October 2025

Justice Where We Live: Promising Practices from Rural Communities

A Report from the Rural Justice Task Force

LSC America's Partner for Equal Justice
LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

Table of Contents

On the cover: The Ohio Justice Bus – a mobile legal services office – drives through a rural town. The bus, run by the Ohio Access to Justice Foundation, operates through partnerships with legal services organizations' pro bono teams across the state to bring legal help to rural communities that otherwise don't have access to attorneys.

Executive Summary

The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) is the single largest funder of civil legal aid in the United States. With LSC's support, legal aid providers offer free legal services to low-income persons in every state and territory. Each Congressional district in the nation is served by a nonprofit legal aid organization that provides life-changing (and in many cases life-saving) services to Americans in need, including survivors of natural disasters and domestic violence, families and individuals facing loss of their homes, seniors struggling with crushing debt, veterans unable to access the supportive benefits they've earned through service, and more.

Since 2005, LSC has periodically measured the need and extent of Americans' civil legal issues relative to the resources available to meet these needs.[1] The difference is known as the justice gap.[2] [3] As one result of this research, LSC identified a need to examine the unique challenges rural Americans face in finding assistance to resolve their civil legal problems. In December 2021, LSC convened the Rural Justice Task Force (Task Force) to examine this issue.[4] This report details the Task Force's findings.

This report summarizes the Task Force's key learning and the unique contours of the justice gap in rural communities. This report also highlights model practices and innovations in rural America to narrow the justice gap. Lastly, this report offers recommendations for federal and state legislators, state and tribal courts, civil legal services providers and private practitioners, law schools and other stakeholders to ensure that more low-income rural residents can get the legal assistance they urgently need.

Assessing the Rural Justice Gap

LSC's 2022 Justice Gap Report found that low-income households in the U.S. did not receive any or enough legal assistance to resolve 92% of their legal problems.[5] In rural communities, the situation was even more severe, rising to 94%. Closing the justice gap is an immense challenge throughout the nation, but addressing the problem in rural America requires an understanding of the unique characteristics that exacerbate challenges and leave people underserved.

Glimpses of rural America.

This report delves deeper into some of the conditions that contribute to the justice gap like poverty, housing insecurity and substance dependency. It also identifies difficulties encountered by distinct rural communities — including low-income agricultural workers, Native Americans, veterans and senior citizens — and how these challenges may contribute to their specific legal needs.

For more information about this report, LSC or the Task Force's work, visit www.lsc.gov/rural.

Addressing Key Barriers to Justice in Rural Areas

Clients meet with a Legal Aid of Arkansas attorney during the organization's 2024 Spring Break on the Road to Justice Clinics, which brought free estate planning services to Augusta, Wynne and Marked Tree, AR.

In the course of its work, the Task Force focused on four barriers to justice in the nation's rural and remote areas. This report explains each of these barriers, highlights ways communities address them and offers recommendations for further action. The barriers in this report are as follows.

- **The shortage of attorneys in rural areas**. There is a severe shortage of legal professionals in rural areas throughout the U.S. This leaves many rural Americans unsure of where to go when they need a lawyer. Without clear places to turn for help, people may struggle to recognize when their everyday challenges — whether financial, housing or health-related — are actually legal in nature.[6] This lack of access not only hides legal issues in plain sight, it also contributes to a sense that the legal system is out of reach, eroding trust in the justice system itself.
- **The digital divide.** The rise of online technologies holds enormous promise for reducing barriers to justice for residents of the nation's rural communities. However, too many Americans, including a disproportionate number of rural Americans, still do not have reliable internet access at home. Many also lack the skills and equipment needed to utilize online legal services.
- **Distance and transportation obstacles to accessing legal help.** While people living in urban and suburban areas tend to have public transportation options, people in rural areas often need to own or have access to a vehicle to travel anywhere for services. The combination of travel distances and transportation obstacles inhibits rural residents' access to the courts and legal and other forms of assistance.
- **Community trust and local needs.** Rural communities across the country are far from a monolith. Each has its own traditions, values and circumstances. These unique qualities sometimes make it harder for residents to seek or access legal help. In some communities, challenges are further shaped by factors like local laws, language differences or the kinds of work people to do, all of which influence how, when and where residents seek help. Expanding access to justice in rural America depends on building trust — trust that begins with listening, understanding and respecting what matters most to local residents — and tailoring services to meet the specific needs of each community.

Solutions and Recommendations

Rural communities and practitioners have met many of these challenges head on. The recommendations and solution spotlights in this report highlight practical solutions and show how lawmakers, courts, legal aid providers, academia, the organized bar and other stakeholders have and can take concerted action to expand legal services and support in the nation's rural communities. The Task Force's purpose is exploring, understanding and elevating the tremendous work that is happening to close the rural justice gap so that others in rural communities and beyond can learn about and shape solutions that address their communities' needs.

Who has a role in closing the rural justice gap?

The Task Force offers the following recommendations to bridge the rural justice gap.

Recommendations to address the shortage of attorneys in rural areas.

1. Elevate the rural justice gap via research, communications, task forces and convenings.

2. Invest in programs to increase the number of lawyers in rural and remote communities.

3. Expand opportunities for professionals beyond lawyers to help close the rural justice gap.

4. Provide current and prospective rural practitioners with support to manage student loan debt.

5. Offer practical courses on starting and running small law practices and fund programs encouraging rural practice.

6. Expand benefits and programs for rural practitioners, such as reduced dues and fees and targeted training on succession planning.

Recommendations to bridge the digital divide.

1. Apply a human-centered approach to deployment of technology.

2. Prioritize broadband expansion.

3. Use online platforms and face-to-face support to expand the availability of legal assistance to rural clients, including virtual consultations and support from attorneys in urban and suburban areas.

Recommendations to ease distance and transportation obstacles.

1. Scale proven models for easing local access to federal infrastructure funding and resources for transportation.

2. Expand court modernization to increase remote access.

3. Bring legal help closer to people.

4. Experiment with and support various types of access to physical and virtual services to see what works best in reaching targeted client groups.

5. Establish rural legal clinics in collaboration with law schools.

Recommendations to build community trust and meet local needs.

1. Expand partnerships with community-based organizations serving low-income rural populations to connect residents to critical legal aid services.

2. Train community members, staff and volunteers without formal legal credentials to serve as first responders and navigators for rural clients in need.

3. Train judges, lawyers, client-facing staff and volunteers on cultural factors impacting distinct rural populations.

4. Widen pathways to pursue legal education for rural residents and members of underrepresented communities to encourage more rural practitioners..

5. Use high- and low-tech community outreach tactics to raise awareness about the availability of free legal help

Introduction

About the Legal Services Corporation

Congress created LSC in 1974 to ensure that low-income individuals and families have access to assistance to resolve civil legal problems.[7] Funding for LSC provides access to justice and due process of law for millions of low-income Americans every year. LSC is the largest single funder of civil legal services in the country. As a grantmaking organization, LSC distributes almost 95% of its annual federal appropriation to eligible nonprofits delivering civil legal services. LSC awards grants to 130 independent legal aid organizations (grantees) with more than 900 offices serving every state, territory and the District of Columbia.[8]

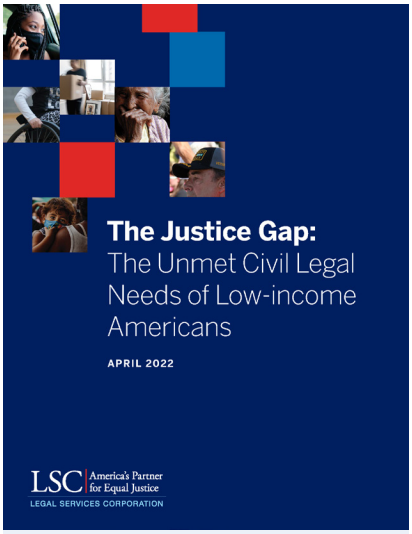
LSC's grantees help low-income families, youth and adults, including seniors and veterans. People served live in households with annual incomes at or below 125% of the federal poverty guidelines.[9] LSC grantees handle the basic civil legal needs of low-income people, addressing matters involving safety, economic subsistence and family stability. Two of the most common legal aid practice areas are family law (including domestic violence, child support and custody) and housing matters (including evictions, housing conditions and foreclosures). Resolving legal problems early, before they spiral out of control, reduces the need for public assistance. Legal aid promotes individual empowerment and self-reliance by giving people the tools, help and knowledge they need to access the civil court system to protect and exercise their rights. It also helps the local economy by reducing disruption to people's work, housing and education. Studies show that every $1 invested in civil legal support returns an average of $7 back to local economies.[10]

Federal Poverty Level Guidelines

LSC-funded legal aid organizations serve individuals and families who meet income eligibility requirements — generally, 125% or below the federal poverty guidelines. In 2025, the federal poverty level was $15,650 for an individual living in the 48 contiguous states, and $32,150 for a family of four.

About the Rural Justice Gap

In 2022, LSC released its fourth Justice Gap Report,[11] measuring the difference between the civil legal needs of low-income Americans and the resources available to meet those needs. Based on a nationally representative survey of more than 5,000 adults, the report found that a vast majority of low-income households in the U.S. — more than 90% — did not receive any or enough legal assistance to resolve their legal problems, an overwhelming divide known as the justice gap.



The Justice Gap Report 2022.

Closing the justice gap is an immense challenge throughout the entire U.S., but addressing the problem in rural America requires an understanding of the unique characteristics of and challenges facing these communities. These can include higher rates of poverty, geographic and social isolation, frequent lack of internet service, spotty mobile phone coverage and a low density of attorneys and other human services providers.

A compounding problem is that the provision of civil legal services in many rural places is highly dependent on federal funding in the form of grants awarded by LSC. Even at current levels — grantees received $612.8 million in revenue from LSC in 2024 — the funding LSC receives from Congress to regrant is not sufficient to address the unmet legal needs of all low-income Americans.[12] In 2021, a census of client applicants performed by LSC grantees nationwide revealed that organizations in the largely rural American West (Alaska, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Montana, Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming) were unable to provide any or enough legal help for 78% of the problems low-income people brought to them.[13] The federal government provides about 19% of funding for civil legal services nationally — including LSC-funded and non-LSC funded legal aid organizations — leaving state and local governments to cover the rest, although not all do.[14] Without significant additional public investment in civil legal services, the justice gap will only continue to grow.

Geographic Breakdown of the Justice Gap

This map shares results from LSC's 2021 Intake Census for each of the four U.S. Census regions. It provides a snapshot of how often LSC-funded organizations are unable to help applicants with their civil legal problems, due to a whole host of reasons — namely, lack of resources. The Intake Census supplements LSC's nationwide Justice Gap study, which looks beyond applicants coming to LSC grantees and surveys the general public.

Midwest

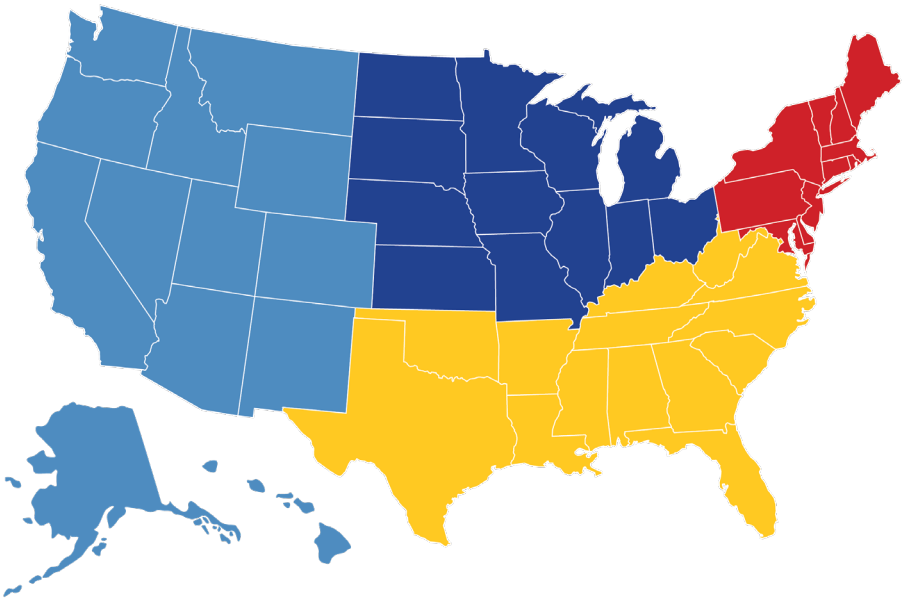
Approximately **417,000** eligible problems brought to LSC-funded organizations annually.

They are unable to provide any or enough legal help for **73%** of these problems.

Northeast

Approximately **387,000** eligible problems brought to LSC-funded organizations annually.

They are unable to provide any or enough legal help for **72%** of these problems.



West

Approximately **407,000** eligible problems brought to LSC-funded organizations annually.

They are unable to provide any or enough legal help for **78%** of these problems.

South

Approximately **655,000** eligible problems brought to LSC-funded organizations annually.

They are unable to provide any or enough legal help for **69%** of these problems.

Source: 2021 Intake Census of LSC-funded organizations.

About the Task Force

Staff from Quarles & Brady LLP and Ascendium, whose partnership and support helped advance the Task Force's work, at the Rural Justice Task Force field hearing in Oklahoma in October 2022.

In response to the challenges facing rural communities, and in recognition of the tremendous innovations put forward by rural-serving practitioners to broaden access to justice, LSC's Board of Directors established the Rural Justice Task Force in 2021. Its charge was to help the civil legal services community — and the broader legal community — better understand access-to-justice obstacles facing the nation's rural communities, as well as identify and share creative solutions and best practices to overcome them.[15] Many of these solutions are featured later in this report. They provide a blueprint for serving rural clients and increasing access to justice for low-income people across the country, including in urban areas.

Members of the Task Force include legal aid and human services providers, business and philanthropic leaders, educators, social scientists, the faith community, court professionals and members of the judiciary. A complete list of members is in Appendix C.

Task Force Goals

- Raise awareness about the rural justice gap and the civil legal needs of rural residents.
- Profile model legal services programs developed in rural communities.
- Share best practices for building trust and providing effective legal assistance to people living in rural or remote communities.
- Recommend strategies for engaging private attorneys and supporting rural attorneys to meet the legal needs of rural residents.
- Encourage the exchange of ideas and offer rural communities and rural-serving practitioners with opportunities to tap into the wisdom and experiences of those on the same journey to learn and improve.

About this Report

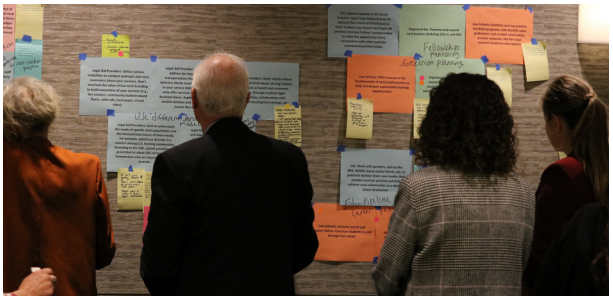
This report shares the results of the Task Force's work. It begins by introducing the justice gap and explaining the term "rural," then provides a brief review of rural demographics. It then offers an overview of some of the unique challenges facing rural Americans and the innovations that rural communities and rural-serving practitioners have developed to address them. It concludes with specific recommendations for key stakeholders, such as lawmakers, state and tribal courts, legal aid and private practice attorneys, law schools and bar associations, about how to address the civil legal challenges in America's rural areas so that low-income rural residents can get the assistance they urgently need.

This report is based on a range of activities led by the Task Force. These activities (detailed further in Appendix C) include the following.

- Exploratory conversations with more than 50 subject matter experts, many of whom joined the Task Force.
- Discussions among three Task Force thematic working groups.
- Two fact-finding field hearings, one held via Zoom in September 2022, and one held in-person in Oklahoma City in October 2022, focused on challenges and solutions.[16]

In support of the Task Force's work, LSC received pro bono project assistance from a team from the national law firm Quarles (Quarles & Brady LLP), along with generous financial and in-kind communications support from Ascendium, a nonprofit committed to making education and training after high school a reality for learners from low-income backgrounds.

The Rural Justice Task Force met in Oklahoma City in October 2022, to hear directly from rural community members and experts from a variety of fields, including law, education, tribal nations and the nonprofit sector.



Understanding the Rural Justice Gap

The U.S. Constitution guarantees the right to an attorney when someone is accused of a crime, but that same constitutional right does not extend to someone facing a civil action. Unless they can afford legal assistance, individuals are on their own to prevent an eviction, obtain a protective court order against an abusive partner, fight for custody of their children or appeal the denial of veterans' benefits earned from military service. Legal support is critical to protecting the values of liberty and justice on which the U.S. was founded.

The need for civil legal assistance is immense. LSC's 2022 Justice Gap Report revealed that nearly 75% of low-income households had at least one significant civil legal problem in the previous year, and that low-income households did not receive any or enough legal assistance to resolve 92% of their legal problems. This means that low-income individuals and families who are facing some of the most devastating circumstances are going it alone, often with dire consequences.[17]

The same report affirmed that the justice gap for low-income Americans is especially pronounced in the nation's rural areas.[18] For example:

- More than three-fourths (77%) of low-income rural households experienced at least one civil legal problem in the past year, and 40% experienced at least five.
- Low-income Americans in rural households did not receive any or enough legal help to address 94% of their civil legal problems in the prior year.
- The most common types of legal problems for low-income rural households were related to consumer (financial) issues, health care and income maintenance.
- Individuals from low-income rural households sought legal help for just 21% of the problems that substantially affected them.

The combination of high demand for services and insufficient funding for those services exacerbates the justice gap in the nation's rural areas. In many rural regions across the country, LSC's grantees are the only local providers of civil legal services, and they are often a considerable distance from the clients and communities they are serving.

Rural Stories: Real People, Real Impact

The following stories show the impact of civil legal help on everyday rural Americans.

Farmer gets help after losing everything in hurricane.

After Hurricane Helene devastated his North Carolina farm, farmer Dave Roland lost his fall crop, his roadside stand and most of his essential farming tools and equipment. The farm was his family's sole source of income, and Dave didn't know how they would survive. Dave visited a pop-up Disaster Relief Center, where he met an attorney from Legal Aid of North Carolina who helped him on the spot. Together, they prepared the necessary legal paperwork to recover his losses. Dave left with the documentation he needed to get his farm back to working order, with a renewed sense of hope and with an eagerness to share what he had learned with others.

Photo represents a farmer from North Carolina, like Dave Roland.

Woman overcomes eviction while battling cancer.

Following a cancer diagnosis, Jocelyn* was forced to quit her job as a store manager in Texas to tend to her rapidly changing health needs. At the time, she lived in subsidized rental housing. Unable to pay her rent, she received a letter in the mail titled "Notice to Vacate." Her landlord had filed an eviction lawsuit against her. Without legal assistance, she was at risk of becoming unhoused while battling cancer. Lawyers from Texas RioGrande Legal Aid negotiated a settlement that allowed her to keep her housing and pay reduced rent based on her income, rather than market rates, allowing her peace of mind and stability while she focused on her health.

**Name has been changed to protect client anonymity.*

Legal services helps senior recover wrongfully terminated benefits.

Nancy*, a 68-year-old Kentucky woman, relies on regular dialysis treatment, which she pays for using her Medicaid benefits. That is, until she received a notice saying that she was no longer eligible for coverage and, in fact, owed repayments. As a senior on a fixed income, Nancy knew her income hadn't changed in years. She sought help from Legal Aid of the Bluegrass. Nancy's legal aid advocate filed an appeal on her behalf and did some digging, determining that the government incorrectly calculated her income, which caused her benefits to be wrongfully terminated. An appeal was granted, and Nancy's benefits and critical health care were restored.

Photo represents a senior woman like Nancy* working with a legal aid advocate.

Name has been changed to protect client anonymity.

Hospitalized woman fights foreclosure.

In Maine, homeowner Patricia* fell behind on her mortgage payments after a month-long hospitalization, which led the bank to initiate foreclosure proceedings on her home. Afraid and unable to afford an attorney, Patricia contacted Pine Tree Legal Assistance (PTLA). Her attorneys filed an appeal, and the bank indicated they were interested in settling Patricia's case — but it was a lengthy process. After months of negotiations, the bank agreed to modify Patricia's loan so that she could afford to remain in her home. As part of the agreement, her monthly payment was reduced to only 22% of her gross monthly income, and she received an extended repayment term of 40 years. Patricia now has peace of mind and stability while she heals.

Name has been changed to protect client anonymity.

Mother expunges record to open doors to better future.

In California's Mojave Desert, a past criminal record kept a mother from improving her family's financial situation. Although Ana* was qualified to work as a certified nursing assistant, no one would hire her because of her record. She was eligible for record expungement that would reclassify her felony as a misdemeanor, but the legal process was complex, and she couldn't navigate it on her own. Lawyers from Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County stepped in to assist Ana through the process. They reviewed her criminal history to determine what part of her record could be expunged, prepared legal paperwork, navigated lost documents and an initial denial and facilitated the expungement of two nonviolent convictions, as well as an additional arrest record where she had not been convicted. These and other legal interventions helped Ana overcome barriers to employment, reenter the workforce and significantly increase her family's stability.

Photo represents a working mom like Ana*.

Name has been changed to protect client anonymity.

Defining Rural America

There is no uniform definition of what makes a place rural. In fact, the federal government's definitions of "rural" vary across agencies and departments based on population numbers, population density and other factors.[19] As defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Economic Research Service, rural America is 74% of the United States' land mass.[20] Approximately one out of every five Americans call a rural community home.[21]

This report includes information about rural America that is critical to understanding the rural justice gap.

Population. Data from the most recent (2020) U.S. Census showed approximately 67 million people, or 20% of the U.S. population, lived in rural areas (under the census designations of "rural," addressed in endnote 18).[22] An analysis of 2024 census data by The Daily Yonder shows four years of continual population growth in rural areas, with nonmetropolitan, or rural, counties growing by 134,000 residents between 2023 and 2024.[23] The primary driver behind this population growth is in-migration. About two-thirds of the national rural population growth happened in the South, but the largest percentage of growth occurred in the Interior Northwest, which grew 0.68%.[24] The Mid-Atlantic region was the only region to see a decline in rural population, and that decline was a minimal drop of 0.07%.[25]

Data from the most recent (2020) U.S. Census showed approximately 67 million people, or 20% of the U.S. population, lived in rural areas.

The following graphic shows population shifts in rural regions from 2023 to 2024.

Rural Population Change in 2024

Rural Region	2023	2024	Raw Change	% Change
Coastal West	2,329,192	2,332,255	3,063	0.13%
Interior Northeast	1,786,192	1,798,336	12,144	0.68%
Mid Atlantic	4,540,180	4,637,078	-3,102	-0.07%
Midwest	15,022,908	15,039,805	17,297	0.12%
New England	1,817,981	1,820,753	2,772	0.15%
AK and HI	510,234	512,445	2,211	0.43%
South	17,816,461	17,904,695	88,234	0.50%
Southwest	2,407,732	2,419,345	11,513	0.48%

Table: Daily Yonder/Sarah Melotte - Source: Census Bureau - Created with Datawrapper

Demographics. There are significant regional variations in the demographics of rural populations. The U.S. population is getting older, and rural America is aging faster than urban areas, with the number of working age Americans declining in rural areas.[26] Rural America is also home to most of the nation's agricultural workers, including large numbers of immigrants,[27] and more than 1.3 million Native Americans.[28]

Educational Attainment. The overall educational attainment of people living in rural areas has increased significantly over time, with 87% of rural residents aged 25 and over having a high school degree and 21% having a bachelor's degree or higher. Both indicators have more than doubled since 1960.[29] Four out of five counties in the U.S. with "low educational attainment" (defined as areas where 20% or more of adults ages 25 to 64 lack a high school diploma or equivalent) are in rural areas, mostly in the South.[30]

Jobs and Industries. There has been a tremendous shift in rural jobs in recent decades. Technological advancements and automation have led to a movement away from small family farms to large industrial operations, reducing jobs in rural industries like mining, forestry and manufacturing.[31] Local banks, small businesses and community hospitals also have shuttered.[32] In light of these changes, many rural communities are pursuing new opportunities for economic growth and sustainability — from tourism to clean energy development — aimed at tapping into their economic potential.[33] And, after near-record high unemployment rates during the COVID-19 pandemic, as of early 2023, total nonmetropolitan employment returned to 99% of the pre-pandemic level.[34]

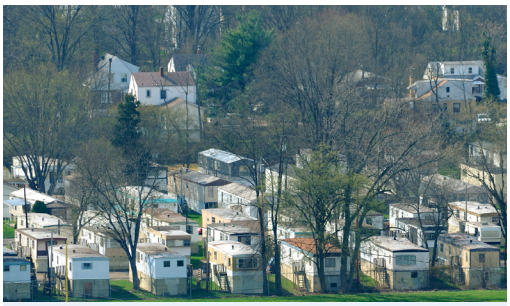
Forestry is one rural industry impacted by technological advancements and automation.

Rural communities are pursuing new opportunities for economic growth and sustainability.

Income. There has been a higher incidence of poverty in rural areas than in urban areas since the 1960s. Twenty percent of households living in rural areas have incomes at or below 125% of the federal poverty level — four percentage points higher than in urban/suburban areas.[35] Poverty rates for African American, Native American, and Latino or Hispanic residents of rural areas are significantly higher than those of their urban counterparts.[36]

There has been a higher incidence of poverty in rural areas than in urban areas since the 1960s.

Housing and Homelessness. The prevalence of poverty in the nation's rural areas, combined with rising housing costs, contributes to a high level of housing instability and homelessness. Homelessness across the country rose by 18% between 2023 and 2024.[37] The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) most recent reporting in 2024 disclosed 771,480 people experienced homelessness during a single night count — more than 16% of these unhoused people were in rural areas.[38] This data also showed a 36% increase in the number of rural families that were unsheltered in comparison to a 7% increase nationally.[39] Many low-income rural residents struggle with housing issues other than supply and affordability. In a recent poll of rural Americans, more than one in 10 respondents said they had experienced problems in their current residence such as the safety of their drinking water (17%) and mold or similar problems (16%).[40] Additionally, manufactured homeowners who rent the land where their house sits face a higher risk of eviction and often confront serious habitability issues that put their health at risk, including problems with power or temperature control, septic systems, water issues and heightened risks from natural disasters.[41]



A manufactured (or mobile) home community.

Health and Health Care. Many rural residents live in health care deserts. According to the USDA's Economic Research Service, 146 rural hospitals closed or stopped providing inpatient services from 2005 to 2023.[42] Pandemic-related assistance programs brought temporary resources to many rural hospitals, but financial pressures persist. From 2017 through 2024, 62 rural hospitals closed compared to just 10 that opened — a net reduction of 52 facilities. Some hospitals that remain open eliminated key service lines, such as obstetrics, leaving rural communities without essential care options. These closures and service reductions ripple through communities, forcing patients to travel farther for care or, in some cases, go without it. The impact is especially difficult for people with urgent

health needs or limited transportation, and hospital losses also impact jobs.[43] Mobile health clinics, freestanding emergency centers, or micro-hospitals, and telehealth are some of the ways some rural residents are accessing care when their nearest hospital shutters.[44]

Substance Use Disorders. Rural communities have not been spared from the effects of the opioid epidemic. At the same time, rural communities are home to fewer treatment facilities, supports for affected families and law enforcement personnel to mitigate the illegal drug trade.[45] A 2017 survey conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of the American Farm Bureau Federation and National Farmers Union found that nearly half (45%) of rural adults said they had been impacted by the opioid epidemic. However, only one out of every three respondents said it would be easy to access addiction treatment in their local community.[46] In recent years, fentanyl has become increasingly problematic for rural communities given its potency, low cost, accessibility and high mortality rate associated with misuse. In one study investigating fatal overdose toxicology trends in rural Michigan, fentanyl was detected in 70% of all overdose deaths in 2020.[47] The legal aid community has responded by working with community partners to integrate civil legal help into a client's treatment, recovery and prevention journey and help support families impacted by addiction.[48]

The Role of Civil Legal Services in Response to the Opioid Epidemic

In response to growing awareness of the opioid epidemic, LSC's Board of Directors created the **Opioid Task Force** in 2019. The Task Force was charged with exploring civil legal issues associated with the epidemic and identifying best practices for addressing them. In its **report**, the group identifies several consequences of the epidemic that legal aid organizations are well positioned to address, including kinship or other caregiving needs, domestic violence and protective orders, housing issues, elder abuse and expungement or sealing of criminal records.[49]

Unique Legal Needs Across Rural Communities

Although residents in metropolitan and rural areas confront many of the same civil legal problems — including eviction, debt collection, family and caregiving disputes, and income maintenance issues — low-income rural residents' needs and circumstances can pose distinct challenges for their safety and well-being. Specific population groups within rural areas may face additional or compounding legal issues, including the following highlighted groups.

Legal Issues in Agricultural Work. In 2022, there were approximately 2.2 million agricultural workers in the U.S.,[50] accounting for 7% of total employment in rural areas.[51] Many agricultural workers earn low wages because they are often excluded from state minimum wage laws or are subjected to a lower minimum wage than most other workers.[52] They are also often dependent on their employers for housing, transportation and future work opportunities. Additionally, many female agricultural workers face sexual harassment by supervisors and co-workers.[53] These factors can result in reluctance to pursue claims against employers, even when housing conditions are poor or wages are unfair.[54]

Agricultural work accounts for 7% of total employment in rural areas.

Lawyers and other professionals serving agricultural workers see a variety of violations by employers that affect worker health, wellness and basic safety. Issues like overcrowded housing, overloaded wiring, inoperable windows, disabled smoke detectors, kitchen appliances that don't function and insufficient bathroom and laundry facilities are common living conditions faced by agricultural workers that often require legal intervention to resolve.[55]

Indian Law and Tribal Courts. Over 1.3 million Native Americans live in rural communities.[56] With at least one in four Native Americans living in poverty, it is the population with the highest poverty.[57] Native Americans living in rural communities often face substantial problems with financial insecurity, health care access, housing, water access, transportation, the digital divide and safety.[58] The challenges facing Native American communities in the U.S. were magnified during the COVID-19 pandemic.

DNA-People's Legal Services branch office in Chinle, AZ, located within the Navajo Reservation. Since 1967, DNA has provided free legal aid in remote portions of three states (AZ, NM and UT) and seven Native American nations.

While Native American communities face many of the same civil legal challenges as rural communities at large, their experiences are shaped by distinctive factors, including tribal laws, treaties, sovereignty and limited infrastructure. The federal government recognizes the sovereign status of Native American tribes as "domestic dependent nations,"[59] with their own jurisdictions, tribal laws and courts.[60]

Key factors include the following:

1. Not every attorney can practice in tribal courts. Attorneys must apply and be admitted to practice. This impacts the overall number of attorneys, and the number of pro bono volunteers, who work in Native American communities.
2. Differing practices in state courts versus tribal courts, such as who is allowed in the courtroom. At the Task Force's September 2022 Virtual Field Hearing, Kace Rodwell, a staff attorney Oklahoma Indian Legal Services, noted that tribal courts often allow extended family members to be present in cases involving the well-being of a child. In state courts, such cases may be limited to only the parties directly involved.[61]
3. The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) governs child custody cases involving Native families, establishing special rights and legal protections for Native American children, parents and tribes.[62]
4. Familial patterns, issues of inheritance and other rights can look different in Native American communities and can impact the outcome of court cases.[63]
5. The tremendous variety of tribal size and geography, ties to land, cultural traditions and practices and language. Outsiders' insensitivity to these differences and customs can erode trust, which already is weakened by a complex and often challenging U.S. history in its relationships with and treatment of Native American people.[64]

The Honorable Gwendolyn Topping, a former judge in the Red Cliff Tribal Court, emphasized to the Task Force that the importance of understanding cultural and language nuances across different tribes can benefit practitioners working with Native American communities.[65] Using a culturally incorrect term when working with clients from different tribes can impact the level of trust in the legal services provider and serve as a flag to Native American people that the provider may not be fully competent or immersed in the issues of their particular community. In addition, Native American cultures often value being able to see and observe the body language of the person they are talking to or working with, rendering telephonic legal services challenging, a complicating factor due to the lack of broadband and technology access that exists in many Native American communities.[66]

Veterans' Legal Needs. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 4.7 million veterans live in rural communities.[67] Veterans are more likely than the broader U.S. population to live in rural settings, and more than half of rural veterans are older than 65.[68] Veterans may face unique cultural, lifestyle and physical and mental health-related challenges that service providers must understand. These include a higher risk of disability, homelessness and suicide than the non-veteran U.S. adult population.[69] Thirty-one percent (31%) of all veterans have some level of service-connected disability rating, which can range from minor joint pain or mild hearing loss to more significant life-limiting health issues.[70]

Such challenges can be obstacles to overall stability, gainful employment, mobility and the pursuit of benefits related to military service.

