp benefits – approximately 62,600 families;
- Low-wage workers and their families whose wages are below 150% of the poverty guidelines; and
- Dislocated workers who have lost their jobs due to lay-offs, shutdowns, and plant closings.

Because MEJP's mission is to represent low-income people on matters of a systemic nature, our focus is on cases and issues that impact a large number of people. We take very few individual legal cases. The legal representation that we provide through impact litigation or administrative advocacy is often complex and may take months and/or years to resolve but it often yields favorable results for thousands of Maine's low-income citizens.

MEJP has a close working relationship with its low-income client organization – the Maine Association of Interdependent Neighborhoods (MAIN). MAIN members include low-income individuals and organizations representing low-income individuals from around the state, including community programs, tenant organizations, anti-hunger groups, neighborhood groups, Head Start parents, and many others. MAIN represents over 10,000 low-income people.

MEJP also works closely with, and enjoys the support of, social service providers, Head Start Policy Councils, community action programs, domestic violence programs, senior citizen programs, disability rights groups, nontraditional education programs, and others. MEJP depends on these organizations for input on its work, and they, in turn, view MEJP as a valuable legal resource on issues affecting their clients and constituents.

## Litigation

MEJP uses a strategy of negotiation, whenever possible, to achieve its goals of systemic reform. When negotiated solutions fail, we pursue resolution in court. In all instances litigation staff gather information about systemic problems affecting low-income people, investigate the applicable cases, determine whether there is a legal claim and an appropriate class representative, and then determine the best course of action for the case. If we are likely to litigate we seek pro bono assistance from the private bar.

**In-home mental health services for children on MaineCare.** As reported last year, we were victorious in achieving a successful settlement of a class-action lawsuit, requiring the state to provide services to up to 1300 children enrolled in MaineCare who need in-home mental health services. MEJP, together with Pierce Atwood pro bono attorneys Bill Kayatta and Margaret Minister O'Keefe, continues to work with the Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services to implement the settlement agreement so that children receive the case management and in-home support services they need.

**Appeal process negotiated for child protective substantiation.** MEJP is pleased to report that it came to an agreement in the fall of 2003 with the Attorney General's office and the Department of Human Services' Bureau of Child and Family Services to provide due process to individuals who have been "substantiated" for possible abuse or neglect of a child. Substantiation occurs when a DHS caseworker investigates an allegation and decides that there is an actual or a threat of abuse or neglect. Sometimes substantiations are erroneous or misplaced. For example, adult victims of domestic violence have been substantiated because a child was present when the abuse occurred. "Substantiated" individuals are placed in the state's database, which is used for background checks by employers, licensing agencies, and others.

Previously, the state had not permitted an administrative hearing to challenge one's inclusion in the database. This meant that people who were identified erroneously could suffer harm, such as loss of employment, a license, or their rights of association, as a result of the substantiation. MEJP and the MCLU, with the support of private attorneys, threatened a federal class action lawsuit, and subsequently entered in negotiations. Those negotiations resulted in an agreement to provide an administrative hearing to anyone who is substantiated after November 1, 2003. This agreement is embodied in emergency rules issued by DHS. Negotiations to adopt due process for persons placed in the database prior to that date continue.

**Settlement of 'Toussignant' case.** Similar to the issue described above, individuals who were substantiated for abuse or neglect by the DHS Out of Home Abuse Unit had no right to due process. This particular DHS unit has independent authority to add substantiated persons to the abuse registry, and, like the Bureau of Child and Family Services, had heretofore refused to provide hearings for these individuals. With co-counsel Rufus Brown, MEJP's litigation director achieved a settlement with DHS, requiring the state to provide due process hearings for persons who are substantiated by this unit.



**Settlement of ‘Horsefall’ case.** With co-counsel Jack Comart, of Pine Tree Legal Assistance, MEJP developed a settlement in the Horsefall case, which required the state to establish a system to provide due process to families and children relating to denials, terminations, or reductions of community-based Medicaid-funded services. The settlement also required the state to establish and implement a system for determining eligibility and priority for MR waiver services (see below).

**Services for children with mental retardation.** As a result of negotiations in the ‘Horsefall’ case, the Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services (BDS) began to keep a waiting list of all children who requested services through the waiver for persons with mental retardation (MR waiver). Since the waiver is currently closed to new enrollees, with the exception of clients of Adult Protection, MEJP staff are working with BDS to ensure that children on the waiting list have access to alternative services to meet their needs.

**Mental health services for inmates of county jails.** MEJP took part in a joint effort with the Maine Civil Liberties Union (MCLU) and the Disability Rights Center (DRC) to investigate access to mental health services for inmates of county jails. Through DRC’s right of access, staff from the three organizations visited every jail in the state to interview inmates who claimed to have mental health problems. While the intent of these efforts was to lay the foundation for a lawsuit, if necessary, the DRC used the information to prepare a report that was submitted to the Legislature in May 2003.

## **Administrative Advocacy**

Policy analysis and administrative advocacy are critical components of Maine Equal Justice’s efforts to achieve systemic reform that benefits Maine’s low-income people. MEJP staff conduct this work on a range of issues and in a variety of forums, including:

### **TANF Reauthorization**

As reported previously, MEJP was deeply involved in analyzing the implications of the federal TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) reauthorization proposals in 2002. TANF – the nation’s current welfare law – was enacted in 1996 and is subject to reauthorization every five years. The polarized debate in Congress in 2002 led to postponement of reauthorization until 2003. As Congress renewed its debate on reauthorization in 2003, MEJP worked with Congressional staff and state officials, providing technical analyses and information on the effects of the proposed policies on families.

Once Congress finalizes reauthorization of the TANF law in 2004, MEJP will work with the Department of Human Services, social service providers, and our low-income clients to implement the required changes at the state level. Our goals are to minimize the harm of unrealistic work requirements and punitive sanctions, to protect families with disabilities who cannot work full time, to increase educational options, and to help families understand the benefits available to them.

