

Kansas Legal Services

2020

ANNUAL REPORT

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Marilyn Harp, Executive Director
kansaslegalservices.org
@KLSforkansas

Message from the Executive Director

As we wrap up our report on 2020, I am reminded how our work impacts the lives of Kansans in so many ways.

When the pandemic struck, access to justice took on a whole new meaning. Literally, access to county courthouses was prohibited to many self-represented persons. This included victims of domestic violence seeking protection orders from their abusers. In Kansas City, the agency that had been the first line of support for these people stopped helping. KLS staff immediately jumped in to create a separate phone line, staffed during business hours, to assist in that crucial preparation of documents for survivors. Using staff, law students and volunteers, hundreds of people were assisted. Now, a year later, that resource is available to those seeking help in Johnson County.

Also recognizing that access to courthouses meant limits on justice, the Office of Judicial Administration funded a project with UMKC law school which created an online application process for protection orders. When fully rolled out, this project will assist survivors in creating initial pleadings in their protection order cases. Those documents are then sent electronically to the Court Clerk. Survivors no longer need access to the courthouse before the hearing on their case. Previously, a trip to the courthouse might mean a chance meeting with their abuser, who was just released from jail or who waited for them to deter their filing for protection. This pandemic response will improve the safety of survivors into the future.

As the legislative session moves forward, we are working to support legislation that will expand access to the state's restricted driver's license program. This important addition to the eligible population parallels the advocacy efforts of staff as they work to restore driving privileges of low income workers. This effort was supported by 2020 ATJ Technology Fellow, Cia Ferguson, who supplemented our web resources with a how-to video and an online clinic.

We are also tracking legislation, introduced by the Judicial Council, that would clarify access to expungement, under the current Kansas criteria. We have hundreds of potential clients waiting for this measure to pass. Our work in this important job readiness area expanded in 2020. We talked with more than 1,000 people about their eligibility to clean up their criminal record using existing Kansas law.

Throughout the pandemic, we shared crucial information with our community on important legal topics.

When did the various moratoriums on eviction end? Check the KLS website.

Where can I get help paying my rent? Check the KLS website or the KLS staff person appearing at the Courthouse during eviction dockets.

What is the latest news about access to Unemployment benefits? Check the KLS website.

How do I access Emergency Food Assistance Benefits? Check the KLS website.

We created space in our offices so that people with limited internet access could still participate in their online court hearings. For those who needed more information, KLS was able to hire law students during the summer to help meet the increased demand for access to legal advice and information. This helped us through the crunch, but demand remains high. The hard work of KLS staff, supported by volunteer attorney efforts, provided services to many low income families during hard times. We will continue to provide that support to be certain that economic recovery includes those families hardest hit by the pandemic.



Marilyn Harp

Marilyn Harp
Executive Director

The photo on the cover was taken by Cinthia Terrazas, KLS-Topeka. It is called “Social Distancing = Love,” and shows a painting on a garage door in Lawrence, KS. Cinthia won first place in the photography contest for the cover in which KLS staff and their families participated.

Throughout this annual report, you will see photos that were contributed to the contest by staff, staff spouses and staff children. Staff was asked to contribute photos of Kansas or photos relating to the pandemic. You can see it was a difficult choice to pick just one for the cover!

Photos in the client stories are stock photos, and names of clients have been changed to protect confidentiality.

Special thanks to Erin Lynch, University of Kansas School of Law Intern, for her valuable help on this report.

KANSAS LEGAL SERVICES IS LEGAL AID IN KANSAS

Kansas Legal Services (KLS) was born in 1964 during the War on Poverty, and became a statewide organization in 1977. KLS provides legal services to alleviate low-income Kansans' poverty burdens. KLS has eleven legal services field offices and two mediation offices located across Kansas. KLS partners with the Kansas Bar Association and its members to supplement staff resources by involving private attorneys in legal work for low-income Kansans.

GOALS

In 2019, the Board of Directors examined KLS's mission statement and reaffirmed it with this simple statement: *Kansas Legal Services is legal aid in Kansas, providing equal access to justice for the most vulnerable Kansans.*

KLS progressively focused efforts on special needs individuals, domestic violence victims, crime victims, the homeless, children in foster care, consumers with housing and debt disputes, the elderly, those with disabling conditions, individuals seeking access to public benefits, and those seeking mediation services.

WHAT WE DO...

FAMILY LAW

KLS represents thousands of low-income persons each year in domestic matters through many funding sources, including: Access to Justice (ATJ), Legal Services Corporation, United Way, Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA) and Victims of Crime Act (VOCA).

ATJ funding increased the number of family law clients KLS has been able to serve. Even with ATJ funding, the demand for direct representation in family law matters continues to exceed KLS's capacity. Priority is placed on cases of spousal or child abuse and protection from abuse orders.

"Jessica" was a 24-year-old mother of one. Jessica's boyfriend, "Tom", secretly filmed her in compromising situations. Tom was arrested and sent to prison. Tom provided Jessica with his credit card information so she could send him money while he was in prison.



Years later, Tom filed a lawsuit against Jessica for fraudulently using his credit card. Tom asked the court for nearly \$20,000 in damages. KLS defended Jessica against Tom's lawsuit. Through information obtained prior to trial, KLS determined Tom's lawsuit was frivolous. After learning Jessica was going to file a counterclaim, Tom sent Jessica a settlement offer. Tom proposed he would drop his lawsuit if Jessica would not file a counterclaim against him. Jessica accepted Tom's offer. Tom's lawsuit was dismissed with prejudice. Without the stress and burdens of litigation, Jessica was able to move on with her life and stop living in fear of Tom.

GUARDIAN AD LITEM SUPPORT CENTER (GALSC)

GALSC is a statewide program that provides technical assistance, advice, and other support services to guardians ad litem, those who represent children in court proceedings. KLS GALSC staff attorneys also provide direct advice and representation in child welfare cases. The Foster Care Helpline is part of the GALSC.

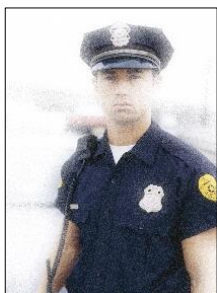
VICTIMS OF CRIME ACT GRANT (VOCA)

VOCA is administered by the Governor's Grants Program to assist all Kansas crime victims, with priority given to legal services for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

KLS's expanded funding base mitigates the effects of poverty and helps Kansas obtain better jobs, housing, and opportunities to support their families. This includes assisting in clearing criminal records, resolving debt disputes, resolving housing disputes, and promoting access to self-help legal resources.

EXPUNGEMENTS

"Steve" wanted to be a police officer. But Steve's felony conviction stopped him from pursuing his dreams. Steve tried to get an expungement before, but he could not afford the attorney's fees. Through KLS's expungement drive, a volunteer attorney helped Steve get his criminal record sealed. Steve is now applying to the local police department.



