

# SDVLP

SAN DIEGO  
VOLUNTEER LAWYER  
PROGRAM

*Pursuing justice | Transforming lives*

# Annual Report 2016



# 2016: Year in Review

Dear Supporters,

Thank you so much for your interest in San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program.

California has the highest proportion of impoverished residents in the nation. What is less widely known is that unresolved civil legal issues play a large part in preventing families from moving forward. As in the rest of California, San Diego has thousands of residents who cannot afford the legal help they need when facing life-changing situations, such as domestic violence, loss of benefits, or loss of housing. Only a fraction of those who need civil legal assistance are able to obtain it. The promise of 'justice for all' is a hollow one for far too many without the means to pay for an attorney.

SDVLP serves those who are most in need of assistance. Our work is vitally important to the safety and well-being of many thousands of vulnerable families in San Diego. These are especially frightening times for so many, and each day brings new uncertainty. All of us here are deeply committed to standing up for those San Diegans who are unable to do so on their own.

We are especially grateful for the assistance of the private attorneys, law students, and other legal professionals, who offer their time and expertise at no cost, to partner with us to assist our neighbors. The impact of our collective work is significant, and we will continue to work with our committed partners to expand our efforts.

Many thanks, again, for your continuing support,

Amy J Fitzpatrick, CEO and Timothy D Cohelan, Board Chair



## Impact

SDVLP serves low-income San Diegans with civil legal issues relating to domestic violence, family law, guardianship, dependency, HIV/AIDS, immigration, and eviction. We deploy a combination of approaches to best serve the community, including legal clinics, ongoing representation, and advocacy.

In 2016 we provided free legal assistance that improved the lives of more than 15,000 individuals. The total number of cases that we handled increased by 7% from 2015. In the same time period, the cases handled by our volunteer attorneys increased by 21%.

It can be difficult to understand just how significantly the lives of our clients are transformed by our work. In 2016 we implemented a new outcome measurement. This results-oriented focus will facilitate our ability to convey the impact of securing child support for a single parent, or preventing a person living with AIDS from having to pay thousands of dollars in erroneous medical debt. It is our hope that this important data will strengthen support for civil legal services statewide.

## Expansion

Our newest program, the Vision for Justice Collaborative, assists immigrants and refugee victims of crime with civil legal issues that arise as a result of the crime. This initiative is the first of its kind in the San Diego region to provide these comprehensive, culturally-competent services targeting San Diego's refugee and immigrant communities.

With our partners, License to Freedom and Casa Cornelia Law Center, VJC clients will receive a broad range of legal, support, and translation services. This is an extraordinary opportunity to connect with San Diego's ethnic communities, and we are looking forward to developing the VJC into a vibrant resource.





# Raising Awareness and Reaching Out

## Engagement

Throughout 2016, we engaged with the private bar by working with law firms, corporations, and law schools. We provided valuable training events, and joined our community counterparts and funding providers to raise awareness around important issues.

These engagements were crucial to educating our community about the range of civil legal problems threatening vulnerable San Diegans, and the positive impact made possible through volunteering with SDVLP.

## Outreach

A significant portion of our work is conducted in the neighborhoods and locations where help is needed most. Court-sited restraining order clinics make it easier to obtain and file the required documents.

Through walk-in legal clinics for guardianship, and issues related to HIV/AIDS, our clients receive advice and direction from our staff and volunteer attorneys.

Other services remove barriers for those fleeing abusers, address untenable living situations, or take steps toward medical and financial stability.

We also participate in Stand Down, a weekend event organized by Veterans Village of San Diego. SDVLP has been providing legal services to homeless and indigent veterans for 28 years.



## Justice For All Celebration

Our annual fundraiser gala, the Justice for All Celebration, is always an opportunity to highlight the need for free civil legal services to the legal community at large.

As we honor our volunteers, we are surrounded by many supporters. These friends and their guests receive our message through the powerful stories told on stage by volunteers and clients who have experienced the life-changing impact of *pro bono* service firsthand.



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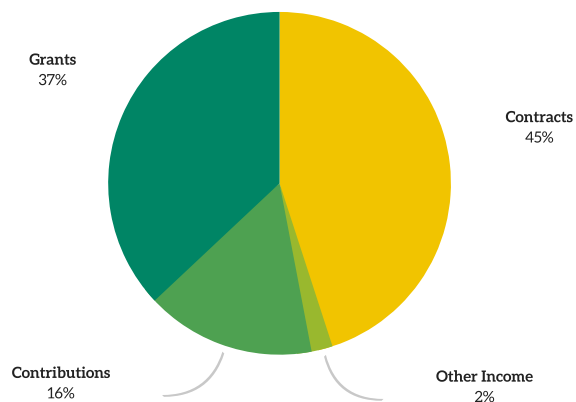
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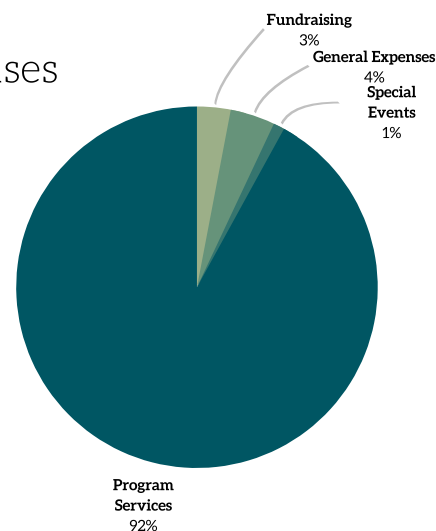
## FY 2015/ 2016 Financials

### Revenues



Total Revenue: \$2 million

### Expenses



Total Expenses: \$1.8 million