

LEGAL SERVICES OF THE HUDSON VALLEY OVERVIEW

The mission of Legal Services of the Hudson Valley is to provide high quality counsel in civil matters for poor and low-income individuals and families and other vulnerable persons who do not have access to the legal representation needed to meet their basic needs.

Founded in 1967, Legal Services of the Hudson Valley (LSHV) is a not-for-profit law firm ensuring fairness in legal proceedings, so that those who cannot afford an attorney in civil (non-criminal) cases have protection and are afforded their legal rights.

There is no charge for our services. We believe everyone has the right to equal justice regardless of the ability to pay.



Agency-wide, we have **165 staff**, including **100 attorneys** and **30 paralegals**.

Assistance We Provide:

Full Representation - an attorney or legal advocate in court or at a hearing at an official agency;

Advice & Counsel - consultation in person or by phone;

Community Legal Education - education about legal rights and responsibilities.

Areas of Expertise:

- Consumer
- Crime Victims
- Disabilities Law
- Domestic Violence & Family Law
- Elder Law
- HIV/AIDS
- Housing & Homelessness Prevention
- Income Maintenance & Public Benefits
- LGBTQ
- Veterans & Military Families

In order to access most of our services, a family's income must be **at or below 200%** of the poverty level (\$52,400 for a family of four in 2020).



There are approximately **535,078** persons **eligible for our services** in New York's Hudson Valley.

In **2019**, Legal Services of the Hudson Valley handled **14,643 cases**, benefiting **33,523 household members**.

Legal Services of the Hudson Valley generated some **\$60,000,000** in taxpayer savings in 2018-2019.



Legal Services of the Hudson Valley 2019 By The Numbers

Main Office: 90 Maple Avenue, White Plains, NY 10601

Tel. (914) 949-1305 · www.lshv.org

LSC America's Partner
for Equal Justice
LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

approximately

535,078

Hudson Valley residents
eligible for our assistance



165



staff members including

including

100 attorneys

and

30 paralegals

in 10 offices across
the Hudson Valley



14,643

cases handled

33,523

individuals impacted
in all households served

including



4,062

seniors



12,848

children

11,427

clients served, including

1,823

domestic violence survivors

4,498

persons with disabilities



70% of our
clients are women



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2020 KEY STAFF MEMBERS

Barbara Finkelstein
Chief Executive Officer

Rachel Chazin Halperin
Chief Program Officer

Maureen Fox
Chief Development Officer

Myra Loewenstein
Chief Financial Officer

Sheeba Mathai
Chief Diversity Officer and Attorney-in-Charge,
Spring Valley Office

Lara Kasper-Buckareff
Program Director

Mary Grace Feron
Program Manager,
Disability and Public Benefits Legal Services

Shira Galinsky
Supervising Attorney – Intake, White Plains

Joanne Labrusciano
Director, Grant Initiatives & Reporting

Christopher Oldi
Pro Bono Director

Melinda Bellus
Attorney-in-Charge, Yonkers Office

Jill Bradshaw-Soto
Attorney-in-Charge, Mount Vernon Office

Erin Burud
Attorney-in-Charge, Kingston Office

Sarah Maida
Attorney-in-Charge, Goshen Office

Shary Sanchez
Attorney-in-Charge, Peekskill Office

Rachel Saunders
Attorney-in-Charge, Poughkeepsie Office

Rachel Simons
Attorney-in-Charge, Newburgh & Monticello
Offices

Joanne Sirotkin
Attorney-in-Charge, White Plains Office

BIOS

Barbara Finkelstein
Chief Executive Officer

Barbara Finkelstein oversees every aspect of Legal Services of the Hudson Valley (LSHV), the largest provider of free civil legal services to almost 600,000 poor and low-income individuals in Westchester, Putnam, Dutchess, Orange, Rockland, Sullivan and Ulster Counties.

Since Ms. Finkelstein became Executive Director in 1995 and now CEO, Legal Services of the Hudson Valley has increased its budget by eightfold, and has grown to a 154-person staff with a \$18 million-dollar budget and ten offices. She is the first woman to lead the organization.

