

2024 YEAR IN REVIEW

NLS

NEVADA LEGAL SERVICES



SERVING THE ENTIRE STATE OF NEVADA SINCE 1981

Nevada Legal Services (NLS) is the only legal aid organization that provides a full range of services to all seventeen counties in Nevada. It is the Mission of Nevada Legal Services to strengthen the community by ensuring fairness and providing equal access to justice for low-income Nevadans.

Our team of knowledgeable legal experts and volunteer professionals provide personalized assistance to help individuals and families seek and obtain the best use of all legal resources available.

We realize that many Nevada residents face disadvantages and financial difficulty when it comes to finding legal help. NLS has the responsibility to advance legal aid in search for justice for those who need it the most.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

In our nearly 45-year history, Nevada Legal Services has never experienced a year, quite like 2024. During the year, we welcomed a completely new leadership team: A new Deputy Director, a new Director of Litigation, a new Executive Committee for Board of Directors and a new Executive Director. However, with all this transition and change, the fundamentals of our work remain consistent. Our new team builds on the accomplishments, wisdom and experience of the exceptional leaders throughout NLS' history. As always, we are committed to serving low-income Nevadans in access to justice for a variety of civil legal needs and criminal defense in tribal courts. From representation at a summary eviction hearing in public housing; to defense against the denial of unemployment insurance benefits, to the sealing of a criminal history record from decades ago, NLS is here to decrease the Justice Gap.

Additionally, in 2024, we renewed our dedication to the philosophy of community lawyering. We are stronger as a law firm when we partner with our community and build relationships with those around us. We are stronger when we are able to look at a legal problem holistically and find solutions beyond just a legal lens. And, we are stronger when our community in Nevada are partners in defining the legal needs of the community.

The NLS 2024 Year In Review is a representation of community lawyering and showcases the successes of our many in-house programs across the state, celebrates the countless champions of justice in our community and our Pro Bono team and reinforces our dedication to all seventeen counties and twenty-eight tribal communities, including urban, rural and frontier communities.

Please join me in celebrating the achievements of NLS in 2024!

With Gratitude,



Alex Cherup,

Executive Director



HOW TO REACH US

NLS has a number of toll-free numbers for general calls and special programs.

The toll-free number for **Clark, Nye, Lincoln, and Esmeralda** Counties: 866-432-0404.

The toll-free number for **all other counties** is 800-323-8666.

We Help All People of Nevada Regardless of Age, Race or Other Ethnicities.

By augmenting funding provided by a variety of federal, state, and local grants, the voluntary support we receive enables Nevada Legal Services to provide access to justice to thousands of poor and low-income people who otherwise would have nowhere else to turn for help with their legal crises — when domestic violence or housing conditions endanger their health and safety, unscrupulous landlords and scam artists threaten to turn them out of their homes, or bureaucratic error denies them their rightful access to medical care and supportive services.

Want to be a part of the change? Consider making a donation at:

<https://nevadalegalservices.org/donate/>

OUR PROGRAMS AND IMPACT IN 2024



A Warm Welcome From Our Team

At NLS we perform intake and outreach on a schedule established by each office. We travel to all corners of Nevada providing self-help clinics, legal seminars, and providing direct assistance to individual clients. Direct assistance can range from brief services (i.e. drafting a simple will) to representation at administrative hearings and in State, Tribal, and Federal Courts.

We can help with a variety of legal issues. We primarily assist with housing cases where tenants are facing eviction or termination of their subsidized housing, where individuals and families are applying for and are denied or terminated from SNAP, TANF, or other government benefits, denials of Unemployment Benefits, sealing criminal and eviction records, and more. **Keep reading to learn more about our programs.**



TENANT'S RIGHTS

The Program turns 1!



Pictured above and far bottom is NLS staff standing with Judge Belinda T. Harris (wearing white) and other court staff.

North Las Vegas Justice Court-Battle Born Justice Project

In 2024 the program celebrated one year of collaboration with the Court in the effort to bring legal access to community members within North Las Vegas!



NLS has a partnership with the North Las Vegas Justice Court to offer free legal assistance to tenants facing eviction. This partnership allows NLS to provide on-site support to tenants every Wednesday morning, helping them navigate court procedures and understand their rights. The collaboration is a response to the increasing number of eviction filings in Southern Nevada.



