OUR MISSION

Land of Lincoln Legal Aid’s mission is to provide low-income and senior residents of central and southern Illinois with high quality legal services to obtain and maintain their basic human needs.

Through advice, representation, advocacy, education, and collaboration, we seek:

- to achieve justice for those whose voices might otherwise not be heard;
- to empower individuals to advocate for themselves; and
- to make positive changes in the communities we serve.
LETTER TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Dear Friends and Supporters:

When 2021 dawned, the release of COVID vaccines glimmered on the horizon with an implicit promise that the world would return to normal. Land of Lincoln Legal Aid understood that regardless of that promise, COVID would continue to have an outsized, destructive impact on our clients’ lives. Indeed, we were most concerned about when federal and statewide moratoria preventing evictions would be lifted and how to assist as many Illinoisans as possible to remain safe and housed.

Thankfully, we received an influx of state funding at the beginning of the year that allowed us to innovate and plan for when the statewide moratorium was finally lifted October 3, 2021. Before then, we got the word out about our help through text messages, Snapchat, Facebook and ads on buses that reached hundreds of thousands of residents. We hired new attorneys and secretaries. We also created a Client Support Services Program—staffed by 10 case workers to help our clients apply for rental assistance, look for new housing, and apply for state IDs and public benefits like Medicaid.

We worked with courts and local partners to create eviction mediation programs and help desks at eviction dockets. We expanded our hotline hours. And at the end of the day, we got to work providing legal assistance to as many renters and their families as we could. As I write this letter in August 2022, I can report we have been opening almost 300 housing cases monthly for the past six months.

As you know, housing isn’t the only area of law that Land of Lincoln assists low-income Illinoisans with. Last year, we helped thousands of residents with a wide variety of legal problems—obtaining Social Security, sealing and expunging criminal records, and divorcing domestic violence survivors from their abusive spouses.

We are grateful for your support of our work. As one of our clients recently wrote in a thank you letter, “I hope that you realize what a difference you are making in people’s lives.” Indeed, your ongoing commitment to Land of Lincoln Legal Aid makes a difference in countless Illinoisans lives each year.

Yours truly,

[Signature]

Clarissa Gaff
Executive Director
WHO YOU HELPED IN 2021

670 Active Military, Veterans & Their Families

9,700 Children Impacted

Caucasian 63.0%

Hispanic 1.6%
Multiple Races 2.3%
Other/Unknown 2.0%

African-American 31.1%
Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, Land of Lincoln was able to help more than 9,500 clients throughout our 65-county service area.
Due to the pandemic and eviction crisis facing our state, Illinois Equal Justice Foundation funded Land of Lincoln with an Eviction Response grant in order to increase our capacity to serve clients regarding housing-related matters. Land of Lincoln saw a dramatic increase of nearly double our normal cases in a single year. Through Eviction Response funds, Land of Lincoln was able to hire more attorneys and support staff, and was able to add case workers to our team of lawyers.

As a result, Land of Lincoln has been able to handle the increase in eviction cases caused by the pandemic. Land of Lincoln prevented clients from having evictions filed against them by getting rental assistance before the eviction moratorium was lifted or by negotiating with landlords before an eviction was filed.
Jim, a 35-year old father, was facing an eviction after his landlord shut off the water and removed the toilet and bathtub in the rental home he was living in with his girlfriend and their three children. They were unable to pay their rent because of lost income due to the COVID-19 pandemic and their landlord was trying to intimidate them into leaving.

Jim and his girlfriend had to fill up containers with water from neighbors and rent motel rooms to bathe. The landlord was showing up at the home with other large men to force Jim and his family into leaving while the eviction moratorium was in place.

Jim reached out to Land of Lincoln for assistance. Our attorney attempted to negotiate a solution, but the landlord avoided all calls. As a result, Jim and his attorney decided to file a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) against the landlord to ask the court to have the water turned back on, the fixtures reinstalled, and end the intimidation attempts.

The court granted the TRO and ordered the landlord to turn the water back on and reinstall the fixtures, which he did within a couple of days. However, while attempting to reach an agreement on the damages, the landlord filed an eviction. Our attorney was able to negotiate approximately $2,500 reduction in the back rent owed for the two months the water was turned off, a move out date that was favorable to Jim and his family, and for the eviction file to be sealed.

Due to the intervention of Land of Lincoln, Jim and his family were able to avoid homelessness and remain in their home for nearly seven months longer, until the eviction moratorium ended, and they were able to find new housing.

Land of Lincoln saw an increase of 73% in landlord/tenant cases from 2020 to 2021.
Steven, a 72-year-old man, was referred to Land of Lincoln after receiving an eviction notice, threatening his ability to stay in his home of more than a decade.

Steven was living on a limited income and fell victim to a phone scam. He received a call from someone convincing him that he had to send them $500. Steven provided his banking information to the scammer and almost immediately his bank account was drained.