## Health Care

**Health care reform.** MEJP staff were closely involved in the Governor's health care reform initiative in 2003. Mary Henderson, Executive Director, was appointed to the 27-member Health Action Team (HAT), representing business, providers, consumers, and government, which provided guidance to the Governor's Office of Health Policy and Finance on the components of health care reform. She also participated in the HAT subcommittee on Low-Income Access and Financing. The work of the Health Action Team and its various subcommittees resulted in proposed legislation to create Dirigo Health, a health reform plan that addresses cost, quality, and access while achieving universal health care over time. MEJP staff provided legal expertise on Medicaid law throughout the development and consideration of various proposals, and brought the voice of the low-income consumer to the deliberations. MEJP is continuing to provide that expertise and representation as the actual design of Dirigo is developed and implemented. Mary Henderson serves on the five-member Dirigo Health Board of Directors.

**Medicaid coverage for childless adults.** As reported in MEJP's 2002 report, Medicaid coverage was extended to childless adults with income below the federal poverty level (FPL). This has meant that thousands of previously uninsured adults are now receiving health care, which is precisely the intended result. Claims data from DHS indicates that this population is costing far more than originally projected, however, thereby jeopardizing expansion of coverage to individuals up to 125% of FPL. MEJP conducted an extensive analysis of Medicaid data and processes, and is working with the DHS and the Governor's Office of Health Policy and Finance to determine what costs are being attributed to this eligibility group, and whether applicants are being appropriately identified in this eligibility category. Our aim is to ensure that the MaineCare program can maximize coverage of individuals who are eligible as childless adults and that available funds for this group of eligibles are spent accordingly.

**Prescription drug coverage.** 2003 was a particularly volatile time for Maine's prescription drug benefit programs. The Healthy Maine Prescription (HMP) Program, which provides discounts on prescription drugs to low-income people through a federal Medicaid waiver, was challenged by the pharmaceutical industry and, ultimately struck down in December 2002 by the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. Meanwhile, the Maine Rx program, another drug discount program for qualifying individuals, faced a Supreme Court challenge. MEJP staff worked with DHS and other administration officials to develop strategies and possible options to secure the intended benefits of both of these programs, including revised waiver proposals to the federal Health and Human Services Department.

The U.S. Supreme Court ultimately ruled in favor of the Maine Rx program in May 2003. MEJP subsequently provided analysis and input to the state in redesigning the program to meet the new budget parameters. When proposed rules for the Maine Rx Plus program were issued in November, MEJP provided comments to the Bureau of Medical Services and the Bureau of Family Independence. The program was implemented on January 20, 2004.

As a result of state budget negotiations in 2003, the Department of Human Services made certain changes to the prescription drug benefit under MaineCare. These included,

requiring the use of generic drugs unless prior authorization for a nongeneric drug is obtained, and implementing a universal \$2.50 co payment per prescription, up to a maximum of \$25 per month. MEJP provided comments to DHS on its proposed rules to implement these changes, in an attempt to ensure that MaineCare beneficiaries retain sufficient access to their pharmacy benefits

### **TANF, ASPIRE and Parents as Scholars**

**TANF increase.** Maine's TANF program was awarded over \$4.2 million in high performance bonuses at the end of federal fiscal year 2003, because of the state's excellent work in helping families retain food stamps and Medicaid and the success of TANF families in the workforce. With the availability of these funds and the knowledge that Maine lags far behind the other New England states in the amount of cash assistance it provides, MEJP began the work of seeking a small increase in TANF benefits through administrative rulemaking. Staff conducted a detailed analysis of current law, existing TANF benefits, and the cost of an increase in TANF benefit levels. As a result of this research, MEJP developed a proposal for a modest increase in TANF cash benefits, using a portion of the bonus funds available

**Peer support for TANF, ASPIRE, and Parents as Scholars beneficiaries.** We are very pleased that MEJP's proposal to create a Peer Support and Advocacy Program within the Maine Department of Human Services (DHS) was enacted into law by the Maine legislature in 2003. The program, which is being implemented initially in four pilot sites around the state, is intended to help families who are enrolled in TANF, ASPIRE, or Parents as Scholars receive comprehensive information about the services available and troubleshoot any problems they might have in accessing benefits. MEJP helped DHS with the development of a training curriculum, and is providing input to DHS as it conducts recruitment and training of individuals from the benefit programs to serve as Peer Advocates.

### **Food Stamps**

**Elimination of three-month time limit for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD).** MEJP provided analysis and recommendations to the Department of Human through the rulemaking process to eliminate the three-month time limit for eligibility for certain Food Stamp recipients, referred to as "ABAWDs". The amended rules, effective February 2003, use exemption slots, accrued under the Food Stamp program's "15% exemption rule" to extend continued benefits to ABAWDs who have received three countable months of assistance and do not meet any other exemption criteria.

**Simplified reporting requirements.** MEJP negotiated with DHS to adopt the simplified reporting option, made available to states under the Farm Bill. Effective May 2003, certified households are now required to recertify their eligibility annually, with a brief report to be completed at six months. This extension of the certification period alleviates a considerable barrier to participation for low-wage families, who often failed to recertify under the three-month requirement because of the burden of submitting wage stubs and other paper work at such frequent intervals.

**Electronic benefit transfer.** The Maine DHS implemented electronic benefit transfers for the TANF and Food Stamp programs in June 2003. With this change, clients now receive a debit card to use at grocery stores and most convenient stores when purchasing food. Maine Equal Justice staff provided input in the development of this system and submitted comments on the proposed rule.

### **Improving Conditions For Low-Wage Workers**

**Unemployment benefits for part-time workers.** The Maine Legislature passed legislation in 2003 that provides unemployment compensation to workers who are only available to work part-time. Subsequent to passage of the law, MEJP staff provided comments to the Department of Labor and the Unemployment Insurance Commission during the development and promulgation of rules enacting the legislation. The intent of this new benefit is to respond to the needs of workers who can only seek part-time work because of the illness or disability of an immediate family member.

**Dislocated workers in crisis.** MEJP and the Maine AFL-CIO produced a book in May 2003, entitled *Laid Off! Conversations with Maine Workers in Crisis: A Blueprint for Action*, which illustrates the challenges that laid-off workers face in Maine and the gravity of the current employment situation in the state. The release of the book created a vehicle to engage the interest of the Governor, the Commissioner of Labor and Maine legislators in better understanding the various problems faced by dislocated workers. As a result of this effort, the Commissioner of the Department of Labor conducted four public forums around the state during the fall of 2003 to hear from workers themselves about the challenges they face and changes that would improve their lives.