Thirty-one percent (31%) of all veterans have some level of service-connected disability rating.

The 2022 Justice Gap Report found that three out of four (76%) veteran households (households where at least one individual is a veteran) faced at least one civil legal challenge that year.[71] Of those, more than a quarter (27%) faced 10 or more challenges.[72] Equipped with national and state data, PTLA pioneered an innovative statewide approach in Maine to integrating legal services with the veteran health care system.[73] Maine has the highest per-capita population of veterans in New England and the fourth-highest in the U.S.[74] Additionally, three of the four most rural counties in Maine are home to the highest percentage of veterans.[75] PTLA also developed Stateside Legal, a national website providing legal information and resources for veterans and, their families, aiming to enhance their understanding and protection of their rights.[76] Successful legal assistance programs for veterans, like in Maine, share key traits: they build trust by understanding military culture and the distinct challenges veterans face, actively engage veterans to assess and meet needs, and collaborate with peer organizations serving veterans. Through these partnerships and coordinated networks, they work to reduce barriers and connect veterans to legal and other supportive services.[77]

Furthering Access to Justice for Veterans

Military service members dedicate their lives to defending America's people, freedoms and way of life. Once they return home and leave active duty, they often face legal issues that create barriers to a successful transition to civilian life. LSC's **Veterans Task Force** examined the civil legal problems — from threatened evictions to other-than-honorable discharges from the military — that are often the greatest obstacles to a veteran's stability and ability to thrive upon reintegrating into civilian life. The **report** identifies ways to strengthen the relationship between legal services providers and other veteran-serving organizations.[78]

Property and Financial Security. Rural Americans, especially those with lower incomes and fewer financial options, are often targeted for financial scams. Kara Wilkins, who directs BankOn Arkansas+ and serves as the Louisiana program officer for the Asset Funders Network, described the extent of the devastation wrought by certain lending practices on rural communities in

Louisiana at a Task Force field hearing in September 2022. “Predatory lending in Louisiana is still a huge problem,” she said, citing loans with annual percentage interest rates of up to 400%, as well as “extractive fees” of about $145 million in Louisiana alone.[79] Access to legal assistance is critical in the prevention and recovery of these assets.

Another issue impacting rural Americans’ wealth is property ownership. A key example of this is the loss of property passed between generations of family members without a will or formal estate plan (known as heirs property).[80] Loss of land caused by heirs property can happen to anyone, although research suggests the problem is especially pronounced in rural Black communities across the American South.[81]

At the same Task Force field hearing, Dãnia Davy, director of land retention and advocacy for the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, emphasized the need for accessible estate planning and family law services to reverse the trend of land loss in the rural South. She said, “In 13 of the 15 Southern states, there’s about 15 billion [dollars] worth of land wealth that is not able to be adequately accessed by families because of tangled title issues,” which can occur when someone inherits a property without the title being transferred into their name through a formal legal process, like probate court.[82]

Further complicating matters, natural disasters can destroy or scatter vital records, leaving heirs without paperwork to prove property ownership.[83] Then, civil legal help becomes even more critical as families need help with title clearing and document recovery before they can obtain disaster recovery benefits, file insurance claims and access financial and direct services to make home repairs.[84]

Elder Abuse, Neglect and Financial Exploitation. Legal issues are prevalent among older Americans. LSC’s 2022 Justice Gap Report found that seven in 10 (70%) senior households faced at least one civil legal challenge that year. Of those, almost one-third (31%) faced five or more challenges.[85] The types of challenges vary. Many seniors are subjected to elder abuse and higher levels of consumer fraud and financial exploitation.[86] However, when these problems happen in rural areas, seniors and their families often have fewer resources when it comes to finding help and support.[87]

Many seniors are subjected to elder abuse and higher levels of consumer fraud and financial exploitation.

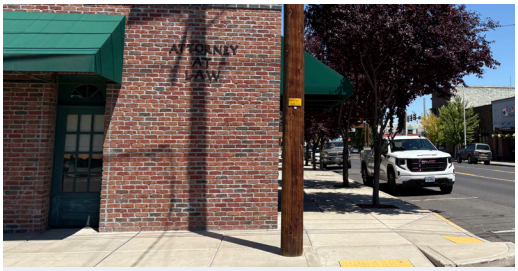
Addressing Key Barriers to Justice in the Nation's Rural Areas

Many of the same factors that fuel the justice gap in urban areas also apply to rural areas: poverty, a lack of awareness that many of the stress points in people's lives revolve around legal issues, a complex legal system made for lawyers rather than everyday Americans, and a general distrust of courts, lawyers and public institutions. In rural areas, however, these factors are compounded by a mix of demographic, economic, technological, geographic and cultural factors.

The Task Force focused on four key barriers to justice in the nation's rural areas.

1. A **shortage of attorneys** in rural areas.
2. The **digital divide** and people's inability to take advantage of online court or legal services.
3. **Distance and transportation obstacles** to accessing legal help.
4. Building **community trust** and meeting **local needs**.

Rural communities and rural-serving practitioners have met some of these challenges head on, developing impactful partnerships and approaches to serving local people more effectively. The heart of the Task Force's work is focused on exploring, understanding and elevating this work, so others in rural communities and beyond can learn from it to shape solutions in their own communities. With that goal in mind, this section of the report digs into the four barriers identified in rural communities and highlights best practices for addressing them.



Nationwide, there were roughly four lawyers for every 1,000 residents in 2020; however, 40% of counties/county equivalents had less than one lawyer per 1,000 residents.

As many as 42 million Americans living in rural communities lack access to technology needed to access remote legal services.

In Kentucky, a Legal Aid of the Bluegrass attorney offers one-on-one counsel to a client.

BARRIER 1

A SHORTAGE OF ATTORNEYS IN RURAL AREAS

There is a severe shortage of legal professionals in rural areas throughout the U.S. One consequence is that legal problems often hide in plain sight. People may live with legal difficulties without recognizing them as such or are unsure of where to go when they need a lawyer.[88] These compounding factors can result in rural Americans believing the legal system is not for them.

Data from states that have studied the access-to-justice landscape and spatial distribution of lawyers relative to the population illustrate the pervasiveness of the problem.

In **Alabama**, 24 of the state's 67 counties (36%) are experiencing a severe justice gap that has created legal deserts.[89] In October 2024, the Alabama State Bar issued an updated "Purpose and Scope" document for its Harvesting Hope Task Force, which reframes legal deserts as "legal opportunity zones" for both lawyers and the communities they serve.[90] The project envisions building support systems, such as mentorships and an incubator for lawyers who move to or start practices in underserved areas, along with a recruiting component.

In **Colorado**, 23 counties with a total of 261,000 residents (or 4.5% of the state's population) are characterized as legal deserts. Four counties have no active attorneys.[91] At an LSC forum focused on legal services in rural America, Jon Asher, former executive director of Colorado Legal Services, noted the "disjunction between where clients are and where a lot of people want to live and practice."[92]

There are 159 counties in **Georgia**, but approximately 70% of the attorneys in the state live and work in the five counties in and around Atlanta.[93] In fall 2024, the Georgia Supreme Court established a committee to study how changes in the regulation of law practice could help close the state's civil justice gap affecting many rural and low-income residents.[94] The committee submitted its report in summer 2025. Among its recommendations is a pilot program that would let non-lawyers assist qualifying people with issues like housing and consumer-debt, giving more people access to the justice system.[95]

In **Indiana**, the Commission on Indiana's Legal Future reported in July 2025 that — using the American Bar Association's (ABA's) data from the prior year — the state ranked 43 in the nation for lawyer-to-population ratio, with just 2.26 attorneys per 1,000 residents. While roughly 16,000 attorneys practice in-state, their distribution is uneven, leaving many rural areas without adequate legal representation.[96]

In **Iowa**, half of the state's 99 counties have 10 or fewer lawyers. In 17 counties, there are fewer than five. A proposed bill that would have created a rural attorney recruitment assistance program failed to advance for a second time in the 2025 Iowa legislative session.[97]

In **Kansas**, the Judicial Branch's Rural Justice Initiative Committee reported in late 2024 that more than three-fourths (~79%) of all active attorneys live in five urban counties. Those counties are also home to nearly half the state's residents. This leaves about 1,400 active attorneys to serve 1.3 million rural Kansans in 100 counties. The state has two counties with no attorneys at all. If attorneys aged 60 and older were excluded, 87 of 100 rural counties would have one or fewer attorneys per 1,000 residents, and nine of those counties would have no attorneys at all.[98]

In **North Carolina**, the State Bar reported that as of July 2023, nearly half of counties in the state qualified as legal deserts, with fewer than one attorney per 1,000 residents.[99]

In **Ohio**, attorney distribution is heavily concentrated. Roughly three-fourths of lawyers practice in the state's seven largest counties, leaving the remaining counties with just a quarter of the bar. Of Ohio's 88 counties, 82 exceed 700 residents per private attorney.[100] In response, a new state law encouraging lawyers to practice in rural areas took effect in 2023, with the support of the Ohio State Bar Association and the Ohio Access to Justice Foundation.[101]

In **Wisconsin**, bar membership records indicate that more than three in four attorneys in the state live in just three largely metropolitan counties. An article in Wisconsin Lawyer concluded: "There are very few private attorneys — if any — to handle the remaining criminal, family, business and other legal issues that residents in every community in our state face. These numbers are most stark in the truly rural swaths of the state."[102]

The statistics from these and other states underscore that America's approximately 1.3 million lawyers[103] are far from equally distributed across the country (see sidebar on following page). In 2020, the ABA performed a detailed evaluation of legal deserts in the U.S. and affirmed that many are rural areas.[104]

Even when there are lawyers in rural areas, the ABA survey found that many of those lawyers work for the government (e.g., as a county prosecutor or judge), are in-house counsel with businesses or otherwise don't focus their practices on legal issues most prevalent in rural communities or most needed by legal aid clients, like family law and real estate.[105] A 2023 evaluation by the ABA found that non-metropolitan areas have 14% of the nation's population, but only 7% of the paid legal aid lawyers.[106] The ABA survey found that in people living in rural areas are served by approximately 1.6 legal aid lawyers for every 100,000 residents — half the national average.[107] As a result, rural lawyers do not necessarily have the capacity, support or expertise to address the civil legal needs of low-income rural residents.

There's so much I'd like to do for people, but as one person without staff, I can't take on every client or handle every last-minute call for help.

Even where there are private practitioners in rural communities, their representation fees may be out of reach for low-income clients, so residents are left wondering how to find legal help when they can't afford a lawyer. As Bruce Cameron, a solo practitioner in rural Minnesota and Task Force member, told the group in spring 2022, "There's so much I'd like to do for people, but as one person without staff, I can't take on every client or handle every last-minute call for help."[108] He noted that he would like to offer services in areas such as real estate closings and bankruptcy but lacks the capacity, including specialized expertise and staff to help with the due diligence paperwork. Without a reliable lawyer backup on staff, Cameron added, if he is sick, out of town or busy tending to his own farm, his practice is effectively on hold. Still, Cameron said one of the real joys of rural practice is getting out to see clients where they are, making "house calls, barn calls, even pig barns. I see more of the five counties I serve than I would any other way."

ABA Study on Legal Deserts Spotlights Lack of Rural Services

Regular research by the ABA paints a picture of Americans' unequal access to legal help, based on geography. Findings from 2020 include the following.[109]

Of the more than 3,100 counties and county equivalents in the U.S., 54 had no lawyers as of Jan. 1, 2020. Another 182 had only one or two lawyers.

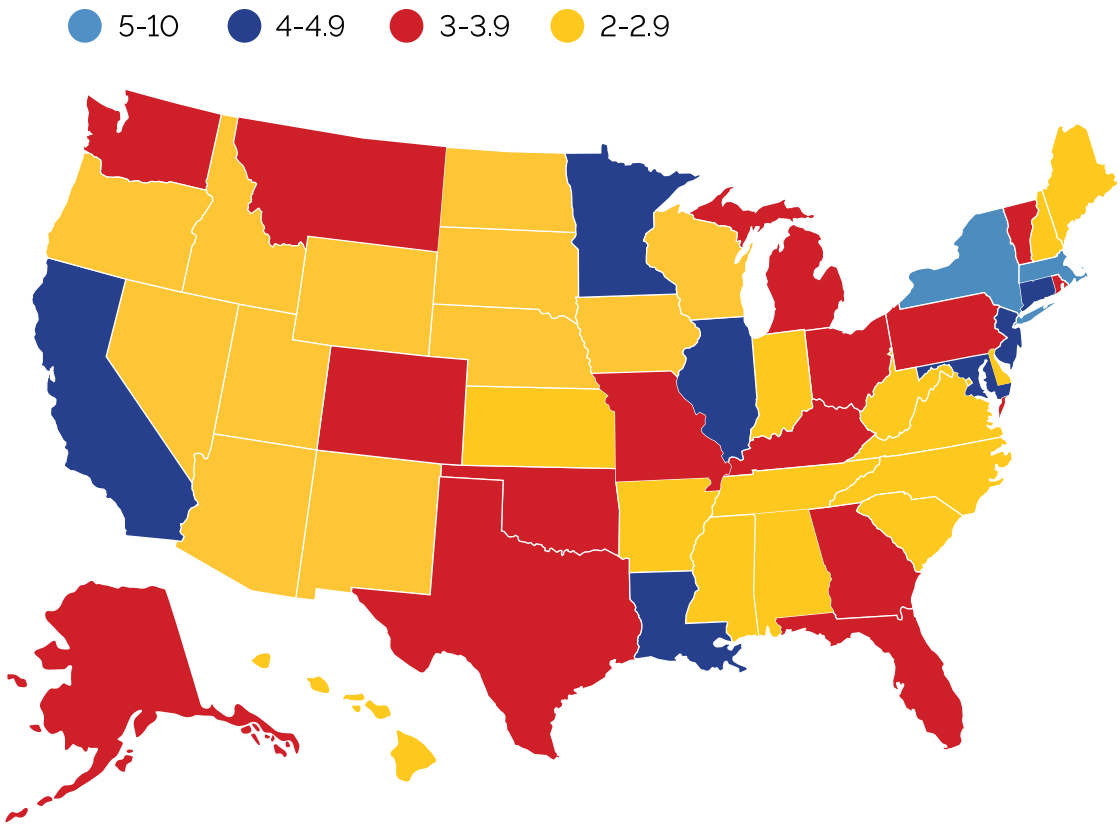
- Nationwide, there were roughly four lawyers for every 1,000 residents; however, **40% of counties/county equivalents had less than one lawyer per 1,000 residents**.
- Lawyer **shortages also are prevalent in highly populated states** with many large urban centers.
  - New York State, home to some of the largest urban centers in the country, had the most lawyers in the country (185,000); however, Orleans County, New York, located between Buffalo and Rochester, had 31 lawyers for 40,000 residents, which equates to less than one lawyer per 1,000 residents.
  - California had the second most lawyers in the country (168,000), but there were seven California counties with less than one attorney per 1,000 residents.

The ABA also found that non-metropolitan areas have 14% of the nation's population, but only 7% of the paid legal aid lawyer workforce.[110] As it stands, LSC's grantees must turn away roughly half (49%) of eligible clients who seek civil legal services due to a lack of resources.[111]

West Tennessee Legal Services staff conduct community outreach. The ABA found that non-metropolitan areas have 14% of the nation's population, but only 7% of the paid legal aid lawyer workforce.

An updated study in 2024 did not address rural-urban differences but noted that almost half of the states (24) saw declines in the overall number of lawyers over the last decade.[112] The map on the next page depicts the number of attorneys per 1,000 residents from the 2024 ABA National Lawyer Population Survey.[113]

Lawyers per 1,000 Residents in Each State



Source: ABA National Lawyer Population Survey, 2024.

Key Factors Driving Lack of Rural Attorneys

The Task Force identified several factors that contribute to the lack of attorneys in rural communities.

An aging bar. Reports and anecdotal evidence from throughout the U.S. paint a picture of an aging legal bar in rural communities, with many private practitioners approaching retirement and with too few attorneys stepping forward to replace them.[114] For example, in 2019, there were five attorneys practicing in Garner, Iowa; four of them were over 60 years old.[115] Only one of the attorneys had found someone to take over their practice when

Task Force member Taier Perlman authored a report documenting trends in law practice in rural New York State.

they retired. In the same year, in a survey of rural attorneys in New York state, 74% of respondents were 45 or older, and more than half (54%) were either at retirement age or approaching it.[116] When asked about succession planning, only 33% of the respondents answered the question; of these respondents, more than half (55%) said that they did not have a viable successor for their practice.[117]

Furonda Brasfield, a member of the Task Force and graduate of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock William H. Bowen School of Law's Rural Practice Incubator, runs a solo law practice in her hometown of Stuttgart, Arkansas, a community of about 9,000 residents. Speaking at the Task Force's October 2022 field hearing in Oklahoma City, Brasfield recalled that a chance meeting with a respected, retiring attorney from Stuttgart catapulted her career.[118] He offered her an office for nominal rent, and later she purchased the fully furnished building — complete with desks, a copier and everything needed to step directly into practice. "Connecting with older attorneys and people who want to retire can help you transition into the business. It is a fantastic way to get a good start," Brasfield said.

Task Force member Furonda Brasfield, a graduate of the Bowen School of Law's Rural Practice Incubator, now runs a law practice in Arkansas.

High costs of a law degree. Attending law school is expensive and has gotten much more so over the last several decades. According to ABA data, the average annual cost of tuition at a public law school in 2024 was $31,542 (resident) to $44,859 (non-resident), which makes the average cost of a law degree at public university $96,000 to 135,000. To compare, the average public law school tuition in 1985 was just over $2,000 annually, which would be just under $4,000 in today's dollars — a more than 10-fold increase. Meanwhile, average private law school tuition was $58,000 per year in 2024.[119] This does not include the cost of living during school, which, on average, can be around $20,000 to $25,000 per year.[120] As a consequence, many new lawyers are leaving school with significant student debt, and it may not seem feasible for them to take a job or start a practice in a rural community that may not have the same guaranteed starting salary (or salary trajectory) as larger law firms in cities. The problem is compounded by the fact that recent graduates may have a limited sense of the economics of managing a rural legal practice, cost of living differentials between rural and urban areas and adequate support navigating student loan relief and repayment options available.

The allure of big law. Many young lawyers join big law practices, which typically are based in urban areas. In law school culture, global private law firms often are viewed as more prestigious, and most law school career recruiting focuses on these larger urban firms. As noted previously, bigger urban practices also offer high salaries, offsetting educational debt. For example, it is not uncommon for starting

salaries for first-year law firm associates in major metropolitan areas to be above $200,000.[121] Urban firms also can be attractive to recent graduates because they provide more structured training and ongoing professional development. In this landscape, it is difficult for small rural practices to compete for talent.

Limited exposure to rural practice. Most law schools do not offer law students opportunities to learn about rural law practice or to gain the practical and entrepreneurial skills that a lawyer would need to establish their own practice in a rural community. Even a law student from a rural area who would like to return home to work after graduation may be hesitant to do so because of concerns about opening their own practice, renting space, hiring staff, maintaining malpractice insurance and paying for software and legal research licenses, as well as additional overhead costs.

(Perceived) lack of amenities in rural communities. Many lawyers might be attracted to rural practice by the benefits of rural life — a tight-knit community, beautiful natural surroundings and the prospect of operating a go-to generalist legal practice recognized throughout the community. Others might be attracted by the opportunity to specialize in topics unique to rural areas, including tribal law and agricultural and natural resource issues. However, there also can be personal and practical downsides to relocating to more rural areas. These can include concerns about the proximity to and quality of schools and childcare, health care and other basic needs. A lawyer's partner or spouse may also need to find a job in the area, and the locality may not provide opportunities in the partner's field. These and other considerations can be seen as drawbacks to new lawyers looking to establish practices.[122]

Following law school graduation, Furonda Brasfield returned to Stuttgart, Arkansas, to live and practice law. However, the lack of amenities, particularly access to specialty health care, made it impossible for her to stay. At the October 2022 field hearing, Brasfield described caregiving responsibilities for a family member with disabilities who required specialized aquatic therapy, a service unavailable in the small town. "So now I commute a little over an hour to my office to practice in a rural area, and I can also have a quality of life that I wouldn't be able to enjoy living in Stuttgart," she said.[123]

RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing the Rural Attorney Shortage

The Task Force recommends that policymakers, bar associations, legal services providers, universities, funders and other stakeholders take far-reaching action to reverse current trends and address the dearth of rural lawyers.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Elevate the rural justice gap via research, communications, task forces and convenings.

Who can do this?

To address the shortage of rural attorneys nationwide, the Task Force recommends action at all levels to research the problem and expand understanding and awareness among key audiences. State bars, for example, frequently set the tone when it comes to identifying key access-to-justice issues in their states and exploring and recommending potential solutions. Capitalizing on their direct access to diverse membership, the state bar and bar associations can play an important role in organizing convenings, sponsoring research and appointing special task forces to evaluate the rural justice gap and plant the seeds for innovation in rural legal services.

One initial strategy could be to form a committee tasked specifically with surveying rural association members about the legal needs in their areas and how best to meet them. Several state bar associations, including Alabama, Kentucky, Ohio, Illinois, Iowa, New York, South Dakota, Washington and Wisconsin, have established task forces for rural justice, and each has provided key data to their members, courts and state legislatures.[124] Special committees like these can help identify the most urgent issues and suggest ways to bring more legal services to low-income rural residents while supporting rural-serving bar members.

The Task Force recommends that bar associations use their platforms to educate members, policymakers and the media about how barriers to practice limit access to legal representation, particularly in rural areas. Such education should be aimed at encouraging members to champion programming and interventions that attract and support rural practitioners. In one example, the Illinois State Bar Association has created a rural practice section, which offers a significant discount on job postings for positions in rural areas.[125]

State Access to Justice Commissions also can play a role in this work. Some commissions, such as those in Alabama, Arizona, California, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa and Kansas, have held hearings on the rural justice gap or engaged in fact-finding efforts to understand the scope and scale of the problem.[126] For example, in 2016, the Alabama Access to Justice Commission, in a detailed letter to the state's Acting Chief Justice, outlined the critical state of affairs regarding lack of access to justice in the state and provided vital data on the number of rural attorneys and legal challenges faced by Alabama's largely rural population.[127] Similarly, the Colorado Access to Justice Commission announced a strategic vision for 2023 and 2024 that included expanding legal services in underserved rural areas. The priorities were informed by findings from a statewide tour that included 41 listening sessions and meetings with more than 500 constituents in diverse communities.[128] In December 2024, the same commission issued a strategic plan for 2025 and 2026, which builds on previous work.[129]

Commissions can engage in regular collection and monitoring of data about legal deserts and identify trends in the provision of legal services in rural communities, ideally in partnership with universities and other entities. When made publicly accessible, this data can then be used to inform the judiciary on a range of policies and decisions, from prospective new courthouse locations to the efficacy of expanded virtual services. Data can also support the courts' advocacy to state and federal legislative bodies to educate on the importance of improving access to rural justice, with suggestions for improvements and funding needs.

At the federal level, the Task Force encourages Congress to commission the collection and monitoring of national longitudinal data on the scarcity of lawyers and allied professionals, as well as where people with civil legal issues reside. This allows lawmakers at all levels to know if their constituents live in a legal desert (i.e., a county with fewer than one attorney per 1,000 residents), where they may not be able to find legal representation. Although the ABA publishes an annual "Profile of the Legal Profession"[130] and individual state access to justice commissions can assess data on the rural attorney shortage at the state level, a comprehensive national approach would go further by providing a standardized, holistic view of the problem and promoting interstate comparison and, in turn, collaboration.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Invest in programs to increase the number of lawyers in rural and remote communities.

Who can do this?

The Task Force recommends that state bar associations, law schools and other partners adopt new strategies to entice lawyers to move to and practice law in rural communities, with a focus on meeting the unmet legal needs of underserved populations in those communities.

State bar associations, for example, have the power and ability to promote rural practice as a viable and appealing career and to connect students and young lawyers to job opportunities in rural communities. One strategy for promoting rural practice is to use regular publications, convenings and other activities to feature rural members and highlight benefits of working in a rural area. Following on the heels of a successful initiative of the Nebraska State Bar Association, for example, the Wisconsin Bar launched its Greater Wisconsin Initiative Bus Tour in 2016 to provide tours of rural communities for law students and new lawyers within three years of graduation from law school.[131] Although the bus tours were temporary, they demonstrated the power of rural representation by bringing participants together with local judges, lawyers and community leaders, exposing new audiences to the benefits of rural practice.[132]

State bar associations can lead the way in connecting students and new lawyers with job opportunities in rural communities.

Building on that foundation, the Wisconsin Bar now offers two complementary initiatives: the Rural Clerkship Program, which places 1L and 2L students from Wisconsin and Minnesota law schools in full-time, paid summer positions, and the Rural Practice Development Program, which provides financial support to up to three attorneys annually who commit to relocating and practicing in designated rural communities.[133]

State bar associations also can lead the way in connecting students and new lawyers with job opportunities in rural communities. For example, the Georgia State Bar Association's Young Lawyers Division partnered with in-state law schools to establish a program matching beginning or entry-level attorneys with experienced rural practitioners.[134] Other state bars have implemented similar initiatives.[135] The Task Force recommends that all state bar and bar associations follow these examples and work to connect their members to prospective talent while building interest in rural practice.

Another strategy for increasing the number of rural practitioners is to expose students to pressing access-to-justice issues in rural regions along with rural legal practice while they are in law school. In spring 2025, the New York State Permanent Commission on Access to Justice, in partnership with Cornell Law School, convened its 13th annual Law School Conference. Sessions explored opportunities and models for expanding access in under-resourced communities, with a focus on rural legal deserts.[136] Held online to maximize participation, the conference brought together more than 600 representatives from New York's law schools, civil legal services organizations, courts and community groups. Immediately after the conference, students joined a networking event to learn about different practice areas and post-graduate opportunities. The Commission will release a conference report soon, summarizing each session and key takeaways and offering recommendations and next steps.

Beyond hosting convenings, the Task Force recommends that law schools establish rural practice incubators and other clinical offerings to enable students to gain valuable experience and insights. These programs can focus on serving specific rural populations, such as agricultural workers, veterans or Native Americans, or more generally be oriented to provide an immersive experience in rural practice. The University of Nebraska College of Law and three partner universities implemented a program to recruit and financially incentivize undergraduate students to attend law school and work in rural counties after graduation. The Rural Law Opportunities Program (RLOP) includes a full-tuition scholarship for participants, presumptive admission into the Nebraska College of Law, internship placements and one-on-one mentoring. (For more examples of law schools that have established rural specialties, see Appendix A.)

The Task Force also recommends that admissions, career and alumni departments at law schools feature graduates who are in rural practice in recruitment, career and alumni relations materials. Doing so can help raise the profile and perceived prestige of rural practice to current and prospective students and alumni, while facilitating networking between students and alumni working in rural communities.

In addition, LSC should continue to invest in and expand its Rural Summer Legal Corps (RSLC) fellowship to provide more law students with awareness of the rural justice gap and hands-on learning opportunities benefiting people living in rural areas (see page 82). Many LSC grantees, especially those covering rural and remote service areas, name recruitment as one of their biggest and ongoing challenges, with positions remaining unfilled for months. Dori Rapaport, Executive Director of Justice North in Northeast Minnesota,

A slide from a recruitment presentation by LSC grantee Judicare Legal Aid in Wisconsin.

also described retention challenges in a July 2024 presentation to the LSC Board of Directors.[137] Rapaport shared that the Minnesota Legal Services Coalition, which comprises seven legal services organizations in the state, reported a staff turnover rate of 37% in 2021. One of the reasons cited for the turnover was their low salaries relative to other public interest roles, like local state government attorneys and public defenders.[138] The Coalition, with help from law firm partners, advocated for increased state funding, securing an historic 84% budget increase in the 2023 legislative session. The result: the average starting annual salary for a staff attorney working for any Minnesota LSC-funded organization increased to $80,000 in 2024.[139] With higher compensation, the employee turnover rate decreased to 14.6% in 2024.[140]

The Task Force recommends that LSC explore creating a multi-year, full-time, paid fellowship for recent law school graduates or early-career lawyers interested in working in legal services in rural communities. Long-established programs, such as Equal Justice Works and the Skadden Foundation fellowships, as well as newer ones, like the New Mexico Judiciary's Rural Justice Initiative Clerkship Program, can serve as models for identifying and preparing professionals who will go on to address the rural justice gap in communities across the nation.[141] (For more fellowship examples, see Appendix A.)

SPOTLIGHT

Paying Lawyers to Practice in Rural Areas

South Dakota launched Project Rural Practice, a public-private partnership, more than a decade ago to meet the vast need for attorneys in its more rural counties. The project pays an annual incentive of $12,500 (roughly the cost of annual in-state tuition) to attorneys who commit to practicing for five years in a rural community. North Dakota replicated the model, launching its own Rural Attorney Recruitment Program in 2021. (Read more on page 80.)

The former courthouse in Slope County, ND. A new building was constructed in 2014.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Expand opportunities for professionals beyond lawyers to help close the rural justice gap.

Who can do this?

- State and Local Lawmakers
- Government and Community Agencies
- State and Tribal Courts and Access to Justice Commissions
- Law Schools and Academic Institutions
- State Bars and Bar Associations
- Civil Legal Services Providers
- Funders of Civil Legal Services

Many rural areas lack attorneys to help individuals with some of the most common legal issues faced by underserved communities — such as filing for a divorce or child custody, stopping an eviction or clearing a title to a home — so people often go it alone, without representation. In Wyoming, a statewide Court Navigator Program helps people representing themselves in court understand legal procedures, complete forms and access resources.[142] Services are available to people who need protection orders, a divorce or custody or child support. Volunteer navigators meet with people in person at select courthouses and online, making them accessible even in the most remote parts of the state. Other states have developed navigator models.[143] For example, in Montana, AmeriCorps members work directly in courthouse self-help centers, certain local government offices, and other community settings to help with intake and outreach and provide legal information and referral services for low-to moderate-income residents seeking civil legal help.[144] In mid- August 2025, the Governor's Office of Community Service announced that the Justice for Montanans Project, administered by Montana Legal Services Association (MLSA), received $596,126 for 24 AmeriCorps members in the 2025-2026 cohort.[145] Some legal services providers have also begun embedding social workers (as staff or volunteers) or social work student interns to help in this capacity, as well.[146]

AmeriCorps service members are sworn in during a ceremony with Justice for Montanans, September 2025.

Another trend gaining momentum is the authorization of alternative types of legal helpers. Known collectively as "allied legal professionals," this growing list of providers includes community justice workers (CJWs) or advocates, licensed (or certified) paralegals, limited license legal technicians, licensed legal paraprofessionals, and tribal lay advocates. They provide limited services and representation in specific practice areas, significantly increasing access to justice in rural areas. A growing number of states, including Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington and the District of Columbia, have tried or are considering this approach.[147] Although it varies by state, common responsibilities include advising

clients on their rights, communicating with opposing party counsel, preparing legal documents for clients and advocating on clients' behalf for purposes of settlement.[148] In addition to expanding access to justice, these models can provide an alternative career pathway for individuals who are well-suited to provide valuable legal help, but who are unlikely to go to law school (due to a whole host of reasons, including expense, geography, lack of interest or other commitments).

At an LSC event in Washington, D.C., March 2023, Chief Justices from Indiana, Minnesota, Oregon and Texas discuss new categories of legal helpers that are changing what access to justice looks like at the state level.