"Carissa's" criminal history would have prevented her from finding employment as a CNA. KLS helped Carissa seal her criminal record. Because her record is no longer a barrier, Carissa is enrolled in CNA school.

DRIVER'S LICENSE

"Joe" loaned his car to a friend. Due to a difficult financial year, Joe had no insurance on his car. While the friend was driving Joe's car, Joe's car was struck by an uninsured driver. The accident's police report caused Joe's license to be suspended, even though Joe was not driving and was not at the scene. Joe tried to contact the uninsured driver, but he was unsuccessful. KLS guided Joe in filing a lawsuit in small claims court. Joe got an order from the court stating he was not liable for the accident.



HOUSING

The "Garcias" were buying a home through a rent-to-own agreement. The Garcias believed they paid off their home in 2015, but the seller refused to give the Garcias the deed. The seller told the Garcias he would not deliver the deed until they paid an additional \$23,000 for taxes and insurance. The Garcias paid the seller an additional \$23,000, but the seller again refused to deliver the deed. In 2020, the seller told the Garcias he would not deliver the deed until they paid an additional \$5,000. The Garcias paid the seller another \$5,000, but the seller still refused to deliver the deed.



Frustrated, the Garcias called their local television station's "problem solvers" group. The television station contacted KLS. The Garcias were income-eligible for KLS's services. KLS reviewed the numerous contracts between the seller and the Garcias. KLS determined the seller was actually selling the home to the Garcias and sent the seller a letter demanding the deed's delivery. KLS's letter prompted the seller to deliver the deed. The Garcias now own their home free and clear.

“Mary” fell behind in rent at a mobile home park in February 2020. In late May, the Governor’s eviction moratorium was expiring, and the landlord filed an eviction action against Mary. Mary believed the eviction lawsuit was contrary to the Governor’s moratorium, so she contacted KLS to help her file a wrongful eviction action against the landlord.

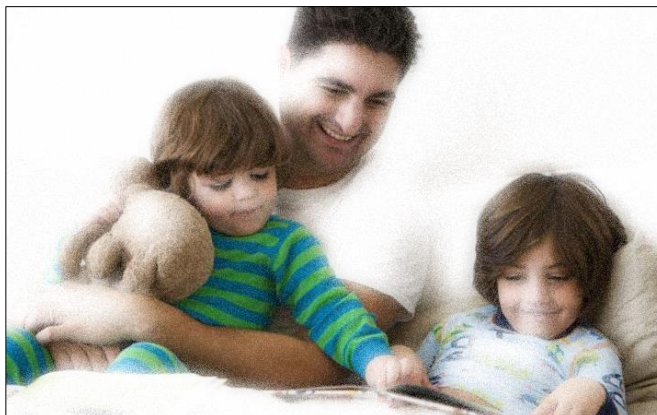


After reviewing the pleadings and the Governor’s executive order, KLS did not believe the eviction action was clearly contrary to the moratorium order. But when reviewing the records of the register of deeds office, KLS discovered the property was recently subject to a federally backed mortgage. KLS contacted the landlord’s attorney and explained that the eviction action was barred by the Federal CARES Act eviction moratorium, which lasted until late July. The landlord’s attorney agreed and dismissed the lawsuit against Mary.

Because the lawsuit was dismissed, Mary was not evicted in the midst of the pandemic. She remained in her home at the park through late July and used the additional time to locate better housing. Mary moved into a new home at the beginning of August, and she is attempting to negotiate a back-rent settlement with her previous landlord.

UTILITY DISPUTE

“Max” and his family were renting a property that became unsafe for them to live in. Because the landlord failed to maintain the plumbing, leaks and damage to the home forced Max and his family to move out. The Public Housing Authority helped Max secure a safer, affordable house. But because of the leaks, Max incurred an excessive water bill. Because Max did not pay the water bill, Max could not turn on water service in their new home. To maintain rental assistance at his new home, Max needed all utilities in service.



KLS negotiated with Public Housing Authority and the City to let Max continue receiving rental assistance and water service while KLS pursued Max’s claim against the landlord. The landlord agreed to pay the water bill. Max’s water bill was paid without any interruption to his rental assistance or water service.

CONSUMER FRAUD

“Jill” bought a used car from a dealer specializing in sales to buyers with bad credit. Jill paid an inflated price for the car, \$14,000. Not long after buying the car, Jill learned that some of the dealer’s representations about the car were not true. Jill tried to work out a resolution with the dealer, but the dealer was not cooperative. Without the dealer’s agreement, Jill returned the car and keys. The dealer sued Jill claiming it had auctioned the car and that Jill owed a deficiency of more than \$8,000.



Because of the pandemic, Jill’s marriage ended, and she lost her job. The dealer’s lawsuit was another burden during a difficult time in her

life. KLS investigated Jill's situation with the dealer and concluded that the dealer was subject to counterclaims under the Kansas Consumer Protection Act. KLS contacted the dealer's attorney and advised that Jill would assert counterclaims unless the dealer's claims were dismissed with prejudice. The dealer then dismissed its claims with prejudice, and Jill was able to continue putting her life back together.

ELDER LAW

KLS cooperates with local Area Agencies on Aging and the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services as a legal service provider in the state aging network. Older Americans Act funds are combined with Legal Services Corporation, county Mill Levy funds, and other private funds to address this growing area of need. Senior Citizens Law Project (SCLP) provides services in a wide range of civil legal issues to persons age 60 and older. SCLP's objective is to target the more vulnerable elderly population who are in the greatest social and economic need.

KANSAS ELDER LAW HOTLINE (888) 353-5337

The Kansas Elder Law Hotline links KLS staff and private attorneys to provide the broadest possible range of legal advice and information.

PUBLIC BENEFITS AND DISABILITY LAW

KLS's goal is to assist low-income individuals in accessing state and federal public benefit programs. KLS has committed resources ensuring applicants get the benefits to which they are entitled.

"May", an 85-year-old woman, was her brother's attorney-in-fact under a Power of Attorney. A few years ago, May made a few money management mistakes and allowed her brother's assets to exceed \$2,000. Social Security Administration (SSA) became aware of May's mistakes and demanded her brother repay \$11,820. During this time, May's brother also received money because of a house he inherited. KLS filed an appeal and request for waiver of repayment with SSA. After reviewing KLS's requests, SSA waived repayment of \$8,725. May knows to repay SSA \$3,095 and immediately reapply for her brother's SSI benefits.



CHILDREN'S SOCIAL SECURITY ADVOCACY PROGRAM

The Children's Social Security Advocacy Program obtains SSI for disabled children. The program is focused on children receiving services from the Department for Children and Families. Obtaining SSI cash and medical benefits often makes home placement possible.

When did you realize the pandemic would change your life?

Kansas Legal Services staff was asked this question in March, 2021, here are some answers.



