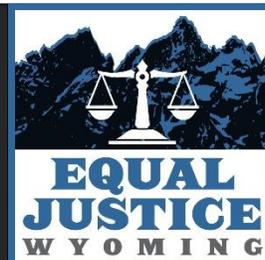


Equal Justice Wyoming

Annual Report to the Wyoming Supreme Court July 2022



*“It is not possible to be in favor of justice for some people
and not in favor of justice for all people.”*

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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Message from the Executive Director

The following report details the work of Equal Justice Wyoming, our grantees, and our volunteers for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022. As we continue to face challenges, we are grateful for the many people who contribute their time and talents to support access to justice for the people of Wyoming. As always, we thank all of our volunteers and pro bono attorneys, legal aid staff, VISTA members, and all of the other individuals who support this important work. Although we still have much work to do to bridge the gaps in availability of civil legal services, it is satisfying to reflect on the great work that has been done over the past year as we look forward to the year ahead.

- Angie Dorsch

**4,836 people received legal services
and self-help assistance in FY 2022**

Pro Bono Programs and Initiatives

Wyoming Free Legal Answers

The Wyoming Free Legal Answers (WFLA) online portal, wyoming.freelegalanswers.org, was launched in August 2016, in partnership with the American Bar Association, to offer online free legal advice. The website screens applicants for eligibility and allows eligible individuals to submit civil legal questions via a secure portal. Attorneys licensed to practice law in Wyoming can register as a volunteer to answer questions on the site. Equal Justice provides the day-to-day administrative functions for the site, including ensuring that only Wyoming-licensed attorneys in good standing are permitted to answer questions. Equal Justice also sends weekly updates to the volunteer lawyers and provides resources for both lawyers and clients. The portal is a valuable resource that reaches Wyomingites in rural and underserved areas of the state, as well as those with limited access to transportation and childcare. Attorneys on WFLA provided legal advice and assistance to address 326 legal questions submitted on the site.



Volunteer Reference Attorney Program

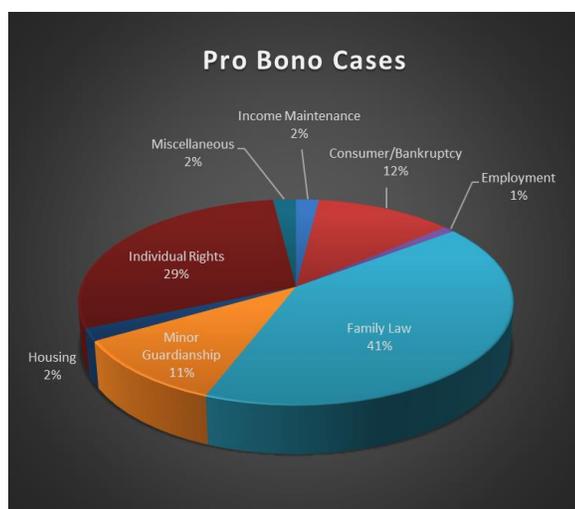
The Volunteer Reference Attorney Program (VRA) places attorneys in courthouses and libraries to provide legal information, explain court procedures, and assist litigants in completing pro se forms. It is often difficult for self-represented litigants to understand the complex civil justice system, and the VRA helps people navigate confusing court processes and procedures. EJW recruits volunteer attorneys to hold “office hours” in the participating courthouses and libraries on the first Thursday of each month. We added a new VRA site in April 2022 in Gillette at the Campbell County Public Library. We now

**295 individuals assisted by
Volunteer Reference Attorneys**

have a total of seven VRA locations across the state: Casper, Cheyenne, Gillette, Green River, Laramie, Rawlins, and Sheridan.

Volunteer Lawyers Program

Equal Justice manages the statewide Volunteer Lawyers Program (VLP) in partnership with the Wyoming State Bar. We provide resources and support to volunteer attorneys in order to encourage and facilitate the delivery of pro bono legal services to low-income clients. The type of assistance provided by the attorneys ranges from advice and brief services to full representation of clients. The pro bono program processed 102 cases in FY 2022.



"You were a total lifesaver for us...Our attorney is highly intelligent, knowledgeable, and professional. For us she was a guardian angel! Thank you is inadequate!"

"[My attorney] is a very good lawyer...Anyone is very lucky to have her as a lawyer. She's the best! Thank you again!"