**Policies to improve educational opportunities for low-wage workers.** MEJP was instrumental in encouraging the state to apply to a selective multi-state initiative focused on improving higher education opportunities for adults. We are pleased to report that the state was selected to participate in this six-state academy, sponsored by the National Governors Association (NGA). Entitled *Pathways to Advancement Policy Academy*, the NGA initiative will, over an 18-month period, assist the selected states to change higher education, workforce development, and welfare policies to help more adults obtain postsecondary credentials. The initiative requires participating states to assemble a core team of senior executives from state agencies, educational institutions, and private non-profit and business organizations. Maine Equal Justice has been asked to serve on the core team, to represent the interests of low-income people.

### **General Assistance**

MEJP staff have participated in a workgroup, convened by DHS, to examine eligibility criteria and benefit levels for the General Assistance Program, along with other state and municipal officials. The group has been collecting and examining relevant data to identify possible opportunities to improve the adequacy of General Assistance as a safety net for Maine people.

## **Benefits for Immigrants**

In the area of immigration, MEJP's research, analysis, and negotiation resulted in agreement by the state that applicants for asylum fall within the categories of immigrants that can receive state-funded benefits such as TANF and Medicaid. This determination resulted in alleviating long delays in processing these applications and securing desperately needed benefits for many immigrants. Further, it helped reduce the local burden on cities coping with an influx of asylum applicants.

While conducting this analysis, the question was raised as to whether certain categories of immigrants (nonimmigrants, aliens who are "not qualified," those unlawfully present and others) could receive state or local general assistance benefits under the federal law. We anticipate that our research and analysis will prevent the unnecessary disqualification of people from general assistance as well as avoid an error-prone process in which general assistance administrators attempt to determine very complex immigration statuses of people who need assistance. The matter remains before the Attorney General's office, which has not yet reached a decision.

## **Participation on Boards and Commissions**

**Advisory Council for the Reorganization and Unification of the Department of Human Services and the Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services.** In his inaugural address in January 2003, Governor Baldacci stated his intent to reorganize state government and, specifically, to merge the Departments of Human Services and Behavioral and Developmental services to improve their service and efficiency. He appointed an Advisory Council to develop recommendations to effect this change. Maine Equal Justice staff member, Pat Ende, was one of the 17 members of that Council and in that role advocated for improved access, coordination, and delivery of the Departments' services so that low-income people receive the benefits to which they are entitled.

MEJP's participation in other boards and committees in 2003 included:

MaineCare (Medicaid) Advisory Committee  
Governor's Health Action Team (to address health care reform) and its low-income financing subcommittee  
Dirigo Health Board of Directors  
Medicare Beneficiaries Workgroup  
TANF Advisory Council  
Advisory Committee on Civil Rules for Supreme Judicial Court  
Public Health Advisory Council  
Child Protective Task Force  
Maine Health Access Foundation, Community Advisory Committee

## **Outreach and Education**

Maine Equal Justice's advocacy on behalf of low-income people would not be complete without its outreach component. We work directly with low-income groups and social service providers throughout Maine, providing outreach and education about the services and opportunities available to low-income people. Program rules and benefits are often complex; our intent is to provide information and tools to low-income people and those that serve them so they can be sure families receive the services they need. At the same time, this outreach provides an opportunity for us to learn about systemic problems that may emerge in the implementation of programs. MEJP conducts its outreach through training and education sessions, its work with MAIN, and dissemination of information through publications and the website.

## **Training and Education**

Over the past year, MEJP has:

- Provided 17 technical training sessions to over 300 social services providers and agency staff about MaineCare eligibility and benefits available to children and adults, as part of the *Covering Kids and Families* collaborative with Maine Primary Care Association (MPCA) and Consumers for Affordable Health Care.
- Provided ten technical training to over 200 agency staff and providers on MaineCare and prescription drug benefits for seniors and people with disabilities – through a similar collaborative with MPCA and Legal Services for the Elderly.
- Conducted nine training and education workshops for staff and parents at Head Start agencies around the state on TANF benefits, food stamps, Parents as Scholars, health care programs, and other benefits for low-income families. As part of this training we provided information about how to get involved in advocacy activities that can improve programs and opportunities for themselves and their clients. Over 100 people participated in these training sessions.
- Provided training and education for staff of university programs for nontraditional students and adult education programs about higher education opportunities through Parents as Scholars and related welfare benefits.
- Conducted a training session on Parents as Scholars and other assistance programs for low-income families at the annual Head Start conference in April 2003.
- Conducted training and education on Maine's prescription drug benefits for seniors at the annual meeting of the Maine Council of Senior Citizens and for volunteers of Catholic Charities' Prescription Drug Assistance Program.
- Conducted five regional trainings on general assistance for the Maine Council of Churches' outreach program.

## **Maine Association of Interdependent Neighborhoods**

MEJP's close working relationship with the Maine Association of Interdependent Neighborhoods (MAIN) provides an important vehicle through which we can both learn about emerging issues for low-income people and provide information on topics and programs that

may be helpful to people in need of assistance. MEJP staff participate in MAIN's monthly meetings – and use the feedback from MAIN members to help craft proposals and recommendations that will improve options and benefits for low-income families. MAIN produces a quarterly newsletter with support from MEJP that reaches approximately 2,000 people. In November 2003 MAIN held a statewide conference, attended by approximately 75 people, with a focus on how poor people can survive in today's economy. It included workshops on housing, health care, opportunities for low-wage workers, anti-hunger issues, and children in need of services.

### **Information Dissemination**

Maine Equal Justice distributed over 5,000 copies of informational materials to low-income people, providers, and other constituency groups. They included the following publications:

- Understanding TANF/ASPIRE: What are your rights?
- Parents as Scholars Program
- Parents as Scholars: Education Works
- Welfare, Work, and Raising Children
- What Happens To My Benefits When I Get a Job and Leave TANF?
- Covering Kids and Families: a Guide to MaineCare
- Maine Low-cost Drug Program for the Elderly and Disabled
- Maine Medical Assistance Programs: Who's Covered and Who's Not

MEJP's website ([www.mejp.org](http://www.mejp.org)) provides a wealth of up-to-date information for consumers and others interested in the specific aspects of Maine's public assistance programs. Many of the materials listed above can be downloaded from the site. We had 68,541 'visits' to our site in 2003; an increase of 34% over visits recorded in 2002.