Photo by Charity Schmidt, Wife of William Schmidt, Kansas City

Christy Campbell, Wichita: I think I realized this would change my life forever as I was going to my first baby ultrasound appointment, and my husband could not go with me. That, or when I sat down one morning and thought “maybe I should be doing a Doogie Houser style diary through this” (don’t worry, I didn’t).

I think all I did was survive and think big thoughts and organize trainings because the one thing I thought we could do while things were slow was brush up on the law we didn’t know.

Tabitha Hasting, Central Intake: The pandemic was a blessing in disguise for me. I struggled for years to have the mental strength and fortitude to leave a very toxic marriage with children. A lot of my struggle was trying to figure out what was right and best for my children. I couldn't understand how a life with divorced parents could be better for them until the pandemic hit and shut everything down. It just really finally gave me a moment to breathe and put everything into perspective and see the reality of everything.

Jeff McAdams, Hays: When my son's live-in girlfriend contracted the virus and my son has had a lifelong battle with acute asthma.

Jessena Schultze, Pittsburg: I follow a lot of news, and as soon as the coronavirus hit ground in the US, I knew we were in for a bad time. I remember telling my husband in early February that I thought it was going to be really bad, and by March 13th, we ate in our favorite restaurant in-person for the last time. We still haven't eaten in-person in a restaurant since, and don't plan to any time soon.

Ty Wheeler, Emporia: During the Big 12 Tournament in 2020. When they decided to limit the number of fans and ultimately cancelled. Then when they cancelled the NCAA tournament it really became real and had impact on my life. Then on the 26th of March we moved to working from home as a whole office.

Photo by Michele Davis, Central Intake





Photo by Juana Ceballos, Central Intake

Laura Wilcoxon, Kansas City: I'm not sure if this counts because I was not an employee at the start of the pandemic. I am, however, here at KLS because of the pandemic. I was (am still technically!) a student at the University of Miami School of Law. I was also the single mother of an infant. When Covid-19 hit, the on-campus daycare shut down. I had to pack up and move back to Kansas in a hurry so my mother could help with child care. When the fall semester rolled around, I was looking for Distance Learning credits so that I could still take advantage of my scholarship, and an externship was one option. I found KLS-KC and cold called the same day Alex placed an ad looking for interns. It wound up being a really good match on both sides, I've been here ever since, and I will be a Staff Attorney after the bar exam.

Michele Davis, Central Intake: When I called Marilyn to confirm, "We really have to work from home, even with how spread-out we are here?" For some reason, the gravity of the situation hadn't fully hit home until she shortly and firmly said, "Yes." The concern in her voice conveyed things much more clearly to me than the news had at that point.

Melissa Nolte, Administration: I'm a geek for news on disease outbreaks and have studied epidemics across history. Hearing about the coronavirus in China in early 2020, and then in a Seattle nursing home, I paid very close attention to everything in the news.

I realized that the pandemic was going to change my life and everyone's lives when I heard a doctor with the CDC say on February 25, 2020, that: "Disruption to everyday life might be severe." That hit me like a sledgehammer. The doctor didn't appear in public briefings after that. There was speculation that she had been "silenced" for her comments stressing the growing urgency of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. Of course, she was right.

Andrea Lichter, Topeka: While packing up and walking out of the office with a box of supplies for our first string of remote working and thinking to myself that I haven't been fired but it feels just as different. Driving home that night and trying not to panic with a box of wires, papers, a laptop, and a jetpack from Verizon because I had just moved into my new home the day before and I hadn't even set up my internet yet.

James Jones, Kansas City: Most assuredly, the Pandemic changed my life. I keep a diary and can tell you that it became real to me earlier than it did most people--possibly as early as March 1. I subscribe to an Italian-language newspaper, and I became aware by March 1, the hospitals in Italy were starting to become stressed by the virus from Wuhan. I idly wished that our leadership would immediately stop air travel. And I began to notice over the coming weeks that in the beginning, the virus arrived to the US via air travel. I am a believer in history: I used to take my lunch hour walking through historic Union Cemetery in Kansas City, MO, and there is a section that I call "the Kindergarten," filled with sad little stones of infants who all died in 1920 to 1921 from the flu. A whole section.

On March 11, the President finally announced a travel ban to Europe. Sadly, this was not done much earlier, but nobody believes that the Plague is really coming. Three days later, on March 14, the President declared a State of Emergency. Days later, there was no toilet paper to be had for love or money.

