



**#STRONGER
TOGETHER**

2020 Annual Report





About Us

Founded in 1969, MidPenn Legal Services is a nonprofit, public interest law firm with approximately 95 staff, including attorneys, paralegals and support staff. Since our incorporation we have provided free legal advice and representation to nearly one million clients. Using the civil justice system, we improve the lives of our clients and the communities where we live and work through the provision of high quality, impactful legal services. Our goal is to help our clients have:

food on the table | stable home environment | an income source | access to health care | personal safety

Our Mission

MidPenn Legal Services is a non-profit, public interest law firm that provides high quality free civil legal services to low-income residents and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault in 18 counties in Central Pennsylvania.

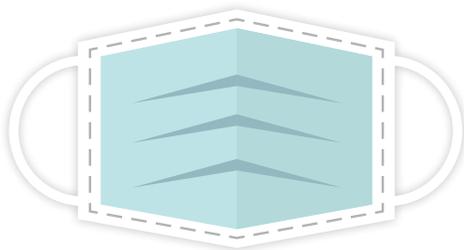


Dear Friends,

What a difference a year can make! A year ago, we were putting the final touches on the upcoming celebration of our 50th Anniversary. A few short months later in March 2020, we were amid a public health crisis which forced us to quickly change our service delivery system while not straying from our mission of providing critical civil legal services across our client communities. As I write this message, we all continue to face the ongoing crises of COVID-19, systemic racism, racial injustice and oppression.

The pandemic forced organizations like MidPenn to make challenging decisions quickly, while continuing to provide critical civil legal services to those in our client communities throughout Central Pennsylvania. For those of us who work in civil legal aid we did not need a public health crisis to recognize that the lives of our clients were already affected by the racial and socio-economic inequities of our nation. COVID-19 only confirmed these inequities.

There is no question that the COVID-19 pandemic is serious and has serious consequences for all of us, but those we serve are among the hardest hit by this disease. At MidPenn, we knew that if we totally closed, those needing our help would have nowhere else to turn. If closed, where would survivors in need of legal protection turn, where would those being denied needed benefits including UC in this time of great job loss get help, and despite the moratoriums on evictions where would tenants facing illegal lockouts go for legal help.



Rather than close, through the efforts of our funders we worked to get an exemption to be considered an essential service. We then took safety precautions, to protect the health and safety of both our clients and the advocates who serve them. We worked remotely, used technology, closed our offices to walk-ins and limited the number of staff in offices. With these safety measures in place, we have continued to serve clients since the onset of the pandemic.

Today, as we continue to limit the number of staff in offices our IT staff has worked tirelessly to set staff up to work remotely, so that they can continue to serve clients. To that end, we implemented online intake so those with internet access can apply for services without calling or leaving their homes. As tribunals reopened, our advocates have been there representing survivors of domestic violence, tenants facing evictions or Claimants being denied Unemployment Compensation. Sometimes this has been done through Zoom or other online platforms but often in person while taking all safety precautions including wearing masks and maintaining social distance.

Finally, despite this pandemic, our work as civil legal aid advocates continues, and as we have always done we will continue to remain in the forefront in the fight for the rights of our clients to achieve equal access to justice.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rhodia D. Thomas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'R'.

Rhodia D. Thomas, Esq.
Executive Director



I am honored to have been appointed President of the Board of Directors of MidPenn Legal Services. MidPenn serves the legal needs of low income individuals and families in crisis in 18 counties within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

MidPenn handles critical matters including protection from domestic violence, emergency child custody cases, housing issues, and elder law, to name a few. The need for these services continues to grow. Over the past several months MidPenn has adapted so as to continue to provide excellent legal services to its clients despite the challenges of Covid-19.

The need for MidPenn's services continues to grow. We are preparing for the additional demand for our services as a result of challenges faced by low income individuals due to the pandemic.

While MidPenn continues to stretch our resources to serve as many low income families as possible, we have concerns that our funding may be reduced.

Please consider helping MidPenn continue to provide these vital services by making a monetary contribution to MidPenn.

Michael J. Pykosh, Esquire
President
Board of Directors



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Rhodia D. Thomas, Esq.
Executive Director