### **Conclusion**

Maine Equal Justice Partners is deeply appreciative of the support provided by the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund during 2003. Funding from the MCLSF supported approximately 25% of MEJP's budget during 2003 – we could not carry out our mission without this support. MEJP's legal services work is unique in the state in that it is the only organization that works primarily at the systemic level to achieve changes that will benefit low-income people. Our expertise and capacity in litigation, administrative advocacy, and outreach and education serve to make the organization an effective advocate. Maine Equal Justice is proud of this leadership role. On behalf of the Board, staff, and clients of Maine Equal Justice, we thank the Commission for its generous support.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary T. Henderson, Esq.  
Executive Director





**2003 Annual Report to the  
Maine Civil Legal Services Fund Commission  
Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Inc.**

Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Inc. (Pine Tree) is pleased to submit this year-end narrative report on the services that it has provided in 2003 and developments at the organization.

Since its doors first opened in 1967, Pine Tree has provided free, high quality legal services to thousands of Maine residents with civil legal problems. Pine Tree services are limited to poor Mainers, generally those individuals whose household incomes are at or below 125% of the federal poverty guidelines. Because its resources have never been sufficient to meet the volume of demand for assistance by eligible clients with serious civil legal problems, Pine Tree prioritizes its services according to several important goals:

- Maintaining, enhancing and protecting income and economic security for low-income Mainers;
- Preservation of housing and related needs;
- Promoting the safety, stability and well-being of low-income Mainers;
- Improving outcomes for children;
- Meeting the legal needs of populations with special vulnerabilities;
- Improving the delivery of legal services and access to justice for low-income Mainers statewide;

**Direct services to poor Mainers with civil legal problems**

In calendar year 2003, more than 30,000 individuals benefited from legal services provided by Pine Tree Legal Assistance -- a number which does NOT include the more than 200,000 client education and self-help articles downloaded from the Pine Tree website, or the 279,000 court and legal forms used online. Staff distributed over 10,300 copies of written legal education materials and "self-help" pamphlets and more than 1,150 individuals attended a Pine Tree presentation or training on some issue significant to low-income individuals with civil legal needs. While the case service statistics for calendar year 2003 are not available in final form, current information suggests that Pine Tree staff were able to complete services in more than 7,000 cases during the year (benefiting a total of 30,993 individuals in the households served.) An additional 2,000 cases remained open at year's end. Some of these matters had been opened in previous years; others involved services which were begun and concluded in 2003.

Many of Pine Tree's clients are the working poor: people who work 40 hours a week in minimum wage jobs and support a spouse and children. Others are single parents trying to provide a stable family life for their children. Some are adults with significant disabilities who are struggling to live independently.

A significant and growing constituency is comprised of recent immigrants with limited English proficiency. Pine Tree's innovative multilingual voicemail system and its use of Language Line interpreters allowed the program to provide access to justice for 368 clients in Maine who could not speak English.

As a statewide provider with the largest network of local legal aid offices around Maine, Pine Tree completed work for more than 7,000 individuals living in 433 Maine communities around the State: a list of those communities is also provided as an attachment to this report.

A separate attachment details the types of cases which were handled by Pine Tree advocates during 2003. (These numbers are approximate because data entry continues on 2003 cases into mid-February.) Roughly 2,000 cases remained open at year's end on which some level of further assistance by Pine Tree advocates was necessary.

In the vast majority of cases, Pine Tree does not resort to litigation. Staff resolve most problems through simple advice, a quick explanation of the law, referral to a local social service organization or negotiation to avoid a protracted and expensive lawsuit. However, when Pine Tree does go to court, it wins nine cases out of ten.

Hundreds of clients statewide were served exclusively with Maine Civil Legal Services Fund support statewide. MCLSF funding allowed Pine Tree to target assistance to needy individuals whose household incomes were slightly above Pine Tree's usual guidelines, whose citizenship status was unclear, or who faced other barriers to service as a result of restrictions imposed by one of Pine Tree's other funding sources.

Outreach services also are not reflected in closed case statistics, although it obviously serves to make client populations more aware of their legal rights and responsibilities. For instance, the tiny staff of the Migrant Farmworker Unit based in Bangor visited over 97 different labor camps in 2003, traveling over 8,000 miles to meet with migrant workers involved in various agricultural activities (including blueberry, apple, broccoli, and vegetable harvests, tree-planting, and egg production.). The Unit also distributed approximately 1,800 copies of an innovative "Harvest Calendar" that combined easy-to use legal information in Spanish and English with a calendar suitable for recording work hours and distributed over 260 newsletters addressing the laws impacting on H-2A workers as part of a regional collaboration in New England.

Similarly, the Native American Unit staff conducted regular outreach to all four tribes in Maine in 2002, allowing Pine Tree to provide much more responsive services to low-income members of the Penobscot Indian Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribe, Houlton Band of Maliseets and Aroostook Band of Micmacs. The Unit also distributed over 3,200 issues of "Wabanaki Legal News" in two editions during the year.

## **Services provided over the Internet**

Pine Tree relies on its web site, at <http://www.ptla.org>, to provide substantial information to the general public and to low-income individuals about their legal rights. In 2003, the Pine Tree web site was visited 585,936 times, 183,226 more times than in 2002, an increase of about 43%. These statistics continue to show very substantial growth in access to our website materials as more and more clients gain access to and familiarity with the Internet.