As a result, Steven was unable to pay his rent and received a 5-day notice from his landlord. A Land of Lincoln case worker sprang into action and helped Steven apply for and obtain three months of rent from a local foundation.

With Steven’s permission, our case worker also connected him with the local Area Agency on Aging for help with money management services. The Area Agency on Aging employee quickly identified that Steven needed a representative payee and helped Steven sign up for a licensed and bonded payee.

As a result of our case worker’s work, Steven is able to remain in his home, avoid assisted living, and hopefully will avoid future consumer scams.

According to reports from ConsumerAffairs, financial crimes against the elderly are on the rise. American seniors targeted by fraudsters suffer an average loss of $34,200.
Deniece called Land of Lincoln after her husband of 20 years continued to violate an Order of Protection she had in place. He even called her from jail after being arrested for assaulting her.

Deniece was ready for a divorce, hoping that no longer being married to her abuser would make him stop. Deniece had left her abusive husband in the middle of the night a few years ago with nothing but her clothes and a car.

Deniece’s husband continued to come to her home and would wait for her outside of her job. He would threaten her and say since she was his wife, she was his property. After he was arrested, Deniece’s mother-in-law even called her and warned her that he was going to kill her. Deniece was scared when she turned to Land of Lincoln for help.

Our intake staff talked to Deniece about safety planning and opened a case for assistance with a divorce. However, Deniece suffered some medical issues and the divorce case could not be initiated until almost a year later. In the meantime, our attorneys helped her extend the Order of Protection. During this time, her husband was in and out of jail. Each time he got out, he would find Deniece and commit additional physical violence against her.

While waiting for the divorce to be granted, Deniece experienced additional medical issues that made her concerned that her husband would have the right to make medical decisions for her should she become further incapacitated. Land of Lincoln opened an additional case for her to create a Power of Attorney and designate a trusted family member to make life and death decisions for her, should the need arise.

Despite many attempts by her husband to delay the court process, Land of Lincoln helped Deniece obtain a divorce while her husband was incarcerated. She was also granted the car she had bought and paid off on her own since fleeing.
New Leaf Illinois is a statewide, state-funded initiative made up of non-profits throughout Illinois who provide free legal representation or legal information to people who want their cannabis convictions off their record.

New Leaf Illinois is committed to equal justice for all those who were previously arrested or convicted for cannabis use, production, and sale. The expungement process is one step toward repairing the damage caused by the war on drugs which unfairly impacted people of color and the economically disenfranchised.

Land of Lincoln is proud to partner with New Leaf Illinois and other civil legal aid and advocacy partners across the state.

Fred, a disabled senior, contacted Land of Lincoln to vacate and expunge his cannabis records. Fred had two felony cases in the 1990s, both related to cannabis, that were holding him back.

Fred wanted to clear his records for possible part-time employment and for volunteer opportunities. He is a former coach and has a lot of grandchildren involved in sports. Fred was interested in coaching and refereeing but wanted to make sure he could pass a background check.

An attorney at Land of Lincoln drafted Fred’s petition and prepared him for a virtual court appearance. There were no objections to Fred’s petition to Vacate & Expunge his cannabis records. Now Fred is able to work and volunteer without worry that his past will limit him.
The R3 Program is a statewide, state-funded initiative for violence prevention, reentry, youth development, economic development, and civil legal aid services in areas of the state that are objectively found to be harmed by unemployment, excessive incarceration, and economic disinvestment.

R3 awarded Land of Lincoln funds to provide legal services in the communities of Carbondale, Cairo, Champaign-Urbana, Danville, Decatur, and Springfield.

Land of Lincoln offices and staff in each region work closely with community partners to provide community education, outreach, and collaborative services to address critical civil legal needs in areas of housing, debt, criminal records expungement and sealing, public benefits, and other legal needs identified by community partners.

Land of Lincoln is excited to be partnering with:

Kelly contacted Land of Lincoln after being terminated from her healthcare job and her employer fought her application for unemployment benefits.

Kelly was hired at an assisted living facility without a CPR certification. She was never informed that it was a problem. A few months into working at the facility, Kelly contracted COVID-19 and was out sick for a month. Upon her return to work, she was given a letter stating that since she did not have her CPR certification, she was terminated. After being let go, she was denied unemployment benefits.