Laurie Baughman, Esq.
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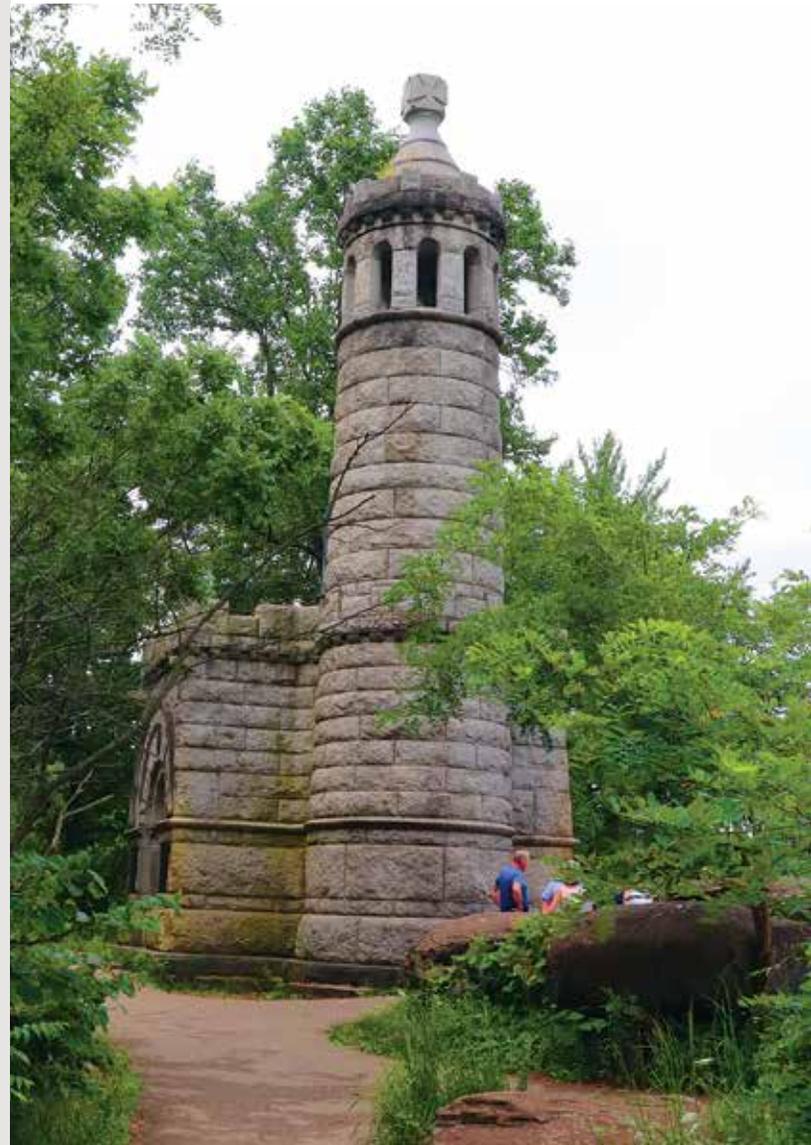
Carrie Bowmaster, Esq.
Deputy Director for Operations

Shawn Geesaman
Director of Technology

Eliz Nestorov
Director of Development

Elizabeth Truntz
Director of Finance

Valerie West, Esq.
Director of Contract Compliance





PANDEMIC ASSISTANCE

Casey is a self-employed custodian who worked for a faith-based organization, which closed when businesses shut down due to the COVID-19 public health crisis. Given that he was categorized as an independent contractor he was denied Unemployment compensation. Casey contacted MidPenn and our advocate informed him about Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PAU), a program created through the CARES Act that provides benefits to individuals who were not eligible for unemployment compensation. Our advocate then assisted him to apply for these benefits. Casey's application was approved, and he began to receive benefits. Had he not contacted MidPenn, he would not have known there was a separate program available to help him obtain income through the shut-down period.

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KEEPING FAMILIES HOUSED

Angela is a single mother with three children who is their sole physical and financial support. Angela was working full-time at a personal care home, but her hours were reduced to little more than half time due to COVID-19. With the reduced hours Angela got slightly behind in her rent, and when the Courts reopened, her landlord filed to have Angela and her children evicted. Angela then contacted MidPenn for assistance with her landlord tenant matter. Our advocate, met with Angela and assessed her situation and developed several strategies to assist her. First, it was determined that Angela apply for unemployment compensation because her hours were reduced due to COVID-19. Angela was unaware of this, and she applied and was approved for benefits within 3 days. This allowed her to satisfy the judgement and remain in the home, which averted the immediate crisis. Our attorney then worked with Angela and the landlord to develop a repayment agreement so that she could get caught up on the remainder of the rent by the end of July. Angela wrote, "I am so glad I called MidPenn, I was ready to just give up on everything."





STABILIZING **FAMILIES**

Esther is a 71-year-old widow who receives a small military pension (her deceased husband was a veteran) and a small amount of Supplemental Security Income. Last year, after her husband passed away, she learned that he had stopped filing federal tax returns and owed several years of back taxes to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). She was very worried that she could lose her house and tried several times without success to reach someone at the IRS who could explain to her what she needed to do to resolve the situation. With the assistance of our Rural Tax Attorney, she learned the amount of debt she personally owed to the IRS was significantly less than the amount her husband owed. However, the pension which was Esther's primary source of income was at risk of garnishment because it was tied to her husband's military service. The Rural Tax attorney worked on Esther's behalf to have her account and her deceased husband's IRS account placed in "current not collectible status." This means that the IRS acknowledged that Esther does not have the means to pay the debt and that all of her available income is required to maintain a basic standard of living. In addition, the IRS will not pursue any action to recover the debt unless Esther's income increases substantially. With our assistance, both Esther's income and her home are safe from collection. Esther was greatly relieved to not have this burden hanging over her.