The twelve most frequently viewed client education html pages on the Pine Tree Legal Assistance site were:

- Emancipation – 43,421 (We were prominently featured on a very popular teen site, and are virtually the only good information on emancipation available on the Internet, so this represents national traffic.)
- Rights of Tenants in Maine – 20,348 (compared with 14,096 last year)
- Divorce and Parental Rights – 11,534 (9,378 last year)
- Indian Child Welfare Act – 9,672 (8,667)
- Protection From Abuse – 7,558 (6,430)
- Security Deposits – 6,063 (4,225)
- Homestead Exemptions – 5,939 (4,111)
- Post-judgment Family Law Motions – 5,254 (4,871)
- Calculating Your Child Support – 4,981 (5,407)
- What can I do if my Landlord is trying to evict me? – 4,769
- Family Law Resources – 4,334 (3,892)
- Child Support and Debt Due – 3,589 (4,198)

Other pages that were frequently viewed include:

- Links to Legal Services Programs – 44,867
- Index to Legal Materials for Clients – 30,098
- Introduction to Forms – 18,721 (There are many forms pages for different kinds of cases.)
- Legal Aid Around the World – 15,721
- Family Law Index – 11,936
- Housing Law Index – 8,854
- Eligibility Guidelines – 12,044
- How to Contact Us for Help – 8,444
- About PTLA – 7,793
- Pro Bono Links – 7,736
- PTLA Jobs – 6,533
- Cool Stuff – 5,412

We make many materials available on the web site in portable document format (pdf). These are mostly forms, but include printable pamphlets of most of our client education materials. The most frequently downloaded .pdf materials in 2003 were:

Request for Return of Security Deposit form – 13,275  
Confidential Family Matter Summary Sheet (interactive) – 11,546  
Child Support Guidelines – 7,536  
Self-calculating, table looking-up, child support worksheet – 7,512  
Acknowledgment of Receipt of Summons and Complaint – 6,965  
Self-calculating child support worksheet (no table look-up) – 6,875  
Court instruction sheet for divorce with children – 5,800  
Motion to Modify Family Law Judgment or Order – 5,580  
Court instruction sheet for motion to modify – 5,223  
Self-calculating child support affidavit – 5,090  
Confidential Family Matter Summary Sheet (not interactive) – 5,080  
Civil Summary Sheet (interactive) – 4,545

The sites that referred people to the PTLA site most frequently in 2003 were Google, Yahoo, MSN and AOL, followed by HelpMeLaw, ABA, Maine State Government, Maine Courts and the VLP.

Pine Tree continued to expand self-help material made available to its non-English speaking clients, with at least some information available in Spanish, French, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Arabic and Khmer. Traffic to these portions of the website also increased dramatically, and encouraged use of Pine Tree's bilingual voicemail system in southern Maine (which provides access to callers in 8 languages other than English.)

### **Changes in Service Delivery in 2003**

Unfortunately, general funding declines in 2003 (including reductions in MCLSF funding to Pine Tree) led to the loss of four staff positions around the State. Pine Tree was able to hold onto its two staff attorney positions in Aroostook County (where Pine Tree is the only legal aid provider with local staff attorneys) but could not replace its Machias staff attorney when that person resigned in mid-summer. The loss of a significant federal grant supporting the equivalent of 3.5 staff attorney positions serving victims of domestic violence also created an additional drain on MCLSF funding, as it was used to maintain the most critically needed legal services for victims in rural areas of the State which were particularly dependent on Pine Tree for support. However, there were insufficient funds to keep open the Rockland domestic violence outreach office and it was closed in 2003.

Pine Tree did secure a significant one-time grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide fair housing education and outreach, with some additional funding support from MCLSF. The program conducted trainings for both consumers and housing professionals around the State, and developed significant new materials detailing fair housing rights and responsibilities in English, Spanish, Arabic and Somali, as well as summaries in Chinese.

In the fall, the program also launched a new Kids Legal Aid Project with grant support from the Maine Bar Foundation and the Juvenile Justice Advisory Group. Some MCLSF funding was used to supplement existing grant funding to this important and vulnerable constituency.

## **Conclusion**

**The Maine Civil Legal Services Fund represented twenty-five percent of Pine Tree's total budget for basic legal services in calendar year 2003, up from twenty percent in 2002, and signifying the tremendous importance of this basic funding source for low-income people in Maine.** Every Pine Tree office and outreach site (in Presque Isle, Bangor, Machias, Augusta, Lewiston and Portland) has been supported with this funding in the past year. Because of Pine Tree's ongoing investment of MCLSF resources in Internet-based services, individuals all over the State who have access to their public library or school's computers can get easy-to-use information about legal rights and responsibilities under Maine law. Poor Mainers from Fort Kent to Kittery, and from Oquossoc to Eastport have a better opportunity to receive justice today, thanks to the continuing services made possible from the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund.

Sincerely,

Nan Heald, Esq.  
Executive Director

## ***LEGAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY PINE TREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE***

### ***Case Types***

#### **Consumer Matters                      total of    538**

♦ bankruptcy/debtor relief	44
♦ collection	147
♦ contracts/warranties	52
♦ credit access	5
♦ loans/installment purchases	20
♦ public utilities	11
♦ unfair sales practice	10
♦ other consumer/finance	249

#### **Education                                  total of    93**

♦ all education	93
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#### **Employment                              total of    268**

♦ job discrimination	23
♦ wage claim	61
♦ other employment	184

#### **Family                                      total of 2,224**

♦ adoption	4
♦ custody/visitation	335
♦ divorce	879
♦ guardianship	35
♦ name change	11
♦ parental rights termination	39
♦ paternity	9
♦ domestic violence	636
♦ child support	142
♦ other family	134

#### **Health                                        total of    251**

♦ all health	251
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#### **Housing                                    total of 2,983**

♦ federal subsidized housing rights	608
♦ homeownership/real property	171
♦ landlord/tenant (other than public	1,683
♦ other public housing	395
♦ other housing	126

<b>Income Maintenance</b>	<b>total of</b>	<b>647</b>
♦ general assistance/TANF		189
♦ food stamps		93
♦ social security		123
♦ SSI		148
♦ unemployment compensation		39
♦ veterans benefits		7
♦ workers compensation		15
♦ other income		33
 <b>Individual Rights</b>	 <b>total of</b>	 <b>223</b>
♦ immigration/naturalization		134
♦ mental health		15
♦ disabled rights		6
♦ other individual rights		68
 <b>Juvenile</b>	 <b>total of</b>	 <b>14</b>
♦ all juvenile		14
 <b>Miscellaneous</b>	 <b>total of</b>	 <b>123</b>
♦ Indian tribal law		34
♦ license (auto & other)		7
♦ torts		8
♦ wills and estates		12
♦ miscellaneous		62

### **Pine Tree's most popular individual legal topics**

- 1. Rights of Tenants in Maine**
- 2. Divorce and Parental Rights in Maine**
- 3. Indian Child Welfare Act**
- 4. Protection from Abuse**
- 5. Calculating Your Child Support**
- 6. Post-Judgment Family Law Motions**
- 7. Security Deposits**
- 8. Child Support and Debt Due**
- 9. Homestead Exemptions**
- 10. Family Law Resources**