Ms. Finkelstein's accomplishments on behalf of Legal Services of the Hudson Valley are many. Under her leadership LSHV has made great strides in securing funding from public and private sources to increase services to low income residents of the Hudson Valley facing civil legal problems affecting the necessities of life. Motivated by a desire to make justice a promise for every member of society, Ms. Finkelstein created partnerships with governments, community-based organizations, and law schools to ensure solutions to the problems facing the low-income population. She has expanded free civil legal services to the neediest and

most marginalized communities in the seven-county region to make justice a reality for every member of society.

Among her many achievements are the creation of domestic violence, family law, children's advocacy, veterans and military families, foreclosure and LGBTQ units. Significantly in 2014 Ms. Finkelstein created an LSHV affiliate, the Hudson Valley Justice Center, to serve clients without status whom LSHV cannot serve due to Legal Services Corporation restrictions. Prior to joining LSHV, Ms. Finkelstein was the Assistant Project Director at Queens Legal Services where she directed services to clients and assisted with overall program operations.

In addition to her leadership of LSHV, Ms. Finkelstein is a member of Chief Justice Janet DiFiore's Permanent Commission on Access to Civil Legal Services in New York, The New York State Bar Association's Committee on Legal Aid, Vice President of the New York Legal Services Coalition, and Secretary of the Board of NonProfit Westchester.

Ms. Finkelstein received her J.D. from Rutgers School of Law – Newark, and her B.A. from Hunter College of the City University of New York.

Related Experience

Permanent Commission on Access to Civil Legal Services in New York
Board of Directors, New York Legal Services Coalition
New York State Bar Association's Committee on Legal Aid
Board of Directors, Nonprofit Westchester

Rachel Chazin Halperin

Chief Program Officer

Rachel Chazin Halperin, J.D., L.M.S.W., has been working as an advocate for underserved and vulnerable populations for the last 20 years. After graduating from law school, Rachel worked for four years as a staff attorney and then supervising attorney at the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia where she represented victims of domestic violence in family court. In 2004, Rachel became the Legal Director of My Sisters' Place, the largest domestic violence service provider in Westchester, NY. From 2008 - 2014, Rachel worked at HELP USA as the Executive Director of Domestic Violence Programs – including HELP Haven emergency shelter and HELP ROADS non-residential domestic violence program.

While at HELP USA, Rachel started several programs including a Transitional Housing Project, Economic Empowerment Program, and Trauma-Informed Childcare Center. Rachel received her J.D. from New York University School of Law and her M.S.W. from New York University School of Social Work. She received her B.A. in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania.

Rachel sits on the Board of Directors of the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Maureen Fox

Chief Development Officer

Maureen A. Fox joined the Legal Services team in December 2019 as the Chief Development Officer. She has spent her career dedicated to improving the communities in which she lived and worked through raising funds and awareness for many important causes. As Chief Development Officer she is responsible for the strategic fundraising and communications avenues of the organization in order to further the mission of Legal Services of the Hudson Valley.

Having begun her career as a paralegal in the Brooklyn District Attorney's office, she decided to devote the remainder to the non-profit sector after graduate school. Maureen has over 25 years of experience as a non-profit executive and communications professional with a demonstrated history of working in the social service sector.

Her previous role was Vice President of External Relations and Communications at Little Flower Children and Family Services of NY where she was responsible for building partnerships and collaborations with local government, schools, community members and individuals. Prior to this she was the Director of Development where she built a strong fundraising and communications department to meet the needs of the organization.

Maureen earned her BS from St. John's University and an MPA from Baruch College. In addition, she is a Certified Fundraising Executive.

Myra Loewenstein

Chief Financial Officer

Myra Loewenstein joined the Legal Services of the Hudson Valley Finance & Administration team in 2012 as Assistant Director of Finance. Previously she served in a number of corporate finance and consulting roles, including both start-up and large corporations. Most notable is her experience in the publishing industry—Reader's Digest & Thomson Corporation (now Thomson Reuters). Her responsibilities included director positions in Finance and Reporting.