"[My attorney] was so outstanding! Very modest and hardworking. Could not have gotten better! Thank you!"

"I am so grateful for this program. Thank you."

– Feedback from clients who received legal assistance through the Volunteer Lawyers Program in FY 2022

102 cases in FY 2022

Online Legal Information and Resources

Equal Justice launched our website, www.equaljustice.wy.gov, in November 2012. Since then, we have continually expanded the site and updated the content to provide information, resources, videos, online classrooms, and pro se forms that address the most common civil legal issues faced by low-income individuals. The website is an important tool that allows the public to understand their legal rights and

access legal information in plain language. In FY 2022, our website had 62,209 site visits by 40,603 unique users.

"I'm finding things on the website to assist me. Great, well-organized, and easy to navigate website. Thanks."

– Feedback from website visitor

62,209 site visits

40,603 unique users

LiveChat

In order to remotely assist people and direct them to the information they need, Equal Justice’s website has a LiveChat feature. This tool helps users navigate our expansive website to find appropriate resources to address their needs. The LiveChat is similar to a remote self-help center in that it does not provide legal advice, but instead helps guide people to appropriate information and trusted resources. In FY 2022, 405 visitors to our website received assistance from a trained LiveChat operator. The majority of the LiveChat volunteers are law students. An EJW AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) member recruits law student volunteers and provides training on the LiveChat software.

405 visitors to www.equaljustice.wy.gov received assistance from a trained LiveChat operator

Supporting Statewide Civil Legal Services through Grants

Equal Justice’s mission to provide a statewide delivery system for civil legal aid is largely carried out through our grants to nonprofit legal service organizations. In FY 2022, we provided a total of \$1,536,738 in grants, including \$407,202 of Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds from the Division of Victim Services to increase civil legal services to victims of crime and \$278,521 in Emergency Rental Assistance (ERAP) funds to provide legal services to support housing stability. In total, 3,708 clients received legal services through the grant programs we fund and administer.

**\$1,536,738 provided in grants
3,708 clients received services**

Equal Justice Wyoming Grantees

Legal Aid of Wyoming, Inc.

Legal Aid of Wyoming is a statewide legal service provider with offices in Casper, Cheyenne, Cody, Gillette, Lander, and Rock Springs. In addition to providing funding for the general provision of civil legal services, Equal Justice Wyoming also funds Legal Aid of Wyoming’s statewide legal advice and intake hotline to assist people in every county and provide services to even the most remote and underserved areas.

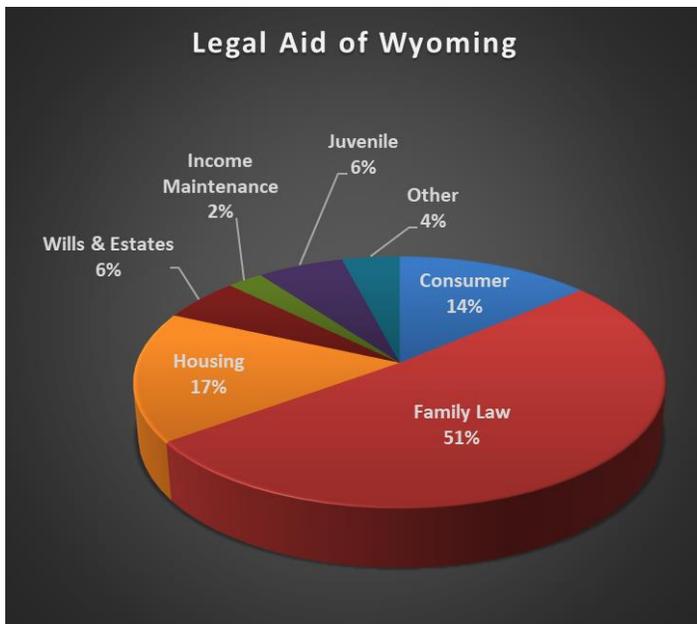
Statewide Legal Advice and Intake Hotline

Equal Justice has partnered with Legal Aid of Wyoming to ensure individuals across the state have access to legal advice through a hotline. Legal Aid of Wyoming operates the hotline Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The hotline is a lifeline for many people in rural areas with limited access to a physical legal aid office. The hotline number is widely distributed by court clerks and librarians to people who are looking for legal advice and assistance.