**Towns with Residents Served by Pine Tree Legal Assistance: 433 Towns  
(Cases Closed in 2003)**

Acton	Brooks	Dayton	Frankfort
Addison	Brownfield	Deblois	Franklin
Albion	Brownville	Deer Isle	Freedom
Alexander	Brownville Junction	Denmark	Freeport
Alfred	Brunswick	Dennysville	Frenchville
Allagash	Bryant Pond	Derby	Friendship
Alton	Buckfield	Detroit	Fryeburg
Anson	Bucksport	Dexter	Gardiner
Arrowsic	Burlington	Dixfield	Garland
Arundel	Burnham	Dixmont	Georgetown
Ashland	Buxton	Dover-Foxcroft	Glen Cove
Athens	Calais	Dresden	Glenburn
Auburn	Camden	Dryden	Gorham
Augusta	Canaan	Durham	Gouldsboro
Baileyville	Canton	Eagle Lake	Grand Isle
Bangor	Cape Elizabeth	East Corinth	Grand Lake Stream
Bar Harbor	Cape Neddick	East Dixfield	Gray
Bar Mills	Caribou	East Eddington	Greenbush
Baring	Carmel	East Livermore	Greene
Bass Harbor	Cary Plantation	East Machias	Greenfield Township
Bath	Casco	East Millinocket	Greenville
Beals	Castle Hill	East Newport	Greenville Junction
Belfast	Caswell	East Orland	Guilford
Belgrade	Charleston	East Poland	Hallowell
Belgrade Lakes	Charlotte	East Vassalboro	Hammond
Belmont	Chelsea	East Waterboro	Hampden
Benton	Cherryfield	East Winthrop	Hancock
Berwick	Chesterville	Easton	Harpswell
Bethel	China	Eastport	Harrington
Biddeford	Clifton	Eddington	Harrison
Bingham	Clinton	Edgecomb	Hartland
Birch Harbor	Columbia	Edmunds	Haynesville
Blaine	Columbia Falls	Eliot	Hebron
Blue Hill	Connor Township	Ellsworth	Hermon
Boothbay	Corinna	Etna	Hiram
Boothbay Harbor	Corinth	Exeter	Hodgdon
Bowdoin	Cornish	Fairfield	Holden
Bowdoinham	Cornville	Falmouth	Hollis
Bradford	Crawford	Farmingdale	Hollis Center
Bradley	Crouseville	Farmington	Hope
Brewer	Cumberland	Farmington Falls	Houlton
Bridgewater	Cushing	Fayette	Howland
Bridgton	Cutler	Fort Fairfield	Hudson
Bristol	Damariscotta	Fort Kent	Indian Island
Brooklin	Danforth	Fort Kent Mills	Islesboro



**Towns with Residents Served by Pine Tree Legal Assistance: 433 Towns  
(Cases Closed in 2003)**

Jackson	Mattawamkeag	Oakland	Rumford
Jay	Mechanic Falls	Olamon	Sabattus
Jefferson	Meddybemps	Old Orchard Beach	Saco
Jonesboro	Medway	Old Town	Sanford
Jonesport	Mercer	Orient	Sangerville
Kenduskeag	Mexico	Orland	Scarborough
Kennebunk	Milbridge	Orono	Seal Cove
Kennebunkport	Milford	Orrington	Searsmont
Kingfield	Millinocket	Orrs Island	Searsport
Kittery	Milo	Otisfield	Sebago
Kittery Point	Minot	Owls Head	Sebago Lake
LaGrange	Monmouth	Oxford	Sebasco Estates
Lambert Lake	Monson	Palermo	Sebec
Lamoine	Monticello	Palmyra	Sedgwick
Lebanon	Montville	Parkman	Shapleigh
Lee	Morrill	Parsonsfield	Shawmut
Leeds	Moscow	Peaks Island	Sherman Mills
Levant	Mount Desert	Pemaquid	Sidney
Lewiston	Mount Vernon	Pembroke	Skowhegan
Liberty	Naples	Perham	Smithfield
Limerick	New Canada	Perry	Smyrna
Limestone	New Gloucester	Peru	Smyrna Mills
Limington	New Portland	Phillips	Solon
Lincoln	New Sharon	Phippsburg	Somerville
Lincolnton	New Sweden	Pittsfield	South Addison
Linneus	New Vineyard	Pittston	South Berwick
Lisbon	Newburgh	Plymouth	South Bristol
Lisbon Falls	Newcastle	Poland	South Casco
Litchfield	Newport	Portage	South China
Littleton	Nobleboro	Portage Lake	South Monmouth
Livermore	Norridgewock	Portland	South Paris
Livermore Falls	North Amity	Pownal	South Portland
Lovell	North Anson	Presque Isle	South Thomaston
Lubec	North Berwick	Princeton	Southwest Harbor
Lyman	North Bridgton	Prospect	Springfield
Machias	North Monmouth	Prospect Harbor	Springvale
Machiasport	North New Portland	Randolph	St. Agatha
Madawaska	North Sullivan	Raymond	St. Albans
Madison	North Turner	Readfield	St. David
Manchester	North Vassalboro	Richmond	St. Francis
Mapleton	North Waterboro	Robbinston	St. George
Mariaville	North Yarmouth	Rockland	Stacyville
Mars Hill	Northport	Rockport	Standish
Marshfield	Norway	Roque Bluffs	Starks
Masardis	Oakfield	Round Pond	Stetson

**Towns with Residents Served by Pine Tree Legal Assistance: 433 Towns  
(Cases Closed in 2003)**

Steuben	West Baldwin
Stillwater	West Bath
Stockholm	West Bethel
Stockton Springs	West Bowdoin
Stonington	West Enfield
Stow	West Farmington
Strong	West Gardiner
Sullivan	West Kennebunk
Surry	West Paris
Swanville	Westbrook
Sweden	Westfield
Sydney	Whitefield
Temple	Whiting
Tenants Harbor	Whitneyville
Thomaston	Wilton
Thorndike	Windham
Topsham	Windsor
Trenton	Winslow
Trescott Township	Winter Harbor
Troy	Winterport
Turner	Winthrop
Union	Wiscasset
Unity	Woodland
Van Buren	Woolwich
Vanceboro	Wypitlock
Vassalboro	Yarmouth
Veazie	York
Verona	York Beach
Vienna	
Vinalhaven	
Waite	
Waldo	
Waldoboro	
Wallagrass	
Warren	
Washburn	
Washington	
Waterboro	
Waterford	
Waterville	
Wayne	
Weeks Mills	
Weld	
Wells	
Wesley	



## **2003 Annual Report to the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund Commission Maine Volunteer Lawyers Project**

The Maine Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP) is pleased to submit this year-end narrative report on its operations and services provided to low-income Mainers during 2003. Funding from the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund (MCLSF) enabled VLP to continue to provide a wide range of services to thousands of clients and to further develop its operational and organizational capacity.