The Task Force recommends that state courts and lawmakers consider programming and reforms to broaden the population of legal helpers, and calls on the organized bar to actively support these changes. For example, in fall 2022, the Alaska Supreme Court authorized a waiver that allows community justice workers that are trained and supervised by Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC), an LSC grantee, to provide legal advice and representation without a law license.[149] Within a year, ALSC recruited over 400 community justice workers who have since provided effective help on discrete legal topics, like resolving public benefit delay or denial. More than 30% of these community justice workers were Alaskan Natives, nearly triple the percentage of ALSC's staff. (Learn more about ALSC's program on page 72.)

The Task Force recommends that state courts and lawmakers consider programming and reforms to broaden the population of legal helpers, and calls on the organized bar to actively support these changes.

In recognition of the success in Alaska and nationwide momentum, the ABA adopted a resolution at its summer 2025 annual meeting, urging states and courts to study community justice worker programs that have been effectively implemented in several jurisdictions, and to consider adopting similar models where appropriate.[150] By endorsing these approaches, the ABA signaled national support for allied legal professionals as a means to expand the accessibility and affordability of civil legal services.

In another example, the Supreme Court of Texas, in 2022, requested that the state's Access to Justice Commission examine existing rules and propose modifications that would allow qualified non-attorney paraprofessionals to provide limited legal services directly to low-income Texans. An Access to Legal Services Working Group issued its recommendations in December 2023,[151] and in 2024, the court issued preliminary rules allowing licensed paraprofessionals and court-access assistants to provide limited legal services.[152] Once implemented, this change will help bridge the gap between the civil legal needs of low-income Texans and the resources currently available to fill those needs.

In Iowa, where nearly half of the state's 99 counties are designated legal deserts,[153] the state bar association is actively evaluating proposals to license paralegals to perform limited legal tasks, such as assisting in family law cases under attorney supervision, seeing this as a sustainable, long-term solution to Iowa's rural access-to-justice challenges.[154]

States exploring how to use requirements for allied legal professionals or other non-attorney legal service providers should consider what can be done within current unauthorized practice and legal ethics rules and how to eliminate burdensome requirements that have little to do with the ability to provide competent legal services. One path forward for courts is to clarify what can be done within existing unauthorized practice rules and to establish a task force charged with looking for ways non-attorney service providers can help shrink the justice gap.

SPOTLIGHT

Bringing Help to Rural Alaskans

Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC) launched a program in 2019 aimed at meeting the legal needs of Alaskan residents in rural and remote parts of the state. The Community Justice Worker (CJW) program trains non-attorney legal advocates to help in public benefits, will drafting, child welfare, debt collection and domestic violence matters. The successful pilot led the Alaska Supreme Court in 2022 to approve a waiver permitting CJWs trained and supervised by ALSC to provide limited-scope legal help. As of December 2024, ALSC had recruited more than 400 CJWs in 42 different communities, exponentially increasing the organization's reach and impact. (Read more on page 72.)

Alaska Legal Services Corporation leads a site visit to Bethel, Alaska's largest rural city off the road network. Bethel serves as the civic and economic center for more than 50 native villages in western Alaska and is a hub for the community justice worker program.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Provide current and prospective rural practitioners with support to manage student loan debt.

Who can do this?

- Federal Lawmakers
- State and Local Lawmakers
- Law Schools and Academic Institutions
- Private Law Firms and Practitioners
- Civil Legal Services Providers
- Funders of Civil Legal Services

As noted previously, the mounting expense of higher education, combined with lower earning potential for legal aid and other lawyers in rural and remote areas, creates a huge barrier for promising attorneys who might be interested in providing services in rural communities. A 2024 survey of more than 700 attorneys younger than age 36 by the ABA's Young Lawyers Division and AccessLex Institute found graduates leave law school with a median school loan debt of $112,500, rising to $137,500 with undergraduate student loans included. The ABA also noted that this level of debt contributes to high rates of anxiety among young lawyers and significantly influences major life decisions.[155]

Law school debt begins with law school tuition. Law schools should consider a range of career trajectories — and the legal needs of their state — when setting tuition rates and developing financial aid and student loan forgiveness options

to address alumni pay differentials. Law schools also can make it easier for students to choose rural practice in the face of student loan debt by: connecting them with alumni mentors, rural fellowships and job opportunities; providing education and training on the economics of rural practice and the skills needed to develop a successful rural practice; and offering stipends to take lower-paying roles. Three-fourths of the young lawyers that responded to the ABA survey said they changed their initial career plans because of their student debt, while approximately one-third (31%) took jobs less focused on public service than they previously planned.[156]

Often with bar associations in the lead, states are exploring ways to encourage law students and new attorneys to practice in rural areas. The Kentucky Bar Association, for example, is considering a loan forgiveness program to attract new lawyers.[157] Other efforts, however, have faced resistance. In 2015, the Georgia State Bar endorsed a proposal modeled on the state's Physicians for Rural Areas Assistance Program.[158] It would have offered state-funded repayment of law school loans — up to the cost of attending a Georgia law school — to attorneys who relocated to one of six rural counties without a single lawyer, committed to stay at least five years, and met minimum pro bono requirements. Despite its promise, the Georgia General Assembly did not adopt the plan.[159]

Federal policymakers have a role to play as well. The National Health Service Corps (NHSC) Loan Repayment Program provides a potential model. Administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, NHSC offers a competitive salary and loan repayment to medical, dental and behavioral health providers who commit to two years of service in medically underserved areas.[160]

Law students and practicing attorneys should also have clear, accessible guidance to navigate existing income-driven debt repayment and forgiveness options. In addition, legal services organizations and law firms could develop employer-based loan repayment assistance programs to help recruit and retain lawyers in rural areas.[161]

Loan Forgiveness Program Helps Legal Services Lawyers Stay the Course

Loan Forgiveness Program Helps Legal Services Lawyers Stay the Course] Since 2006, LSC's **Herbert S. Garten Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP)** has eased the burden of student debt for attorneys at LSC grantee organizations. Unlike many financial assistance programs, LRAP has no geographic restrictions — attorneys in any LSC-funded program nationwide can apply. By providing up to three years of forgivable loans, LRAP enables legal services organizations to keep talented lawyers who might otherwise be forced to leave because of debt.[162]

RECOMMENDATION 5: Offer practical courses on starting and running small law practices and fund programs encouraging rural practice.

Who can do this?

Many attorneys working in rural communities will be sole practitioners. Yet there is a persistent lack of knowledge and understanding among law students and young lawyers about how to start and run a successful small or solo practice, mostly because the subject is not a focus in their legal education. This lack of knowledge can be a significant barrier to enter rural practice. Therefore, the Task Force recommends that law schools work with partners — including other professional schools on campus, such as business schools, alumni and the private bar — to offer practical courses and training for students on launching a small or solo practice. In one example, the University of Arkansas Little Rock's William H. Bowen School of Law created the Rural Practice Incubator program for current students and recent alumni. The program was designed to equip participants with the tools, skills and professional network needed to grow rural law practices.[163] (Learn more about the program on page 73.)

In addition to academic programs, the Task Force recommends that law schools, legal services organizations and funders explore other types of programming that encourage and support students engaging in rural practice while in law school. This includes fellowships and support for public interest internships, with law schools providing participating students with direct financial support and/or post-graduation loan forgiveness. For example, in Illinois, the Rural Practice Fellowship program connects law students with rural firms to give them a taste of this career pathway before they leave law school. The program includes a $5,000 fellowship grant and mentoring.[164] Investment in these programs helps connect more students to the opportunities and rewards that come with practicing law in underserved rural areas across the nation.

SPOTLIGHT

Placing Students in Rural Practice

The Rural Summer Legal Corps (RSLC) program places second- and third-year law students in paid summer fellowships with legal aid organizations that serve rural communities. Fellows spend about two months providing direct legal services to clients and contributing to community outreach and public education activities. The program annually draws more than 250 applications, and in 2025, placed 50 students from 37 law schools with 44 LSC grantee organizations across 32 different states. (Read more on page 82.)

Rural Summer Legal Corps fellows at pre-service orientation in May 2025. Student fellows spend eight to ten weeks at LSC-funded legal services organizations that serve rural communities.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Expand benefits and programs for rural practitioners, such as reduced dues and fees and targeted training on succession planning.

Who can do this? State Bars and Bar Associations

State bars and bar associations can do more to support rural members through a range of potential programs and benefits. For example, they play a significant role in attorney training, often leading the development of continuing legal education (CLE) requirements and programs for local lawyers. The Task Force recommends that the organized bar expand training and support for rural lawyers to address the most practical and

A topic highlighted in various studies and Task Force discussions, succession planning has become an urgent issue as many rural attorneys approach retirement without a clear successor.

urgent problems they face, including succession planning. Bar associations in Maryland, Pennsylvania and Texas, for example, have created resources relevant to small firms or solo practitioners to help with succession planning, office management and other practice skills that often are needed in rural areas.[165]

In addition, state and local bar associations should consider that admission and membership dues and continuing education courses can be a significant cost for practitioners in rural areas. Reducing fees — even by a small amount — can help alleviate the burden on these frontline attorneys and their practices. Therefore, the Task Force recommends sliding fee scales for dues and course registration as a way of mitigating one of the financial challenges of rural practice.

BARRIER 2

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

In the 21st century, having affordable and dependable access to high- speed broadband service has emerged as an essential infrastructure need, comparable to other basic utilities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the internet became Americans' primary means to access news and information, education, job opportunities, health care, banking services and courts. However, too many Americans, including a disproportionate number of rural Americans and people living on tribal lands, still do not have reliable internet access at home.[166]

Consequences of the Digital Divide

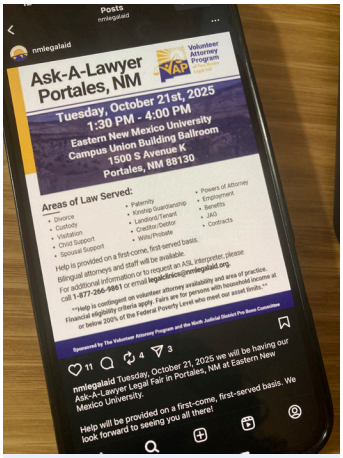
Inability to access the judicial system online or legal services. The digital divide can impede rural Americans' ability to get legal help.[167] A 2022 study of broadband deployment by the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) found that at least 14.5 million Americans lacked reliable internet access.[168] A private sector report the prior year put the number much higher at 42 million.[169] A significant portion of people without broadband access live in rural areas, with four of the five counties with the lowest levels of broadband access in the U.S. (measured as less than 40% of the population with access) being in the country's most rural areas.[170] While smartphones with internet access can be an alternative to at-home broadband, rural adults also are less likely to own a smartphone.[171] This lack of access, coupled with inconsistent cellphone coverage in rural communities, contributes to the rural justice gap.

A significant portion of people without broadband access live in rural areas.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many courts across America expanded use of digital tools in their operations. For example, by holding virtual hearings and pivoting from paper filings to digital records systems. This modernized court technology can improve access to and outcomes for many users of the justice system, especially for individuals who must travel long distances, have disabilities or face financial or logistical barriers, like rearranging work or childcare, to attending court in person.[172] Survey data collected by courts during the pandemic suggests that the public benefited from reduced travel time, less time off work and reduced costs. For example, the Maricopa County (Arizona) Justice Courts saw a significant difference in eviction hearings when adding a remote option. Pre-pandemic, tenants frequently failed to appear for in-person hearings about 40% of the time.

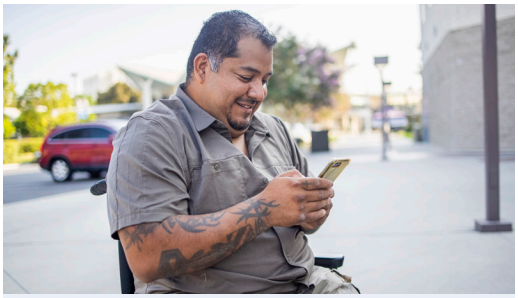
With remote hearings as an option, failure-to-appear rates dropped to 25% in 2022.[173] Lawyers appreciate remote hearings, too, because it's easier for them to appear at multiple or distant courts when appearing online versus in-person.[174]

The possibility of seeing clients and attending hearings virtually creates opportunities for urban and suburban attorneys to support rural residents. A variety of rural-serving virtual legal aid clinics have been established since the pandemic, like the Pro Bono on Demand program run by Florida Rural Legal Services (FRLS).[175] Family law attorneys licensed in the state of Florida can volunteer remotely, helping clients residing in 13 different counties navigate custody and child support issues, divorce and protective orders. Pro Bono on Demand was conceived with busy attorneys in mind. "There's no travel, no ongoing case management, and full malpractice coverage. It's as simple as choosing a time slot and showing up ready to help," said Britt Berg, pro bono manager at FRLS.[176]



An Instagram post advertising New Mexico Legal Aid's Ask-A-Lawyer Legal Fair in Portales, NM.

Internet access and digital literacy are key for clients to access — or even know about — legal help. This is true for virtual hearings and clinics but also for in-person events that are primarily publicized through digital channels like social media. Rural Americans without internet access cannot take advantage of these opportunities. Instead, many rural residents must travel long distances at significant time and expense to appear at a court hearing or to file legal documents.



The Task Force recommends that legal services providers offer rural residents a variety of avenues for accessing legal support, including through videoconference platforms and phone-based consultations, in addition to more traditional face-to-face services.

Courts differ widely in their online systems and services. The availability and quality of online court filing, services and proceedings are consistent. Websites vary in quality or may not be optimized for mobile devices. Moreover, different courts — and even different judges within the same court — differ in their willingness to use online services and hold virtual hearings. In some jurisdictions, the lack of centralized court procedures (or a larger budget and staff with which to spread workload and provide training) can make developing online services and virtual hearing procedures particularly difficult for smaller courts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Bridging the Digital Divide

Rural areas need access to reliable, high-speed internet. While strides have been made to close the digital divide, a large percentage of America's population — particularly in rural areas — remain underserved. The Task Force recommends that lawmakers, government agencies, courts, legal services providers and others take the following actions to bridge the digital divide, strengthen digital literacy and ensure broader access to the technologies and support that will enable more rural Americans to get the legal help they need.

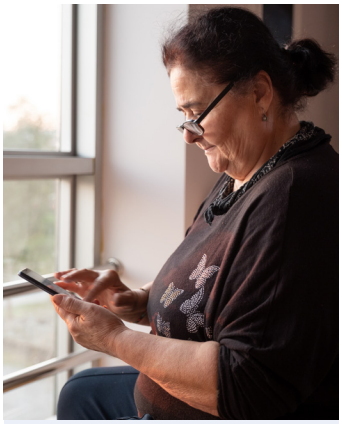
RECOMMENDATION 1: Apply a human-centered approach to deployment of technology.

Who can do this?

Government and Community Agencies

State and Tribal Courts and Access to Justice Commissions

Civil Legal Services Providers



Courts should prioritize mobile-compatible websites and user-friendly designs that address digital and accessibility barriers.

As courts adopt online platforms, judges and administrators should consider ways to mitigate the digital divide and the effect that limited access to the internet or technology devices may have on the ability of some rural residents to take advantage of online services or proceedings.[177] Courts considering mandatory e-filing, for example, must recognize that individuals without reliable and secure internet access may be shut out of the system. The same considerations apply to members of the civil legal services community exploring how AI-driven technologies can enhance their services and client tools. To help grantees explore how to responsibly integrate generative AI, LSC is facilitating an AI Peer Learning Lab designed to help legal aid programs share insights, analyze risks, discuss ethical considerations and develop best practices.[178] Following a human-centered approach — as advocated by Dr. Michele Statz and Dr. Margaret Hagan — courts should design systems that account for all users' needs and limitations. Strategies could include:

- Prioritizing mobile-compatible websites[179] and user-friendly designs that address digital and accessibility barriers.
- Increasing investments in more court navigators, simplified online user interfaces for forms and additional equipment needed to conduct hearings.[180]
- Retaining residents' access to forms in paper format.

SPOTLIGHT

Meeting Clients' Technological Needs

Staff at Legal Services of North Florida (LSNF), which serves a large population of seniors, observed that many clients lacked the access and digital literacy needed to fully participate in online court proceedings. When the Florida Court System started exploring mandatory e-filing, LSNF partnered with the Self-Represented Litigant Network to build a Digital Divide Dashboard to show how such a change would impact their clients and other low-income Floridians. The data provided important context to the state's conversations about online-only access. (Read more on page 83.)

RECOMMENDATION 2: Prioritize broadband expansion.

Who can do this? Federal Lawmakers; State and Local Lawmakers; Government and Community Agencies

The Task Force recommends that federal, state, local and tribal policymakers and agencies prioritize expanding broadband availability and reach, with a focus on rural and remote areas that lack infrastructure or coverage. This includes continuing to support increased access for tribal communities that are disproportionately underserved through initiatives such as the Rural Development Broadband ReConnect Loan and Grant program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.[181]

At the national and state levels, lawmakers should prioritize investments in technology adoption, so rural residents have the tools and skills to get online. The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), administered by the FCC from 2021 to 2024, helped low-income households better afford the broadband they needed for work, school, health care and more.[182] Households with incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines could receive a discount of up to $30 per month toward internet service. The discount increased to $75 per month for households on qualifying tribal lands. More than 23 million people — or one in six U.S. households — received benefits. The program was funded with a one-time congressional appropriation. Due to finite resources, the FCC stopped enrolling new subscribers in early February 2024, and the program ended on June 1, 2024, impacting approximately 3.4 million rural households and more than 300,000 households in tribal areas.[183] Another federal program providing rural broadband access and connectivity, the Universal Service Fund, was also vulnerable. However, the U.S. Supreme Court's June 2025 decision in FCC v. Consumers' Research upheld a fee that is added to consumers' phone bills to provide billions of dollars a year in subsidized phone and internet services in schools, libraries and rural areas.[184]

SPOTLIGHT

Expanding Access Through Legal Kiosks

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Texas became a leader in allowing virtual court proceedings. Yet, large swaths of rural Texan households do not have computers, and many more do not have high-speed internet. In response, the Texas Legal Services Center installed virtual court kiosks in community centers, shelters and public libraries. These kiosks, which include a computer, printer and scanner and technical support, enable people to access court proceedings and participate in the civil justice system close to home without their own device and/or internet access. (Read more on page 86.)

A user explores a legal kiosk, one of many across Texas that connect community members with courts and legal help in English, Spanish and Vietnamese.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Use online platforms and face-to-face support to expand the availability of legal assistance to rural clients, including virtual consultations and support from attorneys in urban and suburban areas.

Who can do this? Private Law Firms and Practitioners; Civil Legal Services Providers

The rise of video conferencing and other technologies has created an opportunity for rural clients to have unprecedented access to support from legal services providers, as well as urban and suburban pro bono practitioners in their states. To the extent that rural residents have available broadband and the training and equipment to make the most of virtual legal support, it can significantly improve access in communities facing longstanding justice gaps.

The Task Force recommends that legal services providers offer rural residents a variety of avenues for accessing legal support, including through videoconference platforms and phone-based consultations, in addition to more traditional face-to-face services. Legal aid groups also can partner with human services organizations — including libraries, medical clinics and schools — to create spaces with the needed technology and staffing where rural residents can participate in virtual clinics or hearings. Virtual services can be effective in addressing challenges of time and distance, but only if the intended clients know what's available, have access to the necessary technologies and are comfortable using them.

BARRIER 3

DISTANCE AND TRANSPORTATION OBSTACLES TO ACCESSING LEGAL HELP

Another significant barrier inhibiting rural residents from accessing the legal support they need is long travel distances and a lack of public transportation in their communities. While people living in urban and suburban areas tend to have public transit options, as well as some services within walking distance, people in rural areas often need to own or have access to a vehicle to travel anywhere. Rideshare services like Uber and Lyft, shuttles and carpools and transportation discount programs may not be widely available to rural residents. Where these types of transportation services are available, they serve as lifelines for those living in rural communities to access grocery stores, pharmacies and other vital services.[185] In 2021, the percentage of rural residents without access to intercity transportation exceeded 15% in 25 states.[186]

Even where public transportation is available, operating hours or the location of stops on the route may be limited. If a person works full time, they may need to take an entire day off work to meet with an attorney or go to court. The amount of time spent in transit may be even longer when the court or law office is several towns away.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overcoming Distance and Transportation Obstacles

Providing legal services via technology alone is not enough to meet rural residents' needs. To overcome travel distances and expand access to legal services in rural communities, it is also important to bring in-person services to people where they are, while also leveraging resources to broaden access to various forms of transportation.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Scale proven methods for easing local access to federal infrastructure funding and resources for transportation.

Who can do this? Federal Lawmakers; State and Local Lawmakers; Government and Community Agencies

Tapping into federal funding for transportation, infrastructure development and other community improvements is no easy task, but it can be especially difficult for small, under-resourced rural municipalities where population and tax revenues have declined. Rural leaders may also encounter

challenges navigating the wide range of grant programs that span across many federal government agencies, all with their own eligibility criteria and application requirements.

A rural bus stop connecting residents to essential services.

To alleviate some of these barriers, the Rural Partners Network (RPN), a federal initiative housed at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, launched in 2022.[187] RPN initially placed federal field staff, known as community liaisons, in 14 rural regions across Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, New Mexico and Native American Nations in Arizona to help local elected officials and community leaders identify federal resources that will best meet their unique needs.

Community liaisons help rural communities navigate federal programs, build relationships, identify community-driven solutions and develop successful applications for funding. They also form a feedback loop by reporting back to the 20 federal agencies and regional commissions that are part of RPN about on-the-ground community needs and barriers to accessing federal resources. Community liaison placements have expanded to Alaska, North Carolina, Nevada, Puerto Rico, Wisconsin and West Virginia.

The Task Force recommends that Congress and key agencies scale this model to all U.S. states and territories and federally recognized tribes, boosting the capacity of more rural communities to access beneficial government resources.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Expand court modernization to increase remote access.

Who can do this? Federal Lawmakers; State and Local Lawmakers; State and Tribal Courts and Access to Justice Commissions

During the pandemic, when many public buildings closed, a number of courts adopted standards for remote proceedings and moved certain services online, creating lasting benefits for people unable to attend court in person due to distance, work schedules, childcare needs or other barriers.[188] While many courts have made pandemic-era innovations permanent, some judges remain reluctant to continue to allow videoconferencing even when the parties appearing in their courtroom have internet access and proper devices. Allowing remote participation would enable legal services providers and pro bono attorneys to represent clients in more locations simultaneously. The Task Force recommends that courts further expand the option to use online proceedings in rural communities where legal help is scarce and both lawyers and clients often travel long distances to reach the courthouse.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Bring legal help closer to people.

Who can do this?

The Task Force recommends a flexible approach: combining openness to online proceedings with in-person legal services, where feasible, to build trust and strengthen communication with rural clients. Across the country, many groups are pursuing creative means to bring legal support to rural residents closer to where they live via mobile (traveling) clinics and recurring hours or a permanent presence (e.g., staffed help desk) inside libraries, schools, departments of Veteran Services and community centers,

This emphasis on bringing services directly to people is reflected in the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) Access to Justice Prize, a nationwide competition designed to spark innovative solutions to address the justice gap and promote equal access to justice for all. The theme for the 2025 prize is "Closing the Rural Justice Gap," and DOJ invited applicants to submit innovative ideas to expand legal access, simplify processes, leverage technology and build community-based partnerships. Five winners announced in July 2025 received $15,000 to advance their project. A notable winner is the 12th Judicial District, in Southern Colorado's rural San Luis Valley, where there is no public transportation, and many residents live far from the courthouse. To address these challenges, the District's Access to Justice Committee is creating a Lawmobile, a traveling legal resource center equipped with internet and printing services that will bring self-help tools and assistance directly to rural people who face transportation, childcare and digital access barriers. Volunteers will drive the vehicle to remote locations to assist residents with their legal and administrative concerns in domestic relations, housing, probate, guardianship, small claims and other civil cases.[189]

By meeting people where they are, the clinics remove a key barrier to reentry.

In Michigan, DTE Energy employees, along with legal and government partners, hosted in-person Road to Restoration license clinics at two Department of Corrections facilities, directly supporting returning citizens who lack the means or knowledge to restore their driving privileges on their own.[190] By meeting people where they are, the clinics remove a key barrier to reentry and complement one of DTE Energy's workforce development programs. The company trains people returning from incarceration to trim trees that threaten power lines. This approach makes critical legal services accessible at the point of need while connecting participants to future employment opportunities.[191]

The Bay Area Rural Justice Collaborative in California, for example, brought regularly scheduled free legal clinics to isolated communities. Volunteer attorneys from law firms staffed the clinics.[192] The collaborative was an initiative of a broader effort coordinated by the nonprofit organization One Justice, which also has a Justice Bus Project that brings pro bono legal help to rural residents across the region.[193] The Task Force recommends that law firms and in-house legal departments partner with legal services groups on efforts like these that extend hands-on, in-person assistance to more rural communities.

SPOTLIGHT

Folding Laundry, Finding Justice in a Florida Laundromat

After Hurricane Ian, Florida Rural Legal Services (FRLS) began meeting disaster survivors at laundromats, places where residents without power or personal laundry facilities gathered, and where legal aid staff found a captive audience waiting loads to finish. The approach continues today, bringing legal help to people where they are and showing that justice can start in unexpected yet familiar places.
(See more on page 87.)

Florida Rural Legal Services found creative ways to reach disaster survivors, including outreach at laundromats.

SPOTLIGHT

Access to Justice on the Move

A mobile legal clinic on wheels, referred to colloquially as a 'justice bus,' is one way that legal aid organizations are bringing lawyers and services directly to rural and remote communities. Three examples pictured here are from Minnesota Legal Services Coalition's Reach Justice initiative, Legal Aid of North Carolina and Oklahoma Indian Legal Services.

These images capture self-contained mobile legal clinics, or justice buses, in action. Attorneys meet with clients on board, and the vehicles are equipped with satellite internet access, printing capabilities and other supplies to serve residents in rural communities.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Experiment with and support various types of access to physical and virtual services to see what works best in reaching targeted client groups.

Who can do this?

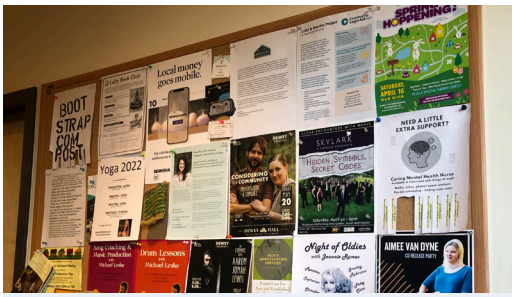
- Government and Community Agencies
- State and Tribal Courts and Access to Justice Commissions
- Private Law Firms and Practitioners
- Civil Legal Services Providers
- Funders of Civil Legal Services

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to expanding access to legal services. Determining the best form of access in a rural area is highly dependent on the specific community. Providers should consider the needs and cultural backgrounds of their clients when designing solutions. The Task Force recommends that legal

services groups and partners experiment with different models based on their clients' circumstances and needs. Meanwhile, funders need to provide flexible financial support for piloting and evaluating these approaches, so practitioners can learn and improve. Some considerations include the following.

- Consider staggered operating hours, including before and after business hours, or after-hours phone and online chat support, to accommodate working clients who find it hard to connect to services during traditional business hours.
- Use in-person services to strengthen trust with clients and communities where personal connection matters most.
- Establish accessible spaces — like private workstations with internet — or court appearances and virtual meetings, so clients can get timely help when they need it most.
- Remove geographic barriers by leveraging technology to connect urban- based attorneys with rural clients, such as through virtual pro bono clinic models.[194]

Legal services providers observe that merely holding clinics that target rural communities is not enough. They've had to think practically about getting the word out about available legal services and how to combine digital marketing with other forms of publicity and outreach. Across the country, LSC grantees serving rural and remote areas are effectively using both online and offline marketing in effective ways and relying on partners with local knowledge to help spread the word. A report prepared for the Access to Justice Commission of the Montana Supreme Court suggested creating simple posters for placement in public places, such as on community bulletin boards, grocery stores, laundromats and shopping centers.[195] The report also emphasized the value of sharing information on the radio, since many rural residents spend a lot of time in their cars. These tactics can complement posts on online events calendars and social media.



A flyer on a grocery store bulletin board advertises Community Legal Aid's free re-entry services, helping people throughout Western Massachusetts expunge or seal criminal records and overcome barriers to housing and employment.

SPOTLIGHT

Partnership Between the Law and Libraries

To support low-income residents of Colorado's rural and frontier counties, Colorado Legal Services (CLS) has utilized both telephone clinics as well as Zoom (videoconference) clinics in partnership with rural public libraries. Both clinic models enable pro bono volunteer attorneys from across the state to advise people living in areas that are hard to reach. Clients either call in from their own phone or visit a library to utilize Zoom on computers in dedicated, private spaces. Library staff greet clients and help them troubleshoot any technical hiccups. The two-pronged approach — one model using the telephone and the other relying on a bricks-and-mortar library — meant continued services even when county library sites shuttered during the COVID-19 pandemic. CLS continues to utilize an expanded call-in model because it provides the public with easy access to free legal clinics using the most readily available technology. The phone works well even in the most sparsely populated and geographically isolated parts of the state, for the senior demographic as well as for callers with mobility challenges. Library staff continue to be great partners and a valuable clinic referral source. In many rural areas across Colorado, the local library remains one of the best gateways for community members to learn about or access legal services. (See more on page 92.)

In Denver, volunteer attorneys staff a call-in clinic, speaking on the phone with clients unable to visit a CLS office.

At rural libraries, staff welcome clients and assist with technology so they can meet virtually with a pro bono attorney.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Establish rural legal clinics in collaboration with law schools.

Who can do this? State and Local Lawmakers; Law Schools and Academic Institutions; Civil Legal Services Providers

Law schools across the country have created rural legal clinics to expose their students to rural practice while also expanding the availability of in-person legal support in underserved areas. The Task Force recommends that law schools

establish rural clinic sites and experiential learning offerings, bringing assistance closer to where the people that need it most live.

In Maine, state lawmakers in 2022 approved legislation authorizing pilot funding for the University of Maine School of Law to open a satellite legal clinic in rural Aroostook County near the Canadian border.[196] Students working in the clinic offer legal services to local residents and learn the fundamentals of rural practice.[197] Experiential learning like this provide students with professional development and, hopefully, persuades some to pursue post-graduate work in a rural community.

Other examples of law school programs exposing students to rural populations and practice include: the University of Minnesota Law School's Rural Immigrant Access Clinic; Cornell Law School's Farmworker Legal Assistance Clinic; University of New Mexico School of Law's Southwest Indian Law Clinic; the Rural Entrepreneurship Program within the University of Wisconsin Law School's Law & Entrepreneurship Clinic; and Lewis & Clark Law School's Rural Entrepreneur Program, a program of the school's Small Business Legal Clinic.[198]

Asset Mapping and Community Needs Assessments

As part of the broader effort to tackle the justice gap, LSC grantees undertake periodic community needs assessments, which may include an asset mapping component, to ensure ongoing awareness of specific legal issues common in the service area, potential local collaborators, and how to build on regional strengths to address the most pressing needs.[199]

A comprehensive needs assessment is a pillar of LSC's Performance Criteria for grantees.[200] No two communities are the same, and understanding a community's specific needs will help a provider better address problems its clients may have with safety, stability and access to legal assistance.

For example, if the community is facing specific and disproportionate problems with housing issues or domestic violence, an LSC grantee will likely want to have an attorney on staff who specializes in those topics. Likewise, if a rural community has a large population of veterans with service-connected disabilities that affect their ability to get to a legal aid office, the provider might want to consider how to use traveling or online offerings to better serve that group. Better understanding of community needs helps providers earn trust and foster long-term client relationships.