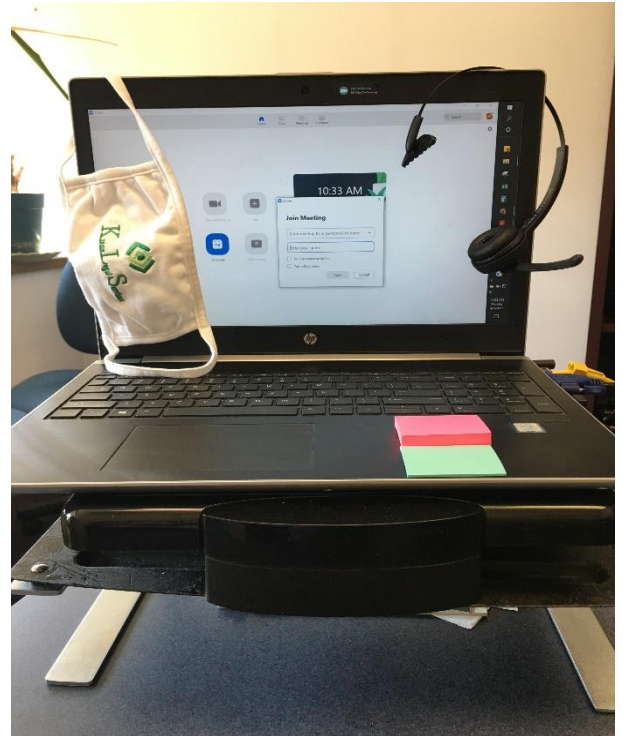


Photo by Allison Perez, Administration



Photo by Gina Hammersmith, Salina

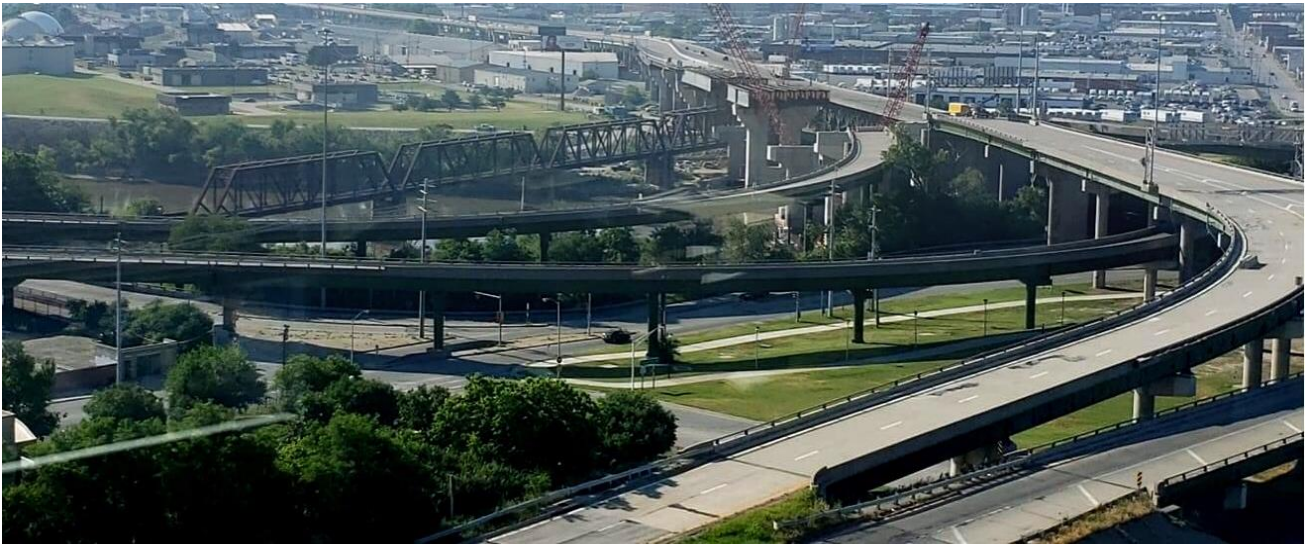


Photo by Dorothy Burgess, Wichita — View from KLS-KC office window

Casey Johnson, Kansas City: In March, 2020, I was in Steamboat Springs, CO, and I was watching the news about the coronavirus. We learned that four counties in Colorado were "hotspots" for COVID-19, and that anyone who traveled to those four counties would have to quarantine. Luckily I didn't travel to any of those four counties. The week after I moved back home, our office sent everyone home to work remotely. I think we handled it as best we could, and the transition was smoother than I thought it would be.

Cinthia Terrazas, Topeka: I didn't start working at KLS until August, 2020, so I missed out on the first work from home wave but I realized this pandemic would change my life when I walked into an office of continuous Zoom meetings and Zoom court hearings as well as wearing masks 24/7 throughout the office, and spreading out in the lunchroom to make sure we all stayed safe while still being able to eat lunch together.



Photo by
Lindsev Schmeidler, Kansas City



Photo by Kaden Lonard, Son of Kerrie Lonard, Topeka

Phon Sounakhen, Manhattan: I don't know that I ever felt it was a lasting effect so I don't have a point where I felt the pandemic would change my life.

Okay, as I typed that I would now say, in March 2021, when the vaccines started rolling out. Not knowing how it will be and when it will be that we will meet with clients in our office and physically be in Court. I know attorneys and judges who have had lasting side effects of having contracted COVID, yet I know attorneys who don't fear it and have no intentions of getting the vaccine, so how will the new normal be? If I think back, maybe July 2020 when I realize kids weren't going back to school for the fall school year and realize we were in it until 2021.

Randy Hoerschgen, Mediation - Topeka: I was at home watching a St. Louis Cardinals Spring training baseball game. At least I thought I was going to...the Pandemic didn't hit me until I watched the baseball players being pulled from the field. I remember getting a chill through my body...this is when I thought that the pandemic might last for a few months...then I saw my wife, who is a nurse at the University of Missouri Hospital come home from work with some horror stories about how sick her patients had become and how quickly their respiratory status changed for the worse...she was so concerned about the hospital not having all they needed to protect the staff...one physician became very ill and was hospitalized...I knew from there that this was going to be a serious - long and drawn out time for everyone...chills again....

Marilyn Harp: First staff meeting on a Zoom call to train all staff on using Ring Central from home.

Kym Walker, Wichita: No, the pandemic didn't change my life. Good to be employed and still have the ability to still help out folks during that time.



Photo by Samantha Rucker, Wichita

2020 KANSAS LEGAL SERVICES ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2020, despite the pandemic that closed courts and administrative agencies for several months, Kansas Legal Services provided life changing services in the following manner:

- 446** Victims of domestic violence obtained a Final Protection from Abuse order, through the representation of a KLS advocate and funded by a variety of sources, including the Victims Of Crime Act (VOCA) funding, including stability for 606 children
- 206** Adults and children received steady monthly income from Social Security or SSI disability benefits, putting over \$1.146 million in the Kansas economy
- 3,095** Kansans completed divorce forms through the Free Legal Forms page on the KLS website, which has 28 sets of legal forms available
- 1,250** Veterans or their families sought legal advice or representation
- 163** Clients received legal assistance for expungement of criminal conviction or arrest, 650 used online forms for self-representation in expungement process
- 466** Cases were mediated, involving employment or family issues
- 40** Kansas families got a fresh financial start from a bankruptcy filed by KLS offices, resulting in \$4.9 million in debt relief
- 220** Families met their child's special needs, due to successful Children's disability and Medicare benefit claims, funded by the Kansas Department for Children and Families
- 394** Kansas families received specialized assistance with keeping children out of foster care through the Kansas Legal Services' KIN TECH program, to promote permanency for Kansas kids.
- 1,619** Hours of legal services provided at no cost to 326 clients from 88 private attorneys, through KLS pro bono program
- 518** Parents received child support orders in divorce and paternity cases, represented by KLS staff, for 1,059 children
- 58** Attorneys and paralegals provide high quality, effective legal advocacy for low income Kansans
- 4,649** Hours were contributed by 29 law school volunteers to advance the legal needs of 1,439 KLS clients, preparing them to continue to give back during their careers on a pro bono basis
- 8,630** Clients received timely legal advice as they faced family law, housing, consumer related or other crises in their lives
- 24,959** Applicants for KLS service, including 17,045 handled by the Central Intake Unit
- 12,086** Applicants completed the online application form to make an initial request for services
- 2,205** Self-represented persons had questions answered through the Live Chat feature on the KLS website
- 334,006** Unique visitors to the KLS website (each counted once) with 871,478 page views on www.kansaslegalservices.org
- \$78,255** Donated to KLS by legal community supporters of our work.

Elizabeth Ferguson Award 2020 Recipient: CASEY JOHNSON

Casey started his journey at KLS as an intern. In 2013 Casey was hired as a receptionist at the Topeka office. Since then, Casey has transitioned from receptionist, to Staff Attorney, to his current role, Assistant Managing Attorney of the Kansas City office.

Casey has provided equal access to justice for Kansans by tackling housing issues, foreclosures, and landlord-tenant disputes. Casey's dedication to his work has resulted in a substantial benefit to both clients and the client community.

Casey put hundreds of hours into one case. The case was complicated, and he faced a difficult adverse attorney. Casey was well-prepared, impassioned, and skillful. After a year of complex litigation, Casey won his client her home outright, plus punitive damages for the abuse his client suffered at the hands of her ex-husband. In addition to securing her home and winning punitive damages, Casey helped his client cut ties with her abusive and manipulative ex-husband. Casey changed his client's life.