As people increasingly need to access legal assistance remotely, the hotline is an effective and efficient way to provide legal advice and to process applications for people across the entire state, including rural and underserved areas. Clients are screened for eligibility before any advice or services are provided, and an application is then taken. The hotline assists people from every county in Wyoming. The hotline provided services to 2,538 callers in FY 2022.



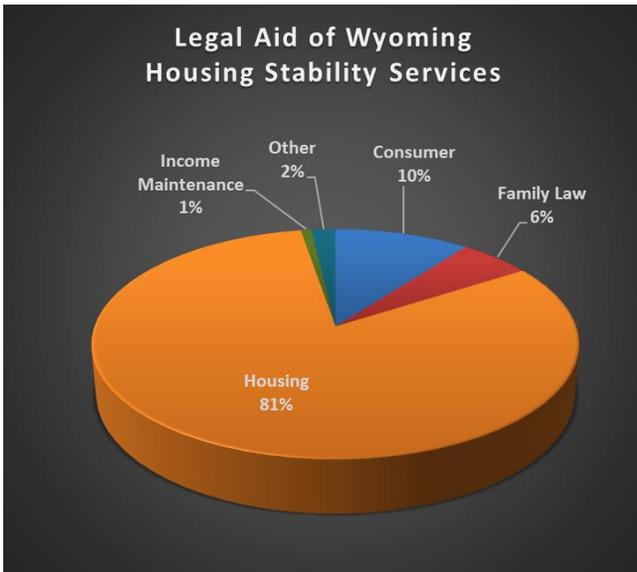
Legal Aid of Wyoming Cases



Beginning in June 2013, Equal Justice partnered with Legal Aid of Wyoming by awarding grants to expand services throughout the state with the addition of three new offices. Since that time, Equal Justice has continued to provide the necessary funds to operate the additional offices in Rock Springs, Gillette, and Cody. These communities previously had not had a legal aid office. Legal Aid of Wyoming staff attorneys handled 197 legal matters under the grant in FY 2022.

197 legal matters handled in 2022

Legal Aid of Wyoming Housing Stability Services



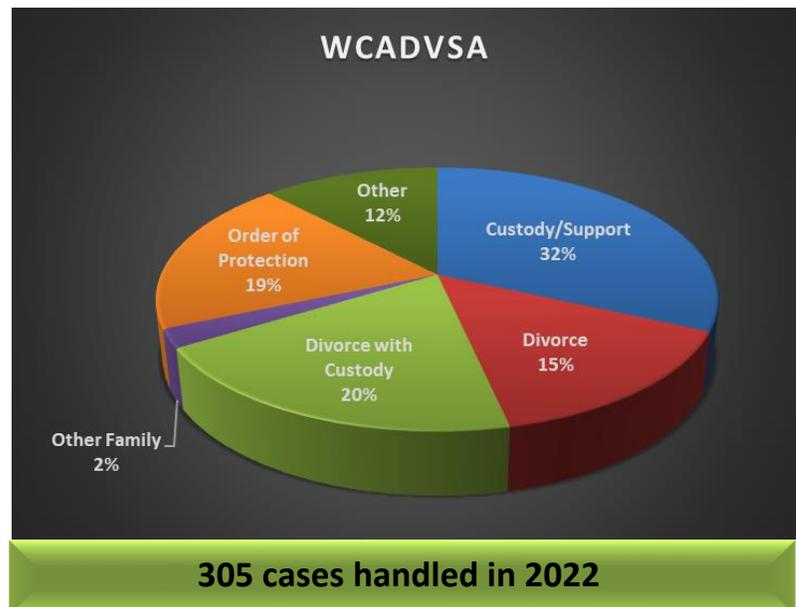
In FY 2022, Legal Aid of Wyoming received a grant from EJW from the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) funds. These funds were used to provide civil legal services to help ERAP eligible clients obtain or maintain safe and stable housing. As eviction moratoriums and other protections for tenants have been lifted, the ERAP funding has been instrumental to help address the legal issues that many individuals who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic continue to face.

326 housing stability cases handled

Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

The Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (“the Coalition”) is a statewide legal aid provider serving victims of abuse and other crimes. The services the Coalition provides are vital for protecting victims from further harm. The Coalition’s services go beyond getting protective orders. They provide holistic services to help victims with all issues related to abuse.