Additionally, asset mapping is the process of inventorying a community's strengths. It provides a systematic way to identify important local institutions and potential partners, so services build on rather than duplicate existing resources. Legal aid groups use asset maps to inform new collaborations and enlist local champions who are effective and trusted messengers about available legal assistance.[201]

BARRIER 4

COMMUNITY TRUST AND LOCAL NEEDS

Task Force discussions regularly surfaced a multi-faceted set of relational and cultural factors that can stand as a barrier between rural residents and the legal help they need. In working group convenings, legal services providers described their communities as holding strong beliefs about self-reliance, which can make people hesitant to ask for outside help. Guest speakers and Task Force members shared anecdotes about the unique cultural identity of their home regions, observing that some rural areas may be more close-knit than urban ones. They also described encounters with clients who distrusted outsiders or authority figures, whom they saw as not understanding the local way of life. In small rural towns, less privacy or the fear of judgment by others may also prevent individuals from reaching out for support. A report on the justice gap in Montana affirmed these confidentiality concerns: older rural Montanans, specifically, are often reluctant to ask for help or embarrassed to take anything for free and don't want to share what they view as their "personal issues" with a stranger — even if the stranger is there to help.[202]

Expanding access to justice in rural America depends on building trust — trust that begins with listening, understanding and respecting what matters most to residents — and tailoring services to meet the specific needs of each community.

A compounding issue seen in rural, urban and suburban areas alike is that many Americans do not understand that some of the problems they are facing, whether related to medical debt, family relationships or employment, are legal issues at all.[203] In 2024, LSC commissioned a national Harris Poll to explore how public perceptions differ from the realities of legal aid access and effectiveness. More than 2,000 Americans participated in this national survey. Poll results showed that 59% of people who experienced a civil legal matter within the past three years did not seek out legal help from an attorney who could have been pivotal in getting their issues resolved. One in three Americans who didn't seek help for civil legal matters believed they could handle the problem themselves or didn't think it was serious enough for legal help.[204]

RECOMMENDATIONS

Building Trust and Meeting Local Needs

Any effort to tackle the rural justice gap in a comprehensive way must address the trust and cultural barriers that keep so many rural residents from seeking the help they need. The Task Force recommends that government and community agencies, the organized bar, legal services providers and others take the following actions to build trust with rural communities and to broaden services and support to specific populations that face unique barriers to justice.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Expand partnerships with community-based organizations serving low-income rural populations to connect residents to critical legal services.

Who can do this?

- Government and Community Agencies
- State and Tribal Courts and Access to Justice Commissions
- State Bars and Bar Associations
- Civil Legal Services Providers

In many rural communities, residents turn to schools, social clubs, clergy and places of worship, libraries and tribal governments for information, guidance and resources when they need help. The Task Force recommends that courts, legal aid organizations and the organized bar partner with local groups that play a vital and stabilizing role in a community's economic and social fabric. Collaboration brings validity and trust to the provision of urgently needed legal services. It also expands reach to potential clients and can be a potent strategy for overcoming the logistical, demographic and cultural barriers — from transportation and language obstacles to an aversion to outside assistance — that prevent rural residents from getting the legal help they need. Finally, partnerships also help bridge the information gap, where many residents may not be aware that a problem they are facing has a legal remedy, let alone that there might be affordable or free legal help available.[205]

Malik Hines, a staff attorney for Georgia Legal Services Program's (GLSP) medical-legal partnership with McKinney Medical Center, a Federally Qualified Health Center in rural, southeastern Georgia, explained that in the communities he serves, access to lawyers is rare, and residents' past encounters with the justice system have eroded trust. Meeting a legal aid attorney in a familiar care setting — introduced by a trusted doctor — can overcome fear, open the door to help, and lead to life-changing assistance. "It requires a lot of bravery for them to even come talk to an attorney," Hines said, "because every legal thing they've ever done has been negative in their view."[206]

Signage at McKinney Medical Center guides patients to Georgia Legal Services Program's on-site attorneys.

SPOTLIGHT

Placing Lawyers in Schools

Legal Aid of West Virginia (LAWV) provides parents and caregivers the opportunity to receive free, brief legal information or advice from an attorney at legal clinics held at public schools. LAWV prioritizes schools where other onsite social services are offered, such as a food pantry or school-based health clinic, because families will be accustomed to coming to the building for support and resources. When the school is already the hub of its neighborhood or town, families feel more comfortable seeking out legal help there.[207] (Read more on page 91.)

A Lawyer in the School program offers free legal help to families with school-age children.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Train community members, staff and volunteers without formal legal credentials to serve as first responders and navigators for rural people in need.

Who can do this?

As discussed under Barrier 1, the size of the justice gap and a consistent shortage of attorneys in rural areas has inspired looking beyond lawyers. The Task Force recommends that legal aid providers and other stakeholders embrace opportunities for helpers that lack formal legal credentials to assist rural clients in need.

Nationally, there is a growing movement to train, supervise and mentor non-attorneys — such as paid nonprofit staff, domestic violence advocates, court navigators, eviction diversion facilitators, public health workers and community volunteers — to perform discrete tasks that help people understand and resolve civil legal matters in areas like family law, housing and public benefits.[208] The National Tribal Trial College (NTTC) Certificate in Tribal Court Legal Advocacy is one such program aimed at enhancing the skills of non-attorney legal advocates, specifically those practicing in tribal courts across the U.S.[209]

NTTC Dean Hallie Bongar White, speaking during the Task Force's October 2022 field hearing, said the free, six-month intensive course was guided by Indigenous traditions and adult learning principles.[210] The curriculum is focused on meeting the real-world justice needs of Native American communities, such as divorce, child custody, visitation and support arrangements and domestic violence protection orders. Students gain legal research and writing skills, in addition to trial skills. The program is in its 11th year, and more than 300 advocates representing 108 tribes from 26 states have served thousands of American Indian and Alaska Native peoples who otherwise would have had no access to foundational legal services.[211]

The previously mentioned community justice worker model is another powerful, scalable example. (Read more on page 72.) As of December 2024, nearly 500 CJWs were located in 42 communities around the state of Alaska, a much deeper penetration of Alaska's vast rural landscape than the 24 staff attorneys working out of ALSC's 13 offices. Further, justice workers often come from, reside in and reflect the communities they serve — something that increases trust and accessibility by bridging geographic and cultural divides between clients and legal providers. About one-third of CJWs identify as Alaska Native (compared to 12% of ALSC staff), making them far more familiar with the needs and challenges of ALSC's Indigenous client population.[212]

Research from the Advancement of the American Legal System (IAALS) and Hague Institute for Innovation of Law (HiiL) suggests that in rural areas, insurance agents may also play an important role as early identifiers of potential legal issues. Because they are often trusted, long-time community members, agents may be among the first to hear about disputes, claims problems or other situations where a legal referral or basic navigation assistance could help prevent matters from escalating.[213]

RECOMMENDATION 3: Train judges, lawyers, client-facing staff and volunteers on cultural factors impacting distinct rural populations.

Who can do this?

Depending on a legal provider's priorities, expertise and location, the organization may assist large numbers of clients with distinct backgrounds and needs. For example, some programs may serve disproportionately large number of clients who speak a language other than English at home, agricultural workers who work seasonally or members of tribal nations. Other legal aid providers may have a significant number of clients who have experienced trauma from exposure to the child welfare system, domestic violence, natural disasters or relatives with substance use disorders. Effectively serving clients with unique needs can require special training for staff.

The Task Force recommends that legal services organizations train their attorneys, frontline staff and volunteers on trauma-informed practice and relevant cultural competencies so they can communicate with and assist frequently served populations with the utmost trust and respect. For instance, legal services providers who work with Native American clients, or who specialize in legal matters subject to the jurisdiction of tribal courts, should provide educational opportunities for non-Native staff to learn about Indigenous history, culture and traditions that could impact the cases they see.

The same applies to members of the judiciary and court personnel. Recently, the National Association of Women Judges launched a free, online, self-guided course designed to "enhance judges' and other court staff's awareness of the issues affecting rural civil courts and the Americans seeking justice within them."[214] The course addresses cultural roots and sensitivities in rural areas, as well as building trust and the power of listening.

SPOTLIGHT

Training Interpreters, Strengthening Cultural Competence

California is the most linguistically diverse state in the U.S., with more than 200 languages used across the state. Yet there is a significant shortage of qualified interpreters for Indigenous languages and languages with limited prevalence. California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. (CRLA), which provides free legal services to low-income residents of California's rural counties, responded by creating a multilingual interpreter training program. Each year, CRLA trains 50 to 60 residents within its service area, equipping them with the skills to become CRLA-contracted interpreters, expanding language access and improving service to rural clients. (Read more on page 93.)

RECOMMENDATION 4: Widen pathways to pursue legal education for rural residents and members of underrepresented communities to encourage more rural practitioners.

Who can do this? State and Tribal Courts and Access to Justice Commissions; Law Schools and Academic Institutions; State Bars and Bar Associations

Helping more rural residents and representatives of underserved rural populations find their way to a legal education and careers in the field can be a key strategy for increasing a local community's trust in the justice system.

Law schools should consider alternative curriculum models that make it more practical and affordable for students from rural areas to earn a law degree. Possibilities include night or part-time programs for working professionals, hybrid or virtual learning models or legal apprenticeships that allow rural students to earn a law degree from home while working with an experienced legal professional, such as a practicing lawyer or judge, in their community.

The Arizona Supreme Court launched an innovative apprenticeship for law school graduates who narrowly miss passing the Uniform Bar Exam (UBE), scoring 260 to 269.[215] Instead of having to retake the exam and delay entry to the workforce, participants in the Arizona Lawyer Apprentice Program (ALAP) complete a two-year, full-time, supervised apprenticeship — working in rural communities and public sector law offices — before earning full admission to the bar. The program is designed to retain promising legal talent in underserved areas, particularly individuals who might otherwise be drawn to jobs in neighboring New Mexico

and Utah, which both have a lower UBE passing score of 260. In a summer 2024 press release announcing the program, Chief Justice Ann A. Scott Timmer commented, "Arizona is not only a real desert, but also a legal desert. Arizona ranks 49 among the states in the number of lawyers per capita. This will be one of several steps we are taking to provide more legal services for Arizonans, particularly those living in rural communities."[216]

Given that rural communities across the country are home to significant numbers of Native Americans, supporting more Indigenous students to enter the field is critical. According to a 2024 analysis of ABA data by the Law School Admission Council, fewer than 2% of first-year law students nationwide were Native American.[217] Only 1% of all lawyers identified as Native American in 2024 — the same proportion as a decade earlier.[218] In contrast, Native Americans accounted for 3% of the U.S. population in the 2020 Census. [219] The Task Force recommends that law schools actively recruit and support Native American students by engaging in strategic outreach to their communities, offering financial incentives and partnering with organizations already helping Indigenous people navigate the law school application and matriculation processes. An example of such a program comes from the University of California Berkeley School of Law, which sought to increase its Native American student enrollment by launching a new financial aid program. The program covers annual tuition and fees for California students who are also enrolled in federally recognized tribes.[220]

Partnering with Faith Leaders to Broaden Access to Justice

Recognizing the trusted role clergy and faith leaders play in their communities, LSC developed a **Faith Community Outreach Toolkit** to help grantees share practical legal resources with local congregations. When people face difficult times, they often turn first to their faith community. By equipping faith leaders to recognize and make referrals when there are legal problems, the toolkit helps them connect individuals — especially those who might not otherwise seek help — to local civil legal providers. Through this effort, LSC aims to strengthen partnerships between legal aid organizations and faith communities, ensuring that people can access legal support where and when they need it.

SPOTLIGHT

Building a Pipeline for Native American Lawyers

Around the country, law schools are working with partners to ensure that American Indian and Alaska Native students can succeed in their legal education and careers.

Aspiring law students take part in the Native American Pathway to Law Initiative workshop, designed to guide them through the application process.

The American Indian Law Center now hosts the Pre-Law Summer Institute, which prepares students for law school through a two-month intensive on research, analysis and writing. Similarly, the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University started the Pathway to Law initiative to help students prepare competitive law school applications. (Read more on page 95.)

RECOMMENDATION 5: Use high- and low-tech community outreach tactics to raise awareness about the availability of free legal help.

Who can do this?

- Federal Lawmakers
- State and Local Lawmakers
- Government and Community Agencies
- State and Tribal Courts and Access to Justice Commissions
- State Bars and Bar Associations
- Civil Legal Services Providers
- Funders of Civil Legal Services

Lack of access to legal assistance does not arise solely because a client is unable to meet with a provider by physical or virtual means. Lack of access also can happen simply because a prospective client does not know their problem is a legal one or that a legal services organization can help them. The Task Force recommends that legal services providers, along with their funders and community partners, consider how to strengthen and expand public outreach to raise awareness about the nature and availability of civil legal assistance and other relevant resources.

One strategy is to direct outreach to specific community locations where providers could find many potential clients. For example, Judicare Legal Aid in Northern Wisconsin conducts on-site community outreach at county job and workforce development centers. Meanwhile, GLSP conducts circuit rides in all 33 predominantly rural counties within its service area, with staff working in different locations in each county on a rotating schedule to increase visibility and accessibility.[221]

Oklahoma, a state rich in Native American history and culture, is home to 39 federally recognized tribal nations, each with its own distinct traditions, languages and ties to the land. Since the early 1980s, Oklahoma Indian Legal Services (OILS) has provided legal aid to low-income members in each of the 39 tribes while respecting each community's sovereignty and cultural traditions. OILS Executive Director Stephanie Hudson shared that staff have built trust with tribal nations over time by maintaining a consistent physical presence in Native American communities.[222] Due to its small staff and limited capacity, OILS cannot establish standalone offices on every reservation in Oklahoma. Instead, OILS opts for a traveling legal clinic approach, sending staff attorneys and intake workers to their respective tribal communities weekly or quarterly. Hudson shares that it often takes several visits for tribal members to feel comfortable approaching the OILS attorneys after consistently seeing the same person. Potential clients may only ask questions about their legal issues or pick up brochures. They may not immediately agree to participate in a formal intake. It may take another week or two of OILS's presence at the same location to demonstrate that staff are trustworthy enough to ask for help.

Providers also should consider other forms of community outreach, from posting information on community bulletin boards hanging in the town post office to placing ads on the radio or in the local paper. MLSA Executive Director Alison Paul told the Task Force that her organization had success producing custom drink coasters with contact details and info about common civil legal problems that threaten basic needs.[223] The coasters were distributed to bars and taverns around Montana. These deliberate communications tactics, among others, play a critical role in bridging the rural justice gap.

Drink coasters produced by Montana Legal Services Association proved to be an effective outreach tool when distributed to local bars and taverns in rural Montana.

Constituent services staff in congressional offices and state and local lawmakers' offices can play a pivotal educational role, too. Because these offices routinely hear from concerned voters seeking help with a wide range of problems, it is important that staff know which legal services programs operate in their district. Equipped with this knowledge, staff can make timely and appropriate referrals to civil legal services organizations, ensuring that residents who reach out for assistance are connected to relevant and proximate resources.

Conclusion

"Justice is indiscriminately due to all, without regard to numbers, wealth, or rank."

— Hon. John Jay, first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States

The ideal of equal access to is a core American value and yet, it remains aspirational. With more than 90% of civil legal problems going unsolved each year, the justice gap is not unique to rural America. However, there are unique characteristics of rural communities that can make problem-solving more challenging. Members of the Task Force are inspired by the dedication and creativity that rural communities are bringing to the challenge of narrowing the rural justice gap in the U.S. This report is a first step in highlighting the wide array of strategies and solutions that the Task Force believes hold enormous promise for expanding legal services not just to rural residents, but to all Americans who fall through the cracks in the nation's civil justice system.

Given LSC's national reach and influence, Task Force members believe it has an important role to play in increasing awareness of rural people's lived experiences and legal needs by aggregating and sharing information and resources about rural access-to-justice barriers and effective, community-based solutions. The group is eager to see how LSC and the larger access-to-justice community build on this report and complementary initiatives by convening rural practitioners to share information, troubleshoot common challenges and strategize on how best to meet Americans' civil legal needs. The Task Force also is looking forward to how the other stakeholders mentioned throughout the report — lawmakers, courts, law schools, legal aid organizations, the private bar, philanthropy, and more — respond to the recommendations, pilot new approaches and evaluate their effectiveness.

Narrowing the rural justice gap is both a challenge and an opportunity that requires a concerted and multifaceted response. The Task Force strongly believes that solutions are possible — indeed, they already are happening in rural and remote regions across the country. Now is the time to learn from this good work and bring more Americans the civil legal help they critically need.

Appendices

Appendix A: Solution Spotlights

Overcoming Barrier 1: Addressing the Rural Attorney Shortage

Alaska Legal Services Corporation trains, places community justice workers

As the largest state in the U.S. in terms of land mass, Alaska faces a significant justice gap, with only 1.13 lawyers available for every 10,000 low-income Alaskans. Alaska also is the most rural state and home to the largest Indigenous population in the country.[224] Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC) saw that the need for legal help outstripped its capacity. In response, ALSC developed its Community Justice Worker (CJW) program in 2019, in partnership with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and Alaska Pacific University.[225] Participating (non-attorney) legal advocates located throughout rural Alaska are provided with training and are empowered to provide certain legal services under ALSC's supervision.

Nikole Nelson, former executive director of Alaska Legal Services Corporation and founding CEO of Frontline Justice, testifies before the Senate Judiciary Committee in July 2024 about Alaska's successful Community Justice Worker program, which combines legal aid expertise with local knowledge and community assets.

ALSC provides free, self-paced, online training for CJWs who commit to assisting at least one ALSC client with a specific legal issue. Alaska Pacific University and Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium participate in the design and implementation of the

community advocacy classes, which cover several topics, including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and unemployment benefits, will drafting, enforcement of the Indian Child Welfare Act, debt collection defense and domestic violence protective order advocacy.[226] After completing the online trainings, CJWs work directly with clients to address their legal issues with the full support of ALSC.

Based on the early success of the program, the Alaska Supreme Court approved a waiver in 2022 that permits CJWs trained and supervised by ALSC to provide limited-scope legal help in certain situations.[227] To date, ALSC has recruited more than 400 justice workers in 42 different communities, enabling the organization to dramatically increase its reach and impact. Aside from the CJW cohort, ALSC employs 45 staff members in just 12 offices. The justice workers are reflective of the people and communities that ALSC serves; 44% of CJWs are Alaska Natives.

"Community justice workers are an integral part of ALSC's efforts to reach clients in the most remote areas of Alaska. Whereas most legal aid and pro bono attorneys operate in urban areas, CJWs often live and work in rural and tribal Alaska," said Nikole Nelson, former executive director of ALSC, and the founding CEO, Frontline Justice.[228]

The program continues to make a difference in the lives of low-income Alaskans. Faced with a 2022 backlog in processing SNAP applications that exacerbated hunger in the state, CJWs efficiently handled over 400 cases by July 2023, securing approximately $5.5 million in benefits for ALSC clients. These data from a state in which the geographic barriers to accessing legal assistance are perhaps greater than anywhere else, suggest that the CJW model should be replicated in other jurisdictions.[229] With the help of an American Bar Foundation-affiliated research team, ALSC is working to expand the CJW program to address more legal problems and provide aid to more Alaskans, while developing training programs that other communities can implement as well.

University of Arkansas Little Rock's William H. Bowen School of Law creates incubator program for rural practitioners

Arkansas faces a severe shortage of attorneys, with only 0.64 attorneys per 1,000 residents in its 25 most rural counties. The ratio is a little better statewide, with 2.04 attorneys per 1,000 residents.[230] Adding to the problem, the state's existing population of attorneys is aging out of practice, with few replacements available to meet

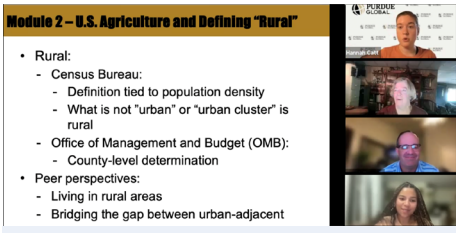
the legal needs of people and communities facing legal barriers.[231] In response, the University of Arkansas Little Rock's William H. Bowen School of Law (Bowen) established the Rural Practice Incubator to help Bowen alumni launch viable small or solo practices in rural, underserved Arkansas communities.[232]

Beginning in 2018, the program opened to Bowen alumni and graduating students who wanted to start a solo legal practice in the state.[233] During an 18-month program, participants receive training and mentoring in the fundamentals of managing a rural legal practice, including recruiting staff, running an office and other practical aspects of the practice of law.

Furonda Brasfield, a member of the Task Force and a graduate of the Rural Practice Incubator, benefited enormously from the connections she made through the program.[234] During the Task Force's October 2022 field hearing, she observed that new attorneys are worried about asking too many questions, saying, "You don't want to bother people." Through the incubator program, she said young attorneys have resources available to consistently assist with questions that arise in rural practice, where frequently "one day you're doing family law, probate the next."[235]

Online university encourages more students to pursue legal careers in rural practice

Like many states, Indiana has a lawyer shortage — less than 20,000 in a state home to 6.8 million people. To address the problem, the state relaxed its rules in 2024, allowing graduates of non-ABA accredited, Indiana-based online law schools to sit for the Indiana bar exam.[236] Shortly thereafter, in spring 2025, five graduates of Purdue Global Law School, the Purdue University System's online school for working adults, passed the Indiana bar exam on their first attempt.[237]



Purdue Global Law School students engage in an online class.

The unanimous passage rate validates Purdue's attempt to "solve the problem of 'legal deserts' across the U.S."[238] The university also launched a course, Rural Law Practice, to educate and empower students who are considering legal careers in rural communities. Another goal is to demonstrate the unique legal needs of various agribusinesses and family farms while highlighting the shortage of civil and family legal services in rural areas.

Improving access to justice in rural areas is a priority for Purdue Global Law School and aligns with its renewed mission to develop partnerships with rural legal communities, according to Shaun Jamison, associate dean of academics. "Some lawyers in rural areas are working into their 70s and 80s, with no one to take over their practice," he said in a news release.[239] "This could be an opportunity for more people who work in rural areas to go into the legal profession and work in the areas they live in."

Kansas law school supports students to pursue rural careers

Washburn University School of Law in Topeka, Kansas, offers a Rural Law Program designed to prepare students for rural employment opportunities and careers.[240] The program combines focused educational content on rural legal issues with opportunities for students to work alongside practicing attorneys and judges in summer externship placements. Through support from the Dane G. Hansen Foundation, Washburn Law offers an immersive externship experience, allowing students to work in one of 26 Kansas counties. The externship includes tuition credits and a stipend for living expenses while students are working in their placement communities.[241] Washburn Law also partners with several other state colleges to provide 3+3 programs, enabling pre-law students to complete three years of undergraduate study at their home institution and count their first year of law school at Washburn Law toward their bachelor's degree.[242] Students who follow this path can earn both their undergraduate and law degrees, take the bar exam, and begin practicing law all within six years. In addition, Washburn Law's Third Year Anywhere program allows students to finish their final year of law school remotely, while taking online classes and gaining practical experience through an externship in the geographic area where they intend to practice.[243]

Minnesota Supreme Court creates Legal Paraprofessional Project

Two-thirds of Minnesota's attorneys work in only one county.[244] Faced with a severe imbalance in attorney representation, the Minnesota Supreme Court in 2020 authorized the Legal Paraprofessional Pilot Project, allowing approved Minnesota legal paraprofessionals to represent and advise clients in select housing and family matters, areas where one or both parties typically don't have counsel.[245] The program rolled out in March 2021 with 13 certified legal paraprofessionals[246] and grew to 37 by August 2025.[247] The initial cohort of paraprofessionals worked

in a variety of environments, including law firms, legal aid offices and as freelance paralegals, all under the supervision of Minnesota licensed attorneys. Through demonstrated success, the program has since been made permanent.[248]

Speaking at an LSC event in Minneapolis in July 2024, James J. Long, an attorney with Maslon LLP and a member of the court-appointed Standing Committee for the Legal Paraprofessional Pilot Project, observed that the strongest success of the program to date had been achieved through its use by legal aid organizations across Minnesota.[249]

James J. Long, of the Minnesota Supreme Court's Standing Committee for the Legal Paraprofessional Pilot Project, joins legal aid practitioners from Justice North and Anishinabe Legal Services to discuss expanding access to justice through nonlawyer models.

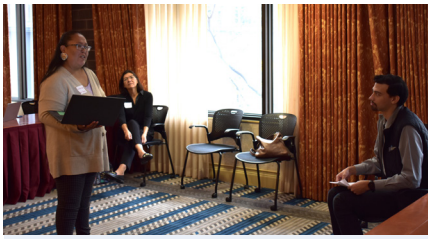
For its final report and recommendations to the Minnesota Supreme Court, the Standing Committee sought feedback from program participants about how the pilot impacted their practice and internal capacity. LSC grantees Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services and Justice North reported 1,267 and 781 closed cases, respectively. Representatives shared:

- "My office utilized the legal paraprofessional program, and my understanding is that it allowed us to serve more people and operate more efficiently with regard to housing matters."
- "We are at an all-time high in the judicial district with eviction/housing cases…Legal Services was able to assist more clients at eviction hearings with my assistance."[250]

The pilot became a permanent in program in 2025. In the order amending the rules governing legal paraprofessionals, the Minnesota Supreme Court expanded the types of cases that paraprofessionals can handle, including appearing in court and giving legal advice regarding criminal record expungements.[251]

Montana creates Tribal Advocacy Incubator Program

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored a startling lack of available legal representation for Montana's Native American communities. Much of Montana was already a legal desert, with only 3,500 attorneys to service the entire state population. As the pandemic shut things down, the Montana Legal Services Association (MLSA) discovered that the problem was especially acute on Native American reservations, where residents had almost no one to turn to for representation in the state's tribal courts.[252]



Trainees in the Montana Tribal Advocacy Incubator Project (TAIP) practice courtroom representation through role-play exercises.

To help fill this critical gap, MLSA partnered with tribal courts across Montana, the Alexander Blewett II School of Law at the University of Montana in Missoula and the Indian Law Section of the Montana State Bar, to implement the Montana Tribal Advocacy Incubator Project (TAIP). The project recruits, trains, mentors and supports residents to become tribal lay advocates, who can represent the state's Native American population living in rural reservation communities on a variety of legal issues, including divorce and custody, landlord-tenant disputes, wills and probate, real estate and land issues. TAIP participants take a free 12-week course that includes training in legal advocacy, court representation and business management. Prior to practice, they must pass a Tribal Bar test.[253]

Task Force Member Alison Paul, MLSA's executive director, discussed TAIP at the Task Force's October 2022 field hearing. "This program is more than simply legal training," she said. It is a business incubator that breaks down barriers to preventing people from becoming advocates for tribal members."[254]

In addition to the tailored curriculum, participants receive a stipend for in-person training and business start-up costs, like office equipment and registration for a Tribal Bar test. They also receive ongoing mentorship and free enrollment in the Modest Means Program and the Montana Lawyer Referral and Information Service. These programs connect prospective rural and other vulnerable clients to attorneys based upon a sliding scale fee system.[255] By training lay advocates in the tribal court system, MLSA can successfully "train local people in each tribe to represent [clients] in their own community," Paul said.

University of Nebraska College of Law program incentivizes pre-law undergraduates to pursue rural practice

The University of Nebraska College of Law's Rural Law Opportunities Program (RLOP) represents an innovative and unique strategy to encourage pre-law undergraduate students to consider career opportunities that address the rural justice gap in the state.

During the Task Force's field hearing in Oklahoma City in October 2022, Professor Anthony Schutz, associate dean for faculty, professor of law and director of RLOP, explained that it was created in recognition

of Nebraska's critical dearth of rural practitioners. According to Schutz, 12 of the state's 93 counties do not have any lawyers, and the majority of the state's counties have fewer than 20 total practitioners, with 22 counties having no more than three legal practitioners.[256]

Professor Anthony Schutz, director of the Rural Law Opportunities Program (RLOP), speaks to Task Force members at the convening in Oklahoma City, October 2022.

Four undergraduate institutions in the state (Chadron State College, the University of Nebraska at Kearney, Peru State College and Wayne State College), identify and select undergraduate students using criteria developed in conjunction with the College of Law. These students must demonstrate a past or current connection to a rural place and exhibit strong academic potential. Those undergraduate students who matriculate into the RLOP receive an array of educational and financial benefits to incentivize transition to rural practice. At the top of the list of enticements is a full-tuition undergraduate scholarship.[257]

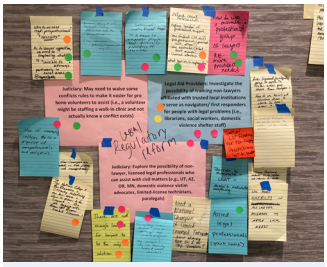
Throughout their undergraduate experience, RLOP participants visit the University of Nebraska College of Law to observe classes, meet faculty and staff, rural attorneys and judges, see special court sessions and gain a critical understanding of the law school experience. Participants receive mentorship from both law school professors and RLOP-focused undergraduate professors, and the Nebraska State Bar Association works with the undergraduate institutions to secure internships for students in public or private rural placements. Program participants are entitled to presumptive admission to the Nebraska College of Law.[258]

Since the program's inception in 2016, 11 students have graduated from the law school, and as of spring 2025, there were 22 RLOP students in law school, along with approximately 70 RLOP undergraduates. As these students progress, Professor Schutz believes that a large percentage will enter practice in rural areas, if not directly out of law school, at some point in their careers. Early indications are promising. Seven of the 11 who have graduated law school since the program's inception are employed in rural places.

Building on these efforts, the University of Nebraska Lincoln recently announced a new center to improve the training of attorneys that serve children and families in juvenile court, especially in rural areas.[259]

Oregon State Bar champions licensed paraprofessional program

In June 2017, the Oregon State Bar Futures Task Force released a report on the future of legal services in Oregon.[260] The report outlined three recommendations for new models for the delivery of legal services to Oregon residents — 84% of whom arrive in court with no legal assistance.[261] One recommendation was the implementation of a legal paraprofessional licensure program. The proposed program would establish a license for paralegals to provide limited legal services in family law and housing law, two areas where a significant number of litigants were self- represented and would otherwise have no legal representation.[262] The Oregon Supreme Court approved the program in 2022, and the state legislature amended the bar's governing statute the following spring to align with the new legal license. The new type of license was officially implemented in 2023.[263]



Ideas for broadening who can provide legal help, generated by the Task Force, hang on the wall during an exercise where members sorted their ideas into groups to highlight key themes and priorities.

The inspiration for a licensed paralegal (LP) was nurse practitioners in the medical profession. LPs are authorized to perform some limited-scope legal tasks, previously available only from attorneys, to help address Oregonians' greatest unmet civil legal needs. They may assist clients in filling out forms and paperwork, prepare them for court hearings, and represent them in settlements and mediations. While similar programs struggled to gain traction in other jurisdictions due to resistance from attorneys and the organized bar, the Oregon program was widely supported by the state bar and its members, which led to its successful enactment.

The Hon. Kirsten Thompson, senior judge on the Washington County (Oregon) Circuit Court and chair of the Paraprofessional Licensing Implementation Committee for the Oregon State Bar, appeared at the Task Force's October 2022 field hearing to describe the program. "The vast swath of Oregon is very rural, and there are very few lawyers," she said. Judge Thompson noted that the focus on certifying paraprofessionals to work in family law and landlord-tenant law addresses enduring representation issues she has seen throughout her career on the bench, in legal services and in private practice. "It's been a chronic issue," she said, "and I think the lack of attorneys has been exacerbated over the years."[264]

The Dakotas offer programs to draw lawyers to rural practice

Recruitment and retention of attorneys serving rural populations in North Dakota and South Dakota are significant challenges. Several counties in each state (including more than 40 counties in North Dakota alone) have no practicing attorneys to serve residents. "We don't have a problem with the number of lawyers; we have a distribution problem," said Patrick Goetzinger, former president of the State Bar of South Dakota and a member of the Task Force.[265] In response, Goetzinger helped his state launch Project Rural Practice and a Rural Attorney Recruitment Program (RARP), a public-private partnership, in 2013. RARP provides annual incentive payments ($12,500) to attorneys who commit to practicing for five years in a rural community that meets the state's requirements.[266] If a lawyer leaves the program early, they forfeit the funds.