VLP was formed in 1983 as a joint project of the Maine Bar Foundation and Pine Tree Legal Assistance for the purpose of organizing, encouraging, and coordinating the *pro bono* efforts of private attorneys on behalf of low-income Maine residents with civil legal problems. VLP services are limited to poor Mainers, generally those individuals whose household incomes are at or below 125% of the federal poverty guidelines. VLP has three broadly stated goals:

- to maximize private bar involvement in assistance to low-income clients
- to focus VLP services on the most pressing legal needs of clients
- to give all individuals contacting the VLP some meaningful information and assistance

### **Overall Improvements in Service Delivery made Possible by MCLSF Funding**

VLP provides statewide services via a telephone hotline staffed in its main Portland office and by making case referrals to attorneys around the state both from Portland and from a satellite office in Bangor established in 2000. In 2003, more than 60 hotline volunteers answered telephone inquiries for civil legal assistance from low-income individuals throughout Maine, donating more than 6,500 hours. Hotline volunteers establish eligibility for VLP services (utilizing the same guidelines governing Pine Tree Legal Assistance (PTLA) in accordance with the regulations of the Legal Services Corporation which provides a portion of VLP's funding). Approximately 750 cases were referred to the private bar for *pro bono* representation this year. Cases are chosen for referral based on a series of service priorities, which are periodically reviewed by the VLP Advisory Committee and others. In general, these priorities are designed to ensure that VLP's services complement the assistance provided by Maine's other legal service providers.

Close to 7,000 low-income Mainers received assistance from VLP in 2003. A summary of cases divided by case type is appended to this report. VLP clients came from more than 400 cities and towns throughout the State; a list of the geographic areas served is also included at the end of this report. Several thousand additional callers ineligible for VLP services were provided with referral information to allow them to locate appropriate assistance elsewhere.

VLP celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year and marked its 25,000 case referred for *pro bono* representation. Over the past two decades, over 160,000 people have been served by VLP and the value of volunteer services is well over \$25 million. The Anniversary was marked by the publication of a report, "Celebrating 20 Years of Doing Maine Justice," celebrating VLP's accomplishments which was distributed to lawyers, judges, legislators, services providers, volunteers and community leaders statewide.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, in combination with the arrival of a new VLP Project Director, spurred a strategic reappraisal of VLP operations and priorities. Over the past year, significant staff resources continued to be devoted to improvements in the intake and referral systems that support requests for assistance from telephone callers around the State. Use of a computerized intake system introduced in 2002 was further expanded and additional volunteers were trained to input client information directly into the Project's case management system streamlining the intake process. A computerized referral system utilized by Lawyer of the Day volunteers was developed and introduced to favorable reviews in Portland and will shortly be expanded to Bangor. VLP published a web-based manual for Guardian *ad litem* volunteers and increased its referrals to GALs. Additionally, VLP staff began a strategic review of its Lawyer of the Day system, developing a working group of *pro bono* firm coordinators and other attorneys to examine on-going challenges in the referral process. MCLSF funding has contributed to the cost of these initiatives as well as the on-going provision of legal services.

Over the past year, MCLSF funding also has continued to help VLP fund its Bangor outreach office, which allows Penobscot County attorneys to participate in our Lawyer of the Day program in which attorneys refer VLP cases to their peers for *pro bono* representation. Over the past three years, the Bangor LD program has resulted in a more than 25% increase in the number of low-income clients receiving *pro bono* representation in Aroostook, Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Waldo, and Washington counties. Additionally, the number of clients served by the Family Law Helpline and the Consumer Debt Helpline (established in 2002), greatly increased in 2003, providing *pro se* clients with in-depth telephone assistance from volunteer attorneys and third-year law students in case preparation and decision-making.

## **Conclusion**

By organizing donated services of private attorneys and community volunteers around the State, VLP has leveraged extraordinary levels of legal service for poor Mainers, greatly multiplying its operating budget and staff. A 2003 Program Evaluation of VLP conducted by the Legal Services Corporation concluded that VLP's service model represents "a brilliant and creative approach to limited resources." The funding made possible by the MCLSF will allow the VLP to continue to expand, improve and enhance the delivery of legal services to poor Mainers in 2004.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary S. Richardson, Esq.  
Maine Volunteer Lawyers Project Director

### Case Types

<b>Consumer Matters</b>	<b>total of</b>	<b>1,308</b>
• bankruptcy/debtor relief		897
• collection		152
• contracts/warranties		75
• credit access		4
• loans/installment purchases		1
• public utilities		3
• unfair sales practice		18
• other consumer/finance		158
<b>Education</b>	<b>total of</b>	<b>36</b>
• all education		36
<b>Employment</b>	<b>total of</b>	<b>83</b>
• job discrimination		13
• wage claim		16
• other employment		54
<b>Family</b>	<b>total of</b>	<b>3,800</b>
• adoption		35
• custody/visitation		977
• divorce		2,003
• guardianship		30
• name change		6
• parental rights termination		92
• paternity		23
• domestic violence		151
• child support		173
• other family		310
<b>Health</b>	<b>total of</b>	<b>34</b>
• all health		34

<b>Housing</b>	<b>total of</b>	<b>327</b>
♦ federal subsidized housing rights		200
♦ homeownership/real property		141
♦ landlord/tenant (other than public		119
♦ other public housing		11
♦ other housing		306

<b>Income Maintenance</b>	<b>total of</b>	<b>4138</b>
♦ general assistance/TANF		188
♦ food stamps		25
♦ social security		609
♦ SSI		103
♦ unemployment compensation		187
♦ veterans benefits		00
♦ workers compensation		17
♦ other income		109