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A **FRESH** START

While there are no do overs in life, we assist our clients to get a fresh start through our Expungement and Records Sealing work.

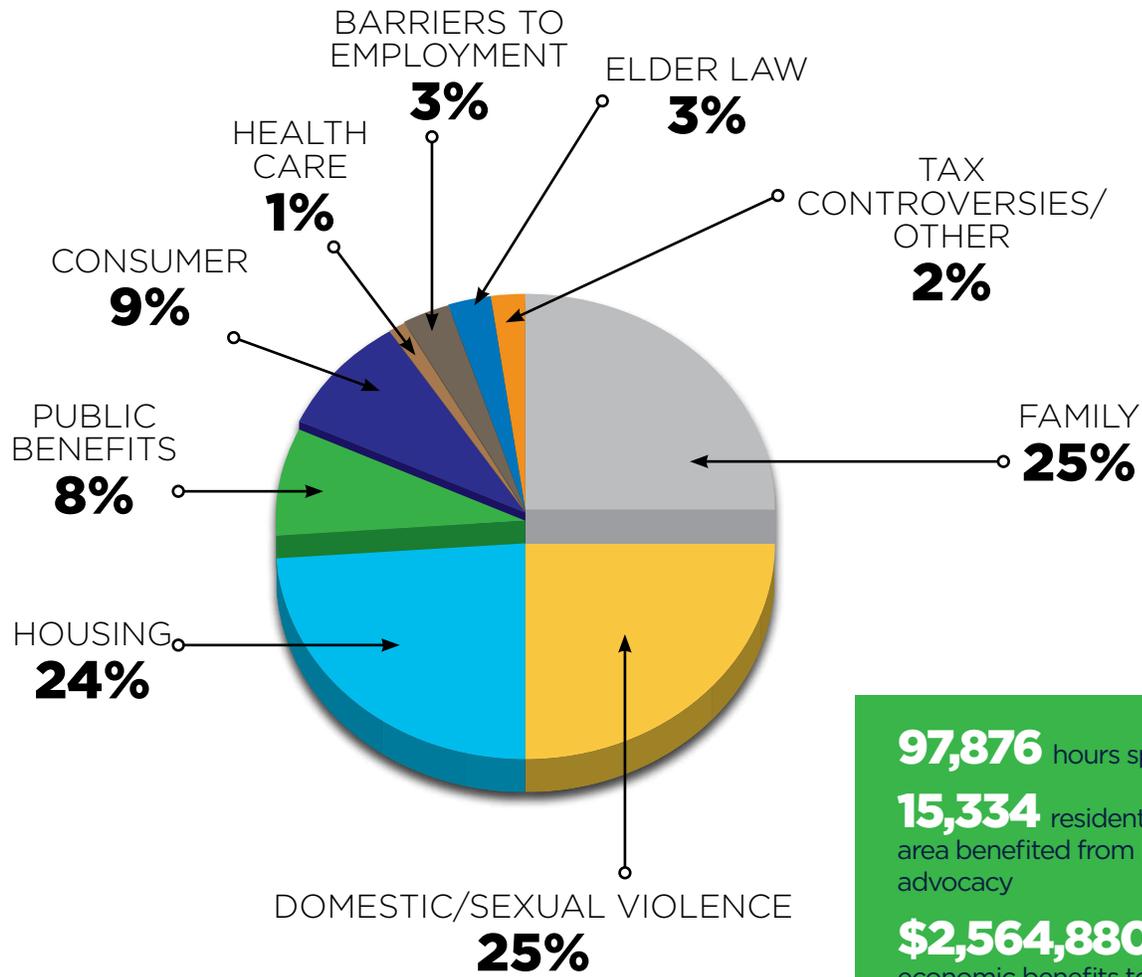
Nadine is a 42-year-old woman who wanted to get a fresh start. In her youth, she was charged with a misdemeanor drug possession charge. This charge haunted her for 22 years, and kept her from obtaining any type of self-sustaining employment. When she came to MidPenn, she was surviving on only \$200 a month. Our attorney was able to get Nadine's record sealed under the new Clean Slate law and obtain an expungement. As Nadine writes, *"I'm writing with a thankful heart. Words cannot express how grateful I am for all of your help! My past was a burden that I carried around for so long. It held me back from applying for so many different positions over the past few decades. With your help, my record has been expunged and I finally feel free! I am now working for [information redacted to protect client privacy] in the finance division. I could not be happier! You have had a profound impact on my life. I am forever filled with gratitude."*