Goetzinger explained that the yearly payment, equivalent to 90% of annual tuition at the University of South Dakota School of Law at the time RARP launched, was the magic number to recruit new attorneys to serve in rural South Dakota. "It's what we could afford, but it also had a logical tie to the in-state student experience," Goetzinger said during a Task Force working group meeting in May 2022.[267] However, in the 12 years since the program's inception, in-state tuition has increased to around $17,000 while the annual incentive payment for RARP participants is unchanged.[268] The program is sustained with funds allocated by the state legislature, a contribution from the state bar and investment from local governments in communities that receive attorney placements.

Sally Holewa, administrator of the North Dakota Supreme Court, appeared at the Task Force's October 2022 field hearing to describe how her state adapted South Dakota's model, launching its own Rural Attorney Recruitment Program in 2021.[269] North Dakota's program costs are shared by the state judiciary, local government and bar associations, reducing the overall financial burden on any stakeholder.[270] Attorneys sign agreements to participate in the program and receive periodic payments to remain in the county or community they serve.[271]

Though rural law incentive programs are promising, more work remains to evaluate what is working and how to expand their reach even more. As of 2025, there have been 36 participants in South Dakota's program, 19 of which have graduated from the program, and 14 of those have remained in their communities.[272] In a reflection of the broader challenges related to strengthening rural practice, the ratio of urban

to rural attorneys in the state has not improved over the years since the program's launch.[273] Even so, Goetzinger notes that these numbers represent direct impacts on the rural justice gap in South Dakota; in a small state such as this, each additional attorney makes a significant impact, well beyond just theory.[274] Goetzinger also commented that he was not aware of any other program producing similar tangible results. He added that the South Dakota experience shows that even successful models leave room for improvement, especially when it comes to attracting lawyers to tribal nations and encouraging rural practitioners nearing retirement to develop succession plans.[275]

In 2025, South Dakota's trailblazing work was recognized with a $15,000 award from the U.S. Department of Justice's Access to Justice Prize Competition.[276] The funding, granted to the South Dakota Bar Foundation, will support implementation of the Project Rural Practice Hub, a virtual platform designed to facilitate peer-to-peer mentoring and boost rural lawyer retention. The online resource center will offer on-demand training, technical assistance and community building features. Partners in this effort include the South Dakota Bar Foundation, State Bar of South Dakota, USD Knudson School of Law, South Dakota Unified Judicial System and Destination Dakota Legal Careers.[277]

Utah Supreme Court endorses advocate program for domestic violence survivors

In 2020, Arizona and Utah launched unprecedented experiments in legal services delivery.[278] The following year, the Utah Supreme Court approved a pilot program developed by legal aid provider Timpanogos Legal Center, which has a special focus on abuse, family law and housing support for self-represented people in rural areas of Utah, to train non-attorney victim advocates to assist survivors of domestic violence.[279] Through the Certified Advocate Partners Program (CAPP), advocates offer legal advice and services related to civil protective orders and stalking injunctions.[280] Susan Griffith, executive director of Timpanogos Legal Center, said that their advocates are now officially permitted to sit at the counsel table during protective order hearings.[281]

As of April 2025, Timpanogos had trained 34 advocates, the majority of whom are actively providing services through the oversight of partner organization, Community Justice Advocates of Utah.[282] Advocates help survivors make informed decisions and pursue legal pathways to increased safety and stability. More than three-fourths (77%) of clients served through CAPP lived in rural areas of Utah. From June 2021 through December 2024, CAPP advocates assisted 358 clients and helped 225 seek protective orders.[283] Of those requests, a court order

was issued in 205 cases. Based on information provided by the Utah State Courts, clients who use a CAPP advocate are approximately twice as likely to have an order entered than the statewide average.[284]

"With our certification program, the Victim Advocate has the authority to give legal advice on which type of protective order the victim should seek, to assist in drafting the petition correctly and to advise on how to present the evidence to the judge or commissioner at the hearing, all of which are critical to the victim's success," Griffith said, in a Daily Yonder article on the CAPP initiative.[285]

New dual degree program supports Alaskan students to study and practice law in state

Alaska is the only state without its own law school, but a new partnership between Alaska Pacific University (APU) and Seattle University (SU) is changing that.[286] The colleges launched an MBA/JD dual degree, with business instruction provided by APU and law by SU. The program began in the 2025-2026 academic year, with classes delivered in a hybrid-online format.[287] While some travel to Seattle is required — approximately five weekends each academic year — students do not needto relocate. The dual program was created to increase educational opportunities for Alaskan students living in legal deserts. The curriculum offers courses in tribal law and tribal court practice as well as exposure to the state's diverse tribes and cultures.[288]

Sullivan Hall on the Seattle University campus, which houses the School of Law.

Legal Services Corporation summer fellowship places students in rural practice

Created in 2016 by LSC, and administered in partnership with Equal Justice Works, the Rural Summer Legal Corps (RSLC) program places second and third-year law students in paid summer fellowships with LSC grantees with rural service areas, where they spend eight to 10 weeks providing direct legal services, engaging in community outreach and education and adding capacity at host organizations.[289] Fellows receive a modest stipend ($7,000), funded by private donations to LSC.

In summer 2025, 50 students from 37 law schools (selected from more than 250 applicants) participated in fellowships with 44 LSC-funded civil legal services organizations.[290] Past RSLC placements have included:

- Assisting migrant farm workers with issues including wage theft, sexual harassment and human trafficking during Colorado's peak summer growing season.[291]
- Staffing a drug treatment clinic in Arkansas so people trying to overcome opioid use disorder can be screened for civil legal needs and supported on their recovery and re-entry journeys.[292]
- Engaging in outreach, community legal education and the full spectrum of legal assistance with members of the Navajo and Hopi communities in Arizona, New Mexico and Utah.[293]

Upon completing the program, some RSLC participants pursue employment with the legal aid organization that hosted their fellowship. Others move on to private practice, either with firms or starting their own practice. While not all RSLC Fellows ultimately choose permanent, full-time roles in rural communities or legal aid organizations, their participation often fosters a lasting dedication to addressing gaps in the justice system and orientation toward public interest and pro bono work.

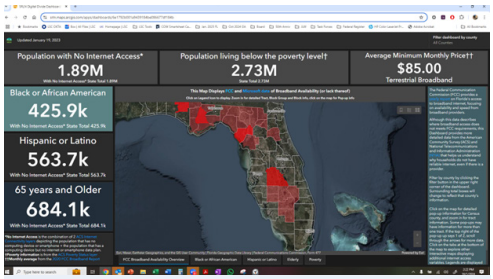
Fellowship programs, like Rural Summer Legal Corps, help connect students to the opportunities and rewards that come from a career in legal aid and practicing in underserved rural areas across the nation.

Overcoming Barrier 2: Bridging the Digital Divide

Legal Services of North Florida educates courts on clients' needs for technology and internet access

Seniors living in rural areas make up a large portion of the client population of Legal Services of North Florida (LSNF), headquartered in Tallahassee, Florida. During an LSC webinar in March 2022, Leslie Powell-Boudreaux, LSNF's executive director, shared that she and her staff have observed that many clients lack the access and digital literacy needed to fully participate in online court proceedings.[294]

"During the pandemic, what we found was people didn't know how to send a picture or how to view or scan a PDF on their phone," she said. "They didn't know how to use WhatsApp. They didn't know a lot of the tools we were using, and so we've had to teach them."[295] Unfamiliarity with technical tools utilized by courts can have serious consequences on the material outcomes of people's cases and their lives in general, she noted.



Legal Services of North Florida's digital divide dashboard provides a breakdown of the availability, speed and cost of broadband in its service area.

"We did hear stories of people during the pandemic who logged onto virtual hearings and thought they were in the right place, but didn't stay on long enough, didn't know that their case was called, or didn't understand Zoom breakout rooms, and so they ended up missing their hearings," Powell-Boudreaux explained. "For some of them, they ran out of prepaid phone minutes or data, missed a hearing and were ruled against."[296]

Where clients were unable to access the necessary technology on their own, LSNF attorneys had to shoulder the work of making accommodations that allowed clients to participate — for example, by setting up broadband-connected conference rooms and offices where clients could access hearings.

When the Florida Court System started to explore mandatory e-filing, Powell-Boudreaux wanted to quantify who would lose out.[297] LSNF approached the Self-Represented Litigant Network (SRLN) to build a Digital Divide Dashboard, which put a data visualization of the availability, speed and cost of broadband throughout the state in the hands of decisionmakers.[298] The data provided much-needed context to the state's conversation around online-only access.

Powell-Boudreaux advised that if virtual proceedings and e-filings are going to be the norm going forward, it should be the responsibility of the courts to recognize and remedy the disparity in access caused by the digital divide. "The court system needs to take on some of that burden," she said. "Because there are people for whom this is all completely unfamiliar…We need to make sure we are not opening doors for some but closing them to others."[299]

In a 2022 Bloomberg article, Nathan Hecht, then-Chief Justice of the Texas Supreme Court, expressed a similar sentiment, acknowledging that providing access to the courts may require different approaches

depending on individual needs or circumstances. "Courts are 'keenly aware' of the bandwidth problem," said Hecht. "Expanding the capacity for virtual court proceedings is the goal, but it shouldn't prevent people from accessing justice. We'll either give it to them, make it available or let them come into the courthouse like they always have, because that's the best we can do. But they're not going to be shut out."[300]

Minnesota Legal Services Coalition installs kiosks, drives justice buses to expand reach

When the Minnesota Legal Services Coalition, comprising seven Minnesota regional legal services programs, received federal CARES Act funding to invest in technological infrastructure for the delivery of civil legal services, members developed the Reach Justice initiative to better serve clients in their own communities.[301] Two signature components of Reach Justice are its legal kiosks and justice buses.[302]

Justice buses gather outside the Minnesota State Capitol before being deployed to provide legal support to rural residents.

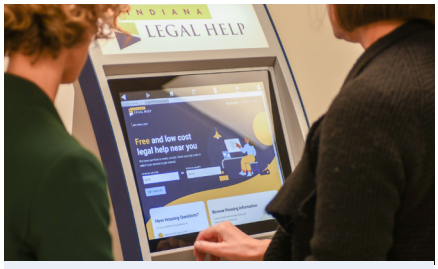
The legal kiosks are a network of more than 250 stations across the state in a variety of court, government agency, nonprofit and other community locations.[303] There are two types of kiosks. Model A kiosks are placed in community partner sites, public spaces like malls or lobbies of government services buildings or homeless shelters. As Dori Rapaport, executive director of Justice North told the Task Force, "[These are] places where you can't have a confidential conversation, but you can apply for legal services, and you can get legal information."[304]

Model B kiosks, on the other hand, provide a more private setting where clients can have Zoom conversations with legal aid intake staff and attorneys, as well as attend virtual court hearings. These kiosks, which also provide users with a printer and scanner, are hosted in a variety of locations, including community action centers, public libraries, tribal courts and domestic violence shelters. Having the two types of kiosks enhances client access, with the Model B units offering expanded confidentiality, Rapaport said.[305]

Minnesota's justice buses function as legal aid offices on wheels that traverse the state.[306] In addition to serving as mobile billboards advertising legal aid services ("We see people Googling when they see us while we're riding in the bus!" Rapaport said), the buses are

fully remote, traveling offices, equipped with a computer, printer and consistently strong satellite internet connection. The justice buses take attorneys and staff to special events, like community festivals and parades, as well as standing locations to meet clients on a regular schedule. Better yet, all buses operate in the Minnesota winter.

Texas courts support legal kiosks to expand access to proceedings



An Indiana resident explores a court kiosk, a computer station that connects users to online resources, virtual support and real-time chats with a legal provider.

Texas was one of the first states to allow remote court proceedings on a permanent basis.[307] Yet, more than 8% of Texas households lack internet and another 14% only have access via smartphone.[308] To narrow this gap in access, the Texas Legal Services Center is using funding from the state's Access to Justice Foundation to establish public legal kiosks, strategically located computer stations that help community members connect with courts, find legal help and participate in proceedings.[309]

The kiosks, accessible in English, Spanish and Vietnamese, consist of a computer, a printer/scanner and technical support. They have so far been installed in community centers, shelters and libraries.[310] People who use the kiosks also have support from a navigator, who can help them sign into a virtual court hearing or video meeting, find and complete legal forms online, print and upload documents and lookup information on legal problems.[311] Staci Maloney, communications manager for the Texas Legal Services Center, shared via email that kiosk users can now also obtain legal advice via real-time chat.[312]

Similar initiatives have been launched in several other states, including Minnesota (see example above), Nevada, Arizona, Georgia, Massachusetts and Indiana, often with a focus on strategic access points in rural regions. Kiosk placement helps people access information at safe and convenient locations that are geographically distant from existing legal aid offices, and where assistance from private attorneys is often limited.[313]

Overcoming Barrier 3: Easing Distance and Transportation Challenges

Florida Rural Legal Services brings legal assistance to the laundromat

Florida Rural Legal Services staff conduct outreach at laundromats — natural gathering places for local people without power after a hurricane.

Following Hurricane Ian in 2022, Florida Rural Legal Services (FRLS) realized the organization needed to be creative in reaching disaster survivors, prompting outreach at laundromats, where residents without electricity or laundry facilities gathered, giving legal aid staff a captive audience and a familiar accessible setting to start conversations. Laundromats serve many people who are traditionally legal aid clients — those without their own personal washers and dryers — making them natural gathering places after a hurricane. "After a disaster, everybody has dirty clothes…and one thing everybody in a laundromat has besides quarters is time," said Peter Dennis, managing attorney of the FRLS Fort Myers, Florida, office, at an LSC event in Tampa, Florida, in January 2025.[314] As people waited for loads to finish, they were more willing to approach the FRLS table, share their challenges and discover that a local legal aid organization could help with problems they hadn't thought a lawyer would be able to address. This creative outreach has continued long after the storm, as FRLS keeps meeting people where they are, including at laundromats, to ensure access to justice for all.

Georgia Legal Services Program partners with rural medical center to narrow the justice gap

To ensure continued access to civil legal services in Waycross, Georgia, where it no longer had an office, Georgia Legal Services Program (GLSP) established a medical-legal partnership in 2022 with McKinney Medical Center, a federally qualified health center.[315] Waycross is a rural city, home to just under 14,000 people and located about 125 miles south of Savannah, Georgia. GLSP and McKinney had been longtime referral partners, but the opportunity to collaborate more formally arose following a pattern of rural hospital closures throughout Georgia. The closures made McKinney an even more critical access point for comprehensive health

care and other services for the rural population of South Georgia. Medical-legal partnerships make it easier and more convenient for people to access legal help in the same trusted, convenient location in which they are already receiving care for their physical, mental and social health needs.

Staff from Georgia Legal Services Program at the launch of the organization's medical-legal partnership with McKinney Medical Center.

Malik Hines, staff attorney for the collaboration, is based in GLSP's Brunswick, Georgia, office but drives 60 miles each way to work from McKinney in Waycross twice a week. Speaking about the medical-legal partnership at an LSC forum in Atlanta in October 2024, Hines noted that "access to attorneys is so scarce" in the communities he serves, where most clients live at least an hour — and often two hours — from GLSP's Brunswick office. "[At McKinney] a patient can have their medical situation checked out and then walk 10 feet to talk to me, and I help them with their eviction — that makes a world of difference to the clients," he said."[316] Through its partnership, GLSP legal staff are available onsite at McKinney medical facilities in Ware and Charlton counties. GLSP staff trained medical personnel in identifying common legal issues that impact patient health so that when care providers recognize a problem, they can refer the patient to GLSP right then and there.[317] Patients receive assistance with various legal issues, from Supplemental Security Income determinations and food assistance to Medicaid applications and veterans' benefits. While some GLSP clients also are McKinney patients, others are members of the community who visit the medical facility strictly to access legal support there because of its proximity to their homes.

GLSP and McKinney share patient outcomes and data with each other and have seen an increase in the number of clients served since launching. Both organizations are committed to continuing the partnerships and seeking additional funding for long-term sustainability. If efforts to secure federal public health funds succeeds, GLSP aims to use this model to expand its reach into other underserved rural parts of the state through partnerships with other community health clinics.

Virtual proceedings expand access to legal support on housing issues in Minnesota

Dori Rapaport, executive director of Justice North in Minnesota, leads a staff of 40 people across five offices responsible for a 10-county service area. Rapaport joined a Task Force working group meeting in 2022 to share how the court's transition to exclusively online proceedings during the pandemic facilitated an increase in efficiency and legal representation for individuals in housing court, resulting in a significant decrease in default judgments.[318]

In Minnesota, virtual housing court proceedings launched during the pandemic expanded access to legal assistance and reduced default judgments for tenants facing eviction.

During this time, one judicial district in Minnesota coordinated a statewide housing court calendar so that all proceedings were heard virtually by the same judicial official(s). Before the pandemic, Rapaport noted that Justice North staff attorneys would frequently have to drive two-and-a-half hours to an eviction hearing. By moving these proceedings online, legal aid lawyers were able to seamlessly transition from one hearing to the next, without losing time traveling between physical courthouses.

Not only did the increase in virtual proceedings help legal aid practitioners in Minnesota appear at more hearings across wide areas of rural land in less time, but it also allowed more qualifying individuals to take advantage of these services. This was because attorneys were accessible to potential clients at the click of a button on a computer or mobile device. Rapaport shared, "Before the pandemic, potential clients had to come to our organizations to get help. But virtually, we are there. Intake is there. Legal aid staff are there."

Justice North conducted an internal study and found that the organization was able to speak with 50% more people with housing problems after the transition to virtual proceedings. Notably, one-half of the additional people served had never sought help from a legal aid organization before. "But for our ability to be there (virtually), we never would have been able to help those individuals in those housing proceedings," Rapaport said. "Virtual has been a total game changer when it comes to representing more individuals."

Speaking to Minnesota Public Radio News, a court appointed referee who oversees housing court proceedings for the state's Seventh Judicial District said, "If you think about how our courts are, where we as a society resolve our disputes in a civilized manner, according to our

system of rules and laws, greater access to the courts is really greater access to justice. And that benefits all the court users across the board, and as a result, that really benefits our communities as a whole."[319]

Law for Learners brings legal help to students across Wisconsin

Law for Learners team members table at Northwood Technical College to raise visibility and connect directly with students.

Law for Learners (LFL) connects students attending postsecondary schools throughout Wisconsin with free help to address legal barriers to education and employment, such as criminal record expungement, family law issues, driver's license restoration and housing issues.[320] LFL partners with several legal aid organizations, including Wisconsin's two LSC grantees, Judicare Legal Aid and Legal Action of Wisconsin, as well as Wisconsin's two law schools.[321] LFL also runs an internship program to provide meaningful training opportunities to paralegal and other students, including those studying on rural campuses.

Students can get help through LFL from both in-person and virtual clinics. In addition to hosting legal clinics, partner colleges also help students identify legal issues and seek assistance and holistic services when appropriate. Partner colleges provide spaces on campus where students have access to computers and technology that allows them to hold a confidential videoconference with a lawyer.

Task Force member Holly Clendenen, chief student services officer at Southwest Wisconsin Technical College (a partner college of LFL), in the rural community of Fennimore, Wisconsin, shared the story of an instructor who noticed that a student was regularly missing class. After inquiring, the instructor learned the student was the only family member with a driver's license; when others in the family needed to be driven to appointments, the student had to miss class. The instructor connected the student and their mother, whose driver's license had been revoked, with the LFL program, and LFL volunteers were able to help the mother reinstate her driver's license. "We were able to keep that student on track," Clendenen said.[322] Clendenen noted that the impact of LFL's services reverberated throughout that family; now that the mother could take family members to appointments, "the student could be in class, focus on academics, and graduate on time, and the mother was able to take over the caregiver role from the student."

Legal Aid of West Virginia removes an access barrier by placing lawyers in schools

Legal Aid of West Virginia's (LAWV) Lawyer in the School program provides legal services to families at schools in seven counties throughout the state. The program began at one school in Charleston, West Virgina, and has since expanded to serve families with a variety of legal issues, most frequently relating to substance use disorder, custody and eviction.[323] The program offers both in-person clinics as well as referral services for families dealing with civil legal issues.[324]

During the October 2022 Task Force field hearing in Oklahoma City, Kate White, executive director of Legal Aid of West Virginia, said the idea for the program developed when legal aid staff realized that many teachers, counselors and nurses spotted issues but did not know how to connect families to available legal aid services. To remedy this, LAWV decided to meet parents and other caregivers where they already were and make legal services available in schools, not just a traditional legal office. This removed physical, financial and emotional barriers that may have otherwise prevented people from seeking help.[325]

An attorney from Legal Aid of West Virginia leads a classroom lesson as part of the Lawyer in School program, which helps families resolve legal issues that affect their children's educational success and well-being.

LAWV targets schools where health and wellness support, such as medical and dental care or adult education programs, are also available on site to students and families. This creates strong partnerships between service providers, educators and families. According to White, the key to the success and expansion of the program is LAWV staff's constant presence in the schools and their participation in community events, such as back-to-school night and school celebrations. Through these activities, staff built meaningful, lasting relationships with teachers and school leadership, which, in turn, fostered a sense of trust and reliability in the legal services provided.[326]

Partnerships between legal aid groups and public libraries support rural communities in Colorado, Illinois, Oregon and beyond

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) recognized that two large, sparsely populated frontier counties in its service area did not have enough attorneys to serve local clients. Saguache and Costilla counties were each home to just one attorney. The justice gap in these counties was exacerbated by Colorado's mountainous terrain, which creates geographic barriers and long distances between clients and attorneys.

While Saguache and Costilla counties lacked lawyers, they were home to strong public library systems. "[Each library] had a large enough private space as well as willing and engaged staff who wanted to help and wanted to collaborate with us," said Jen Cuesta, managing attorney for the Northwest Colorado Legal Services Project, an office of Colorado Legal Services, at a 2022 working group meeting of the Task Force.

Cuesta said CLS designed a program where eligible residents could go to their local library to connect with pro bono attorneys located in the Denver metro area. CLS hosted legal clinics at these libraries, where clients used library equipment in private space to communicate with an off-site, volunteer attorney. Library staff helped set up the technology so that clients could have a seamless experience. "We want the client to sit down and see the attorney," Cuesta said. "They don't have to navigate the technology. We can remove that barrier because of that library staff member."

In places where lawyers are few, public libraries serve as vital community hubs, hosting pro bono legal clinics and connecting residents to help.

Other legal aid programs have embraced library partnerships to expand public awareness and bridge gaps in access. For example, a Prairie State Legal Services staff attorney is available to give free legal advice to visitors to the Watseka Public Library, in Iroquois County, Illinois, on the first Tuesday of each month. In central Oregon, the Deschutes Public Library system partners with the Deschutes County Access to Justice Committee to offer free, 30-minute consultations with an attorney at the downtown Bend library twice a month in the evening. This Lawyer in the Library program is intended to help self-represented people. Attorneys volunteer their time, and partners aim to schedule one family law lawyer and one general law practitioner each week. The program does not provide ongoing legal

representation, nor help with criminal law questions or give advice about specific cases. Individuals can, however, get general legal information and referrals to other agencies.

With so many librarians acting as informal "issue spotters" in their communities, quickly recognizing needs or challenges when patrons walk in, LSC partnered with OCLC, a global library cooperative, to produce online training to strengthen public library staffs' knowledge of civil legal aid issues and how to direct library users to relevant, helpful information and services. The free, self-paced courses cover the most common problems that people are likely to experience, including housing, family law and public benefits issues. It also offers practical guidance for identifying when a patron may need legal help, strategies for making effective referrals to legal aid and other human services providers, and tips for using reliable online legal information sources. Designed specifically for library staff with no prior legal background, the training can be completed in short modules to fit busy schedules.

Overcoming Barrier 4: Building Trust and Meeting Community-Specific Needs

California Rural Legal Assistance trains local interpreters to expand access

Established in 2019, the Language Justice Initiative (LJI) is a cornerstone of California Rural Legal Assistance's (CRLA) strategy to reduce barriers for deaf, hard-of- hearing, Indigenous and limited English proficient residents in rural California who qualify for civil legal services. One of its signature efforts is building a network of skilled interpreters that can help with outreach, community education and case support.[327] CRLA and partners created the Engaged Interpreting program, a 50-hour online course that trains 50 to 60 interpreters annually, with a focus on speakers of Mexican Indigenous languages and other high-demand languages.[328]

A flyer advertises the Engaged Interpreting training program offered by California Rural Legal Assistance.

The interpreting program allowed LJI to address a gap that existing training did not fill. Most programs delivered English-only curricula, excluding potential candidates who interpreted between the Latin

American Indigenous and Spanish languages yet lacked English proficiency. LJI worked with legal aid and translation partners throughout California to develop a parallel Spanish-based curriculum that trains interpreters to communicate information from Spanish to their proficient language(s).

LJI recruits community volunteers and CRLA clients to participate in the $300 training program, offering scholarships if needed. Trainees also participate in language teams that meet weekly outside of class to practice linguistics and offer peer support. Expert mentors, such as legal or court interpreters, provide guidance specific to each language team. Upon successful completion of the course, LJI can hire graduates as paid interpreters, strengthening CRLA's capacity to provide culturally competent and linguistically accessible services.

Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma teams with faith leaders to expand access to disaster-related support

Oklahoma is one of the most rural states in the country, with fewer than 20 of its 77 counties considered metropolitan (non-rural) areas.[329] An analysis of Census data ranked the state's 2023 poverty rate higher than the national average, with 15.9% of Oklahomans living in poverty compared to 12.5% nationally.[330] In addition, the state ranks high in the number of natural disasters affecting residents.[331] To address these twin challenges, Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma (LASO) developed a partnership with the faith community to help rural residents navigate legal challenges that occur in the aftermath of a disaster.

After a disaster, Americans often face a range of civil legal problems. LSC's Disaster Task Force identified common issues such as landlord-tenant disputes, income protection, document replacement, title clearing, FEMA appeals, domestic violence and consumer fraud.[332] In rural areas, where legal services are already limited, disasters can intensify these challenges for individuals and families and strain providers whose staff are also disaster survivors.

At the Task Force's October 2022 field hearing, Christa Figgins, director of mission advancement and disaster legal services for LASO, described how local churches and other houses of worship often lead the initial response, with people more likely to seek help from congregations than from government agencies or social service providers.[333] Recognizing this dynamic, LASO partnered with Crisis Care Ministries, a multi-faith alliance in Oklahoma, to prepare clergy and lay leaders to educate their congregations about potential legal issues and to mobilize "boots on the ground" after a future disaster.

Tennessee effort focuses legal outreach on faith communities

In Tennessee, as in many other states, people often turn to faith leaders first in times of crisis. This is especially true in rural areas with fewer human services. In response, the Tennessee Access to Justice Commission, which was created by the Tennessee Supreme Court, established the Tennessee Faith and Justice Alliance (TFJA), a group of legal professionals, faith and state leaders committed to providing legal resources, information and support to their communities.[334] While many members of the alliance are affiliated with Christian organizations, the TFJA is open to all faiths.

As described by Task Force member Anne-Louise Wirthlin, director of Access to Justice and Strategic Collaboration with the Tennessee Administrative Office of the Courts, TFJA provides a pathway to support when residents approach a faith leader or fellow congregant with legal questions or concerns. "We train people to ask, 'Is there something here that a trained lawyer or law student or legal services provider could do to help keep this person from continuing to experience this [problem] over and over and over again?'" Wirthlin said.[335]

TFJA's programming has helped create trust between Tennesseans, particularly in rural areas, and legal aid organizations by building bridges with community and faith leaders whom Tennesseans already turn to when they need help. The Alliance's success inspired the North Carolina Judicial Branch to launch a similar coalition of faith-based groups and legal practitioners to help meet the growing need for legal assistance for their residents.[336]

Programs prepare Native Americans for legal education, careers

Many Tribal communities are legal deserts, and Native Americans remain underrepresented in the legal profession.[337] To address this gap, law schools across the country are partnering with groups working to support American Indian and Alaska Native students in pursuing legal education and careers that serve their communities. One example is the Pre-Law Summer Institute (PLSI),

During a moot court exercise, Dosa Nappo practices courtroom advocacy during the 2024 Pre-Law Summer Institute for Native American students interested in pursuing legal careers.

an intensive two-month program offered by the American Indian Law Center, Inc. (AILC), which prepares students for the demands of law school through focused instruction in legal research analysis and writing.[338] In 2024, AILC expanded its efforts by hosting a complementary training for academic advisors and professionals who guide Native American students on educational and career pathways.[339]

In a similar effort, Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law is working with partners to help American Indian and Alaska Native students successfully navigate the law school application process.[340] Now in its eleventh year, the Pathway to Law initiative organizes an annual workshop to assist students and college graduates in exploring legal careers, preparing competitive applications, understanding financial aid options and networking with peers and professionals. Partners include the Indigenous Law Program at Michigan State University College of Law; the Office of Admissions at University of California, Berkeley, School of Law; and AILC. This program receives support from the National Native American Bar Association, Native American Bar Association of Arizona, TestMasters and the National Native American Law Students Association.

Students listen to a seminar during the Native American Pathway to Law workshop at Arizona State University's Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law.

Appendix B: Recommendations by Stakeholder Group

Federal Lawmakers

Rural Justice Task Force Recommendations

- Elevate the rural justice gap via research, communications, task forces and convenings.
- Provide current and prospective rural practitioners support to manage student loan debt.
- Prioritize broadband expansion.
- Scale proven models for easing local access to federal infrastructure funding and resources for transportation.
- Expand court modernization to increase remote access.
- Use high- and low-tech community outreach tactics to raise awareness about the availability of free legal help.

State and Local Lawmakers

Rural Justice Task Force Recommendations

- Invest in programs to increase the number of lawyers in rural and remote communities.
- Provide current and prospective rural practitioners support to manage student loan debt.
- Prioritize broadband expansion.
- Scale proven models for easing local access to federal infrastructure funding and resources for transportation.
- Expand court modernization to increase remote access.
- Establish rural legal clinics in collaboration with law schools.
- Use high- and low-tech community outreach tactics to raise awareness about the availability of free legal help.

Government and Community Agencies

Rural Justice Task Force Recommendations

- Elevate the rural justice gap via research, communications, task forces and convenings.
- Expand opportunities for professionals beyond lawyers to help close the rural justice gap.
- Apply a human-centered approach to deployment of technology.
- Prioritize broadband expansion.
- Scale proven models for easing local access to federal infrastructure funding and resources for transportation.
- Bring legal help closer to people.
- Experiment with and support various types of access to physical and virtual services to see what works best in reaching targeted client groups.
- Expand partnerships with community-based organizations serving low-income rural populations to connect residents to critical legal aid services.
- Train community members, staff and volunteers without formal legal credentials to serve as first responders and navigators for rural clients in need.
- Train judges, lawyers, client-facing staff and volunteers on cultural factors impacting distinct rural populations.
- Use high- and low-tech community outreach tactics to raise awareness about the availability of free legal help.

State and Tribal Courts and Access to Justice Commissions

Rural Justice Task Force Recommendations

- Elevate the rural justice gap via research, communications, task forces and convenings.
- Expand opportunities for professionals beyond lawyers to help close the rural justice gap.
- Apply a human-centered approach to deployment of technology.
- Expand court modernization to increase remote access.
- Bring legal help closer to people.
- Experiment with and support various types of access to physical and virtual services to see what works best in reaching targeted client groups.
- Expand partnerships with community-based organizations serving low-income rural populations to connect residents to critical legal services.
- Train community members, staff and volunteers without formal legal credentials to serve as first responders and navigators for rural clients in need.
- Train judges, lawyers, client-facing staff and volunteers on cultural factors impacting distinct rural populations.
- Widen pathways to pursue legal education for rural residents and members of underrepresented communities to encourage more rural practitioners.
- Use high- and low-tech community outreach tactics to raise awareness about the availability of free legal help.

Law Schools and Academic Institutions

Rural Justice Task Force Recommendations

- Invest in programs to increase the number of lawyers in rural and remote communities.
- Expand opportunities for professionals beyond lawyers to help close the rural justice gap.
- Provide current and prospective rural practitioners support to manage student loan debt.
- Offer practical courses on starting and running small law practices and fund programs encouraging rural practice.
- Bring legal help closer to people.
- Establish rural legal clinics in collaboration with law schools.
- Train community members, staff and volunteers without formal legal credentials to serve as first responders and navigators for rural clients in need.
- Train judges, lawyers, client-facing staff and volunteers on cultural factors impacting distinct rural populations.
- Widen pathways to pursue legal education for rural residents and members of underrepresented communities to encourage more rural practitioners.