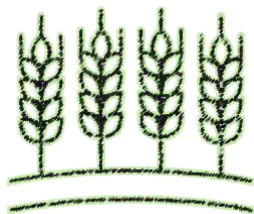
Not only does Casey impact individual clients, he also impacts client communities. When the pandemic hit, Casey became an expert in housing. Several organizations asked Casey to give presentations. He

used this opportunity to educate the public and direct service providers about tenants' rights. He is involved in at least three or four committees to try to obtain additional CARES Act funding for KLS so that we can assist even more people in the community facing housing issues.



Left, Alexandra English, Managing Attorney, KLS-KC, giving the award to Casey Johnson, right.

In addition to Casey's client-centric work, he diligently pursues administrative duties and supervises interns and staff. This summer Casey supervised at least five housing interns and worked on housing cases across Kansas. No matter how busy he was, Casey made time for interns to answer their questions and help with cases. Casey's leadership has been crucial to KLS's ability to help clients.



STATEWIDE PRO BONO SERVICES

KLS THANKS ALL OF OUR PRO BONO ATTORNEYS!

KLS recruited private attorneys to provide legal assistance to 326 clients in 2020. These attorneys provided 1,619 hours of legal services at no cost.

KLS was fortunate to have 29 law school volunteers who contributed 4,649 hours to address the legal needs of 1,439 KLS clients.

KLS – KANSAS BAR FOUNDATION EXPUNGEMENT PROJECT

Expungements help low-income Kansans compete for better jobs. The KLS volunteer Lawyer Program, led by Pro Bono Director, Christine Campbell, partnered with local bar associations and a corporation to conduct expungement clinics in several locations. The clinics enhance the local bar's benevolent community reputation.

The Saline County expungement project is almost complete. We had over 100 applicants. Of the 100 applicants, 61 were eligible with 175 eligible cases. With 16 volunteer attorneys each taking more than one expungement case, we had more cases than we could handle! We diverted 18 individuals and their 42 county cases to the Harvard project and left 39 participants, or 125 total cases, to be done by volunteers.

EVICTIION DEFENSE

We originally prepared for a wave of evictions in the spring of 2020. After several moratorium extensions, evictions are delayed, but inevitable. We are creating a virtual Kansas Eviction Help Desk. Since our last CLE on this topic was in the spring of 2020, we are hoping to keep delaying the kickoff for such a program, while monitoring the needs of Kansans. We do not want to lose trained volunteers because there was a lag between training and kick off. Firms in KC have indicated their interest in a program, so please spread the word among the public and attorneys about this opportunity.



Photo by Shawn Dodds, Husband of Heather Dodds,
Administration

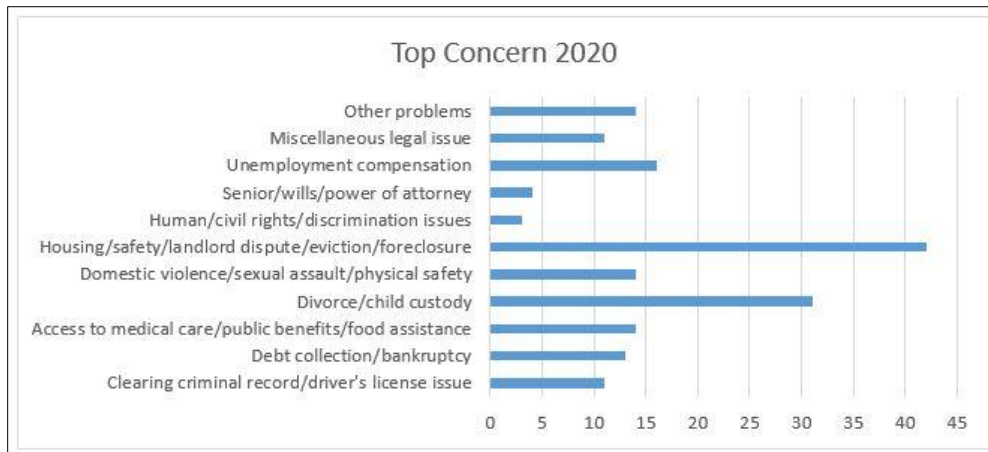
2020 LEGAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

KLS conducts periodic needs assessments to: 1) prioritize services to attend to Kansans' most urgent or unmet legal needs; 2) reevaluate long-term strategic planning; and 3) ascertain emerging or evolving legal issues.

This year's assessment was critical. The COVID-19 pandemic magnified impoverished and marginalized communities' legal needs. The assessment found that 8 out of 10 families felt they were "struggling to get by." The majority of households reported two or more legal needs without about half that were not being addressed. Many of the problems were exacerbated by the pandemic and the resulting financial crisis.

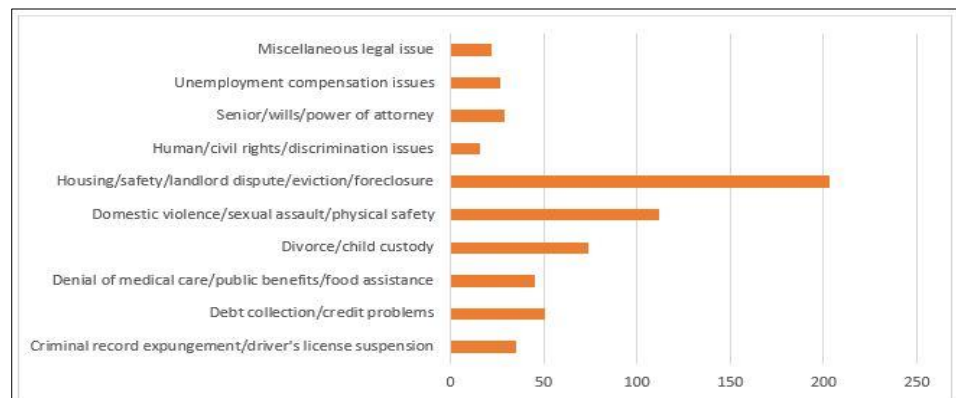
KLS surveyed three groups to evaluate low income Kansans' perceived legal needs during the pandemic. The groups surveyed were: 1) consumers (website users); 2) court personnel (attorneys, clerks, and Judges); and 3) community services staff (advocates, social workers, counselors, etc.) Three needs received the most responses: 1) housing; 2) domestic abuse and family law; and 3) legal issues impacting employability. The intensity of responses showed that these areas are extremely important in KLS's client communities' lives.

Consumers, court personnel, and community services staff cited housing as low income Kansans' greatest legal need. Court personnel were considerably more likely than community services staff to cite divorce/custody and domestic violence as the greatest legal need. Community services staff highlighted denial of benefits (such as food assistance or medical care) or unemployment compensation issues as low income Kansans' primary legal need.