Myra has a B.A. in International Studies from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and an M.B.A from Columbia Business School.

Sheeba Mathai

Chief Diversity Officer and Attorney-in-Charge, Spring Valley Office

As Chief Diversity Officer, Sheeba Roy Mathai is responsible for leading the agency's initiatives around Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. Sheeba is also Attorney in Charge of LSHV's Spring Valley office, which serves residents of Rockland County. Sheeba began working as a Staff Attorney in the Domestic Violence Unit of Legal Services of the Hudson Valley's Yonkers office in March 2011. In that capacity, she represented victims of domestic violence in family offense and custody proceedings. Prior to joining Legal Services of the Hudson Valley, Sheeba also worked briefly as a New York City public school teacher of students receiving special education services.

Sheeba received her J.D. degree from the University of Connecticut School of Law, where she was enrolled in the school's Asylum and Human Rights Clinic. There she successfully represented a client with developmental disabilities who had been persecuted in his home country throughout his asylum application process. Sheeba attended George Washington University, and graduated with a Bachelor of Business Administration.

Lara Kasper-Buckareff

Program Director

Ms. Kasper-Buckareff assists the management team in addressing systemic legal issues affecting LSHV's clients, procuring funding, contract oversight, and agency-wide programming. She also oversees LSHV's foreclosure prevention practice program-wide. From 2008 until 2012 when she joined the management team, Ms. Kasper-Buckareff was a Staff Attorney at Legal Services of the Hudson Valley, gaining diverse experience representing persons with disabilities in related civil matters, survivors of domestic violence in family court and matrimonial matters, and low-income children and their families in various matters such as special education, Medicaid denials, Section 8 terminations and school disciplinary matters.

Prior to joining Legal Services of the Hudson Valley, Ms. Kasper-Buckareff was an attorney at the Workers' Rights Law Center of New York, Farmworker Legal Services of New York, and MidPenn Legal Services. Ms. Kasper-Buckareff is licensed to practice law in New York and Pennsylvania. She received her JD and MSW from SUNY Buffalo, and her BA from California State University, Fullerton.

Mary Grace Ferone

Program Manager, Disability and Public Benefits Legal Services

Ms. Ferone has dedicated her entire career to working with low-income and disabled New Yorkers. She began her career in legal services in a small field office near the Canadian border where she represented clients with serious physical and mental disabilities. Ms. Ferone then represented low-income persons in housing matters at Queens Legal Services. A native of Westchester, Ms. Ferone returned home in 1999 to work in the mental health unit of Legal Services of the Hudson Valley (LSHV). From 2001-2014, Ms. Ferone was managing attorney of LSHV's White Plains office (2001-2010) and LSHV's Yonkers office (2011-2014).

Currently, Ms. Ferone serves as Program Manager, Disability and Public Benefits Legal Services at Legal Services of the Hudson Valley. Ms. Ferone welcomes this opportunity to work more closely with case handlers on client issues and litigation.

Active in the community, Ms. Ferone spends her time away from the office devoted to other organizations that advance the cause of justice. She is the current Board Chair of CHOICE, a Westchester based not-for-profit organization that provides peer advocacy services for persons with serious and persistent mental illness; a mentor with the Her Honor Mentoring program; a board member of the Max Michael Rosenfield Foundation dedicated to children's sports and literacy; and a member of the Westchester Women's Agenda.

Ms. Ferone received her law degree from Franklin Pierce Law Center (University of New Hampshire) and BA from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Related Experience:

Member, Westchester Disability Advocacy Partnership
Past Board Member - Careers for People with Disabilities, Family Ties, New York State Civil Liberties Union
Former White Plains Democratic District Leader

Shira Galinsky

Supervising Attorney, Intake - White Plains

Shira Galinsky oversees Legal Services of the Hudson Valley's central telephone intake unit, where she ensures that the unit's dedicated attorneys and paralegals provide efficient, compassionate, and thorough services to callers seeking assistance from LSHV. Prior to becoming the Supervising Attorney for the Intake Unit, Shira worked for ten years at South Brooklyn Legal Services, representing clients in housing, foreclosure, disability, and domestic violence cases. She has also served as a research associate at the Midtown Community Court in Manhattan and a program associate in the Immigration Intervention Project at Sanctuary for Families. Shira is admitted to practice law in New York State.