Our Services

NLS helps tenants with evictions, lockouts, utility shut-offs, housing discrimination, habitability concerns and issues facing homeless individuals. Our program also assists tenants who have been denied admission to or terminated from public housing, including the Section 8 voucher program and other federally subsidized housing.

Help with Eviction notices

Habitability or essential services advocacy

Advocacy in the case of illegal lockouts

Problems with your landlord and Information/resources related to eviction moratoriums

PRO BONO



Pictured above (left to right) is Volunteer Attorney, Hawah Ahmad, NLS Pro Bono Coordinator, Edith Medina, Volunteer Attorney, Jessica Melgar, NLS Executive Director, Alex Cherup, Volunteer Attorney, Mysty Langford, Volunteer Attorney, Nancy Wong, NLS Paralegal/Office Manager, Donna McDonald, Volunteer Attorney Bob Cerceo, and NLS Pro Bono Director, Krissta Kirschenheiter.

IN A NUTSHELL

NLS offers pro bono opportunities for law firms, lawyers and other professional members who have an interest in helping our low income clients with their legal matters. If you are a tax professional, immigration or social security advocate, we have clients that need your immediate help!



Pictured above (left to right) is NLS Pro Bono Assistant, Yancy Meza, Pro Bono Coordinator, Yrene Chavez, and Pro Bono Assistant, Candy Rivera.

Communities Served

We serve the entire state of Nevada. Each office recruits pro bono attorney volunteers to generously donate their time to take qualifying cases free of charge.

Who Should Volunteer?

We have clients that need your help even if you are not an attorney! There are a number of community service projects that we participate in where the expertise of other professionals is appreciated.



ACTION

We all have the responsibility to advance legal aid in search of justice for those who need it the most. By providing legal services, we stabilize our communities through decreased homelessness, prolonged employment, and financially healthy families.



Solution A

Whether it's taking a case or volunteering at an Ask-A-Lawyer session, your time and skills help Nevadans access the justice they deserve. Can't volunteer? Spread the word to your colleagues that there is a need for their help!



Solution B

Every financial donation made goes towards covering at least an hour of attorney services. By making a donation you help strengthen our communities.

PROBLEM IDENTIFIED

As of June 2024, 65% of Nevada's counties had less than one attorney per 1,000 residents, exceeding the national average for "legal deserts" (counties with a shortage of legal representation). This geographic disparity makes it challenging for our communities to have equal access to justice and thus impacts their ability to thrive.

CHALLENGE

Nevada Legal Services, through its staff and volunteers, fight everyday to ensure that Nevadans have representation during the most critical times in their lives. Despite this the effort to close the justice gap, it is not possible without the continued generosity of our volunteers.

Every hour given makes a difference in the lives of our community neighbors.

Overview

Communities are still trying to navigate the complexities of post COVID increases, including employment cuts, which have resulted in economic fluctuations. Ultimately, the ability to face and overcome these challenges can determine the long-term success and impact within our communities.

Focus Problem

Sustainability and social responsibility have become critical considerations as well, with community members' facing an increase demand in representation in matters such as housing displacement and estate planning.

384

NLS Volunteer cases taken in 2024

1,898.61

The number of attorney pro bono hours given to NLS in 2024

RESULT

By advocating in cases that involve housing, government benefits, estate planning, unemployment assistance, criminal and eviction record sealing, tribal court advocacy, and advancing the rights of the LGBTQ+ Nevadans, we continue to show up and close the justice gap.

With continued support, the number of services provided to those in the community will grow and stabilization will be possible.



GIVING BACK TO THOSE DEDICATED TO OUR COMMUNITY



Since 2010, Nevada Legal Services has held the Champions of Justice awards as part of our pro bono celebration each year to recognize attorney volunteers, nonprofit partners, and community leaders for their significant contributions in support of our mission to provide access to justice for all Nevadans. We are fortunate to have many generous volunteers throughout the state who participate in our pro bono programs, and in October of 2024 we took a moment to shine a light on those who have demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to serving our communities.

The dedication of these outstanding individuals greatly increased the ability of Nevada Legal Services to provide pro bono legal assistance to Nevada's low-income families, seniors, veterans, farm workers, and Native Americans in civil matters affecting their lives. We continue to extend our deepest thanks to each of them.