Mary came to MidPenn seeking assistance with having an alleged indicated report of child abuse removed from her record. This report was adversely affecting both her educational and employment opportunities. Our attorney filed an appeal to have the indicated report of abuse expunged through the Department of Human Services' Bureau of Hearing and Appeals process. However, the appeal was denied as untimely filed. Our advocate did not give up but rather researched and utilized a little-known remedy that allows the DHS Secretary to expunge records for a showing of good cause. Our attorney prepared a document outlining Mary's journey from the time she was accused of abuse through the present. While trying to get her record cleared, Mary attended college and obtained her B.A. in Sociology and was working to obtain her Master's Degree. Unfortunately, because of this incident, she was unable to take a position as a graduate assistant that she had been offered. However, five months after the submission to the DHS Secretary, and 19 years after the alleged incident, Mary received the Secretary's decision—her record was expunged.





97,876 hours spent on cases
15,334 residents in our service area benefited from MidPenn's advocacy
\$2,564,880 in savings and economic benefits to MidPenn clients and their communities

Fiscal Year 19-20 Overview	MidPenn Staff	Volunteer Attorneys	Total	%
Family	1,418	819	2,237	25%
Domestic Violence/Sexual Violence/Intimidation	2,194	114	2,308	25%
Housing	2,107	72	2,179	24%
Public Benefits	677	50	727	8%
Consumer	630	179	809	9%
Health	117	0	117	1%
Barriers to Employment	238	65	303	3%
Elder Law	196	118	314	3%
Tax Controversies, Other	146	28	174	2%
TOTAL	7,723	1,445	9,168	100%

Revenues and Other Support	2020	2019
Contracts and grants	\$ 8,312,785	\$ 8,989,258
Contributions:		
In-kind	\$ 787,102	\$ 1,337,875
Other	\$ 238,450	\$ 64,470
Interest Income	\$ 171,606	\$ 147,263
Net realized & unrealized gain on investments	\$ 37,159	\$ 165,778
Other	\$ 13,954	\$ 2,203
Total Revenue and Other Support	\$ 9,561,056	\$ 10,706,847
Expenses		
Program Services	\$ 8,478,460	\$ 8,417,682
Management and general	\$ 1,164,532	\$ 1,177,045
Fundraising	\$ 8,268	\$ 23,097
Total Expenses	\$ 9,651,260	\$ 9,617,824

Major Funders

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adams County Bar Association Adams County Commissioners Alexander Stewart, M.D. Foundation AmazonSmile Foundation American Legal Claim Services Berks County Bar Association Big Spring Community Chest Blair County Bar Association Centre County Housing and Land Trust Centre County Office of Aging Centre County United Way Centre Foundation Centre Safe City of Harrisburg Community Action Partnership of Lancaster County Conestoga View Cumberland County Bar Association Dauphin County Bar Association Dauphin County Bar Foundation Domestic Violence Services of Cumberland & Perry Counties Eastern District of PA Bankruptcy Conference Ferree Foundation Gatehouse Media Huntingdon-Bedford-Fulton Area Agency on Aging | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Revenue Service Lancaster Bar Association Lancaster Bar Association Foundation Lancaster County Coalition to End Homelessness Lancaster County Community Foundation Lancaster County Housing and Redevelopment Authority Lancaster County Office of Aging Lancaster General Hospital Lebanon County Area Agency on Aging Lebanon County Bar Association Lebanon County CDBG Legal Services Corporation PayPal Charitable Giving Fund Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Pennsylvania Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts Board Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network Pepper Chapter of The Phi Alpha Delta Legal Fraternity – Widener University Commonwealth Law School | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perry County Office of Aging Reading Hospital – Be Well Berks Regional Housing Legal Services Schuylkill County Bar Association Schuylkill County Commissioners Schuylkill County Office of Senior Services Southwestern PA Legal Services State College Community Land Trust United Way of Bedford County United Way of Berks County United Way of Blair County United Way of Carlisle & Cumberland County United Way of Lebanon County United Way of Mifflin-Juniata United Way of the Capital Region United Way of York County Veterans Multi-Service Center York County Area Agency on Aging York County Bar Foundation/ Association York County Commissioners |
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Administration

213-A N. Front Street
Harrisburg, PA 17101
717-234-0492

Altoona

171 Lakemont Park
Boulevard
Altoona, PA 16602
814-943-8139

Bedford

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Bedford, PA 15522
814-623-6189

Carlisle

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Suite 103
Carlisle, PA 17013
717-243-9400

Chambersburg

230 Lincoln Way East
Suite A
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Clearfield

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Clearfield, PA 16830
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Gettysburg

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Lebanon

513 Chestnut Street
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Mid Penn
LEGAL SERVICES

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