She received her BA in economics from Columbia University and her JD from CUNY Law School, where she was a member of the International Women's Human Rights clinic and served on the editorial board of the New York City Law Review.

Joanne Labrusciano

Director, Grant Initiatives & Reporting, Headquarters

Joanne Labrusciano heads the organization's grant initiatives and both internal and external reporting. Her responsibilities include oversight of (1) reviewing Requests for Proposals and other public funding opportunities, writing proposals and applying to selected opportunities, disseminating award information and informing and developing strategies for implementation; (2) ensuring contract terms are agreeable and paperwork is properly executed; (3) primary liaison between LSHV funders and the program and finance staff; (4) ensuring preparation, efficiency and success for funders' monitoring visits; (5) arranging for contract renewal paperwork; (6) producing reports for internal and external use including productivity, contract fulfillment, performance metrics and special information requests for outreach and networking purposes and events; (7) reviewing database content to identify issues and propose solutions; (8) identifying opportunities, through technology and online tools, to extend LSHV's efficiency and reach to target populations.

Ms. Labrusciano joined Legal Services of the Hudson Valley in 2009 as Grants Manager in its White Plains office prior to assuming her current position. Her previous experience includes Wall Street investments, trading and financial analysis at a variety of firms including a large money market fund, primary money market dealer, primary government dealer, municipal bond insurer, money center bank's mortgage portfolio and a single strategy hedge fund.

She received her J.D. from Pace School of Law and has an M.B.A. in Finance from Fordham University, Lincoln Center. She received her B.A. in Modern Languages from Fordham College, Rose Hill campus.

Related Experience:

Pace Law Investors' Rights Clinic
LSC Innovations in Technology conferences

Christopher Oldi

Pro Bono Director

Christopher Oldi is the Pro Bono Director at Legal Services of the Hudson Valley (LSHV) where he oversees the implementation and development of pro bono programming in the agency. Prior to becoming the Pro Bono Director, Christopher was a Supervising Attorney in the Yonkers office, supervising staff attorneys and support staff. Christopher also spearheaded and served as the staff attorney of LSHV's LGBTQ Legal Project from 2015-2016, where he represented low income LGBTQ individuals in the Hudson Valley in areas such as discrimination, name changes, landlord/tenant matters, disability advocacy, and other civil legal services. Prior to joining LSHV in 2014, Christopher was an associate with the law firm of Wormser, Kiely, Galef & Jacobs LLP, where he specialized in municipal law.

Christopher attended Vassar College where he received a BA, with honors, in Psychology and Italian and then went on to earn his Juris Doctorate at CUNY School of Law at Queens College. Christopher is the chair of the Westchester County LGBTQ Advisory Board. Christopher is also on the Family and Matrimonial Committee of The LGBT Bar Association of Greater New York, as well as a member of the New York State Bar Association. Because of his community work throughout the County, the Westchester County Legislature have named two "Christopher Oldi" days in his honor – June 22, 2016 and September 28, 2017.

Melinda Bellus

Attorney-in-Charge, Yonkers Office

Melinda Bellus oversees Legal Services of the Hudson Valley's Yonkers office, where she leads a team of over 20 attorneys, paralegals, and support staff in delivering comprehensive legal services to residents of Westchester County. Her primary area of concentration is elder law. However, since joining Legal Services of the Hudson Valley in 1999, she has practiced in many areas including housing, government benefits, disability, and family law. Prior to supervising the Yonkers office, she was Attorney-in-Charge of our White Plains and Peekskill offices. Previously Ms. Bellus supervised our central intake unit. Ms. Bellus is a tireless advocate for seniors, and is committed to assisting seniors to remain in their homes. Her prior experience includes working as an associate in the law firm of Zeichner Ellman & Krause in New York City, where she practiced real estate law.