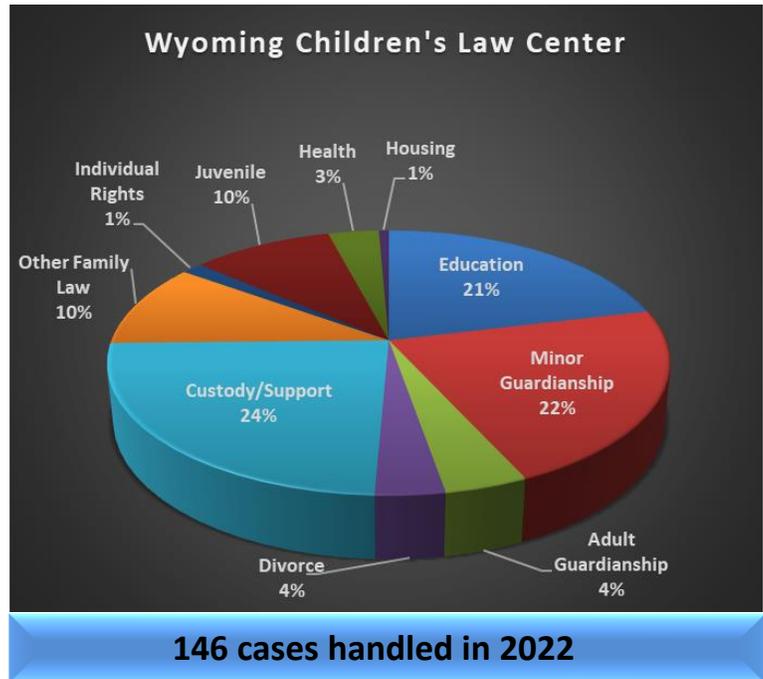
Equal Justice has provided substantial funding to support the work of the Coalition since 2012. The funds have expanded the availability of legal services and have allowed the Coalition to open satellite offices in Casper, Cody, Fort Washakie, and Gillette, in addition to maintaining their primary office in Laramie. The Coalition handled 305 cases in FY 2022 with the EJW, VOCA, and ERAP funds that they received.



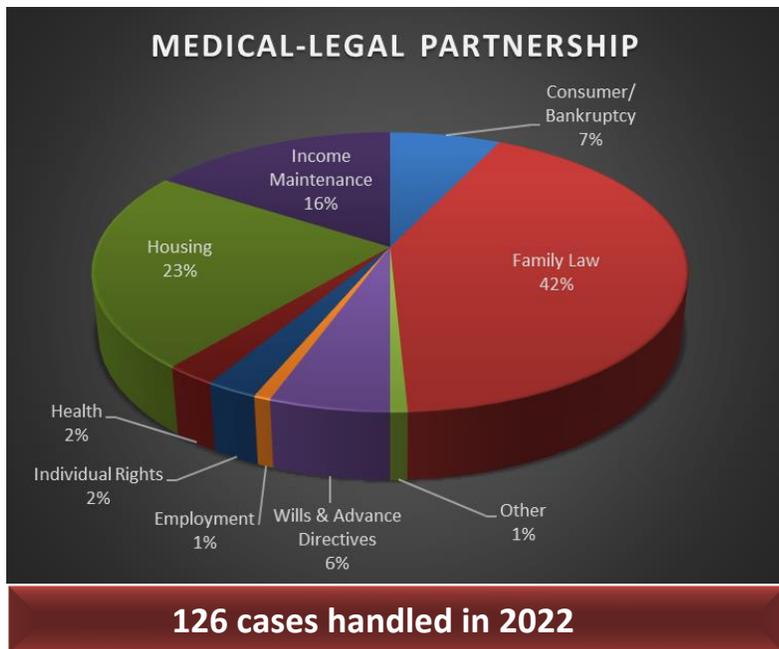
305 cases handled in 2022

Wyoming Children’s Law Center

The Wyoming Children’s Law Center (WCLC) provides legal services in cases involving children and families. The WCLC’s services include traditional family law cases as well as other matters that are vitally important to children’s well-being. For example, the WCLC provides advocacy to ensure children receive special education services to which they are entitled. The WCLC fills a great unmet need. The grant from Equal Justice supports a wide variety of civil legal services, allowing the WCLC to handle 146 cases in FY 2022.