2024 NLS-South Champion of Justice *Judge Nancy L. Alf. (Ret.)*



Hon. Nancy L. Alf (Ret.) served as a district court judge for the Nevada Eighth Judicial District Court for 13 years from 2011 to 2024. Judge Alf served as a Business Court judge for most of her time as jurist, where she handled a wide range of cases involving business tort, business divorce, breach of fiduciary duty and relationships, business judgment rule, derivative causes of actions, and the purchase or sale of a business's stocks, assets and commercial real estate.

The Nevada Supreme Court appointed Judge Alf as a settlement judge from 1998 to 2007. She was also appointed to the Pro Bono Compliance Committee in 2002. In 2005, she was appointed to be a judge in the Short Trial Program of the Eighth Judicial District. She served as the presiding judge of the Civil Division of the Eighth Judicial Court from 2021 to 2022.

As a neutral, Judge Alf is known for her intelligence, decisiveness and tireless effort to accomplish what needs to be done. She is adept at resolving complex and high-conflict cases. She works with attorneys to find creative paths to resolution and is always prepared to put in the extra effort to push through impasse. A known problem-solver, Judge Alf works with attorneys to help their clients understand their position in a case.



2024 NLS-North Champion of Justice *Reno Justice Court*



It is the mission of the Reno Justice Court to promote and preserve the rule of law and protection of property rights by providing a fair, independent, and impartial forum for the peaceful resolution of legal conflicts according to the law.

Further, it is the mission of Justice Courts to provide judicial services in such a manner as to: 1) promote access to justice; 2) adjudicate cases in an expeditious and timely manner; 3) utilize public resources efficiently and effectively such that it demonstrates accountability and engenders public trust and confidence; and 4) promote an understanding of the Courts as a vital component of the tripartite system of government, independent of and co-equal to the Legislative and Executive.



Pictured far top (left to right) is Reno Justice Court Administrator, James Conway and Reno Justice Court Judge, Jennifer Richards. Bottom photo is a picture of the Reno Justice Court.

2024 Southern Nevada Honored Pro Bono Attorneys, Orgs., and Firms



Keith D. Routsong, Esq.
Pro Bono Atty. of the Year



Right Divorce Lawyers
Law Firm. of the Year



Access to Justice Commission
Partner Org. of the Year



Michelle L. Abrams, Esq.
Pro Bono Atty. of the Year



Willick Law Group
Partner in Pro Bono
Innovations



Maria Perez Alvilez, Esq.
Pro Bono Atty. of the Year



Joel G. Selik, Esq.
Pro Bono Impact Award

2024 Northern Nevada Honored Pro Bono Attorneys, Orgs., and Firms



MaryBeth Gardner, Esq.
Solo Practitioner of the Year



Sean Patterson, Esq.
Pro Bono Atty. of the Year



Homa S. Woodrum, Esq.
Pro Bono Atty. of the Year



Lauren Driscoll, Esq.
Rising Star Award



Washoe County Housing &
Homeless Services
Partner Org. of the Year



The O'Mara Law Firm
Law Firm of the Year

Ryan White Aids/HIV Program

Nevada Legal Services provides legal assistance to individuals living with HIV/AIDS through the Ryan White Part B Program, ensuring access to essential services and support. This assistance includes help with estate planning, public benefits, housing, and consumer law issues. NLS aims to help clients maintain independence and navigate the legal complexities associated with their HIV status.



Pictured on the left (left to right) is Ryan White's mother, Jeanne White-Ginder, and NLS' Heidi Foreman, J.D.

During the conference, Ryan White's mother told the attendees about her journeys with her son and what led to the creation of the program.

The Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program in Nevada, like the national program, originated from the advocacy and tragic experience of Ryan White, a teenager diagnosed with AIDS in 1984. His fight to return to school after contracting HIV through a blood transfusion gained national attention, highlighting the need for education and care for people with HIV/AIDS.

NLS was honored to attend this conference and collaborate with so many partners upholding the core mission of the program.



VETERAN'S LAW PROJECT

Nevada Legal Services is proud to provide free legal advice and representation to protect the rights of low-income, homeless, and at-risk veterans.

Through strong partnerships with non-profit veteran service organizations, the VA, and the Nevada Attorney General's Office of Military Legal Assistance, veterans in need are frequently referred to NLS for legal assistance concerning housing, veteran's benefits, consumer issues, record sealing, simple estate planning, family law, and more.