Melinda Bellus received her J.D. from the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, and a B.A. in political science and theatre arts from Hunter College of the City of New York.

Related Experience:

Co-chair of the Client and Consumer Issues Committee – Elder Law Section of the New York State Bar Association.

Jill Bradshaw-Soto

Attorney in Charge, Mount Vernon Office

Jill Bradshaw-Soto heads Legal Services of the Hudson Valley's office in Mount Vernon, which has one of the largest poor and low-income populations in Westchester. In addition to handling a full caseload of her own, she is responsible for case strategy and management, daily client intake, supervision and mentoring of staff. She also has built strong ties with the cities of Mount Vernon, New Rochelle and Pelham, as well as the many local non-profit organizations that address matters of concern to economically disadvantaged individuals and families. Ms. Bradshaw-Soto joined Legal Services of the Hudson Valley in 1998 as a housing attorney in its White Plains office and was subsequently named managing attorney of its Yonkers office prior to assuming her current position. Her prior experience includes work as a Special Assistant Corporation Counsel for the City of New York's Paternity and Support Unit and as a legal advocate in the Osborne Association's Alternative to Incarceration Program in the Bronx.

She received her J.D. from Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law and has a BS in Administration of Justice from Guilford College in Greensboro, NC. She received her paralegal certification from Mercy College.

Related Experience:

Member, Westchester Black Bar Association
St. Francis AME Zion Church — Missionary and Member of the New Life Choir

Erin Burud

Attorney-in-Charge, Kingston Office

Erin C. Burud is the Attorney in Charge of Legal Services of the Hudson Valley's Kingston Office where she oversees a staff of 12 attorneys, paralegals and support personnel. Prior to Attorney in Charge, Erin was a Supervising Attorney in Legal Services' Foreclosure Prevention Unit for Ulster, Dutchess, Sullivan and Orange counties and a Staff Attorney in Ulster County where she assisted homeowners seeking to avoid mortgage and tax foreclosure through bankruptcy, litigation, and *Pro Se* assistance.

She obtained her J.D. from Catholic University, Columbus School of Law, a B.A. in History from Catholic University of America and is admitted to practice law in New York.

Sarah Maida

Attorney-in-Charge, Goshen Office

Sarah Maida is the Attorney-in-Charge of Legal Services of the Hudson Valley's Goshen office, which serves Orange and Sullivan Counties. Sarah joined Legal Services of the Hudson Valley's Newburgh office as a law graduate in the Domestic Violence Unit in 2007. During her time as a staff attorney and senior staff attorney she also worked in the HIV Unit and on the Health Advocacy Project. Her practice areas included family law, housing law, public benefits, permanency planning, and consumer debt/bankruptcy. From 2015 to 2019 Sarah was the Supervising Attorney of the Newburgh office where she oversaw the Domestic Violence Unit and Disability Advocacy Project in Orange and Sullivan Counties.

Sarah received her J.D. from Case Western Reserve School of Law and has a dual degree in Philosophy and English from SUNY Albany. She currently sits on Newburgh Ministry's Board of Directors.

Shary Sanchez

Attorney-in-Charge, Peekskill Office

Shary Sanchez was promoted to Attorney-in-Charge of Legal Services of the Hudson Valley's Peekskill Office, which serves Northern Westchester and Putnam County. Ms. Sanchez joined Legal Services of the Hudson Valley in 2012 as a general practice Staff Attorney in White Plains where she provided legal assistance in eviction prevention, family law, public benefits, disability, and future planning matters. In 2015, Ms. Sanchez became the Supervising Attorney of the White Plains office, overseeing Housing, Public Benefits, the Disability Advocacy Project, the HIV Unit, and the LGBTQ Legal Project. From 2009 to 2012, Ms. Sanchez worked at the HIV Law Project in New York City where she provided civil legal assistance to individuals infected and affected with HIV/AIDS.