Private Law Firms and Practitioners

Rural Justice Task Force Recommendations

- Provide current and prospective rural practitioners support to manage student loan debt.
- Offer practical courses on starting and running small law practices and fund programs encouraging rural practice.
- Use online platforms and face-to-face support to expand the availability of legal assistance to rural clients, including virtual consultations and support from attorneys in urban and suburban areas.
- Bring legal help closer to people.
- Experiment with and support various types of access to physical and virtual services to see what works best in reaching targeted client groups.
- Train judges, lawyers, client-facing staff and volunteers on cultural factors impacting distinct rural populations.

State Bars and Bar Associations

Rural Justice Task Force Recommendations

- Elevate the rural justice gap via research, communications, task forces and convenings.
- Invest in programs to increase the number of lawyers in rural and remote communities.
- Offer practical courses on starting and running small law practices and fund programs encouraging rural practice.
- Expand benefits and programs for rural practitioners, such as reduced dues and fees and targeted training on succession planning.
- Expand partnerships with community-based organizations serving low-income rural populations to connect residents to critical legal services.
- Widen pathways to pursue legal education for rural residents and members of underrepresented communities to encourage more rural practitioners.
- Use high- and low-tech community outreach tactics to raise awareness about the availability of free legal help.

Civil Legal Services Providers

Rural Justice Task Force Recommendations

- Expand opportunities for professionals beyond lawyers to help close the rural justice gap.
- Provide current and prospective rural practitioners support to manage student loan debt.
- Apply a human-centered approach to deployment of technology.
- Use online platforms and face-to-face support to expand the availability of legal assistance to rural clients, including virtual consultations and support from attorneys in urban and suburban areas.
- Bring legal help closer to people.
- Experiment with and support various types of access to physical and virtual services to see what works best in reaching targeted client groups.
- Establish rural legal clinics in collaboration with law schools.
- Expand partnerships with community-based organizations serving low-income rural populations to connect residents to critical legal aid services.
- Train community members, staff and volunteers without formal legal credentials to serve as first responders and navigators for rural clients in need.
- Train judges, lawyers, client-facing staff and volunteers on cultural factors impacting distinct rural populations.
- Use high- and low-tech community outreach tactics to raise awareness about the availability of free legal help.

Funders of Civil Legal Services

Rural Justice Task Force Recommendations

- Elevate the rural justice gap via research, communications, task forces and convenings.
- Invest in programs to increase the number of lawyers in rural and remote communities.
- Expand opportunities for professionals beyond lawyers to help close the rural justice gap.
- Provide current and prospective rural practitioners support to manage student loan debt.
- Offer practical courses on starting and running small law practices and fund programs encouraging rural practice.
- Bring legal help closer to people.
- Experiment with and support various types of access to physical and virtual services to see what works best in reaching targeted client groups.
- Use high- and low-tech community outreach tactics to raise awareness about the availability of free legal help.

Appendix C: Acknowledgements

Task Force meetings and interviews took place from 2021-2023. Individual titles and organizational affiliations listed (and quoted throughout the report) reflect the period in which the discussions occurred and may have changed since that time.

Task Force Co-Chairs

Father Pius Pietrzyk, **O.P.**, Vice Chair, LSC Board of Directors
Rebecca Rapp, General Counsel and Chief Privacy Officer, Ascendium

Working Group Leadership

Group 1: Understanding the Rural Client and Legal Provider Populations, Along with the Rewards and Challenges of Rural Practice

Cynthia Faur, Partner, Quarles & Brady LLP
José R. Padilla, Former Executive Director, California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.

Group 2: Model Practices and Innovative Legal Service-Delivery Models That Benefit Rural Areas

Fred Gants, Retired Partner, Quarles & Brady LLP
Alison Paul, Executive Director, Montana Legal Services Association

Group 3: Other Possible Solutions That Address the Barriers to Rural Justice (such as Regulatory, Education or Funding Reforms, or Attorney Pipeline Interventions)

Pilar M. Thomas, Partner, Quarles & Brady LLP
Nikole Nelson, CEO, Frontline Justice

Task Force Members

Samuel (Sam) David Abel-Palmer, Executive Director, Legal Services Vermont
Katherine Alteneder, Director Emerita, Self-Represented Litigation Network
Furonda Brasfield, Managing Attorney, The Law Office Furonda Brasfield PLLC
Hon. Joel H. Bolger, Senior Justice, Alaska Court System
Elizabeth (Liz) Canney Borer, General Counsel, Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies
Aaron Brooks, General Counsel, Corporate Governance, Bank OZK
Amanda Brown, Founder and Executive Director, Lagniappe Law Lab
Kristina Bryant, Consultant, Rural Justice Collaborative: A Project of the National Center for State Courts
Bruce Cameron, Founder and Principal, Cameron Law PLLC
Scott W. Carlson, Executive Director, Farmers' Legal Action Group

Holly Clendenen, Chief Student Services Officer, Southwest Wisconsin Technical College
Whitney Kimball Coe, Vice President of National Programs, Center for Rural Strategies
Erin Dearborn Coryell, Program Officer, Disaster Relief & Recovery, Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies
Jen Cuesta, Managing Attorney, Northwest Colorado Legal Services Project, an office of Colorado Legal Services
Ira Foster, General Counsel, Georgia Legal Services Program
Patrick G. Goetzinger, Partner, Gunderson, Palmer, Nelson and Ashmore, LLP
Hon. Michael G. Heavican, Chief Justice, Nebraska Supreme Court
Matt Hildreth, Executive Director, RuralOrganizing.org
William C. Hubbard, Dean, University of South Carolina School of Law
Nalani Fujimori Kaina, Former Executive Director, Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i
Brittany K.T. Kauffman, CEO, Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System (IAALS)
Heidi Khokhar, Executive Director, Rural Development Initiatives, Inc.
Abigail (Abby) Lawlis Kuzma, Board Member, Legal Services Corporation
David A. Lash, Managing Counsel for Pro Bono and Public Interest Services, O'Melveny & Meyers, LLP
Thomas M. Maul, Of Counsel, Dvorak Law Group, LLC
Carol Mitchell, Program Manager, Arizona State University (formerly with the Arizona Administrative Office of the Courts)
Hon. Margaret M. Morrow, Former U.S. District Judge, U.S. District Court for the Central District of California; Former President & CEO, Public Counsel
Karama Neal, Former Administrator, Rural Business-Cooperative Service, Rural Development, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Nikole Nelson, CEO, Frontline Justice ~
Jessie R. Nicholson, Former CEO, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services
José R. Padilla, Retired Executive Director, California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. ~
Tuleah Palmer, CEO, Blandin Foundation
The Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki, Bishop, Diocese of Springfield, Illinois
Alison Paul, Executive Director, Montana Legal Services Association ~
Taier Perlman, Former Staff Attorney, Legal Services of the Hudson Valley
Anthony (Tony) Pipa, Senior Fellow, Center for Sustainable Development, Global Economy and Development, Brookings Institution
Lisa R. Pruitt, Distinguished Professor of Law, University of California Davis (King Hall)
Beth Ann Richlen, Executive Director, Judicare Legal Aid
Kace Rodwell, Staff Attorney, Oklahoma Indian Legal Services, Inc.
Kevin Ruegg, CEO, Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education, Inc.
Rodolfo "Rudy" Sanchez, Executive Director, DNA-People's Legal Services
Jessica Seel, Director of Behavioral Health Initiatives & Workforce Development, South Carolina Office of Rural Health
James R. Silkenat, Member and Treasurer, World Justice Project Board of Directors

Radhika M. Singh, Vice President, Civil Legal Services and Strategic Policy Initiatives, National Legal Aid & Defender Association (NLADA)
Michele Statz, Associate Professor, University of Minnesota Medical School; Affiliate Faculty, University of Minnesota Law School
Rhonda Taylor, Executive Vice President and General Counsel, Dollar General Corporation
Hon. Gwendolyn (Gwen) Topping, Former Associate Judge, Red Cliff Tribal Court
Katherine Un, Organizing & Advocacy Director, National Young Farmers Coalition
William (Bill) Waddell, Jr., Partner, Friday, Eldredge & Clark LLP
Adrienne Worthy, Former Executive Director, Legal Aid of West Virginia
Anne-Louise Wirthlin, Director of Access to Justice and Strategic Collaboration, Tennessee Supreme Court, Administrative Office of the Courts
Anthony Young, Executive Director, Southern Arizona Legal Aid, Inc.

Major Partners

Ascendium

Katie Chu, Legal Project Manager
Kira Cortese, Creative Director
Heidi Fluhr, Design Specialist
Kyley Hon, Senior Project Management Specialist
Brett Lindquist, Vice President - Communications & Community Engagement
Rebecca Rapp, General Counsel & Chief Privacy Officer
Cailean Robinson, Legal Project Specialist
Lindsay Sanderson, Copy Director
Renola Swoboda, Digital Communications Manager

Quarles

Quarles & Brady LLP Pro Bono Team: Past and Present

Cameron Arthur, Partner (Phoenix, AZ)
Patrick J. Bitterman, Partner (Chicago, IL)
Dawn Caldart, Director of Pro Bono (Milwaukee, WI)*
Megan B. Center, Former Partner (Washington, DC)
Theresa DeAngelis, Associate (Washington, DC)
Cynthia Faur, Partner (Chicago, IL) ~*
Berny Frenzer, Office Administrator (Madison, WI)
Brian K. Fullmer, Former Associate (Phoenix, AZ)*
Fred Gants, Retired Partner (Madison, WI) ~*
Nour Kalbouneh, Pro Bono Coordinator (Milwaukee, WI)
Michael Levey, Pro Bono Partner (Milwaukee, WI)*
Jennifer Michalski, Former Pro Bono Coordinator (Milwaukee, WI)
Jared W. Miller, Associate (Phoenix, AZ)

Michael Mostow, Partner (Chicago, IL)
Kaitlyn L. (Fydenkevez) Slack, Associate (Washington, DC)*
Grace G. Stewart, Associate (Madison, WI)*
Pilar M. Thomas, Partner (Tucson, AZ) ~*
Shaylynn Veeder, Associate (Phoenix, AZ)

~denotes Working Group Leader
**denotes Core Team Member*

LSC America's Partner for Equal Justice
LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

Core LSC Project Team

Becky Fertig Cohen (2021-2023)
Maria Duvuvuei (2024-2025)
Kathryn Fanlund (2025)
Lynn Jennings (2021-2025)
Kimberly Little (2025)
Kate Reifenberg (2023-2024)
Karly Satkowiak (2020)
Jessica Wechter (2021-2025)

Editorial Support

William H. Woodwell, Jr.

Suggested Citation

Legal Services Corporation. 2025. Justice Where We Live: Promising Practices from Rural America — A Report from LSC's Rural Justice Task Force. www.lsc.gov/rural.

Contact Us

For additional information or questions about this report, please contact updates@lsc.gov.

Subject Matter Experts

Thanks to everyone who lent their expertise to the Task Force by speaking at convenings or reviewing report drafts.

Lawrence Baca, Former Deputy Director, Office of Tribal Justice, U.S. Department of Justice (Retired)
Gary Batton, 47th Chief, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
Caitlin Berberich, Group Coordinator, Labor and Employment Group, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid
Dãnia Davy, Director of Land Retention and Advocacy, The Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund

Christa Figgins, Director of Mission Advancement and Disaster Legal Services, Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma, Inc.
Whitney Ford, Director, Division of Immigration, Farm Labor, and Trade, Wage and Hour Division, U.S. Department of Labor
Nicole Golden-Bouchard, Managing Attorney and Stateside Legal Coordinator, Pine Tree Legal Assistance
Helen C. Gratil, Director, Beyond Opioids Project, Center for Arkansas Legal Services
Sally Holewa, State Court Administrator, North Dakota Supreme Court
Lisa Hone, Senior Advisor for Broadband and Technology Policy, National Economic Council, The White House
Nancy C. Ivarinen, Program Director, Paralegal Studies Program, Whatcom Community College; and Attorney at Law, NCI Legal
Peter J. Kaboli, MD, MS, Acting Executive Director, Office of Rural Health, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Johnnie Larrie, Director, Economic Justice Project, Legal Aid of North Carolina
Kerry Miller Loos, Mental Health Specialty Programs Director, VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System
Cassandra Overton Welchlin, Executive Director and Lead Organizer/Co-Convener, Mississippi Black Women's Roundtable
Dori Rapaport, Executive Director, Justice North
Xochitl Torres Small, Former Under Secretary for Rural Development, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Anthony Schutz, Associate Dean for Faculty & Marvin and Virginia Schmid Foundation Professor of Agricultural Law, Nebraska College of Law, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Hon. Kirsten E. Thompson, Senior Judge, Washington County (Oregon) Circuit Court; and Chair, Paraprofessional Licensing Implementation Committee, Oregon State Bar
Alaina Varvaloucas, Managing Attorney, Farmworker Law Project, Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York
Jayne Wagner, Interim Managing Attorney, Health, Education, & Law Project (HELP), Legal Aid of Nebraska
Andrew Walchuk, Former Chief of Civil Policy, Office for Access to Justice, U.S. Department of Justice
Kate White, Executive Director, Legal Aid of West Virginia
Hallie Bongar White, Dean, National Tribal Trial College; and Executive Director, Southwest Center for Law and Policy
Kara Wilkins, Director, BankOn Arkansas+; and Program Officer, Louisiana, Asset Funders Network

Appendix C

Thanks to all the people who spoke with LSC and partners before the Task Force launched.

Farah Ahmad, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
Jon Asher, Colorado Legal Services
Aaron Beswick, Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Darah Blackwater, U.S. Department of Interior
Jill Bradshaw-Soto, Legal Services of the Hudson Valley
Erin Burud, Legal Services of the Hudson Valley
Justin Burch, Rural Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
Jake Caldwell, LOR Foundation
Edyael Casaperalta, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
Ben Thomas Cole, Jr., Northern Mississippi Rural Legal Services
Matt Dunne, Center on Rural Innovation
Ann Eisenberg, University of South Carolina School of Law
John Echohawk, Native American Rights Funds
Gabe Galanda, Galanda Broadman, PLLC
Michelle Garcia, New Mexico Legal Aid
Jennifer Growth, Rural Development Initiatives
Hannah Haksgaard, University of South Dakota School of Law
Danielle Hirsch, National Center for State Courts
Allison Hutchings, Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Amanda Kool, Harvard Law School
Heather Scheiwe Kulp, New Hampshire Judicial Branch and Bay Path University
Christina Mead, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Mona Mangat, Rural Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
Megan Meacham, Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
LeVar Michael, Rural Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
Melissa Moss, CatalystZone, LLC
Nathaneal Player, Utah State Courts
Amy Pritchard, William H. Bowen School of Law; Consumer Protection Clinic, University of Arkansas Little Rock
Lauren Sudeall, Center for Access to Justice, Georgia State University College of Law
Gary Smith, Legal Services of Northern California; California Commission on Access to Justice Rural Access Committee
John Simpkins, MDC
Natalie Williams, Full Frame Initiative
Ming Wong, National Center for Lesbian Rights
James Ziliak, University of Kentucky

Endnotes

[1] Legal Services Corporation. *Justice Gap Research*. https://www.lsc.gov/initiatives/justice-gap-research.

[2] Legal Services Corporation. (2022). *The Justice Gap: The Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-income Americans*. Prepared by Mary C. Slosar, Slosar Research, LLC. https://justicegap.lsc.gov/.

[3] World Justice Project. *Measuring the Justice Gap: A People-Centered Assessment of Unmet Justice Needs Around the World*. https://worldjusticeproject.org/our-work/research-and-data/access-justice/measuring-justice-gap. (accessed August 2025).

[4] Legal Services Corporation. *Rural Justice Task Force*. https://www.lsc.gov/initiatives/lsc-task-forces/rural-justice-task-force.

[5] Legal Services Corporation. (2022). *The Justice Gap Report*. Above, n. 2.

[6] Sandefur, R. L. (2023, April). *Civil legal needs and public legal understanding* [Handout]. American Bar Foundation. https://www.americanbarfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/sandefur_-_civil_legal_needs_and_public_legal_understanding_handout.pdf.

[7] Legal Services Corporation. *About LSC*. https://www.lsc.gov/about-lsc.

[8] Legal Services Corporation. *About LSC*. https://www.lsc.gov/about-lsc.

[9] In 2025, the federal poverty rate was $15,650 for an individual living in the 48 contiguous states, and $32,150 for a family of four. Department of Health and Human Services. (2025, January 17). Annual Update of the HHS Poverty Guidelines. *Federal Register*, 90(12), 5917–5918. https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/17/2025-01377/annual-update-of-the-hhs-poverty-guidelines.

[10] Legal Services Corporation. *The Economic Case for Civil Legal Aid*. https://www.lsc.gov/our-impact/economic-impact.

[11] Legal Services Corporation. (2022). *The Justice Gap Report*. Above, n. 2.

[12] Legal Services Corporation. (2025). *By The Numbers*. https://www.lsc.gov/our-impact/publications/numbers

[13] Legal Services Corporation. (2022). *The Justice Gap Report*. Above, n. 2. p, 78.

[14] American Bar Association. (2024). *Legal Services Corporation one-pager*. https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/government_affairs_office/lsc-one-pager-2024.pdf.

[15] In April 2021, the Legal Services Corporation Board of Directors adopted *Resolution #2021-006, Establish a Rural Justice Task Force*. Available at https://lsc-live.box.com/s/ynd1iohmw30rq2tkqecxis8kahfr41d9.

[16] View recordings of the field hearings online: Sept. 2022 (Zoom) https://lsc-live.box.com/s/9f5kbymilhd32wthp7ztvm7ctrlsx8gi; and Oct. 2022 (YouTube), https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLy_lgH_-ZCltN3w3ZE9rmzXNGZ7CJpg78&si=H4B2izCIMfUehfsH.

[17] Legal Services Corporation. (2025). *Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Request*. https://www.lsc.gov/our-impact/publications/budget-requests/fiscal-year-2026-budget-request.

[18] Legal Services Corporation. (2022). *Rural Americans: The justice gap in rural communities*. https://justicegap.lsc.gov/resource/rural/.

[19] Here are the principal definitions of rural areas used by the U.S. Department of Agriculture ("USDA"), the U.S. Census Bureau, and the Office of Management and Budget ("OMB").
USDA's Economic Research Service ("ERS"). ERS distinguishes metropolitan counties by the population size of the metropolitan area, and "nonmetropolitan" counties by the degree of urbanization and adjacency to a metropolitan area. The ERS's 2023 "Rural-Urban Continuum Codes" scheme includes 1,186 metropolitan (or urban) counties and 1,958 nonmetropolitan (or rural) counties. Information regarding Rural-Urban Continuum Codes is available at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. (2025, January 7).*Rural-Urban Continuum Codes.* https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/rural-urban-continuum-codes.
U.S. Census Bureau. The U.S. Census Bureau defines "rural" as any territory that is not an urban area, based primarily on housing unit and population density of census "blocks," which are the smallest geographic areas for which the Census Bureau collects data. Information regarding the U.S. Census Bureau definition of urban and rural areas is available at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. (2025, January 8). *What is Rural?* https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-classifications/what-is-rural.
In 2022, a revised Census Bureau definition of what is urban vs. rural resulted in as many as 1,140 formerly "urban" communities being reclassified as "rural." U.S. Census Bureau. (2022, December 29). *Nation's Urban and Rural Populations Shift Following 2020 Census*. https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/urban-rural-populations.html.
U.S. Office of Management and Budget ("OMB"). Unlike the Census Bureau and the ERS, the OMB does not define "rural" or "urban," but delineates whether counties are part of Core-based Statistical Areas ("CBSA") (e.g., metropolitan or non-metropolitan). A CBSA generally includes an urban area or large population center and adjacent communities that have a high integration with that urban center. There are two types of CBSAs: metropolitan areas, which contain a core urban area of 50,000 or more people, and "micropolitan" areas, which contain an urban core of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000 people. Counties outside a metropolitan or micropolitan area are "non-core" areas. Information regarding OMB's July 21, 2023 revised delineations is

available at Office of Management and Budget. (2023, July 21). *OMB Bulletin No. 23-01: Revised Delineations Of Metropolitan Statistical Areas, Micropolitan Statistical Areas, and Combined Statistical Areas, and Guidance on Uses of the Delineations of These Areas.* https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/OMB-Bulletin-23-01.pdf.

[20] Farrigan, T., Genetin, B., Sanders, A., Pender, J., Thomas, K. L., Winkler, R., Cromartie, J. (2024). *Rural America at a Glance* (Report No. EIB-282, p.2). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. https://doi.org/10.32747/2024.8722498.ers.

[21] U.S. Census Bureau. (2023, June 29). 2020 *Census Urban Areas Facts.* U.S. Department of Commerce. https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/urban-rural/2020-ua-facts.html.

[22] U.S. Census Bureau. (2023, June 29). Above, n. 19.

[23] Melotte, S. (2025, April 21). Migration to Rural America Resulted in Population Growth Last Year, Census Shows. *The Daily Yonder.* https://dailyyonder.com/migration-to-rural-america-resulted-in-population-growth-last-year-census-shows/2025/04/21/

[24] Melotte, S. (2025, April 21). Above, n. 23.

[25] Melotte, S. (2025, April 21). Above, n. 23.

[26] Farrigan, T, *et.al.* (2024). Above, n. 20, pp. 6-7.

[27] Melotte, S. (2025, May 28). International Immigrants Drive Rural Population Growth. *The Daily Yonder.* https://dailyyonder.com/international-immigrants-drive-rural-population-growth/2025/05/28/.

[28] Center on Rural Innovation. (2023, January 12). *Who lives in rural America? (Part 2).* https://ruralinnovation.us/blog/who-lives-in-rural-america-part-2/.

[29] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. (2025). *Employment & Education – Rural Education.* https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/employment-education/rural-education.

[30] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. (2025). *Employment & Education – Rural Education.* Above, n. 29.

[31] Davis, J. C., Rupasingha, A., Cromartie, J., & Sanders, A. (2022). *Rural America at a Glance* (Report No. EIB-246, pp. 14-16). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. https://ers.usda.gov/sites/default/files/_laserfiche/publications/105155/EIB-246.pdf.

[32] Bohn, K. (2024, December 18). Rural communities may be especially impacted by essential places closing. *Penn State Agricultural Sciences.* https://www.psu.edu/news/agricultural-sciences/story/rural-communities-may-be-especially-impacted-essential-places-closing

[33] Melotte, S. (2024, August 20). Rural Tourism-Driven Counties Continue to Lead the Way in Post-Pandemic Job Recovery. *The Daily Yonder.* https://dailyyonder.com/rural-tourism-driven-counties-continue-to-lead-the-way-in-post-pandemic-job-recovery/2024/08/20/; Davis, J.C., Cromartie, J., Farrigan, T., Genetin, B., Sanders, A., & Winikoff, J.B. (2023). *Rural America at a Glance: 2023 edition* (Report No. EIB-261). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details?-pubid=107837&v=5178.9.

[34] Davis et al. (2023). Above, n. 33.

[35] Legal Services Corporation. (2025). *Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Request.* Above, n. 17, p.8.

[36] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. (2025, January 14). *Rural poverty & well-being: Demographics.* https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-poverty-well-being#demographics.

[37] Mitchell, M. (2025, March 28). *Rural Research Brief, Homelessness Continues to Increase in the U.S. and in Rural America.* Housing Assistance Council. https://ruralhome.org/rural-homelessness-ahar-2024/#:~:text=The%20U.S.%20Department%20of%20Housing,impact%20of%20sustained%2C%20targeted%20interventions.

[38] Mitchell, M. (2025, March 28). Above, n. 37.

[39] Mitchell, M. (2025, March 28). Above, n. 37.

[40] Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2019, May). *Life in Rural America: Part II.* (pp. 7-8). https://www.rwjf.org/en/insights/our-research/2019/05/life-in-rural-america--part-ii.html.

[41] Legal Services Corporation. (2023, March 22). *Housing Insecurity in the United States and the Role of Legal Aid: Mobile and Manufactured Housing.* https://lsc-live.app.box.com/s/vn8det0gmcbepedan5mr1hkrxjo76kdf.

[42] Rupasingha, A., & Cho, J. (2025, February 18). *146 rural hospitals closed or stopped providing inpatient services from 2005 to 2023 in the United States.* Charts of Note. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. https://ers.usda.gov/data-products/charts-of-note/chart-detail?chartId=110927.

[43] Hulver, S., Levinson, Z., Godwin, J., & Neuman, T. (2025, April 16). *10 Things to Know About Rural Hospitals.* Kaiser Family Foundation. https://www.kff.org/health-costs/10-things-to-know-about-rural-hospitals/#:~:text=Hospital%20closures%20outpaced%20openings%20in,net%20reduction%20of%2052%20hospitals

[44] Rural Health Information Hub. (n.d.) *Healthcare access in rural communities.* https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/healthcare-access. (accessed in August 2025).

[45] The Economist. (2020, March 12). *Small towns and rural parts of America have a policing problem.* https://www.economist.com/united-states/2020/03/12/small-towns-and-rural-parts-of-america-have-a-policing-problem; The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2019, February). *Opioid Use Disorder: Challenges and Opportunities in Rural Communities.* https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/assets/2019/02/opioiduseruralcommunities_final.pdf.

[46] U.S. Department of Agriculture. (n.d.). *AFBF NFU joint report.* https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/AFBF_NFU.pdf. (accessed August 2025); Hagstrom, J. (2017, November 30). *Opioid Effects on Farm County.* DTN Progressive Farmer. https://www.dtnpf.com/agriculture/web/ag/news/article/2017/11/30/joint-survey-farm-groups-shows-abuse.

[47] Victor, G., Hedden-Clayton, B. J., Lister, J., Lee, G., Huynh, P., & Ray, B. (2023). Community overdose surveillance: Fentanyl involvement in overdose deaths in rural Michigan. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence eports, 7,* 100150. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2772724623000203.

[48] See for example the Beyond Opioids statewide project led by Center for Arkansas Legal Services and Legal Aid of Arkansas, https://www.beyondopioids.org/.

[49] Legal Services Corporation. (2019). *Strengthening the Role of Civil Legal Aid in Responding to the Opioid Epidemic.* https://www.lsc.gov/our-impact/publications/other-publications-and-reports/lsc-opioid-task-force-report.

[50] Legal Services Corporation (LSC). (2022, April). *Final 2021 LSC agricultural worker poverty population estimates.* https://www.lsc.gov/grants/basic-field-grant/lsc-service-areas/agricultural-worker-population-estimate-2021-update.

[51] Davis et al. (2022). Above, n. 31. p. 11.

[52] Costa, D. (2023, October 5). *The farmworker wage gap: Farmworkers earned 40% less than comparable nonagricultural workers in 2022.* Economic Policy Institute. https://www.epi.org/blog/the-farmworker-wage-gap-farmworkers-earned-40-less-than-comparable-nonagricultural-workers-in-2022/.

[53] *See e.g.,* National Farm Worker Ministry. (n.d.). *Women's issues.* https://nfwm.org/farm-workers/farm-worker-issues/womens-issues/. (accessed August 2025); Human Rights Watch. (2012, May 15). *US: Sexual violence, harassment of immigrant farmworkers.* Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/05/15/us-sexual-violence-harassment-immigrant-farmworkers.

[54] *See generally,* Berberich, C., Padilla, J., Ford. W., & Varvaloucas, A. (2022, September). *Panel #2: Understanding and Serving the Civil Legal Needs of Farmworkers.* [Remarks]. LSC Rural Justice Task Force Virtual Field Hearing. https://lsc-live.box.com/s/5g9lz4pdgy0f3hkab49h0cnvbslvcjhc. During this field hearing, it was noted that the Department of Labor often finds housing violations at farms where temporary farmworkers are housed. It was further noted that often a contractor retains the farmworkers and is the entity that is paid by the farmer. This contractor may not adequately compensate the workers, citing their expenses of housing and caring for the workers.

[55] Ford, W. (2022, September 22). *Panel #2: Understanding and Serving the Civil Legal Needs of Farmworkers.* [Remarks]. LSC Rural Justice Task Force Virtual Field Hearing. https://lsc-live.box.com/s/5g9lz4pdgy0f3hkab49h0cnvbslvcjhc.

[56] Center on Rural Innovation. (2023, January 12). Above, n. 28.

[57] Romero, S., Rabin, R. C., & Walker, M. (2022, August 31). *How the Pandemic Shortened Life Expectancy in Indigenous Communities. The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/31/health/life-expectancy-covid-native-americans-alaskans.html.

[58] Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2019, May). Above, n. 40, pp. 23-24.

[59] U.S. Department of Justice. (1995, June 1). *Attorney General memorandum on Indian sovereignty.* https://www.justice.gov/archives/ag/attorney-general-june-1-1995-memorandum-indian-sovereignty.

[60] Library of Congress. (n.d.). *Tribal Law.* https://guides.loc.gov/american-indian-law/Tribal-Law. (accessed August 2025).

[61] Rodwell. K. *Panel #3: Understanding and Serving the Civil Legal Needs of Native Americans.* [Remarks]. LSC Rural Justice Task Force Virtual Field Hearing. https://lsc-live.box.com/s/5g9lz4pdgy0f3hkab49h0cnvbslvcjhc.

[62] See generally, Native American Rights Fund. (2019). *About the Indian Child Welfare Act.* NARF Legal Review, 44(2), 2. https://narf.org/nill/documents/nlr/nlr44-2.pdf. The constitutionality of the ICWA was upheld by the United States in *Haaland v. Brackeen*, 599 U.S. 255 (2003), opinion available at https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/22pdf/21-376_7l48.pdf.

[63] See generally, Baca, L. Rodwell, K., Sanchez, R., & Topping. G. Panel #3: *Understanding and Serving the Civil Legal Needs of Native Americans.* [Remarks]. LSC Rural Justice Task Force Virtual Field Hearing. https://lsc-live.box.com/s/5g9lz4pdgy0f3hkab49h0cnvbslvcjhc.

[64] Legal Services Corporation. *How Oklahoma Indian Legal Services advocates for Native populations.* https://www.lsc.gov/i-am-grantee/model-practices-innovations/provide-legal-services/how-oklahoma-indian-legal-services-advocates-native-populations.

[65] Topping, G. *Panel #3: Understanding and Serving the Civil Legal Needs of Native Americans.* [Remarks]. LSC Rural Justice Task Force Virtual Field Hearing. https://lsc-live.box.com/s/5g9lz4pdgy0f3hkab49h0cnvbslvcjhc.

[66] Carmody and Associates. (2014, July). *The Justice Gap in Montana: As Vast as Big Sky Country* (pp. 27–28). Prepared for the Access to Justice Commission of the Montana Supreme Court. https://courts.mt.gov/external/supreme/boards/a2j/docs/justicegap-mt.pdf.

[67] U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Research and Development. (n.d.). *VA research on rural health.* https://www.research.va.gov/topics/rural_health.cfm. (accessed August 2025).

[68] U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (n.d). *VA research on rural health*. Above, n. 66; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Rural Health. (n.d.). *Rural veteran demographics.* https://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/aboutus/ruralvets.asp. (accessed August 2025).

[69] Vespa, J., & Carter, C. (2024, November). *Trends in veteran disability status and service-connected disability: 2008–2022* (ACS-58). U.S. Census Bureau. https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/2024/demo/acs-58.pdf; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Research and Development. (n.d.). *VA research on homelessness.* https://www.research.va.gov/topics/homelessness.cfm. (accessed August 2025); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Health disparities in suicide.* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/disparities/index.html. (accessed August 2025).

[70] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2025, March 20). *Employment situation of veterans — 2024* (USDL-25-0377). https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf.

[71] Legal Services Corporation. (2022). *The Justice Gap Report.* Above, n. 2. p.41.

[72] Legal Services Corporation. (2022). *The Justice Gap Report.* Above, n. 2. p.41.