Pictured on the left (left to right) is NLS' Director of Community Engagement, Morgan Shah, Esq. and NLS Legal Secretary, Tracy Baez.



ERIKA DRAKE, ESQ.

Thomas G. - Client Success Story

Thomas came to NLS via an SSI intake outreach at WC Studios (transitional housing shelter). When he came to us, he had just been denied at the reconsideration level of review. NLS attorney **Erika Drake, (pictured to the right)** filed a request for hearing for Thomas and agreed to represent him at the time of hearing.

He had concurrent claims, with an SSI filing date of 6/3/22. He was no longer eligible for SSDI, as he had a DLI in the very remote past and an intervening unfavorable ALJ decision from 2020.

Attorney Drake prevailed at the hearing, with the ALJ adjudicating him disabled with an established onset date as of the date of filing for Title XVI (6/3/22). On 9/17/24, we received a notice of award for Thomas Grote, indicating he was owed \$943.00/month in SSI (maximum for NV) and a retroactive back benefit of \$23,136.72 that would be split into three installments to be paid out at six month intervals.

AGING & DISABILITY KIOSK PROGRAM



Pictured above (right) is NLS Litigation Director, Susan Myers, Esq. speaking to the local news media about the expanding Kiosk Program.

The Nevada Aging and Disability Services Division (ADSD) was designed to connect older adults, individuals with disabilities, care partners, and support networks, with essential programs and resources in an effort to enhance the overall quality of life for Nevadans.

Through the use of ADSD funds, NLS has created the KIOSK Program which provides free access to legal information and resources through kiosks located in libraries across Nevada. These kiosks offer information on various civil legal issues, how to access legal aid, court forms, and community resources. The program aims to bridge the digital divide and expand access to justice for all Nevadans, particularly those in underserved areas.

NLS has installed 28 legal kiosks as of 2024

A legal kiosk is a dedicated computer that serves as a portal to curated civil legal information and resources. The kiosks are distributed among rural and urban communities in Carson City and Clark, Churchill, Elko, Lyon, Mineral, Nye, Washoe, and White Pine Counties.

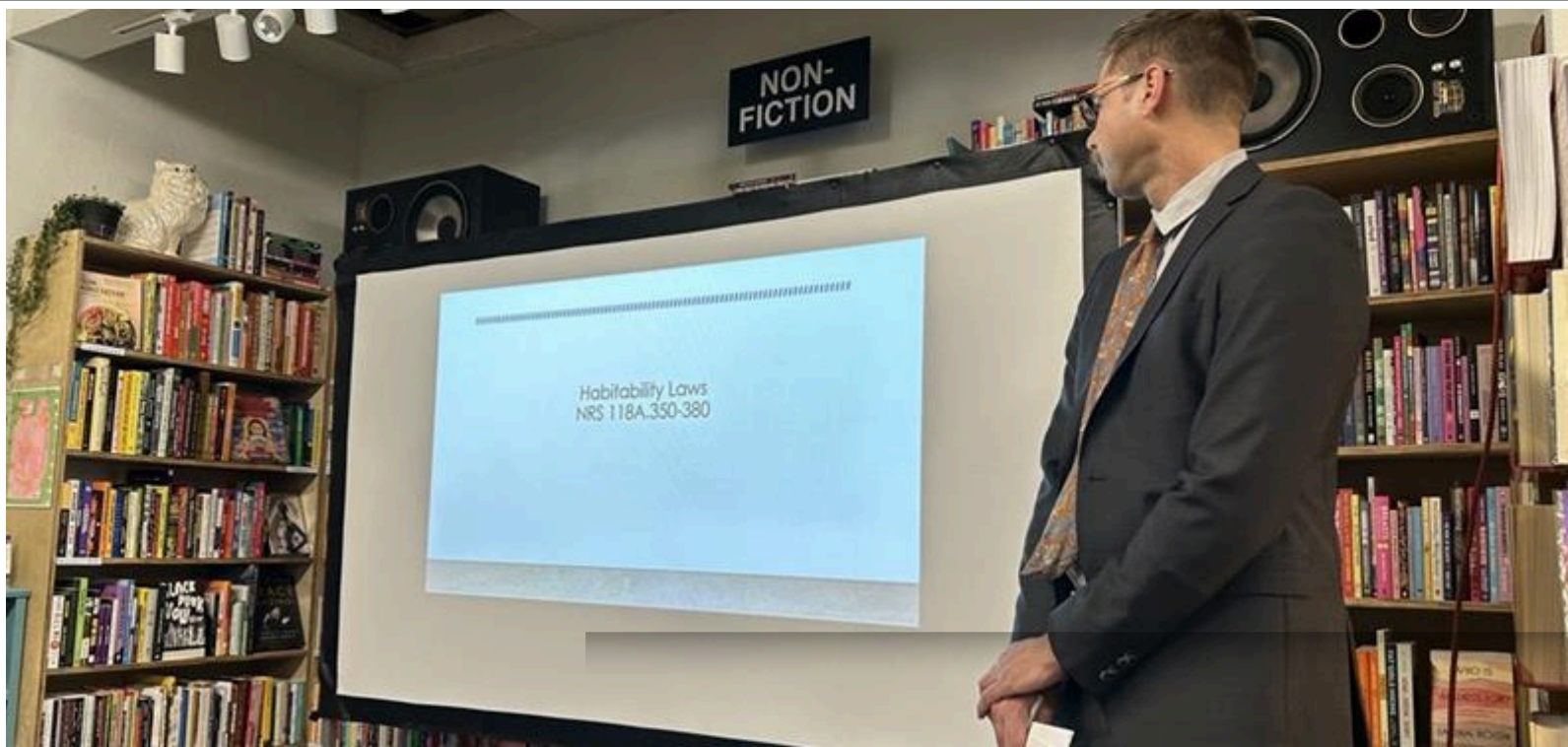
The Kiosk Project, started in 2023 with the intent is to address the digital divide exposed by the pandemic, which disproportionately affected seniors and those without adequate access to technology. By using the kiosk, community members can learn where to find free legal help and forms and community resources, as well as find a guide to Nevada's courts. The kiosks offer free printing for legal forms. Users also can participate in virtual court hearings or meetings with their attorneys through the kiosk.



