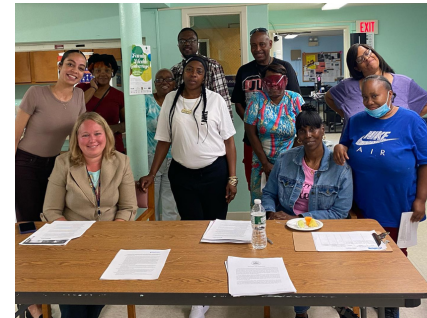
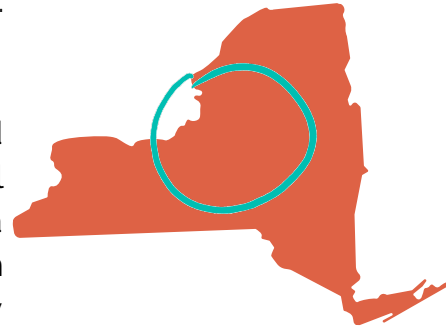


2021 MID-YEAR UPDATE

Greetings from the Volunteer Lawyers Project of CNY, Inc. Our volunteers have told us they want updates about services, opportunities and trainings. We hope to provide what you're looking for here.

When COVID hit, VLP quickly transitioned to remote work. Volunteers and staff have met with clients virtually, offering the whole range of free legal services. For many of our clients, especially those outside of Onondaga County, remote services make it easier to connect to legal help. In recognition of the larger geographic footprint that we serve, we officially changed our name to the **Volunteer Lawyers Project of CNY, Inc.**

We are carefully returning to in-person programs, while maintaining some remote services. This is where we need all of you. Would you like to volunteer in person? Would you like to help via phone? What updates would you like to receive? Let us know! As a reminder, visit our [website](http://www.vlpcny.org) to view a list of all the services we provide. Thank you so much for your support – you are central to everything that we do!



VOLUNTEERS, WE NEED YOU!

TALK-TO-A-LAWYER

The Talk-to-a-Lawyer Community Clinics allow volunteer attorneys to provide free legal advice, information and referrals regarding civil legal issues at locations throughout the community. The clinics were on pause during the pandemic but are now re-opening with safety protocols in place

Contact:

Cheri Blair
(315) 949-2118
communityclinics@vlpcny.org

EVICTIION DEFENSE

VLP has a large number of cases heading to court in the fall, when the "moratorium" ends. We are seeking volunteer advocates to help with cases and connect with tenants in virtual clinics, especially on Mondays and Fridays, with training provided. The time commitment is minimal, but it makes a huge impact.

Contact:

Laurie Rolnick
(315) 930-3506
housing@vlpcny.org

IMMIGRATION

We always have a need for attorneys to tackle removal proceedings and asylum cases. They can be involved and complex, but we provide technical assistance, resources and support for those willing to take on the challenge in our Immigration Program.

Contact:

Sara McDowell, Esq.
(315) 579-0178
immigration@vlpcny.org

FAMILY LAW

Seeking attorneys willing to take on full representation in child support, custody and divorce cases for individuals either not entitled to an assigned attorney by statute or because their income places them over the eligibility guidelines, but they do not earn enough to hire a private attorney.

Contact:

Mary C. John, Esq.
(315) 579-2574.
family@vlpcny.org

This past year, the **LGBT* Rights Program** has completed 186 transgender name changes, held 7 virtual name change clinics, and has won settlements in several discrimination cases. Our volunteers also worked steadily toward passage of the Gender Recognition Act, a long overdue reform of state laws governing name and gender marker changes. Our team helped draft the bill and provided crucial direction to assist the sponsors in the Assembly and Senate. The GRA will make the process of correcting the name and gender markers of transgender and non-binary persons easier – and safer – than ever before. We are so excited to be able to offer these new protections for our trans and non-binary community members when the GRA takes effect in January.



DID YOU KNOW?



VLP's **Immigration Program** serves **12** counties in NY & our **LGBT* Rights Program** serves **15**

The **Immigration Program** is celebrating important changes to immigration law and practice including expansions of Temporary Protected Status, rescinding restrictive public charge rules, restarting the Central American minors refugee/parole program, mandating greater prosecutorial discretion in immigration cases, and the reopening of asylum law, particularly for those fleeing persecution based on domestic violence or familial ties. VLP has already begun winning positive outcomes for clients based upon these changes.

The Immigration Program has held virtual client clinics monthly throughout the pandemic and has provided virtual educational trainings that have reached over 1,500 community members. Recently, VLP helped a refugee obtain lawful permanent residency who had been waiting over ten years, a process that normally takes one year. In the North Country, we've assisted several unaccompanied minor children obtain Special Immigrant Juvenile Status and are working on an immigrant visa for the spouse of a U.S. soldier stationed at Ft. Drum.