CONSUMERS

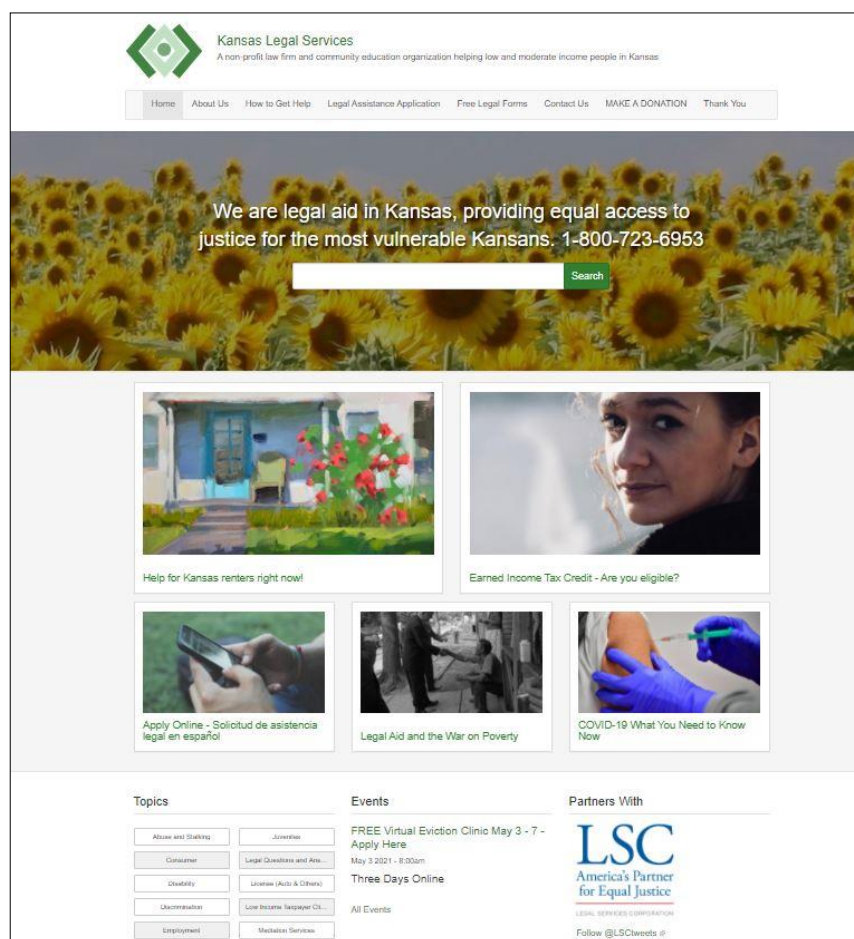
**COURT PERSONNEL
AND
COMMUNITY
SERVICES STAFF**



KANSAS LEGAL SERVICES WEBSITE

In 2020, kansaslegalservices.org had 334,006 unique visitors (a 1.3 % increase over 2019) who viewed 871,478 pages (a -3% decrease over 2019) in 462,279 sessions. The website received 61.2% of its traffic from mobile devices.

An analysis of the usage of the kansaslegalservices.org website showed that over 20,000 users viewed the webpage on “Tenant Issues and Rights for Kansas Renters” just between September 1, 2020 to February 2, 2021.



Kansans also depend on the Kansas Legal Services website to keep them informed on issues with housing such as moratoria on prevention of evictions and foreclosures and how to apply for relief, issues which have changed end-dates and requirements almost weekly. KLS legal staff was ready to assist families with applications for financial assistance and in working with landlords to negotiate terms to prevent evictions.

In calendar year 2020, many new webpages were posted for users of the website to deal with specific issues related to COVID-19, and informational resources for those looking for up-to-date

requirements for applications (i.e., expanded SNAP benefits and food security issues, stimulus payments, foreclosure and eviction prevention/relief programs, extended unemployment benefits, general legal questions about COVID-19).

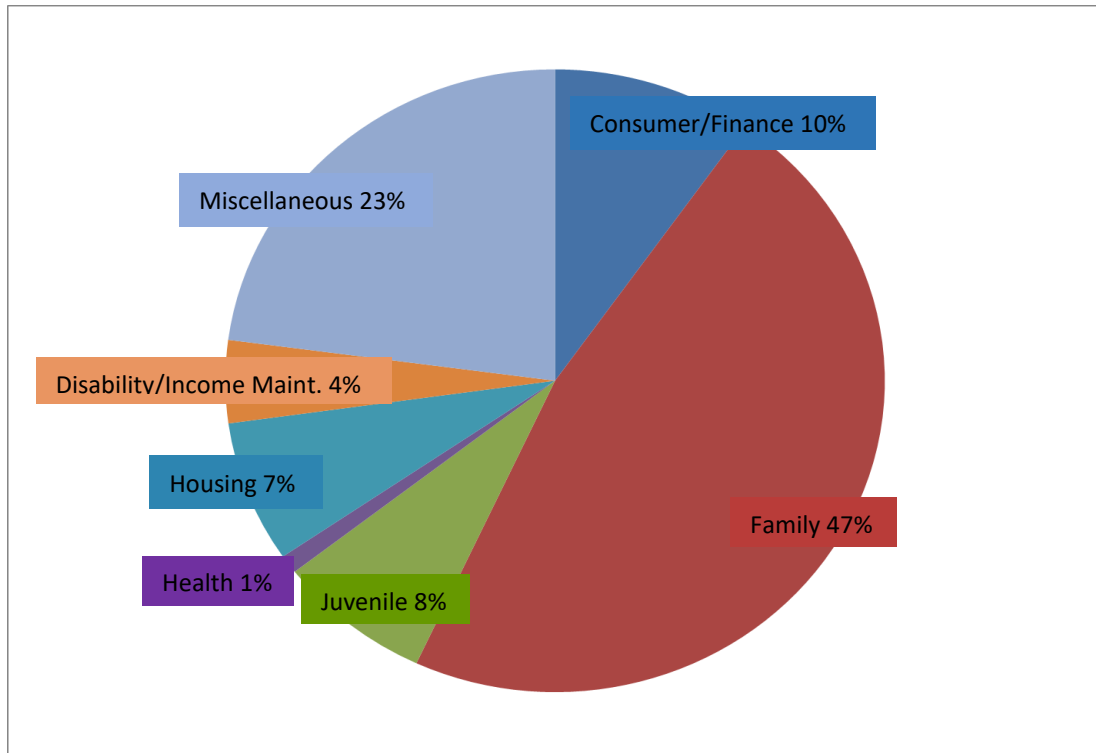
These COVID-related pages were viewed over 25,000 times in 2020. Another feature that was added to the special COVID-19 issues webpage was a link to a Survey Monkey form where people could anonymously ask their own questions and get the answer online within two days.