A Land of Lincoln attorney argued that there was nothing in the employee handbook requiring the certification and Kelly was wrongly terminated. The Administrative Law Judge agreed that the CPR certification was not required and therefore Kelly was eligible for unemployment benefits. Kelly was awarded a lump sum of back pay and a weekly benefit amount.
## 2021 CLOSED CASES

### BY OFFICE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Regional Office</td>
<td>1,601</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern Regional Office</td>
<td>1,713</td>
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<td>Western Regional Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal Advice &amp; Referral Center</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

![Category Bar Chart]

- **Consumer Protection**
- **Elder Law**
- **Expungements & Sealings**
- **Family Safety & Stability**
- **Health & Income Security**
- **Housing**
- **Miscellaneous**
2021 Closed Cases: 9,523

Family Safety & Stability: 3,281 (Orders of Protection, Divorce, Custody, Guardianship, Education)

Housing: 2,296 (Rental, Homeownership)

Expungement & Sealing: 1,468

Elder Law: 1,449 (Elder Abuse, Financial Exploitation, Advanced Directives and Wills)

Consumer Protection: 614 (Consumer Fraud, Debt Collection, Bankruptcy)

Health & Income Security: 358

Miscellaneous: 57
OUR PEOPLE

LEGAL AID STAFF

Central Regional Office
Carmen Awuah
Angela Bates-Smith
Liz Baum
Rosemary Berkemann
Daniel Blair
Nathan Elwood
Patrick Graham
Elliott Jensen
Keesha Kimbrow
Megan Kinney
Brian Lambert
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Julie Poplstein
Kate Scott
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Julie Rose
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Southern Regional Office
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Christina Dent
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As of December 31, 2021
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Land of Lincoln Legal Aid is grateful for the help of the private bar in meeting the legal needs of low-income residents of southern and central Illinois. Private attorneys partner with Land of Lincoln to provide pro bono legal services to our clients and are critical to ensuring access to justice to all, not just those who can afford it. In 2021, pro bono attorneys handled 741 cases referred by Land of Lincoln. The following attorneys are currently active in our Pro Bono Attorney Program.

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- Jennifer Behme
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- Ryan Connor
- Ashley Cook
- Bruce Cook
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- Charles Courtney
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- M. Caitlin Embrich
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AgeSmart Community Resources
AgeLinc (Area Agency on Aging for Lincolnland)
Alton Woman’s Home Association
Carle Foundation Hospital
Champaign County
East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging
Illinois Bar Foundation
Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority
Illinois Department of Children & Family Services
Illinois Equal Justice Foundation
Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois
Legal Services Corporation
Midland Area Agency on Aging
Office of the Attorney General of Illinois
Public Interest Law Initiative
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Saint Clair County Intergovernmental Grants
Saint Louis Community Foundation
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Southern Illinois University School of Medicine - HIV Care Connect
Southern Illinois University School of Medicine - Medical-Legal Partnership
United Way of Champaign County
United Way of Greater St. Louis
Westside Justice Center - Access to Justice

Thank you to our institutional funders who supported Land of Lincoln in 2021.
FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

REVENUE
Grants $10,060,383
Cy Pres Awards $63,841
Contributions $1,544,469
In-Kind Donations (pro bono hours) $583,421
Other (investment income, attorneys fees, etc) $52,718

2021 Total Revenue = $12,334,832

EXPENSES
Program Services $8,652,664
Management & General $1,297,960
Fundraising $139,849

2021 Total Expenses = $10,090,473
REMEMBERING JOHN PHIPPS

On September 24, 2021, Land of Lincoln hosted the dedication of our Eastern Regional Office in Champaign, Illinois. Our Board of Directors decided to officially rename the office, the John T. Phipps Community Law Center, after the passing of one of our founders, John Phipps.

In 1972, John signed our original incorporating documents and eagerly sat on our Board of Directors. In 1983, he was elected Chair and President of our Board and actively served in that role until 1994, when he stepped down. He continued to serve on our board until his death in 2020.

We are grateful for the 48 years of John’s dedication to ensuring access to justice for low-income Illinoisans.
In the Summer of 2021, Land of Lincoln began the Summer Law Student Fellowship Program and welcomed our inaugural fellows.

In hopes of increasing opportunities and ensuring equity, Land of Lincoln secured sponsorships to provide a paid fellowship to four law students.

Through this opportunity, these law students were able to spend 10 weeks working at our organization throughout the summer. While each law student’s experience was different, most students had the opportunity to interview clients, prepare pleadings and briefs, interview witnesses, attend court, collaborate with community organizations, and work in a number of areas of law. Students had the chance to participate in the life-changing work that legal aid attorneys perform and were part of our mission to ensure justice for all.

We are very thankful to our inaugural fellowship sponsors: M. Ann Hatch; Simmons Hanly Conroy LLC; Goldenberg Heller & Antognoli P.C.; and Husch Blackwell. If you or your firm would like to sponsor a fellowship for next summer, please contact Clarissa Gaff at admin@lincolnlegal.org.
Land of Lincoln Legal Aid provides free legal assistance and representation on civil legal issues to residents throughout 65 counties in central and southern Illinois.

When they have nowhere else to turn, low-income families and individuals, people with disabilities, seniors, and veterans look to Land of Lincoln Legal Aid to help secure the most basic necessities of life.