The **Eviction Defense** team has worked hard keeping tenants safe in their homes and informed during the pandemic. VLP has continued to provide free legal help to low-income tenants regarding eviction, renters' rights and housing quality. VLP continues to provide an attorney-of-the-day during virtual court appearances in Syracuse and East Syracuse. Shortly after the the pandemic began, VLP created a new daily Tenant's Rights Counseling program, where volunteers provide advice and counsel via telephone to renters regarding the eviction moratorium, landlord harassment, codes violations, and more. VLP's team has provided virtual information sessions on changes in eviction law to over 15,000 community members since the pandemic began.



VLP's **Economic Opportunity Programs** continue to help clear pathways out of poverty for those most in need. VLP's **Debt Program** advocates for those fighting consumer debt. Volunteers meet with clients virtually and draft answers, discovery, etc. We helped a widower, whose only source of income is social security and VA disability benefits. He received a notice from a debt buyer attempting to collect on a judgment for \$76,433, for debt that was not his and a lawsuit he was never aware of. VLP obtained a stipulation of discontinuance with prejudice for the client so he could go back to enjoying his retirement in peace. VLP's **Reentry Program** continues to remove barriers to employment caused by prior criminal convictions for jobseekers in the Worktrain and now the Pathways to Apprenticeship program. VLP's **Small Business and Nonprofit Program** has helped 60 organizations with issues related to COVID and more.



Thank you to all who continue to stay connected, volunteer and support our mission of providing access to justice to those in need. We simply cannot do this work without you.



All **Elder Law and Disability** related programs including, Surrogate's Court Clinic, Hospital Clinic, and Estate Planning have successfully continued to operate remotely this past year. Volunteers have completed Powers of Attorney, Wills and provided critical advice, counsel and representation in the Surrogate Court process. Operating remotely has provided opportunities to reach out to the community, including our Virtual Elder Law Fair that provided critical information on Scams & Fraud, Estate Planning, Housing and Accommodations, and Caregiving, thanks to our amazing partners and volunteers.

The **Virtual Court Access Program** is a partnership with the 5th Judicial District Courts, community organizations, and houses of worship, with the goal of providing locations where community members can appear in court via computer when needed. VLP is proud to partner on this project that offers accessible locations for all and makes connecting to court easier for everyone.

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In 2020, VLP handled **3,292** intakes, producing **2,786** cases involving legal services and over 500 hotline calls giving legal information or a referral to another organization.



The **Talk-to-a-Lawyer Program** has relaunched after being on pause during the pandemic. The returning clinics include sites at the Central Library and Catholic Charities Men's Shelter, as well as our weekly Tel Law program. We look forward to more sites opening this Fall. Volunteers are needed!

VLP's **Family Court Program** went remote shortly after the pandemic hit. VLP's interns and intake team conduct client intakes via telephone and gather all needed documents, then volunteers meet with clients telephonically and prepare their orders, which our Family Court Program Director, Mary John, sends to the clients via email. Despite working remotely, the program has assisted over 500 clients. Many clients could use ongoing assistance, especially in child support matters. We are seeking volunteers!



JOIN US FOR AN UPCOMING CLE OR EVENT

Free CLEs for our Volunteers!

September 9, 2021 | Noon

LANDLORD TENANT

Presented by: Laurie Rolnick

September Date & Time TBD

FAMILY COURT UPDATE

Presented by: Mary John

October 27, 2021 | Noon

DEBT DEFENSE 101

Presented by: Anna Anderson, LawNY & Sally Curran

November 18, 2021 | Noon

SURROGATE'S COURT UPDATE

Presented by: Samantha Aguam

To learn more visit: vlpcny.org/events/cle-programs/

A promotional graphic for a virtual wine tasting fundraiser. It features a close-up of a wine glass filled with red wine in the foreground. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with green foliage. Overlaid on the right side is a white rectangular box with an orange border containing event information.

PLEASE JOIN THE
VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROJECT OF CNY FOR

CHEERS FOR A CAUSE

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 30 • 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM
VIA ZOOM • \$100/TICKET

A virtual wine tasting fundraiser and volunteer celebration hosted by Saint Urban Wine Bar. Proceeds benefit Volunteer Lawyers Project of CNY and our mission to provide access to justice. Learn more and buy a ticket at:

www.vlpcny.org/events/cheersforacause

**VOLUNTEER
LAWYERS PROJECT
OF CNY, INC.** SAINT URBAN



221 South Warren Street, Suite 200
Syracuse, New York 13202