<b>Individual Rights</b>	<b>total of</b>	<b>1206</b>
♦ immigration/naturalization		123
♦ mental health		1
♦ disabled rights		04
♦ other individual rights		1038

<b>Juvenile</b>	<b>total of</b>	<b>200</b>
♦ all juvenile		200

<b>Miscellaneous</b>	<b>total of</b>	<b>412</b>
♦ Indian tribal law		00
♦ license (auto & other)		21
♦ torts		122
♦ wills and estates		83
♦ miscellaneous		1806

**Towns with Residents Served by Volunteer Lawyers Project: 412 Towns  
(Cases Closed in 2003)**

Abbott	Bristol	Damariscotta	Fort Kent
Acton	Brooks	Danforth	Frankfort
Addison	Brownfield	Dayton	Franklin
Albion	Brownville	Deer Isle	Freedom
Alfred	Brownville Junction	Denmark	Freeport
Alna	Brunswick	Dennysville	Fryeburg
Alton	Bryant Pond	Detroit	Gardiner
Amherst	Buckfield	Dexter	Gardiner
Anson	Bucksport	Dixfield	Garland
Argyle	Burlington	Dixmont	Georgetown
Arundel	Burnham	Dover-Foxcroft	Glenburn
Ashland	Buxton	Dresden	Gorham
Athens	Calais	Dryden	Gouldsboro
Auburn	Camden	Durham	Gray
Augusta	Canaan	Eagle Lake	Greenbush
Avon	Canton	East Andover	Greene
Baileyville	Cape Elizabeth	East Holden	Greenville
Bancroft	Cape Neddick	East Lebanon	Greenville Junction
Bangor	Caribou	East Livermore	Greenwood
Bar Harbor	Carmel	East Machias	Grindstone
Bar Mills	Casco	East Millinocket	Guilford
Baring	Caswell	East Orland	Hallowell
Bass Harbor	Chapman	East Sebago	Hampden
Bath	Charleston	East Waterboro	Hancock
Beals	Chelsea	East Wilton	Harmony
Belfast	Cherryfield	East Winthrop	Harpwell
Belgrade	Chester	Easton	Harrington
Benton	Chesterville	Eastport	Harrison
Berwick	China	Eddington	Hartland
Bethel	Cliff Island	Edgecomb	Hebron
Biddeford	Clifton	Eliot	Hermon
Bingham	Clinton	Ellsworth	Hiram
Blue Hill	Connor Township	Embden	Holden
Boothbay	Coopers Mills	Etna	Hollis
Boothbay Harbor	Corinna	Exeter	Hollis Center
Bowdoin	Corinth	Fairfield	Hope
Bowdoinham	Cornish	Falmouth	Houlton
Bradley	Cornville	Farmingdale	Howland
Bremen	Cumberland	Farmington	Hudson
Brewer	Cumberland Foreside	Farmington Falls	Indian Island
Bridgton	Cushing	Fort Fairfield	Industry



LaGrange	Monticello	Parsonsfield	Sedgwick
Lamoine	Montville	Passadumkeag	Shapleigh
Lebanon	Moody	Patten	Sherman Mills
Lee	Morrill	Peaks Island	Sidney
Leeds	Mount Desert	Pemaquid	Skowhegan
Levant	Mount Vernon	Pembroke	Smithfield
Lewiston	Naples	Penobscot	Smyrna
Liberty	New Gloucester	Perry	Solon
Limerick	New Portland	Peru	Somerville
Limestone	New Sharon	Phillips	South Berwick
Limington	New Sweden	Phippsburg	South Bridgton
Lincoln	New Vineyard	Pittsfield	South Casco
Lincolnton	Newburgh	Pittston	South China
Linneus	Newcastle	Plymouth	South Gardiner
Lisbon	Newport	Poland	South Hiram
Lisbon Falls	Nobleboro	Porter	South Paris
Litchfield	Norridgewock	Portland	South Portland
Little Deer Isle	North Anson	Pownal	South Thomaston
Littleton	North Berwick	Presque Isle	South Waterford
Livermore	North Bridgton	Princeton	South Windham
Livermore Falls	North Monmouth	Randolph	Southwest Harbor
Long Island	North New Portland	Rangeley	Springfield
Lovell	North Vassalboro	Raymond	Springvale
Lubec	North Waterboro	Readfield	St. Agatha
Lyman	North Waterford	Richmond	St. Albans
Machias	North Windham	Ripley	St. Francis
Machiasport	North Yarmouth	Robbinston	Standish
Madawaska	Northfield	Rockland	Steep Falls
Madison	Northport	Rockport	Stetson
Manchester	Norway	Rockwood	Steuben
Mapleton	Oakland	Round Pond	Stillwater
Mars Hill	Ocean Park	Rumford	Stockholm
Mattawamkeag	Ogunquit	Sabattus	Stockton Springs
Mayfield	Olamon	Saco	Stonington
Mechanic Falls	Old Orchard Beach	Sanford	Stratton
Medway	Old Town	Sangerville	Strong
Mercer	Orient	Scarborough	Sullivan
Mexico	Orland	Seal Cove	Sumner
Milford	Orono	Seal Harbor	Sunset
Millinocket	Orrington	Searsmont	Surry
Milo	Otisfield	Searsport	Swanville
Minot	Oxford	Sebago	Tenants Harbor
Monmouth	Palermo	Sebago Lake	Thomaston
Monroe	Palmyra	Sebasco	Thorndike
Monson	Parkman	Sebasco Estates	Topsfield

Topsham	Winthrop
Trenton	Wiscasset
Troy	Woodland
Turner	Woodville
Union	Woolwich
Unity	Yarmouth
Van Buren	York
Vassalboro	York Beach
Veazie	York Harbor
Vinalhaven	
Wade	
Waldo	
Waldoboro	
Wales	
Wallagrass	
Warren	
Washburn	
Washington	
Waterboro	
Waterford	
Waterville	
Wayne	
Weeks Mills	
Weld	
Wellington	
Wells	
West Baldwin	
West Bath	
West Buxton	
West Enfield	
West Farmington	
West Gardiner	
West Newfield	
West Paris	
West Poland	
West Rockport	
Westbrook	
Whitefield	
Wilton	
Windham	
Windsor	
Winn	
Winslow	
Winter Harbor	