CASE TOTALS

		2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Consumer/Finance	Advice & Brief Service	1,240	1,480	1,301	1,261	1,358	1,627
	Representation	120	144	226	201	200	160
	Other Service	476	730	790	757	637	621
	Mediation	0	0	0	2	0	1
	Total	1,836	2,354	2,317	2,221	2,195	2,409
Family	Advice & Brief Service	4,625	5,213	3,921	4,107	4,430	5,185
	Representation	2,162	2,734	3,224	3,232	3,258	2,998
	Other Service	1,928	2,756	3,323	3,902	4,451	4,529
	Mediation	131	134	138	106	143	125
	Total	8,846	10,837	10,606	11,347	12,282	12,837
Juvenile	Advice & Brief Service	326	360	240	226	240	326
	Representation	917	1,085	1,089	955	1,135	1,101
	Other Service	174	407	458	475	404	481
	Mediation	6	4	11	7	2	6
	Total	1,423	1,856	1,798	1,663	1,781	1,914
Health	Advice & Brief Service	153	907	154	222	230	231
	Representation	12	62	31	24	23	2
	Other Service	16	26	40	47	36	30
	Mediation	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Total	181	995	225	293	289	264
Housing	Advice & Brief Service	1,025	1,410	1,021	930	1,098	1,342
	Representation	118	109	351	305	314	41
	Other Service	234	223	220	166	97	85
	Mediation	4	1	3	0	3	1
	Total	1,381	1,743	1,595	1,401	1,512	1,469
Disability/Income Maint.	Advice & Brief Service	288	240	159	207	247	400
	Representation	399	613	724	696	721	693
	Other Service	118	193	313	258	229	158
	Mediation	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	805	1,046	1,196	1,161	1,197	1,251
Miscellaneous*	Advice & Brief Service	2,229	1,804	1,427	828	988	2,313
	Representation	1,266	1,399	2,152	1,894	1,978	669
	Other Service	477	649	700	645	414	371
	Mediation	327	158	150	135	121	130
	Total	4,299	4,010	4,429	3,502	3,501	3,483
	TOTAL CASES	18,771	22,841	22,166	21,588	22,757	23,627

*includes education, employment, individual rights, Indian/Tribal law, wills, criminal/juvenile defense.

CASE DISTRIBUTION



*Includes education, employment, individual rights, Indian/Tribal law, wills, criminal/juvenile defense

CLIENT PROFILES IN 2020

GENDER

Female	10,060
Male	4,862
Transgender	16
TOTAL	14,938

AGE/ETHNICITY

Ethnicity	Under 18	18-35	36-59	60 & over	Total
Asian	4	62	63	19	148
Black	225	723	746	310	2,004
Hispanic	85	508	437	100	1,130
Multi-Racial	5	260	145	44	454
Nat Haw/Other Pac Islander	0	9	5	3	17
Native American	5	88	90	40	223
Nat Amer/Alaskan Native	5	7	6	6	24
Other Race	14	100	90	37	241
White	1,202	3,692	3,568	2,235	10,697
Total	1,545	5,449	5,150	2,794	14,938

MIDLAND MEDIATION AND SETTLEMENT SERVICES

MEDIATION SERVICES PROGRAM OVERVIEW

What is mediation?

Mediation is a voluntary process in which a trained mediator facilitates communication and negotiation between parties in dispute. The goal of mediation is to facilitate greater understanding between parties in dispute, and attempt to reach an agreement that settles the dispute in a mutually satisfactory manner.

Mediations are conducted at a neutral location and in an informal and non-threatening environment. During the process, all participants have the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings regarding the matter in dispute. With the mediator, all individuals collectively create an agenda, identify the issue in dispute, define each individual's interests and create mutual agreement resolving the dispute as determined by the parties.

The KLS mediation program has four approved mediators on staff and three contract mediators providing civil rights, employment, domestic, juvenile permanency, insurance and other mediation services throughout the state. Mediation services complement the work of KLS by providing a non-adversarial dispute resolution method for appropriate cases.

- **Access to Justice (ATJ) Mediations** are funded by the Office of Judicial Administration under the direction of the Kansas Supreme Court. ATJ funding enables parties' access to KLS offices for mediation services at no cost to participants who qualify. Most ATJ mediations involve post-divorce custody and parenting time issues.

- **Human Rights Mediations** offer voluntary mediation to individuals involved in employment, housing and public accommodation discrimination claims filed with the Kansas Human Rights Commission.

- **For Fee Mediations** are offered to parties in domestic matters on a sliding fee basis when neither party is ATJ-eligible, and is available to parties in some civil matters at a reasonable hourly rate.

For More Information, Please Call 785-232-5348



Photo by Michele Davis, Central Intake

FUNDING AND STAFF FIGURES

YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2020

WITH COMPARATIVE TOTALS 2017 - 2019

	2020	2019	2018	2017
Legal Services Corporation	\$3,226,366	\$2,892,791	\$2,861,021	\$2,633,406
Department of DCF – State of Kansas	297,541	240,503	206,094	200,183
Access to Justice	799,998	800,000	800,002	794,300
Kansas Governor’s Grant Program	799,010	671,791	518,397	533,933
Kansas Housing Resource Center - KEPP	5,750	0	0	0
IOLTA & Bar Sponsored	164,405	206,164	245,476	322,625
Kansas Bar Foundation	290,747	323,104	298,200	180,307
Lawyer Giving	83,515	56,606	47,931	45,098
City/County Grants	651,569	739,370	729,809	773,867
Area Agencies on Aging	281,388	305,356	300,388	300,888
United Way	131,983	135,060	143,582	162,114
U.S. Department of Justice	0	150,181	193,310	178,166
Low Income Taxpayer Clinic	44,563	44,924	43,815	42,107
Mediation Contracts & Fees	115,000	115,000	115,000	115,000
Medical-Legal Partnerships	120,000	120,000	119,332	120,000
Independence Charitable Trust	175,632	168,694	160,889	155,000
Court Awards	197,942	283,163	333,716	404,269
Cy Pres Awards	0	0	5,504	10,596
Interest Income	15,681	12,552	7,725	2,296
Farm Counseling	0	700	4,908	7,920
Other Miscellaneous	100,627	92,575	84,368	111,882
Computer Training	0	0	1,900	9,600
Total Revenues	<u>\$7,501,717</u>	<u>\$7,358,534</u>	<u>\$7,221,365</u>	<u>\$7,103,557</u>

STAFF TOTALS

	2020	2019	2018	2017
Full-time equivalent employees	96.5	94.9	97.3	104

EXPENSES

YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2020

WITH COMPARATIVE TOTALS FOR 2017 - 2019

	2020	2019	2018	2017
Salaries	\$4,763,388	\$4,728,872	\$4,622,230	\$4,460,628
Employee Benefits & Payroll Taxes	1,150,540	1,184,437	1,107,908	1,100,626
Rent, Parking, Utilities & Maintenance	566,887	541,614	590,174	554,034
Equipment Rental and Maintenance	66,668	54,286	80,866	45,991
Office Supplies, Printing & Postage	102,261	105,341	108,281	106,394
Telephone	110,633	110,663	116,584	109,009
Travel	20,291	71,895	76,727	70,030
Training	27,543	52,874	49,542	41,115
Electronic Research & Library	71,442	66,833	55,172	27,472
Insurance	41,789	44,749	40,966	37,454
Litigation Expenses	31,586	26,311	24,379	25,027
Audit, Consulting & Contract Services	162,329	248,637	239,930	189,726
Private Bar Involvement	51,276	43,422	46,701	48,509
Depreciation	40,790	39,254	33,387	48,037
Other	60,292	69,453	79,757	77,703
Total Expenses	<u>\$7,267,715</u>	<u>\$7,388,641</u>	<u>\$7,272,604</u>	<u>\$6,941,755</u>