[73] Legal Services Corporation. *Serving rural veterans: Pine Tree Legal Assistance's medical-legal partnership model.* https://www.lsc.gov/i-am-grantee/model-practices-innovations/provide-legal-services/serving-rural-veterans-pine-tree-legal-assistances-medical-legal-partnership-model.

[74] USAFacts. (2022). *Veterans in Maine.* https://usafacts.org/topics/veterans/state/maine/.

[75] Stacker. (2022, July 25). *Most rural counties in Maine.* https://stacker.com/stories/maine/most-rural-counties-maine; Stacker. (2022, July 4). *Counties with the most veterans in Maine.* https://stacker.com/maine/counties-most-veterans-maine.

[76] Legal Services Corporation. Serving rural veterans: *Pine Tree Legal Assistance's medical-legal partnership model.* Above, n. 73, p. 2; Stateside Legal. (n.d.). *About us.* https://www.statesidelegal.org/aboutus. (accessed August 2025).

[77] Legal Services Corporation. (2021). *LSC Veterans Task Force Report* (p. 31). https://www.lsc.gov/our-impact/publications/other-publications-and-reports/lsc-veterans-task-force-report.

[78] Legal Services Corporation. (2021). *LSC Veterans Task Force Report.* Above, n. 77.

[79] Wilkins, K. (2022, September, 22). Panel #1: *Understanding and Serving the Civil Legal Needs of Black Americans Living in the Rural South.* [Remarks]. LSC Rural Justice Task Force Virtual Field Hearing. https://lsc-live.box.com/s/5g9lz4pdgy0f3hkab49h0cnvbslvcjhc.

[80] See e.g., Simpson, A. (2019, June 19). *New Laws Help Rural Black Families Fight for their Land.* Stateline. https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2019/06/18/new-laws-help-rural-black-families-fight-for-their-land; Bailey, C., Zabawa, R., Dyer, J., Barlow, B., & Baharanyi, N. (2019). Heirs' property and persistent poverty among African Americans in the southeastern United States. In C. J. Gaither, A. Carpenter, T. Lloyd McCurty, & S. Toering (Eds.), *Heirs' property and land fractionation: Fostering stable ownership to prevent land loss and abandonment* (pp. 9–19). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Southern Research Station. https://doi.org/10.2737/SRS-GTR-244.

[81] Zinn, A. (2023, December 13). *What is Heirs' Property, and Why Does it Matter for Equitable Home Ownership Housing Matters.* https://housingmatters.urban.org/articles/what-heirs-property-and-why-does-it-matter-equitable-homeownership.

[82] Davy, D. (2022, September , 22) *Panel #1: Understanding and Serving the Civil Legal Needs of Black Americans Living in the Rural South.* [Remarks]. LSC Rural Justice Task Force Virtual Field Hearing. https://lsc-live.box.com/s/5g9lz4pdgy0f3hkab49h0cnvbslvcjhc.

[83] Legal Aid Disaster Resource Center. (2023, April 28). *Housing issues after a disaster.* https://www.ladrc.org/housing-issues-after-a-disaster/.

[84] Legal Aid Disaster Resource Center. (2025, April 30). *How to replace lost documents.* https://www.ladrc.org/how-to-replace-lost-documents/.

[85] Legal Services Corporation. (2022). *The Justice Gap Report.* Above, n. 2, p. 41.

[86] Yang-Green, A. (2022, July 5) *We can't reach elder abuse victims in rural areas without public interest lawyers. Chicago Tribune.* https://www.chicagotribune.com/2022/07/05/allie-yang-green-we-cant-reach-elder-abuse-victims-in-rural-areas-without-public-interest-lawyers/; Dexter, A., & McKinney, H. (2021, April 22). *Six ways public interest attorneys can combat elder abuse in any practice area.* Equal Justice Works. https://www.equaljusticeworks.org/news/six-ways-public-interest-attorneys-can-combat-elder-abuse-in-any-practice-area/.

[87] U.S. Department of Justice. (n.d.). *Rural and tribal resources.* Elder Justice Initiative. https://www.justice.gov/elderjustice/rural-and-tribal-resources. (accessed August 2025); Conference of State Court Administrators. (2018). *Courts Need to Enhance Access to Justice in Rural America* (p. 4). https://cosca.ncsc.org/resources-courts/courts-need-enhance-access-justice-rural-america.

[88] Michael, H. (2019, March 7). *Many solve civil justice problems on their own, rarely involving attorneys, says study.* University of Illinois News Bureau. https://news.illinois.edu/many-solve-civil-justice-problems-on-their-own-rarely-involving-attorneys-says-study/.

[89] Alabama State Bar. (2022, October 5). *From The Alabama Lawyer: Closing the gap — The ongoing pursuit of justice for all.* https://www.alabar.org/news/from-the-alabama-lawyer-closing-the-gap-the-ongoing-pursuit-of-justice-for-all/.

[90] Alabama State Bar. (2024, October 2). *Harvesting Hope Task Force: Purpose and scope* [Memo]. https://www.alabar.org/assets/2024/10/2025-PS-HH.pdf.

[91] Seaman, J. (2023, July 10). *Colorado's rural attorney shortage creates legal deserts. Greeley Tribune.* https://www.greeleytribune.com/2023/07/10/colorado-rural-attorney-lawyer-shortage-legal-deserts/

[92] Legal Services Corporation. (2020, March 3). *LSC Access to Justice Forum: Panel – "Legal Aid in Rural America"* [Video at 11:24]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3la_B2eRBdI.

[93] Supreme Court of Georgia. (2025, June 30). T*he Georgia Supreme Court Study Committee on Legal Regulatory Reform: Report and recommendations.* https://www.gasupreme.us/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/LRRCmteFinalReport_6-30-25.pdf.

[94] Supreme Court of Georgia. (2024, October 31). *Chief justice establishes committee to address civil justice gap.* https://www.gasupreme.us/10-31-2024-chief-justice-establishes-committee-to-address-civil-justice-gap/

[95] Supreme Court of Georgia. (2025, June 30). Above, n. 93.

[96] Bonilla Muñiz, L. (2025, July 29). *Indiana attorney shortage commission releases final report. Indiana Capital Chronicle.* Retrieved August 2025, from https://indianacapitalchronicle.com/2025/07/29/indiana-attorney-shortage-commission-releases-final-report/.

[97] Long, J. (2025, May 15). *KCCI investigates: Iowa's growing legal deserts hurt access to justice.* KCCI-Des Moines. Retrieved August 2025, from https://www.kcci.com/article/kcci-investigates-iowas-growing-legal-deserts-hurt-access-to-justice/64746145.

[98] Kansas Supreme Court. (2024, December 20). *Rural Justice Initiative Committee releases report and recommendations.* https://kscourts.gov/Newsroom/News-Releases/News/2024-News-Releases/December-2024/Rural-Justice-Initiative-Committee-releases-report.

[99] Krueger, S. (2023, July 17). *WRAL Investigates: Rural counties hit hardest by North Carolina's attorney shortage.* WRAL. https://www.wral.com/story/wral-investigates-rural-counties-hit-hardest-by-north-carolina-s-attorney-shortage/20958413/.

[100] Supreme Court of Ohio. (2023, August). *In depth: Roads to Justice for Rural Ohio.* Court News Ohio. https://www.courtnewsohio.gov/inDepth/2023/August/.

[101] Ohio Revised Code § 3333.131 (2023). https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section-3333.131

[102] Juel, P. (2023, May 10). *Demystifying law practice in Greater Wisconsin. Wisconsin Lawyer, 96(5).* https://www.wisbar.org/NewsPublications/WisconsinLawyer/Pages/Article.aspx?Volume=96&Issue=5&ArticleID=29791.

[103] American Bar Association. (2024). *ABA Profile of the Legal Profession: Demographics.* https://www.abalegalprofile.com/demographics.html.

[104] American Bar Association. (2020). *ABA Profile of the Legal Profession 2020* (p. 2). https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/news/2020/07/potlp2020.pdf. This information was also included in the 2021 ABA Profile of the Legal Profession. See American Bar Association. (2021). *ABA Profile of the Legal Profession 2021.* (p. 24) https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/news/2021/0721/polp.pdf; Additionally, the National Center for State Courts has used GIS mapping to layer and sort data showing disparities in access to legal services in 20 states. These maps are available at https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/news/2021/0721/polp.pdf (accessed August 2025).

[105] American Bar Association (2020). Above, n. 104, p. 3.

[106] American Bar Association. (2023). *ABA Profile of the Legal Profession 2023* (p. 13). https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/news/2023/potlp-2023.pdf.

[107] American Bar Association. (2023). Above, n. 106. p. 13.

[108] Cameron, B. (2022, May 4). *Remarks at Working Group #1 meeting of the Rural Justice Task Force: Understanding the Rural Client and Legal Provider Populations, along with the Rewards and Challenges of Rural Practice.* Legal Services Corporation. https://lsc-live.box.com/s/fhpg6wo8yel3t04e0xb90uzv96uujdm2.

[109] American Bar Association. (2020). Above, n. 104, p. 2.

[110] American Bar Association. (2023). *Profile of the legal profession 2023.* https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/news/2023/potlp-2023.pdf.

[111] Legal Services Corporation. (2022). *Executive summary*. The Justice Gap Report. https://justicegap.lsc.gov/resource/executive-summary/.

[112] Povich, E. S. (2023, January 24). *Lack of rural lawyers leaves much of America without support.* Stateline. https://stateline.org/2023/01/24/lack-of-rural-lawyers-leaves-much-of-america-without-support/.

[113] American Bar Association. (2024). Above, n. 103; American Bar Association. (2020). Above, n. 104, p. 3.

[114] Pruitt, L. R., Kool, A. L., Sudeall, L., Statz, M., Conway, D. M., & Haksgaard, H. (2018). Legal deserts: A multi-state perspective on rural access to justice. Harvard Law & Policy Review, 13, 15–121. https://journals.law.harvard.edu/lpr/wp-content/uploads/sites/89/2019/04/4.-Legal-Deserts.pdf.

[115] Karp, J. (2019). No country for old lawyers: Rural U.S. faces a legal desert. *Law360.* https://www.law360.com/articles/1121543/no-country-for-old-lawyers-rural-u-s-faces-a-legal-desert

[116] Perlman, T. (2019). *Rural law practice in New York State.* Government Law Center, Albany Law School. https://www.albanylaw.edu/sites/default/files/centers/government-law-center/the-rural-law-initiative/Documents/rural-law-practice-in-new-york-state.pdf.

[117] Perlman, T. (2019). Above, n. 116.

[118] Brasfield, F. (2022, October 25). *Panel #2: Recruitment and Retention of Rural Lawyers.* [Remarks]. LSC Field Hearing, Legal Services Corporation Rural Justice Task Force, Sheraton Oklahoma City Downtown Hotel. https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLy_IgH_-ZCItN3w3ZE9rmzXNGZ7CJpg78&si=R-heQwhz2kyoAhQS.

[119] LawHub. (n.d.). *Law School Tuition in the United States, 1985 - 2024s. LawHub.* https://www.lawhub.org/trends/tuition. (accessed August 2025).

[120] LawHub. (n.d.). Above, n. 119.

[121] Zaretsky, S. (2023). The Biglaw salary wars increased first-year associate salaries across the legal profession. *Above the Law.* https://abovethelaw.com/2023/05/the-biglaw-salary-wars-increased-first-year-associate-salaries-across-the-legal-profession/; Rubino, K. (2022, March 28). Jones Day's $225,000 starting salary for associates is not actually above market. *Above the Law.* https://abovethelaw.com/2022/03/jones-days-225000-starting-salary-for-associates-is-not-actually-above-market/.

[122] Pruitt, L. R., McKinney, J. C., II, & Calhoun, B. (2015). *Justice in the hinterlands: Arkansas as a case study of the rural lawyer shortage and evidence-based solutions to alleviate it. University of Arkansas at Little Rock Law Review, 37(4), 537–642.* https://lawrepository.ualr.edu/lawreview/vol37/iss4/3/.

[123] Legal Services Corporation. (2022). *Rural Justice Task Force, October 2022 - "Recruitment and Retention of Rural Lawyers".* Above, n. 118.

[124] American Bar Association. (n.d.). *Checklist for state access to justice commissions.* Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants. https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal_aid_indigent_defendants/ATJReports/ls_sclaid_atj_checklist.pdf. (accessed August 2025); Illinois State Bar Association. (n.d.). *Rural Practice Fellowship Program.* https://www.isba.org/ruralpractice. (accessed August 2025); New York State Bar Association. (2020). *Report and recommendations of the Task Force on Rural Justice: Interventions to ameliorate the access-to-justice crisis in rural New York.* https://nysba.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Rural-Justice-Report_April-2020_Final.pdf.

[125] Illinois State Bar Association. (n.d.). *Rural Practice Section.* https://www.isba.org/sections/rural. (accessed August 2025).

[126] American Bar Association. (n.d.). *Checklist for state access to justice commissions.* Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants. Above, n. 124.

[127] Alabama Access to Justice Commission. (2017). https://www.alabamaatj.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/ATJ-Report-to-Supreme-Court-4-17.pdf.

[128] Colorado Access to Justice Commission. (2023). *2023–2024 strategic vision report.* https://www.coloradoaccesstojustice.org/2023-2024-strategic-vision-report.

[129] Colorado Access to Justice Commission. (n.d.). *Rural Legal Resources Project: Strategic plan.* https://www.coloradoaccesstojustice.org/rural-legal-resources-project-strategic-plan. (accessed August 2025).

[130] American Bar Association. (2024). *Profile of the legal profession.* https://www.americanbar.org/news/profile-legal-profession/.

[131] Brown, G. (2016, July 28). Go rural, new lawyer. *Wisconsin Lawyer, 89*(7). https://www.wisbar.org/newspublications/wisconsinlawyer/pages/article.aspx?Volume=89&Issue=7&ArticleID=24972; State Bar of Wisconsin, *"Hop a Bus this September and Find Your Career Opportunity Up North," Inside Track* vol. 9, no. 15 (August 2, 2017), https://www.wisbar.org/newspublications/insidetrack/pages/article.aspx?Volume=9&Issue=15&ArticleID=25779; State Bar of Wisconsin. (2017, September 11). *Bus tour highlights need for more rural lawyers* [Press release]. https://www.wisbar.org/NewsPublications/Pages/General-Article.aspx?ArticleID=25852.

[132] Brown, G. (2016, July 28). Above, n. 131.

[133] State Bar of Wisconsin, *Rural Clerkship Program,* n.d., https://www.wisbar.org/aboutus/overview/Pages/RuralClerkshipProgram.aspx. (accessed August 2025); State Bar of Wisconsin, *Rural Practice Development Program,* n.d., https://www.wisbar.org/aboutus/overview/Pages/RuralPracticeDevelopmentProgram.aspx. (accessed August 2025).

[134] Law.com. (2015, April). State bar youth launch matching service for lawyers.

[135] Yamson, A. (2020, December 28). *OSBA rural practice clerkship: Increasing access to justice, one pairing at a time.* Ohio State Bar Association. https://www.ohiobar.org/member-tools-benefits/practice-resources/practice-library-search/practice-library/2020OL/osba-rural-practice-clerkship-increasing-access-to-justice/; Illinois State Bar Association. (n.d.). *Rural Practice Fellowship Program.* https://www.isba.org/ruralpractice. (accessed August 2025); Oregon State Bar. (n.d.). *Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP).* https://www.osbar.org/lrap/index.html. (accessed August 2025); Kittay, D. (2022, May–June). *Success on the horizon? New efforts to increase rural access to justice.* American Bar Association. https://www.americanbar.org/groups/bar-leadership/publications/bar_leader/2021_22/may-june/success-on-the-horizon-new-efforts-to-increase-rural-access-to-justice/; Montana Legal Services Association. (2023, May). *Rural Incubator Project for Lawyers: Web application.* https://www.mtlsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Rural-Incubator-Project-for-Lawyers-Web-application-PDF.pdf.

[136] New York State Unified Court System. (2025, April 17). 2025 *Law School Conference.* https://ww2.nycourts.gov/law-school-conference-2025-41676

[137] Rapaport, D. *Minnesota LSC grantees* [PowerPoint slides], presented at Legal Services Corporation Board of Directors Meeting, Minneapolis, MN, July 2024. https://lsc-live.app.box.com/s/6z6arueq6iag77vpd67c0slzfg1sxfwa

[138] Walker, T. (2022, April 5). *Omnibus bill aims to boost judicial services, public defender compensation.* Minnesota House of Representatives. https://www.house.mn.gov/sessiondaily/Story/17357

[139] Rapaport, D. (2024). *Minnesota LSC grantees,* Above, n. 128; Walker, T. (2023, February 7). *Judiciary panel approves $69.5 million funding boost to help service low-income legal clients.* Minnesota House of Representatives, " Session Daily." https://www.house.mn.gov/sessiondaily/Story/17624#:~:text=The%20committee%20approved%20the%20bill,%2470%2C000%20in%20fiscal%20year%202024.&text=Rep.,-Jamie%20Becker%2DFinn.

[140] Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid. (2024, October 16). *Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid, Union agree to 14.29% pay increase.* https://mylegalaid.org/news-stories/mid-minnesota-legal-aid-union-agree-to-14-29-pay-increase/.

[141] New Mexico Supreme Court. (n.d.). *Rural Justice Initiative.* https://supremecourt.nmcourts.gov/rural-justice-initiative/. (accessed August 2025); Rodgers, J. (2024, January 19). *New Mexico judiciary establishes rural clerkship program.* Law360. https://www.law360.com/articles/1787454/new-mexico-judiciary-establishes-rural-clerkship-program; Equal Justice Works. (n.d.). *Fellowships & opportunities.* https://www.equaljusticeworks.org/fellowships-opportunities/. (accessed August 2025); Skadden Fellowship Foundation. (n.d.). *Skadden Fellowship Foundation.* https://www.skaddenfellowships.org/. (accessed August 2025).

[142] Payne, V. (2024, October). *Wyoming Judicial Branch Court Navigator Pilot Program. Wyoming Lawyer.* https://digitaleditions.walsworth.com/article/Wyoming+Judicial+Branch+Court+Navigator+Pilot+Program/4868084/833079/article.html; Oil City News. (2024, July 16). *No lawyer? A new program in Casper could help you navigate the court system.* https://oilcity.news/crime/court/2024/07/16/no-lawyer-a-new-program-in-casper-could-help-you-navigate-the-court-system/.

[143] Zottola, S. A., Morrissey, B., Massey, I., & Desmarais, S. L. (2024). *A resource guide on court navigator programs: Providing connections and support across the legal and behavioral health systems.* Policy Research Associates. https://www.prainc.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Court-Navigator-Resource-Guide.pdf.

[144] Montana Legal Services Association. (n.d.). *AmeriCorps State Justice Program.* https://www.mtlsa.org/americorps-state-justice/. (accessed August 2025); Montana Legal Services Association. (2020). *Justice for Montanans AmeriCorps evaluation report* (Revised ed.). Corporation for National and Community Service. https://www.americorps.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/MontanaLegalServices.20ES220455.Report-Revised_508_1.pdf.

[145] Kruse, L. (2025, August 13). *Governor's Office of Community Service announces AmeriCorps grant awards to Montana organizations. Char-Koosta News.* https://www.charkoosta.com/news/governors-office-of-community-service-announces-americorps-grant-awards-to-montana-organizations/article_55dac5f7-594a-49fd-99b8-1a1dd9ad682e.html.

[146] McClymont, M. E. (2019, June). *Nonlawyer navigators in state courts: An emerging consensus.* Justice Lab, Georgetown Law Center. Retrieved from https://www.law.georgetown.edu/tech-institute/initiatives/georgetown-justice-lab/court-navigators/.

[147] Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System. (n.d.). *Allied Legal Professionals: Knowledge Center.* University of Denver. https://iaals.du.edu/projects/allied-legal-professionals/knowledge-center. (accessed August 2025).

[148] Legal Services Corporation. *LSC's Model Practices and Innovations Fact Sheet: Allied Legal Professionals – States Increasing Access to Justice.* https://www.lsc.gov/i-am-grantee/model-practices-innovations/provide-legal-services/allied-legal-professionals-increasing-access-justice.

149 Alaska Legal Services Corporation. (n.d.). *Community Justice Worker Program.* https://www.alsc-law.org/cjw/. (accessed August 2025).

150 American Bar Association. (2025, August 12). *Annual Meeting: House of Delegates actions.* ABA News. https://www.americanbar.org/news/abanews/aba-news-archives/2025/08/annual-meeting-house-of-delegates-actions/.

151 Texas Access to Justice Commission. (2024). *Access to Legal Services Working Group.* https://www.texasatj.org/access-legal-services-working-group; Legal Services Corporation (2024 January) *January 2024 Increasing Access to Justice Forum - Panel on Considering Regulatory Reform [Video].* YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yyet1EtZ11g.

152 Supreme Court of Texas. (2024, August 6). *Supreme Court advances access-to-justice efforts with proposed new rules to license legal paraprofessionals.* Texas Judicial Branch. https://www.txcourts.gov/supreme/news/supreme-court-advances-access-to-justice-efforts-with-proposed-new-rules-to-license-legal-paraprofessionals/.

153 Long, J. (2024, May 6). *KCCI Investigates: Iowa's growing legal deserts hurt access to justice.* KCCI 8 News. https://www.kcci.com/article/kcci-investigates-iowas-growing-legal-deserts-hurt-access-to-justice/64746145.

154 Long, J. (2025, July 30). *KCCI Investigates: Could paralegals be the solution to Iowa's attorney shortage?* KCCI 8 News Des Moines. https://www.kcci.com/article/kcci-investigates-could-paralegals-be-the-solution-to-iowas-attorney-shortage/65192978.

155 Sloan, K. (2024, September 10). *Financial stress, anxiety plagues two-thirds of young lawyers, ABA survey finds.* Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/legal/transactional/financial-stress-anxiety-plagues-two-thirds-young-lawyers-aba-survey-finds-2024-09-10/.

156 Sloan, K. (2024, September 10). Above, n. 155.

157 Kentucky Educational Television. (2023, April 21). *Solving the rural lawyer shortage* [Video]. PBS. https://www.pbs.org/video/solving-rural-lawyer-shortage-r9u4ol/.

158 Georgia Board for Healthcare Workforce. (n.d.). *Physician loan repayment programs.* State of Georgia. https://healthcareworkforce.georgia.gov/physician-loan-repayment-programs.

159 Pruitt, L. R., Kool, A. L., Sudeall, L., Statz, M., Conway, D. M., & Haksgaard, H. (2018). Above, n. 114.

160 Health Resources & Services Administration. (n.d.). *Loan repayment programs for health careers.* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. https://bhw.hrsa.gov/funding/apply-loan-repayment. (accessed August 2025); Health Resources & Services Administration. (2025, February). *National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program fact sheet.* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. https://nhsc.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/nhsc/loan-repayment/nhsc-lrp-fact-sheet.pdf; Health Resources & Services Administration. (n.d.). *NHSC Loan Repayment Program.* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. https://nhsc.hrsa.gov/loan-repayment/nhsc-loan-repayment-program. (accessed August 2025).

161 Internal Revenue Service. (2025, August 6). *IRS reminds employers: Educational assistance programs can help pay employee student loans through 2025 (IR-2025-81). U.S. Department of the Treasury.* https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/irs-reminds-employers-educational-assistance-programs-can-help-pay-employee-student-loans-through-2025; Farrington, R. (2024, January 25). *Employers can now match student loans with retirement contributions.* Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/robertfarrington/2024/01/25/employers-can-now-match-student-loans-with-retirement-contributions/.

162 Legal Services Corporation, *Loan Repayment Assistance Program,* n.d., https://www.lsc.gov/grants/loan-repayment-assistance-program.

163 Macaulay, D. (2018, April 16). *UA Little Rock launches rural law practice incubator. National Jurist.* https://nationaljurist.com/national-jurist-magazine/ua-little-rock-launches-rural-law-practice-incubator/.

164 Illinois State Bar Association. (n.d.). *Rural Practice Fellowship Program.* https://www.isba.org/ruralpractice. (accessed August 2025).

165 Texas Young Lawyers Association. (n.d.). *Attorney billing guide.* TYLA. https://tyla.org/resource/attorney-billing-guide/. (accessed August 2025); Maryland State Bar Association. (n.d.). *2025 Solo & Small Firm Symposium.* https://www.msba.org/site/site/rise/Events/Event_display.aspx?EventKey=MDSOLO2025. (accessed August 2025); Siegel, D. J. (2024, May 13). *Proposed Rule of Professional Conduct mandates succession planning.* The Philadelphia Lawyer. https://philadelphiabar.org/?pg=ThePhiladelphiaLawyer-Blog&blAction=showEntry&blogEntry=107474.

166 U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2023, February 1). *Closing the digital divide for the millions of Americans without broadband.* https://www.gao.gov/blog/closing-digital-divide-millions-americans-without-broadband.

167 Spoto, M., & Alder, M. (2022, August 29). *Rural digital divide complicates virtual court participation.* Bloomberg Law. https://news.bloomberglaw.com/us-law-week/rural-digital-divide-complicates-virtual-court-participation.

168 Federal Communications Commission. (2021, January 19). *Fourteenth broadband deployment report.* https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/reports/broadband-progress-reports/fourteenth-broadband-deployment-report.

169 U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2022, May 31). *Broadband: National strategy needed to guide federal efforts to reduce digital divide* (GAO-22-104611). https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-104611.pdf; Campisi, N. (2023, May 26). *Millions of Americans are still missing out on broadband access and leaving money on the table—here's why.* Forbes Advisor. https://www.forbes.com/advisor/personal-finance/millions-lack-broadband-access/.

170 Pollard, K., & Martinez, M. (2021, December 15). Digital divide in high-speed internet access leaves rural areas behind. Population Reference Bureau. https://www.prb.org/articles/digital-divide-in-high-speed-internet-access-leaves-rural-areas-behind/.

171 Vogels, E. A. (2021, August 19). *Some digital divides persist between rural, urban and suburban America.* Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/08/19/some-digital-divides-persist-between-rural-urban-and-suburban-america/.

172 Holding Eagle III, M. (2024, September 4). *Virtual hearings transform housing courts around Minnesota.* MPR News. https://www.mprnews.org/story/2024/09/04/virtual-hearings-transform-housing-courts-around-minnesota.

173 Thumma, S. A. (2023, May 24). *We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to improve access to justice — let's not squander it.* The Hill. https://thehill.com/opinion/judiciary/4016923-we-have-a-once-in-a-lifetime-opportunity-to-improve-access-to-justice-lets-not-squander-it/.

174 Thumma, S. A. (2021). *A virtual step forward sparked by disruption: The role of public policy in sustaining pandemic-era innovations.* Morrison Institute for Public Policy. https://morrisoninstitute.asu.edu/sites/g/files/litvpz841/files/thumma-sparked-2021.pdf

175 Florida Rural Legal Services. (n.d.). *Pro bono on demand.* Florida Rural Legal Services. https://www.frls.org/pro-bono-on-demand. (accessed September 2025).

176 The Florida Bar. (2025, August 7). *Florida Rural Legal Services launches pro bono on demand virtual clinic. Florida Bar News.* https://www.floridabar.org/the-florida-bar-news/frls-launches-pro-bono-on-demand-virtual-clinic/.

177 New York State Permanent Commission on Access to Justice. (n.d.). *The digital divide and access to justice* [Slide presentation]. New York State Unified Court System. https://www.nycourts.gov/LegacyPDFS/accesstojusticecommission/DigitalDivideSlides.pdf. (accessed August 2025).

178 Legal Services Corporation. (n.d.). AI Peer Learning Lab resource hub. https://lsc-live.app.box.com/hubs/143422807?s=rnxmex9wehpael9kb239bp5f5acajk4a.

179 Hagan, Margaret D. (2018) "A Human-Centered Design Approach to Access to Justice: Generating New Prototypes and Hypotheses for Intervention to Make Courts User-Friendly," *Indiana Journal of Law and Social Equality:* Vol. 6: Iss. 2, Article 2. Available at: https://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/ijlse/vol6/iss2/2.

180 Hagan, Margaret D. (2018.) Above, n. 179.

181 U.S. Department of Agriculture. (n.d.). *ReConnect Loan and Grant Program.* https://www.usda.gov/sustainability/infrastructure/broadband/reconnect-loan-and-grant-program. (accessed August 2025).

182 Federal Communications Commission. (2022, January 3). *FCC launches Affordable Connectivity Program; Emergency Broadband Benefit Program transitions to new Affordable Connectivity Program* [News release]. https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-378908A1.pdf.

183 Federal Communications Commission. (2024, May 31). *FCC brings Affordable Connectivity Program to a close* [News release]. https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-402930A1.pdf.

184 PBS NewsHour. (2025, June 27). *Supreme Court OKs fee that subsidizes phone, internet services in schools, libraries and rural areas.* PBS. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/supreme-court-oks-fee-that-subsidizes-phone-internet-services-in-schools-libraries-and-rural-areas; Barnes, R. (2025, June 27). *Supreme Court upholds FCC's Universal Service Fund program against nondelegation challenge. The Washington Post.* https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/06/27/supreme-court-universal-service-fund-decision-nondelegation/.

185 U.S. Department of Transportation. (2025, March 17). *The critical role of rural communities in the U.S. transportation system.* https://www.transportation.gov/rural/grant-toolkit/critical-role-rural-communities.

186 Bureau of Transportation Statistics. (2023, September 25). *Rural access to intercity transportation.* U.S. Department of Transportation. https://www.bts.gov/data-spotlight/85-rural-residents-have-reasonable-access-intercity-transportation-lack-reasonable/.

187 Pipa, A. F. (2023, July 24). *Five recommendations from Reimagine Rural for the 2023 Farm Bill and federal implementation.* Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/five-recommendations-from-reimagine-rural-for-the-2023-farm-bill-and-federal-implementation/; U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2024, November). *Rural Partners Network: Building stronger futures together* [Fact sheet]. https://www.rural.gov/sites/default/files/2024-11/508_RD_FS_RuralPartnersNetwork%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf.

188 Pipa, A. F. (2022). Reimagining rural policy: Recommendations for the 2023 Farm Bill and beyond. *SMU Law Review Forum, 75(1),* Article 1. https://scholar.smu.edu/smulrforum/vol75/iss1/1/; Bagby, L. (2021, October 28). *First Judicial Circuit & Land of Lincoln Legal Aid partner on remote appearance pilot program.* 2Civility. https://www.2civility.org/first-judicial-circuit-land-of-lincoln-legal-aid-partner-on-remote-appearance-pilot-program/; Texas Office of Court Administration. (n.d.). *Best practices for courts in Zoom hearings involving self-represented litigants.* https://www.txcourts.gov/media/1446335/zoomsrlbestpractices.pdf. (accessed August 2025).

189 U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs. (2025, July 28). *Justice Department announces winners of the Access to Justice Prize Competition* [Press release]. U.S. Department of Justice. https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-winners-access-justice-prize-competition.

190 Durham, E. (2024, May 6). *DTE employees help returning citizens restore their driving licenses.* Empowering Michigan. https://empoweringmichigan.com/dte-employees-help-returning-citizens-restore-their-driving-licenses/.

191 Graham, T. (2023, January 6). *DTE program trains prisoners to trim around power lines.* WDET. https://wdet.org/2023/01/06/dte-program-trains-prisoners-to-trim-around-power-lines/.

192 Association of Pro Bono Counsel. (2016, November 15). *Nationwide resource hotline launched.* https://apbco.org/nationwide-resource-hotline-launched/.

193 California Pro Bono Opportunities Guide. (n.d.). *OneJustice.* https://www.californiaprobono.org/oppsguide/organization.73221-OneJustice. (accessed August 2025).

194 The Florida Bar. (2025). Above, n. 176.

195 Carmody and Associates. (2014). Above, n. 66.

196 Feinberg, R. (2022, April 26). *Legislature approves bill to create a legal aid clinic in Aroostook County.* Maine Public. https://www.mainepublic.org/courts-and-crime/2022-04-26/legislature-approves-bill-to-create-a-legal-aid-clinic-in-aroostook-county.