Medical-Legal Partnership at Cheyenne Regional Medical Center

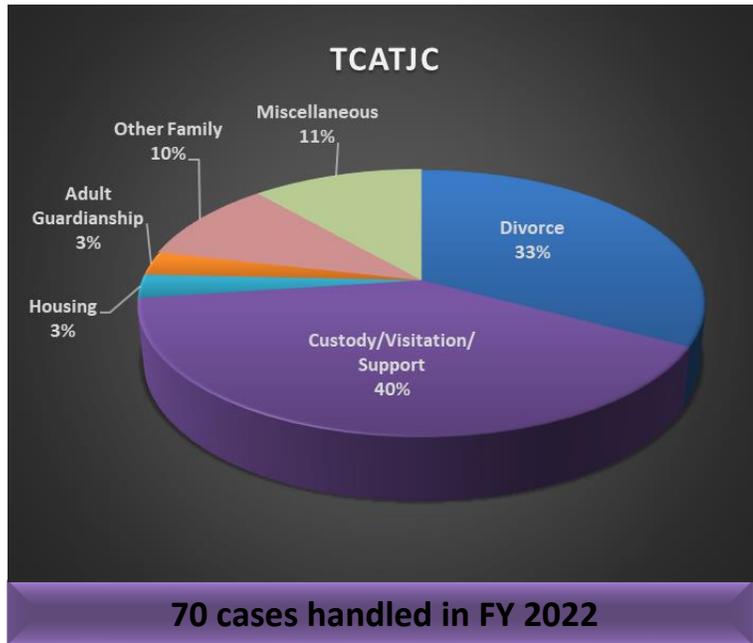


Cheyenne Regional Medical Center received a grant from Equal Justice to operate a Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP). MLPs are forming across the country to address health-harming legal issues. Cheyenne Regional’s MLP handles various legal matters ranging from landlord-tenant cases where safe housing is at issue to denials of public benefits that leave individuals unable to afford healthcare. The MLP incorporates a lawyer into a medical team to identify and address patients’ legal needs in order to improve their health. The MLP partners with HealthWorks medical clinic in

Cheyenne, and also receives referrals from other health care providers. In FY 2022, the MLP added a second attorney through an ERAP grant from EJW. The MLP attorneys handled 126 legal matters.

Teton County Access to Justice Center

The Teton County Access to Justice Center (“TCATJC”) was launched in 2012 with funding from Equal Justice. The TCATJC is housed in space donated by Teton County and shares the space with the county law library. The TCATJC provides legal information and self-help services to individuals in Teton, Sublette, and Lincoln Counties. Eligible applicants may also apply for legal representation through a panel of private contract attorneys who provide legal services at no charge to the client. The services are paid at a reduced rate from the Equal Justice grant funds. In FY 2022, the TCATJC handled 70 cases.



Financial Summary

The revenue generated from filing fees that fund Equal Justice has continued to significantly decline. We have been able to offset some of the decreased revenue through new sources of funding and by reducing our staff. We have not filled a vacant Staff Attorney/Pro Bono Coordinator position due to the reduced revenue.

Additional Revenue

Pro hac vice fees paid by out-of-state attorneys. The fees are used to supplement our grants.

VOCA (Victims of Crime Act) funds to provide civil legal services to victims of abuse and other crimes.

Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) funds to support grants that provide civil legal services to help individuals obtain or maintain safe and stable housing.

A support grant from the Corporation for National & Community Service to manage our AmeriCorps VISTA program.

As access-to-justice programs across the country are faced with decreased revenue, we will continue to explore additional ways to support the important work of our program and our grantees.

Summary of Expenditures

Salaries and Benefits	\$337,095
Office Expense and Travel	\$8,638
Telecommunications	\$4,088
Grants*	
Legal Aid of Wyoming	\$554,827
Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault	\$700,886
Wyoming Children's Law Center	\$84,000
Teton County Access to Justice Center	\$36,153
Cheyenne Regional Medical Center MLP	\$160,872
Special Services	\$37,643
Total*	\$1,924,202

*Includes the June 2022 grant expenditures which were paid in July 2022. Includes EJW, VOCA, and ERAP grant payments.

Vision - Equal access to justice for the people of Wyoming.

Mission - Serving the legal needs of low-income persons of Wyoming through community engagement, education, information, and expansion of legal services throughout the state.

Equal Justice Wyoming
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www.equaljustice.wy.gov