Pictured above is Project Manager Nick Rogers from A2J Tech and library dog Moo Shoo from the Amargosa Library located in Amargosa Valley, NV, where a new kiosk was being installed.

AMARGOSA
LIBRARY

AGING & DISABILITY SENIOR LAW PROJECT



Pictured above is NLS Attorney, Brian Oltman, speaking at an outreach event for seniors about housing laws.

The Senior Law Project (SLP) is a program offered by NLS that provides free legal assistance to Nevadans aged 60 and older. It is the only program of its kind in the state. The SLP offers a wide range of services, including counsel, advice, brief services, legal document preparation, and court representation, with a focus on estate planning and advance directives. This Project provides legal assistance for all Senior residents of Washoe County and the northern rural Counties. The Senior Law Project provides this assistance to seniors regardless of income. This project is also made possible through ADSD funding.

SLP collaborates with various senior centers and community organizations to deliver services. You can often find NLS staff conducting outreach events and seminars at senior centers, health fairs, and other community locations to connect with seniors. This outreach includes an Ask-A-Lawyer program that brings SLP attorneys to senior centers for free consultations.

NLS
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LGBTQ+ ADVOCACY INITIATIVE



Pictured above is one of the program's founding members, NLS Attorney, Kristopher Pre

The LGBTQ+ Advocacy Initiative is a direct legal assistance program serving low-income, LGBTQ+ individuals. As the first and only program of its kind in Nevada dedicated to addressing the unique legal needs and challenges of the LGBTQ+ community, the initiative has provided legal advice and direct representation to 156 clients since 2023. Cases have included matters such as employment discrimination, public benefits, labor law, and legal name changes.

The initiative's work has gained recognition in the Nevada Current and, in June 2024, received an invitation from the White House to participate in a roundtable discussion on LGBTQ+ rights.

The LGBTQ+ Advocacy Initiative was established because of Nevada Legal Services' longstanding commitment to equal access to justice through its work under the Ryan White Part B program. While engaging in outreach under this program, NLS frequently encountered LGBTQ+ individuals who did not qualify for services under Ryan White Part B but were hesitant to seek help elsewhere due to a lack of LGBTQ+-affirming legal services. NLS staff working under the Ryan White Part B program were already well-trained and experienced in working with LGBTQ+ clients, many of whom were part of both communities.

Recognizing the urgent need for a safe, inclusive, and specialized legal service, NLS created the LGBTQ+ Advocacy Initiative to serve this broader population.