197 Feinberg, R. (2022, February 9). *A shortage of attorneys in Aroostook County prompts a bill to create a rural legal aid clinic.* Maine Public. https://www.mainepublic.org/business-and-economy/2022-02-09/a-shortage-of-attorneys-in-aroostook-county-prompts-a-bill-to-create-a-rural-legal-aid-clinic and University of Maine School of Law. (2022, July 12). *Rural Practice Fellows pursue their passion for serving Mainers.* https://mainelaw.maine.edu/news/rural-practice-fellows-pursue-their-passion-for-serving-mainers/.

198 University of Minnesota Law School. (n.d.). *Rural Immigrant Access Clinic (Course 7910).* https://law.umn.edu/course/7910/rural-immigrant-access-clinic. (accessed August 2025); Cornell Law School. (n.d.). *Farmworker Legal Assistance Clinic.* https://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/academics/experiential-learning/clinical-program/farmworker-legal-assistance-clinic/. (accessed August 2025); University of New Mexico School of Law. (n.d.). *Southwest Indian Law Clinic – Indian Law Program.* https://lawschool.unm.edu/indian/indian-clinic.html (accessed August 2025); University of Wisconsin Law School. (n.d.). *Rural Entrepreneurship Program.* https://law.wisc.edu/uwle/services/rural.html (accessed August 2025); Lewis & Clark Law School. (n.d.). *Information for clients – Small Business Legal Clinic.* https://law.lclark.edu/centers/small_business_legal_clinic/information-for-clients/. (accessed August 2025).

199 Legal Services Corporation. (n.d.). *Comprehensive needs assessment and priority setting.* https://www.lsc.gov/i-am-grantee/model-practices-innovations/plan-strategically/comprehensive-needs-assessment-priority-setting.

200 Legal Services Corporation. (2007). *LSC performance criteria.* https://www.lsc.gov/our-impact/publications/other-publications-and-reports/lsc-performance-criteria.

201 Center for Justice Innovation. (2017, October). *Introduction to community asset mapping.* https://www.innovatingjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/asset_mapping.pdf; Institute of Museum and Library Services. (2022, July). *Tool: Asset mapping user guide.* https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2022-07/tool-asset-mapping-user-guide.pdf.

202 Carmody and Associates. (2014). Above, n. 66.

203 Sandefur, R. L. (2023, April). Above, n. 4.

204 Legal Services Corporation. *Survey tracks misconceptions about civil legal aid.* Legal Services Corporation. https://www.lsc.gov/celebrate50/survey-tracks-misconceptions-about-civil-legal-aid.

205 Sandefur, R. L. (2023, April). Above, n. 4.

206 Legal Services Corporation. (2024, October 28). *The lawyer will see you now* [Panel discussion]. *Forum on Increasing Access to Justice.* State Bar of Georgia Conference Center, Atlanta, GA, United States. https://youtu.be/BIePnvY4xRE?si=L4zmU9TpnlsUtRAq.

207 Legal Aid of West Virginia. (2018). *LAWV digital Lawyer in the School guide.* National Legal Aid & Defender Association. https://legalaidwv.org/our-programs/legal-services/lawyer-in-school/.

208 Georgetown Justice Lab. (n.d.). *Court Navigators.* Georgetown University Law Center. https://www.law.georgetown.edu/tech-institute/initiatives/georgetown-justice-lab/court-navigators/. (accessed August 2025).

[209] National Tribal Trial College. (n.d.). *Certificate in Tribal Court Legal Advocacy.* University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension. https://nttc.extension.wisc.edu/. (accessed August 2025).

[210] White, H. B. (2022, October 25). Panel #2: *Recruitment and Retention of Rural Lawyers.* [Remarks]. LSC Field Hearing, Legal Services Corporation Rural Justice Task Force, Sheraton Oklahoma City Downtown Hotel. https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLy_lgH_-ZCltN3w3ZE9rmzXNGZ7CJpg78&si=R-heQwhz2kyoAhQS.

[211] National Tribal Trial College. (n.d.). Above, n. 209.

[212] Self-Represented Litigation Network. (2024, November 13). *America's civil courts: Whom do we serve?* ArcGIS StoryMaps. https://srln.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=102d56b227384bb0827edc98909e7f77.

[213] Kauffman, B., Cornett, L., Gramatikov, M., Núñez, R., Banks, I., Barendrecht, M., & Brouwer, J. (2021). J*ustice needs and satisfaction in the United States of America.* IAALS – Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System. https://iaals.du.edu/publications/justice-needs-and-satisfaction-united-states-america.

[214] National Association of Women Judges. (n.d.). *Rural Courts.* https://nawj.org/catalog/community-outreach-programs/rural-courts. (accessed August 2025).

[215] Arizona Supreme Court. (n.d.). *Arizona Lawyer Apprentice Program.* Arizona Judicial Branch. https://www.azcourts.gov/cld/Arizona-Lawyer-Apprentice-Program. (August 2025).

[216] Arizona Supreme Court. (2024, July 17). *Arizona Lawyer Apprentice Program helps expand access to justice in rural communities and fill empty positions in public law firms across our state* [Press release]. Administrative Office of the Courts. https://www.azcourts.gov/Portals/0/201/News%20Release%20-%20Arizona%20Supreme%20Court%20Authorizes%20Lawyer%20Apprentice%20Program.pdf.

[217] Krinsky, S. (2024, December 16). *First impressions of the incoming class of 2024: Largest class since 2021, top-line diversity is level, more research needed and the work continues.* Law School Admission Council. https://www.lsac.org/blog/2024-class-first-impressions.

[218]American Bar Association. (2024, November 18). 2024 *ABA profile of the legal profession:* Demographics. American Bar Association. https://www.americanbar.org/news/profile-legal-profession/demographics/.

[219] National Council on Aging. (2023, January 10). *American Indians and Alaska Natives: Key demographics and characteristics.* https://www.ncoa.org/article/american-indians-and-alaska-natives-key-demographics-and-characteristics/; U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). RACE (TOTAL RACES TALLIED). *Decennial Census, DEC Demographic and Housing Characteristics, Table P6.* Retrieved September 15, 2025, from https://data.census.gov/table/DECENNIALDHC2020.P6?q=P6&g=010XX00US&y=2020&d=DEC+Demographic+and+Housing+Characteristics.

[220] Kell, G. (2022, May 18). *Law school to pay bulk of its in-state Native American students' tuition.* Berkeley News. https://news.berkeley.edu/2022/05/18/law-school-to-pay-bulk-of-its-in-state-native-american-students-tuition/.

[221] Albany Herald. (2025, May 13). *Georgia Legal Services adds Westtown Library to circuit.* Albany Herald. https://albanyherald.com/features/georgia-legal-services-adds-westtown-library-to-circuit/.

[222] Legal Services Corporation. (n.d.). *How Oklahoma Indian Legal Services advocates for Native populations.* https://www.lsc.gov/i-am-grantee/model-practices-innovations/provide-legal-services/how-oklahoma-indian-legal-services-advocates-native-populations.

[223] Paul, A. (2022, March 10). *Remarks at Working Group #2 meeting of the Rural Justice Task Force:Model practices and innovative legal service-delivery models that benefit rural areas.* Legal Services Corporation. https://lsc-live.box.com/s/5sdgyzc1az7ymnq8qir0389t2t103yfb.

[224] Nelson, N. (2023). *Medical-legal partnerships: Where health and justice meet.* https://lsc-live.app.box.com/s/4m9rcenmeu46uxvqe4d4gko0s528pu3t; Legal Services Corporation. (n.d.). *Moving beyond lawyer-based solutions: Community justice workers.* https://www.lsc.gov/i-am-grantee/model-practices-innovations/provide-legal-services/moving-beyond-lawyer-based-solutions-community-justice-workers.

[225] Alaska Legal Services Corporation. (n.d.). *Community Justice Worker Program.* https://www.alsc-law.org/cjw/. (accessed August 2025).

[226] Alaska Legal Services Corporation. (2022). *Advocate training brochure.* https://www.alsc-law.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Advocate-Training-Brochure-v922.pdf.

[227] Alaska Legal Services Corporation. (n.d.). Above, n. 225.

[228] Nelson, N. (2023). Above, n. 224.

[229] Flagg, R. (2023) "The Path Forward for the Legal Services Corporation," *MIE Journal* vol. 37, no. 4, 18-23 (Winter 2023–2024), Management Information Exchange for Legal Aid, https://lsc-live.box.com/s/68slqd1ikiiri0bmx439aonubfd8of63.

[230] William H. Bowen School of Law. (n.d.). *Rural Practice Incubator Project.* University of Arkansas at Little Rock. https://ualr.edu/law/clinical-programs/rural-practice-incubator-project/. (accessed August 2025).

[231] Arkansas Access to Justice Commission. (2015). *Access to justice in rural Arkansas: Policy brief.* Arkansas Access to Justice. https://arkansasjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/AATJPolicy-Brief2015-0420.pdf.

[232] William H. Bowen School of Law. (n.d.). Above, n. 230.

[233] The National Jurist. (n.d.). *UA Little Rock launches rural law practice incubator.* https://nationaljurist.com/ua-little-rock-launches-rural-law-practice-incubator/. (accessed August 2025).

[234] Brasfield, F. (2022, October 25). *Panel #2: Recruitment and Retention of Rural Lawyers.* [Remarks]. LSC Field Hearing, Legal Services Corporation Rural Justice Task Force, Sheraton Oklahoma City Downtown Hotel. https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLy_lgH_-ZCltN3w3ZE9rmzXNGZ7CJpg78&si=R-heQwhz2kyoAhQS.

[235] Brasfield, F. (2022, October 25). Above, n. 235.

[236] Hanes, M. (2025, May 21). *Expanding access to justice: First five Purdue Global Law School students admitted to Indiana bar.* Indiana Capital Chronicle. https://indianacapitalchronicle.com/2025/05/21/expanding-access-to-justice-first-five-purdue-global-law-school-students-admitted-to-indiana-bar/.

[237] Bartels, A. (2025, April 14). *Purdue Global Law School celebrates 100% pass rate on Indiana bar exam, validating law school's efforts to expand access.* Purdue University. https://www.purdue.edu/newsroom/2025/Q2/purdue-global-law-school-celebrates-100-pass-rate-on-indiana-bar-exam-validating-law-schools-efforts-to-expand-access/.

[238] Oates, M. (2023, April 19). *Concord Law School launches new class to address rural legal issues.* Purdue University. https://www.purdue.edu/newsroom/2023/Q2/concord-law-school-launches-new-class-to-address-rural-legal-issues/.

[239] Oates, M. (2023). Above, n. 238.

[240] Washburn University School of Law. (n.d.). *Rural Law Program.* https://www.washburnlaw.edu/practicalexperience/rural/index.html. (accessed August 2025).

[241] Washburn University School of Law. (n.d.). Above, n. 240.

[242] Washburn University School of Law. (n.d.). *Law Early Admission Program (LEAP).* https://www.washburnlaw.edu/admissions/early-admission-program.html. (accessed August 2025).

[243]Washburn University School of Law. (n.d.). *Third Year Anywhere®.* https://www.washburnlaw.edu/academics/experience/third-year-anywhere.html. (accessed August 2025).

[244]Statz, M. (2021, October 27). *Rural Minnesota's legal deserts.* Minnesota Lawyer. https://minnlawyer.com/2021/10/27/rural-minnesotas-legal-deserts/.

[245]Minnesota Supreme Court Standing Committee for Legal Paraprofessional Pilot Project. (2023, March 1). *Interim report and recommendations to the Minnesota Supreme Court.* https://mncourts.gov/_media/migration/appellate/supreme-court/administrative-standing-committee-for-legal-paraprofessional-pilot-project-interim-report-and-recommendations-to-the-minnesota-supreme-court_filed.pdf.

[246] Houlberg, M. (2022, March 17). *Minnesota's Legal Paraprofessional Pilot Project shows early successes.* IAALS, Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System. https://iaals.du.edu/blog/minnesotas-legal-paraprofessional-pilot-project-shows-early-successes.

[247] Minnesota Judicial Branch. (2025, August 25). *Roster of approved legal paraprofessionals.* https://mncourts.gov/help-topics/Legal-Paraprofessional-Program/roster.

[248] Minnesota Judicial Branch. (n.d.). *Legal Paraprofessional Program.* https://www.mncourts.gov/help-topics/legal-paraprofessionals-pilot-project.aspx. (accessed August 2025).

[249] Long, J. J. (2024, July 23). *Remarks at the Championing Justice Forum & Reception.* Minneapolis, MN.

[250] Standing Committee for Legal Paraprofessional Pilot Project. (2024, January 12). *Final report and recommendations to the Minnesota Supreme Court.* BWJP. https://bwjp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/FINAL_REPORT_AND_RECOMMENDATIONS_TO_THE_MINNESOTA_SUPREME_COURT.pdf.

[251] Minnesota Supreme Court. (2024, September 16). *Administrative order amending rules governing Legal Paraprofessional Pilot Project.* https://mncourts.gov/_media/migration/appellate/supreme-court/administrative-order-amending-rules-governing-legal-paraprofessional-pilot-project.pdf.

[252] Paul, A. (2022, October 25). *Panel #1: Looking Beyond Lawyers to Shrink the Justice Gap: Legal Paraprofessionals and Non-Lawyer Navigators.* [Remarks]. LSC Field Hearing, Legal Services Corporation Rural Justice Task Force, Sheraton Oklahoma City Downtown Hotel. https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLy_lgH_-ZCltN3w3ZE9rmzXNGZ7CJpg78&si=R-heQwhz2kyoAhQS.

[253] Montana Legal Services Association. (n.d.). *Tribal Advocacy Incubator Project.* Montana Legal Services Association. https://www.mtlsa.org/tribal-advocate-incubator-project/. (accessed August 2025); Missoulian Staff. (2023, March 27). *New Course Makes Legal Help More Accessible To Tribal Members.* Missoulian. https://missoulian.com/news/local/new-course-makes-legal-help-more-accessible-to-tribal-members/article_657cf42a-cd92-11ed-af78-cb74c1293425.html.

[254] Paul, A. (2022). Above, n. 252.

[255] Montana Legal Services Association. (n.d.). Above, n. 135.

[256] Nebraska Supreme Court. (2017, June 2). *Number of attorneys per county 2017.* Nebraska Judicial Branch. https://supremecourt.nebraska.gov/sites/default/files/Administration/nebraska-attorneys-per-county2017.pdf.

[257]Wayne State College. (n.d.). *Rural Law Opportunities Program (RLOP).* Wayne State College. https://www.wsc.edu/rlop. (accessed August 2025).

[258] Wayne State College. Above, n. 257.

[259]University of Nebraska–Lincoln, College of Law. (2025, July 1). *New center will address rural attorney shortage, support Nebraska children.* Nebraska Today. https://news.unl.edu/article/new-center-will-address-rural-attorney-shortage-support-nebraska-children/.

[260]American Bar Association. (n.d.). *OSB Futures Task Force summary.* ABA Journal. https://www.abajournal.com/files/FuturesTF_Summary.pdf.

[261] Lugo, D. (2024, April 1). *Oregon's first licensed paralegals to provide family, housing law help.* Statesman Journal. https://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/local/oregon/2024/04/01/oregon-licensed-paralegals-provide-family-housing-law-legal-assistance/73122961007/.

[262] American Bar Association. (n.d.). Above, n. 260.

[263] Oregon State Bar. (n.d.). *Oregon Licensed Paralegals.* https://www.osbar.org/lp. (accessed August 2025).

[264] Thompson, K. (2022, October 25). *Panel #1: Looking Beyond Lawyers to Shrink the Justice Gap: Legal Paraprofessionals and Non-Lawyer Navigators.* [Remarks]. LSC Field Hearing, Legal Services Corporation Rural Justice Task Force, Sheraton Oklahoma City Downtown Hotel. https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLy_lgH_-ZCltN3w3ZE9rmzXNGZ7CJpg78&si=R-heQwhz2kyoAhQS.

[265] Hult, J. (2023, January 15). *Rural lawyer recruitment efforts show local results, but fail to alter urban-rural divide.* South Dakota Searchlight. https://southdakotasearchlight.com/2023/01/15/rural-lawyer-recruitment-efforts-show-local-results-but-fail-to-alter-urban-rural-divide/.

[266] South Dakota Unified Judicial System. (n.d.). *Rural Attorney Recruitment Program.* https://ujs.sd.gov/for-attorneys/rural-attorney-recruitment-program/. (accessed August 2025); North Dakota Court System. (n.d.). *Rural Attorney Recruitment Program.* https://www.ndcourts.gov/rural-attorney-recruitment-program. (accessed August 2025).

[267] Goetzinger, P. (2022, May 2). *Remarks at Working Group #3 meeting of the Rural Justice Task Force: Other Possible Solutions that Address the Barriers to Rural Justice (such as Regulatory, Education, Funding or Attorney Pipeline Interventions).* Legal Services Corporation. https://lsc-live.box.com/s/dfhe3r1syjt4cbh3yvgxnlg10nx7zly1.

[268] Goetzinger, P. G. and Morris, R. L., "Project Rural Practice: Its People & Its Purpose: The Next Chapter," *South Dakota Law Review* 69, no. 3 (2024): 333–, https://red.library.usd.edu/sdlrev/vol69/iss3/8.

[269] Holewa, S. (2022, October 25). *Panel #2: Recruitment and Retention of Rural Lawyers.* [Remarks]. LSC Field Hearing, Legal Services Corporation Rural Justice Task Force, Sheraton Oklahoma City Downtown Hotel. https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLy_lgH_-ZCltN3w3ZE9rmzXNGZ7CJpg78&si=R-heQwhz2kyoAhQS.

[270] North Dakota Legislative Branch. (n.d.). *North Dakota Century Code: Chapter 27-02.2 – Attorney Recruitment Program.* https://ndlegis.gov/cencode/t27c02-2.pdf. (accessed August 2025).

[271] North Dakota Legislative Branch. (n.d.). Above, n. 270.

[272] South Dakota Unified Judicial System. (2025). *Rural Attorney Recruitment Program: Annual report.* https://ujs.sd.gov/media/k0ajuzwm/2025-rarp-annual-report.pdf.

[273] Hult, J. (2023, January 15). Above, n. 232.

[274]Goetzinger, P. (2022, May 2). Above, n. 234.

[275] Goetzinger, P. G. (2024). Above, n. 268.

[276] U.S. Department of Justice. (2025, July 28). *Justice Department announces winners of Access to Justice Prize Competition.* https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-winners-access-justice-prize-competition.

[277]South Dakota Unified Judicial System. (2025, July 29). *U.S. Department of Justice awards South Dakota Bar Foundation for innovative solution to improve access to justice.* https://ujs.sd.gov/ujs-news/us-department-of-justice-awards-south-dakota-bar-foundation-for-innovative-solution-to-improve-access-to-justice/.

[278] Legal Services Corporation. (2025, June 24). *Talk Justice, an LSC podcast: New data on Arizona and Utah's innovations after 5 years of legal reform* [Audio podcast episode]. https://www.lsc.gov/press-release/talk-justice-lsc-podcast-new-data-arizona-and-utahs-innovations-after-5-years-legal-reform.

[279] Timpanogos Legal Center. (n.d.). *Certified Advocate Partners Program (CAPP).* https://www.timplegal.org/legal-services/certified-advocate-partners-program. (accessed August 2025).

[280] Timpanogos Legal Center. (n.d.). Above, n. 279.

[281] Griffith, S. (2025, February 27). *Email message to Kimberly Little at Legal Services Corporation.*

[282] Community Justice Advocates of Utah. (n.d.). *Protective orders.* https://www.cjau.org/protective-orders. (accessed August 2025).

[283] Timpanogos Legal Center. (n.d.). Above, n. 280.

[284] Timpanogos Legal Center. (n.d.). Above, n. 280.

[285] Slepyan, A. P. (2022, January 6). *Legal assistance pilot program helps rural victims of domestic violence and abuse in Utah.* The Daily Yonder. https://dailyyonder.com/legal-assistance-pilot-program-helps-rural-victims-of-domestic-violence-and-abuse-in-utah/2022/01/06/.

[286] Jennings, N. (2024, May 9). *Seattle U Law, Alaska Pacific University launch innovative JD/MBA program.* Seattle University School of Law. https://law.seattleu.edu/about/newscenter/all-current-stories/seattle-u-law-alaska-pacific-university-launch-innovative-jdmba-program.html.

[287] University of Alaska Anchorage. (2024, October 11). *New partnership between UAA and Seattle University School of Law creates pathway for Alaska students to attend law school without moving out of state.* https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/news/archive/2024/10/alaska-hybrid-hub-seattle-u-law-partnership.cshtml.

[288] Jennings, N. (2024, May 9). Above, n. 286.

[289] Legal Services Corporation. (n.d.). *Rural Summer Legal Corps.* https://www.lsc.gov/initiatives/rural-summer-legal-corps. (accessed August 2025).

[290] Equal Justice Works. (2024, June 18). *Meet the 2024 Rural Summer Legal Corps student fellows.* https://www.equaljusticeworks.org/news/congratulations-to-the-class-of-2025-rural-summer-legal-corps-student-fellows/.

[291] Equal Justice Works. (2024, June 18). Above, n. 290.

[292] Equal Justice Works. (2024, June 18). Above, n. 290.

[293] Equal Justice Works. (2024, June 18). Above, n. 290.

[294] Powell-Boudreaux, L. (2022, March 7). Remarks presented at the LSC Access to Justice Forum: Increasing access to justice and closing the digital divide [Panel presentation]. Legal Services Corporation. https://www.lsc.gov/events/access-justice-forum-march-7-2022.

[295] Powell-Boudreaux, L. (2022, March 7). Above, n. 294.

[296] Powell-Boudreaux, L. (2022, March 7). Above, n. 294.

[297] Legal Services Corporation. (2022, March 7). *The digital divide is about more than internet access* [Audio podcast episode]. *In Talk Justice, an LSC podcast.* https://www.lsc.gov/press-release/talk-justice-lsc-podcast-digital-divide-about-more-internet-access.

[298] Self-Represented Litigation Network. (2024, August 25). *SRLN digital divide state dashboards.* https://www.srln.org/node/1581/srln-digital-divide-state-dashboards.

[299] Powell-Boudreaux, L. (2022, March 7). Above, n. 294.

[300] Spoto, M., & Alder, M. (2022, August 29). *Rural digital divide complicates virtual court participation.* Bloomberg Law. https://news.bloomberglaw.com/us-law-week/rural-digital-divide-complicates-virtual-court-participation.

[301] Minnesota Lawyer. (2021, April 13). Bar Buzz: Legal aid coalition gets $3.5 million. https://minnlawyer.com/2021/04/13/bar-buzz-legal-aid-coalition-gets-3-5-million/.

[302] Reach Justice. (n.d.). *About.* https://www.reachjustice.org/about. (accessed August 2025).

[303] Legal Kiosk. (n.d.). Legal Kiosk. https://www.legalkiosk.org/. (accessed August 2025); Legal Kiosk. (n.d.). *About.* https://www.legalkiosk.org/about. (accessed August 2025).

[304] Rapaport, D. (2022, May 2). *Remarks at Working Group #2 meeting of the Rural Justice Task Force: Model practices and innovative legal service-delivery models that benefit rural areas.* Legal Services Corporation. https://lsc-live.box.com/s/xc5dfkzloav5t9vqlhnsygxymlkddxex.

[305] Rapaport, D. (2022, May 2). Above, n. 204.

[306] Reach Justice. (n.d.). Justice Buses. https://www.reachjustice.org/justice-buses. (accessed August 2025).

[307] Massey, D. (2023, February 7). *Texas Supreme Court issues "final" Covid-19 emergency order and rule changes for civil court proceedings.* JD Supra. https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/texas-supreme-court-issues-final-covid-2464621/.

[308] Texas Community Health News. (2023). *Technology gap.* https://www.texascommunityhealthnews.org/reports/2023/technology-gap.html.

[309] State Bar of Texas. (2023, June). Texas Legal Services Center launches statewide virtual court kiosk project. *Texas Bar Journal.* https://www.texasbar.com/AM/Template.cfm?Section=articles&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=60295.

[310] Dennislaw News. (2023, May 4). *US: Nonprofit opens several virtual court kiosks in Texas.* https://dennislawnews.com/article/us--nonprofit-opens-several-virtual-court-kiosks-in-texas.

[311] Dennislaw News. (2023, May 4). Above, n. 283; Texas Legal Services Center. (n.d.). *Virtual court kiosks.* https://www.tlsc.org/kiosks.

[312] Maloney, S. (2025, February 12). *Email message to Jessica Wechter at Legal Services Corporation.*

313 See, e.g., Indiana Court Times. (2023, February 16). *Spotlight: Self-service kiosks coming to every county.* https://times.courts.in.gov/2023/02/16/spotlight-kiosks/; Legal Services Corporation. (2025, January 14). *Self-help legal kiosks create adaptable access.* https://www.lsc.gov/press-release/self-help-legal-kiosks-create-adaptable-access; Minnesota Legal Services Coalition. (n.d.). *Legal Kiosk Project.* https://www.legalkiosk.org. (accessed August 2025); *Legal Services Corporation. (2023, November 16). Legal Services Corporation awards $5.1 million in technology grants to 29 legal aid organizations.* https://www.lsc.gov/press-release/legal-services-corporation-awards-51-million-technology-grants-29-legal-aid-organizations; Legal Services Corporation. (2022, December 19). *Legal Services Corporation awards $4.6 million in technology grants to 29 legal aid organizations.* https://www.lsc.gov/press-release/legal-services-corporation-awards-46-million-technology-grants-29-legal-aid-organizations; and Raths, D. (2023, August 10). *Legal advice from a kiosk? It's a reality in Springfield, Mass.* GovTech. https://www.govtech.com/public-safety/legal-advice-from-a-kiosk-its-a-reality-in-springfield-mass.

314 Dennis, P. (2025, January 27). *Remarks at the Forum on Disaster Legal Services* [Conference presentation]. Legal Services Corporation 50th Anniversary Event, Tampa, FL, United States.

315 Baños, J., & Hamilton, B. (2024, June 26). *Addressing rural health inequities through medical-legal partnership: MLP spotlight featuring McKinney Medical Center & Georgia Legal Services Program.* National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership. https://medical-legalpartnership.org/addressing-rural-health-inequities-through-medical-legal-partnership-mlp-spotlight-featuring-mckinney-medical-center-georgia-legal-services-program-rural/; Georgia Legal Services Program. (n.d.). *Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP).* https://www.glsp.org/mlp/. (accessed August 2025).

316 Legal Services Corporation. (2024, October 28). *The lawyer will see you now* [Panel discussion]. *Forum on Increasing Access to Justice.* State Bar of Georgia Conference Center, Atlanta, GA, United States. https://youtu.be/BIePnvY4xRE?si=L4zmU9TpnlsUtRAq.

317 Baños, J., & Hamilton, B. (2024, June 26). Above, n. 316.

318 Rapaport, D. (2022, May 2). *Remarks at Working Group #2 meeting of the Rural Justice Task Force: Model practices and innovative legal service-delivery models that benefit rural areas.* Legal Services Corporation. https://lsc-live.box.com/s/xc5dfkzloav5t9vqlhnsygxymlkddxex.

319 Holding Eagle III, M. (2024, September 4). *Virtual hearings transform housing courts around Minnesota.* MPR News. https://www.mprnews.org/story/2024/09/04/virtual-hearings-transform-housing-courts-around-minnesota.

320 Law for Learners. (n.d.). *Home.* https://www.lawforlearners.com/. (accessed August 2025); Law for Learners. (n.d.). L*egal partners: Volunteer.* https://www.lawforlearners.com/partners/legal#volunteer. (accessed August 2025).

321 For the current list of legal service providers partner with Law for Learners, see: https://www.lawforlearners.com/partners/legal?scLang=en. Nonprofit Ascendium maintains a central website and intake form, develops a toolkit of outreach materials for schools to spread the word about the available legal help on their campuses, and provides support to Law for Learner's partner legal aid organizations.

322 Clendenen, H. (2022, March 10). *Remarks at Working Group #2 meeting of the Rural Justice Task Force: Model practices and innovative legal service-delivery models that benefit rural areas.* Legal Services Corporation. https://lsc-live.box.com/s/5sdgyzc1az7ymnq8qir0389t2t103yfb.

323 Legal Aid of West Virginia. (n.d.). *Lawyer in the School.* https://legalaidwv.org/our-programs/legal-services/lawyer-in-school/. (accessed August 2025).

324 White, K. (2022, October 25). Panel #3: *Community Partnerships that Increase Access to Justice in Rural Areas.* [Remarks]. LSC Field Hearing, Legal Services Corporation Rural Justice Task Force, Sheraton Oklahoma City Downtown Hotel. https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLy_IgH_-ZCltN3w3ZE9rmzXNGZ7CJp-g78&si=R-heQwhz2kyoAhQS.

325 White, K. (2022, October 25). Above, n. 324.

326 White, K. (2022, October 25). Above, n. 324.

327 Legal Services Corporation. (n.d.). *California Rural Legal Assistance: Technical innovations for language access.* https://www.lsc.gov/i-am-grantee/model-practices-innovations/provide-legal-services/california-rural-legal-assistance-technical-innovations-language-access. (accessed August 2025); California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. (2025). *Language Justice Project brief.* Office of Training and Technical Assistance. https://lsc-live.app.box.com/s/g0l6xrolb585b98exsmydq0zroawgky2.

328 California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. (2025). *Engaged Interpreting training.* https://crla.org/interpret.

329 Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Oklahoma – Rural Definitions: State-Level Maps* (PDF), accessed August 31, 2025, https://ers.usda.gov/sites/default/files/_laserfiche/DataFiles/53180/25591_OK.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com&v=92581.

330 Oklahoma Policy Institute, *2023 Census Data: Oklahoma Ranks as Sixth Poorest State*, September 12, 2024, accessed August 31, 2025, https://okpolicy.org/2023-census-data-oklahoma-ranks-as-sixth-poorest-state/.

[331] Journal Record Staff. (2021, January 28). *Oklahoma listed among riskiest states for natural disaster.* The Journal Record. https://journalrecord.com/2021/01/28/oklahoma-listed-among-riskiest-states-for-natural-disaster/.

[332] Legal Services Corporation. (2019). *Report of the LSC Disaster Task Force.* https://www.lsc.gov/initiatives/lsc-task-forces/lsc-disaster-task-force.

[333] Figgins, C. (2022, October 25). *Panel #3: Community Partnerships that Increase Access to Justice in Rural Areas.* [Remarks]. LSC Field Hearing, Legal Services Corporation Rural Justice Task Force, Sheraton Oklahoma City Downtown Hotel. https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLy_lgH_-ZCltN3w3ZE9rmzXNGZ7CJp-g78&si=R-heQwhz2kyoAhQS.

[334] Tennessee Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission. (n.d.). *TN Faith & Justice Alliance.* https://justiceforalltn.org/tn-faith-justice-alliance/.

[335] Wirthlin, A.-L. (2022, May 2). *Remarks at Working Group #2 meeting of the Rural Justice Task Force: Model practices and innovative legal service-delivery models that benefit rural areas.* Legal Services Corporation. https://lsc-live.box.com/s/xc5dfkzloav5t9vqlhnsygxymlkddxex.

[336] North Carolina Equal Access to Justice Commission. (n.d.). *North Carolina Faith and Justice Alliance.* https://www.nccourts.gov/commissions/north-carolina-equal-access-to-justice-commission/north-carolina-faith-and-justice-alliance.

[337]American Bar Association. (2024, November 18). Above, n. 219; Jimenez, C. (2024, October 25). *Indigenous initiatives at ASU Law empowers future leaders.* Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law, Arizona State University. https://law.asu.edu/newsroom/indigenous-initiatives-asu-law-empowers-future-leaders.

[338] American Indian Law Center, Inc. (n.d.). *Pre-Law Summer Institute (PLSI).* https://www.ailc-inc.org/plsi/. (accessed August 2025).

[339] American Indian Law Center, Inc. (n.d.). *Pre-Law Advisors Training.* https://www.ailc-inc.org/pre-law-advisors-training/. (accessed August 2025).

[340] Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law. (n.d.). *Pathway to law.* Arizona State University. https://law.asu.edu/pathway-to-law.

For more information about this report,
LSC or the Task Force's work,
visit www.lsc.gov/rural.

LSC America's Partner for Equal Justice
LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION