



# Annual Report

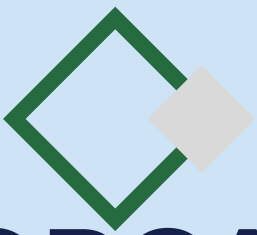
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**FISCAL YEAR:**

**JULY 1, 2024 TO JUNE 30, 2025**

Delaware Volunteer Legal Services





# ORGANIZATION PROFILE

Delaware Volunteer Legal Services, Inc. (DVLS) is an agency dedicated to providing quality pro bono legal services to Delaware's most vulnerable citizens. Established in 1981 by the Delaware State Bar Association to fill the void created by severe cutbacks in the federally funded Legal Services Corporation, DVLS is a driving force in legal services in Delaware.

Our mission is empowering Delaware's underserved communities through accessible legal support by offering compassionate advocacy and essential civil legal services for those in need. Through collaboration with dedicated volunteers, we strive to expand our reach and impact to advocate and work for justice.

**DVLS.ORG**



Delaware Volunteer  
Legal Svcs



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Delawarevolunteer  
legalservices

# Message from the Executive Director

FY2025 kicked off with me celebrating 20 years of service as the Executive Director of Delaware Volunteer Legal Services, Inc. ("DVLS"). Reaching this milestone prompted meaningful reflection on the growth, resilience, and evolution of the agency over the past two decades.

When I took over the helm on July 1, 2004, DVLS was an agency of five individuals with a budget of less than \$500,000. Today, we have a staff of 13 dedicated professionals and a budget exceeding \$2 million, not including Right to Representation funding, for which DVLS serves as the fiscal agent. Over the past 20 years, we have significantly diversified our funding sources, allowing our reserves to grow and positioning the agency for long-term financial stability.

This past year, we invested in a comprehensive organizational assessment that included an in-depth analysis of our compensation structure. That process generated several recommendations that we are actively implementing to strengthen the agency for the future. These efforts include adopting a comprehensive performance management framework, restructuring our organizational hierarchy, initiating succession planning, implementing a competitive compensation policy, enhancing strategic planning, and continuing development of a comprehensive policies and procedures manual.

As part of these organizational changes, longtime staff attorney Jacki Chacona was promoted to Deputy Director. We also promoted former paralegal Melissa Hughes to the role of Office Manager and Grants Administrator. Both promotions became effective in January 2025 and reflect our ongoing commitment to developing internal talent and ensuring strong leadership continuity.

As we look ahead to FY2026, DVLS is well positioned to deepen our impact, strengthen our operations, and respond thoughtfully to the evolving legal needs of Delaware's most vulnerable communities. None of this progress would be possible without the dedication of our staff, pro bono attorneys, board members, volunteers, funders, and community partners. I am deeply grateful for their continued commitment to our mission and their belief in the importance of access to justice.

Warmly,

*Janine N. Howard-O'Rangers*



# PRO BONO OPPORTUNITIES



**DVLS recruits, trains and mentors' attorneys to serve as pro bono counsel for needy individuals with meritorious civil legal issues.**

**DVLS administers or participates in programs including the PFA Pro Bono Program and Wills Events. We also partner with Community Legal Aid Society (CLASI) and Legal Services Corporation of Delaware (LSCD) to provide services to low-income tenants facing eviction in the J.P. Courts. We participate in a program with JP Morgan Chase to give individuals with minor criminal records a chance to obtain employment by obtaining FDIC Waivers, pardons and expungements with the assistance of a pro bono attorney.**

**DVLS Staff has historically participated in community outreach to individual facilities and held community events. DVLS staff works diligently in advance of the community events with other agencies and with the clients to ensure the events are successful and a positive experience for everyone.**

# OUTREACH IN COMMUNITY



Community outreach is done throughout the state, including visits to community centers, senior centers, and the Family Court. The frequency of visits is based on the needs of the agencies as indicated by the agencies' staff members. The goal of the outreach is to provide information and education on the legal services available to Delawareans. Each visit to a center could include education of patrons and staff of the legal services available to them in Delaware and on specific legal matters. After the educational portion of the presentation, a staff attorney meets with individuals upon request to do a complete intake or to give out contact information for the individuals to contact staff at a later time. The Staff Attorney also assists clients with completion of forms and provides advice.



**Tom McDonough at the Hicks Expungement & Pardon Clinic on September 20, 2024.**



**Melissa Hughes at Health Fair at Chelton Apartments on September 24, 2024.**



**Tina Ventresca, Berma Scott, and Melissa Hughes attended the Delaware State Bar Association (DSBA)'s Bench and Bar on June 12, 2025.**



**DVLS staff attended Combined Campaign Breakfast**



# NEW HIRE



**DVLS announced our new Holland Fellow, Giovanna Crozier-Fitzgerald. Giovanna will be representing victims of domestic violence in various family law matters between September 2024 through September 2026. Thanks to our newly announced fellowship, more low-income families and victims of domestic violence will have access to legal support. Congratulations to Giovanna for passing the Delaware bar.**

**Pictured below: (Left) Giovanna Crozier-Fitzgerald (Holland Fellow) & (Right) Janine N. Howard-O'Rangers, Esquire (Executive Director)**



**DVLS attended the Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence's Purple Ribbon event on October 2024 to celebrate the work of the Coalition.**

# Award



**Delaware Volunteer Legal Services attended the Governor's Proclamation Signing on April 9, 2025, at Legislative Hall in Dover, Delaware. DVLS receives the 2025 Outstanding Organization Award.**





# Spotlights



**Berma Scott receives Staff Spotlight in January 2025. has been a part of the legal community in Delaware for decades.**



**2025 Graduates at Delaware Law School for all receiving Student Spotlight!**

## Volunteer Spotlights

**Robert Hirst, Richard Buzz Hannum, Pete Clark, and John X. Denney Jr.**



# FISCAL PERIOD AT A GLANCE

JULY 1, 2024 - JUNE 30, 2025

**In the Fiscal Period, at least 537 individuals received representation, advice or referral through DVLS programs. The following is a breakdown of the numbers of cases opened and individuals served:**

<b>Pro Bono cases</b>	<b>DVLS In-house Representation, Advice and Brief Services</b>	<b>Delaware Civil Clinic</b>	<b>Prescreens</b>
252	514	4	4936

# Financials



## Income

### Public

Federal Government	\$ 260,414
State and Local Government	\$2,580,972
Delaware Bar Foundation	\$ 632,744
Foundations and Corporations	\$ 100,000
United Way	\$680
Combined Campaign for Justice	\$623,856
Other	\$14,475
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$4,213,141</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>	
Programs	\$3,818,977
Support and Management	\$368,884
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$4,187,861</b>



# DVLS' BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Tiffany A. Poole, Esq., President**

**Leslie Spoltore, Esq., Vice President**

**W. Donald Sparks II, Esq., Treasurer**

**Don C. Brown, Esq., Secretary (Secretary)**

**Pamela Brooks-Grimes**

**Lawrence S. Dexler, Esq.**

**Wilson Gualpa, Esq.**

**Randolph K. Herndon, Esq.**

**Robert Hirst, Esq.**

**David Miller Meyers, Esq.**

**Ryan P. Newell, Esq.**

**Kara Swasey, Esq.**

**King Thornton-Frazier**

**Sharon Whitaker**

**Jennifer Ying, Esq.**

**Dr. Jeffrey Benson**

**Executive Director- Janine N. Howard- O'Rangers, Esq.**



# DVLS STAFF DIRECTORY



**Janine N. Howard-O'Rangers, Esquire- Executive Director**

**Jacquelyn A. Chacona, Esquire- Deputy Director**

**Tina Ventresca- Director of Finance & Administration**

**Thomas V. McDonough, Esquire- Director of Pro Bono Recruitment**

**Christina M. Showalter, Esquire- Staff Attorney**

**Angela Desmond Fantini, Esquire- Staff Attorney**

**Giovanna Crozier-Fitzgerald, Esquire-Holland Fellow**

**Melissa Hughes- Grants Administrator/Office Manager**

**Berma Scott- Senior Intake Specialist**

**Jennifer Castaneda- Pro Bono Case Manager, Eviction Defense Specialist**

**Gina Greim- Pro Bono Case Manager, Communications**

**Kassia Cox- Intake Specialist**

**Nilza Ramirez- Administrative Assistant**