The LGBTQ+ Advocacy Initiative not only provides essential legal services but also plays a critical role in shaping equitable policies for LGBTQ+ individuals in Nevada. Through its casework and community presence, the initiative brings to light systemic barriers that disproportionately affect LGBTQ+ people, particularly those living in poverty.

Its participation in national forums such as the White House roundtable on LGBTQ+ rights amplifies the voices of marginalized communities and informs policy discussions at the highest levels. As the initiative grows, it remains committed to driving meaningful legal change and assistance that promotes inclusion, fairness, and equal protection under the law.

Pictured on the right bottom are NSL LGBTQ+ Founding members Kristopher Pre, Esq. (left) and Heidi Foreman, J.D. (far right) along with NLS Deputy Executive Director, Sherie Royster, Esq. (middle) in Washington, D.C. after being invited by the White House to participate in the LGBTQ+ roundtable as speakers.



CLEAN SLATE PROGRAM

We are here to help navigate the process.

The Clean Slate program helps Nevadans with the sealing of eligible criminal records. NLS will provide assistance with the process which can often be very confusing and time consuming. NLS' eligibility requirements for assistance is often based on income, residency, and the type of conviction.

Certain convictions, such as those involving crimes against children, felony DUIs, and some violent crimes, are generally not eligible for sealing. However, most community members are unaware of the other criminal offenses that can be sealed which is where help from our program becomes very important.



Balancing the Scales

NLS will assist with obtaining the necessary documentation, including a Criminal History Report (CHR) from the State of Nevada.

By helping with the sealing process, NLS hopes that it gives community members a clean start and thus access to more opportunities such as employment and housing.



Pictured above (left to right) is NLS Legal Secretary, Traci Baez and Attorney, Trinity Charles.



Pictured above (left to right) is NLS Paralegal, Suzeth Hawkins and Receptionist Cynthia Anderson.

• Quick Record Sealing Facts

- Remain conviction free (except minor traffic violations) for the required waiting period OR have your later conviction sealed.
- A hearing is required if the prosecuting attorney does not stipulate to the sealing of your criminal record.
- Not all criminal offenses are eligible for record sealing.



INDIAN LAW PROJECT



The Indian Law Project (ILP) focuses on providing free legal assistance to Native American tribes and their members in Nevada. NLS represents tribal members on a case by case basis in a wide range of legal issues including those related to tribal sovereignty, jurisdiction, family law, and housing matters. This representation takes place in state and tribal courts across Nevada.

ILP is the only legal aid program in Nevada specializing in tribal law.

A big part of the Tribal Law Program includes education. In April of 2024 NLS Tribal Attorney, Ilse Turner, was selected to present at the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law where she discussed how attendees can all come together to prevent legal deserts in our rural and tribal communities.

In 2024 NLS Attorney, **Ilse Turner (pictured on the right)**, was also asked to present at the National American Indian Court Judges 55th Annual Conference on the work Nevada Legal Services has been doing to increase access to justice for pro-se tribal criminal defendants. Ilse was able to share with tribal judges, personnel, and leaders how holistic defense practices in conjunction with pro-se criminal litigation resources decreases recidivism and increases positive outcomes for tribal members.



LAWYER IN THE SCHOOL



Pictured above (left to right) is NLS Paralegal, Cecy Roa and Attorney, Constantina Rentzios.

The Lawyer in the School Program provides free legal assistance to families within the school community, particularly those experiencing civil legal issues, in an effort to help stabilize the lives of children in the community. Legal assistance includes a multitude of areas, such as tenant's rights, unemployment, protective orders for domestic violence, custody and guardianship, and other matters affecting their lives. This unique program is designed to provide direct access to legal services for underserved families by embedding NLS staff and pro bono volunteers into the Clark County schools.

The Program Has Grown!

In 2024 the Lawyer In The School Program made the leap from being in one school (Myrtle Tate) to becoming district wide within the Clark County School District.

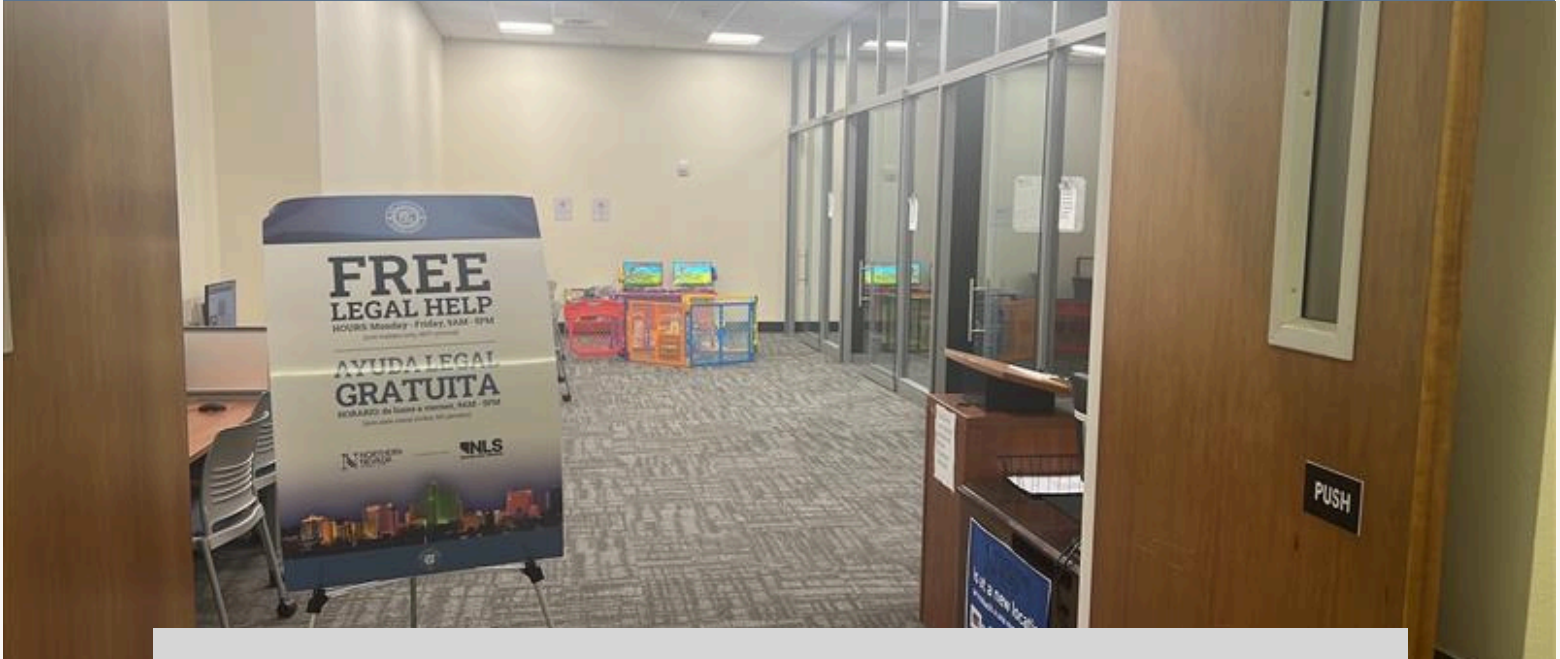


Pictured above (center) is Myrtle Tate School Nurse, Sherri.



Prior to expanding, NLS staff and volunteers spent every Tuesday and Thursday meeting with school families in a classroom at Myrtle Tate while school was in session.