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Attorney
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Term: 2019-2022

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Term: 2018 - 2021

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Executive Director: Marilyn Harp

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316-265-9681 telephone
316-265-5902 fax
Managing Attorney: Rhonda Sullivan

Application Line:

1-800-723-6953

Or apply online:

www.kansaslegalservices.org

What are you most proud of accomplishing for KLS clients during the pandemic?

Along with asking when they knew their lives were going to be changed by the pandemic, KLS staff was also asked what they and their colleagues accomplished during 2020.

Tabitha Hasting, Central Intake: I am most proud to be able to provide a sense of comfort, however small it may be, to anyone who calls in.

Casey Johnson, Kansas City: Over the Summer and into the Fall of 2020, KLS used CARES Act funding to hire paid interns to advise clients. I supervised five of them and we advised tenants from across the state on eviction issues and the many eviction and foreclosure moratoriums. Later in the year, I submitted joint applications with the United Way and several other organizations that provide rent and utility assistance for additional CARES Act and CDBG funding. With the funding, we were able to hire two temporary, full-time employees to assist tenants with COVID-19 related issues in Johnson, Wyandotte, and Leavenworth counties.

Jeff McAdams, Hays: I was most proud to be able to continue to provide the same level of service as before the pandemic.

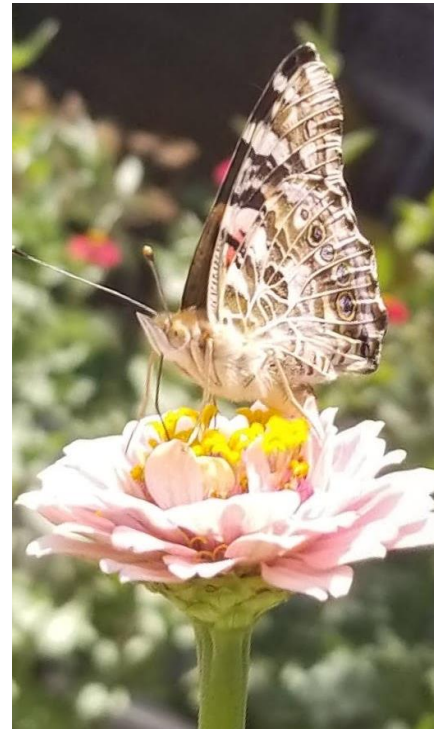


Photo by Michele Davis, Central Intake



Photo by Dorothy Burgess, Wichita

Marilyn Harp: Our ability at all levels to do a quick pivot out of the office, but always at work. From Admin staff who planned how to support this effort and, for example, got Ring Central set up on a Saturday, so it was ready to go for our first work from home day, to ordering printers and other things for staff success at work from home.

For the staff who thought through what they would need to be most successful from home offices and ask for it. For intake, who didn't miss a beat in picking up tower computers, making a place for using them at home, plugging them in to a computer system at home and continuing the client eligibility process.



Photo by Gina Hammersmith, Salina

Randy Hoerschgen, Mediation: I am proud of being able to still give people the access to justice/the legal system that they need. By utilizing our technology and finding a way to move forward, we helped give people confidence through a sense of normalcy, that we will make it through this together finding alternative ways to do so. Congratulations to everyone!

Ty Wheeler, Emporia: I was surprised how well we adjusted to all of the changes. We were able to service all our client's needs despite everything. We moved to doing most hearings by Zoom with ease. We handled the few Covid scares with little disruption. And then made some physical changes to the office to allow us to come back to the office with far less risk.



Photo by Charity Schmidt, Wife of William Schmidt, Kansas City



Photo by Michele Davis, Central Intake

Cinthia Terrazas, Topeka: I am most proud of KLS still being able to assist as many people as we can even with a pandemic going on. I am impressed at how our office has adapted so well to communicating to our clients by phone or email as efficiently as we probably would have in person and as well as helping out clients with Zoom hearings and making sure they are still understanding the process while being remote. KLS staff has been not only been on top of it but caring as well with understanding the difficulties our clients are facing during the pandemic but still provided the best services we can.

Jessena Schultze, Pittsburg: I'm pleased that we've all worked together as a team to ensure that our clients can still access services. Back in April 2020, with the assistance of her son, I managed to coordinate with an 87-year old client who had very limited computer literacy skills to get documents electronically signed for a PFA. She even attended the hearing by Zoom. Managing COVID procedures and Zoom hearings has been a challenge for us all this year, but I'm proud of the way we have risen to the occasion.

Melissa Nolte, Administration: I was incredibly proud of all KLS staff and how everyone adapted to a very stressful and challenging situation. We found ways to work out every obstacle. It was really amazing.



Photo by Lindsey Schmeidler, Kansas City

Andrea Lichter, Topeka: Our continued commitment to be accessible to our surrounding community. As a receptionist working with Ring Central for the first time I thought it would never equate to the system we have in our actual office, there's no way it could work out without our staff being able to directly communicate face to face. That was until hearing the gratitude from our callers who expressed such great difficulty trying to get a hold of their other resources; how afraid they were that we wouldn't be able to help them during the pandemic; and just how relieved they were to still be able to speak and work with us, it really made me step back and think about how so many of us stepped up so our clientele would know that we were still there for them even if they couldn't come see us face to face. I love working somewhere where I know without a doubt that we help people even while struggling ourselves.

Working for KLS for the past almost 4 years has definitely been crazy and I can say with 100% certainty that 2020 was by far the craziest, but we did it!!

Phon Sounakhen, Manhattan: Helping a lot of them get their stimulus checks from adverse, providing safety to protection order clients/cases from not having to personally physically see their abusers to get a protection order. I think we've effectively utilized Zoom to meet with clients and their advocates.

Michele Davis, Central Intake: As I imagine many others will share, the speed of our transition from working in the office to using Ring Central and working remotely was astounding... simply astounding. Thank you KLS Admin for the speedy Ring Central coordination! I was also incredibly proud of how staff embraced setting up cameras for weekly meetings that allowed us to see each other and more fully connect with/support each other through a very strange and stressful time. They also didn't hesitate when I asked that they update their Ring Central caller i.d. to allow callers a direct route back to them if needed.

Photo by Gina Hammersmith, Salina