HOLISTIC LAWYERING PROGRAM

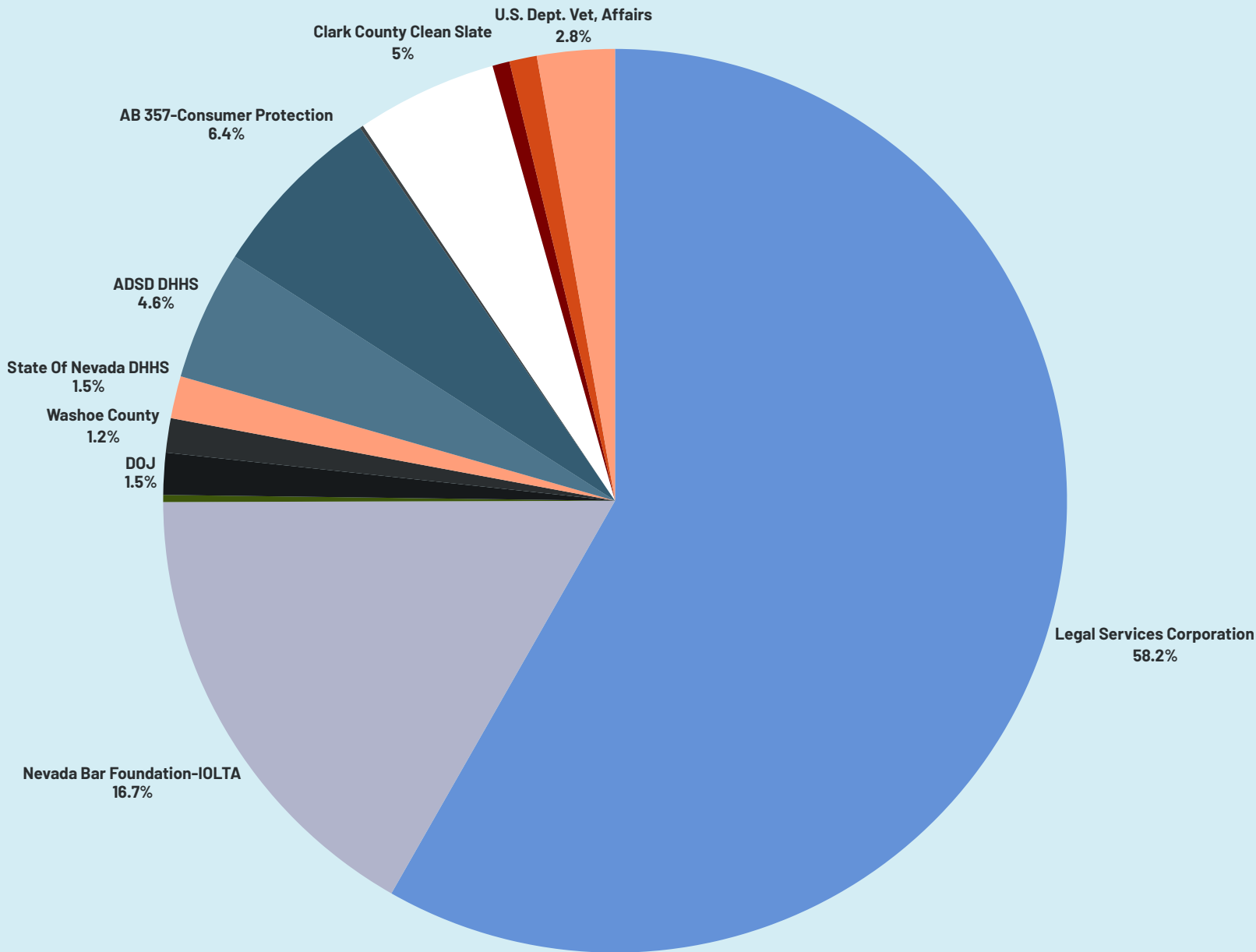
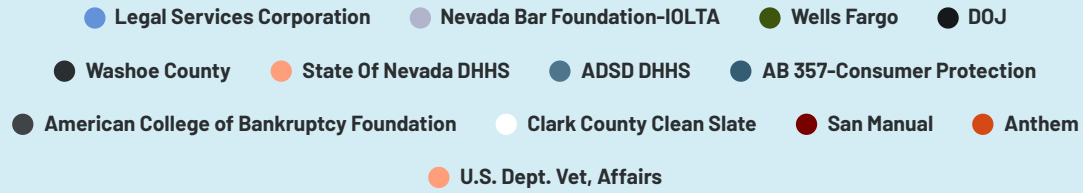


NLS' Holistic Lawyering Program recognizes that legal issues often stem from deeper, non-legal challenges. In partnership with the Reno Justice Court and Northern Nevada Legal Aid, we use a multidisciplinary approach to the legal challenges affecting low-income Nevadans.

While providing court representation and legal advocacy, the program seeks to address the social, financial, and personal circumstances of the individual that may be contributing to their legal issue. We accomplish this by providing social work services, connections to local resources, and working with the client to directly promote positive outcomes beyond the scope of our legal representation.

The Holistic Lawyering Program has helped the community stay connected with health providers, maintain stable housing, address chronic physical and mental health issues, and build a stronger network of community and support. We're not just here to assist with legal issue, we're here to help however we can.

2024 FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS





Board of Directors

Thank you to our 2024 Board of Directors for their contribution in ensuring that NLS had a successful year.

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Nancy Ghushn, Esq.

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