She attended NYC public schools and graduated from Binghamton University where she majored in Sociology & Africana Studies and minored in Latin American & Caribbean Area Studies. Upon graduating from college, Ms. Sanchez attended and graduated from The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law. Ms. Sanchez currently serves on the board of directors for The Loft LGBT Community Center; is a member of the Diversity Commission of the New York State Bar Association; and is a mentor with the Hispanic National Bar Association Law School Sin Limites Program.

Rachel Saunders

Attorney-in-Charge, Poughkeepsie Office

Rachel Saunders is the Attorney-in-Charge of Legal Services of the Hudson Valley's Dutchess County office, overseeing a staff of more than 15 attorneys, paralegals and support personnel. She joined Legal Services of the Hudson Valley's staff in June 2016.

Prior to joining Legal Services, Rachel Saunders was employed as an Associate Attorney with the Mental Hygiene Legal Service, which is a New York State agency responsible for representing, advocating and litigating on behalf of individuals receiving services for a mental disability. Ms. Saunders was previously at the Children's Law Center located in the Bronx, New York, representing children in family court proceedings. Prior to that Ms. Saunders spent over two years in Kabul, Afghanistan focused on issues of access to justice and training for criminal defense attorneys. Ms. Saunders' first legal position was as a criminal defense attorney at the Legal Aid Society in the Bronx, New York.

Rachel received her J.D. from Howard University School of Law in 2001.

Rachel Simons

Attorney-in-Charge, Newburgh & Monticello Offices

Rachel Simons oversees Legal Services of the Hudson Valley's Newburgh, Goshen and Monticello offices and leads a team of 24 attorneys, paralegals, and support staff in delivering comprehensive civil legal services to residents of Orange and Sullivan Counties. Prior to being appointed Attorney-In-Charge, Rachel was a staff attorney at LSHV and provided representation to clients in the areas of housing law, elder law and disability advocacy. From 2005 to 2013 Rachel was employed for the City of New York's Department of Housing Preservation and Development in their Housing Litigation Division, where she enforced the Housing Maintenance Code and Multiple Dwelling Law against private landlords in Kings County, and in the Division of Tenant Resources, where she assisted in all aspects of the administration of HPD's Section 8 Program. Rachel has held fellowships and internships with Amnesty International USA's Research Department, the ACLU's

Lesbian and Gay Rights Project, and the Urban Justice Center's Peter Cicchino Youth Project and Harm Reduction Project.

Rachel received her J.D. from Brooklyn Law School, where she was an Edward V. Sparer Public Interest Law Fellow, and has a dual degree in Political Science and American Cultural Studies from Bates College. She is admitted to practice law in New York and Connecticut. Rachel currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Orange County Rural Development Advisory Corporation and Beacon Hebrew Alliance. In 2018, Rachel was presented with the Orange County Human Rights Award by the Orange County Human Rights Commission.

Joanne Sirotkin

Attorney-in-Charge, White Plains & Peekskill Offices

Joanne Sirotkin is Attorney-in-Charge of Legal Services of the Hudson Valley's White Plains and Peekskill Offices, overseeing a staff of more than 20 attorneys, paralegals and support personnel. She joined Legal Services of the Hudson Valley's staff as Attorney Manager of Domestic Violence Services in November, 2013, bringing expertise as an experienced attorney and specialist in the dynamics of domestic violence.

Prior to joining Legal Services, Joanne Sirotkin was employed as Special Litigation and Appeals Counsel within the Legal Center of My Sisters' Place, a full service domestic violence agency in White Plains. Ms. Sirotkin was previously at Faust Roy Mangold and Fuchs, a matrimonial firm. Prior to that, she was an associate at Lansner & Kubitschek, where she was part of the trial team representing the subclass A mothers in *Nicholson v. Williams*, a federal class action lawsuit initiated in 2000 on behalf of victims of domestic violence and their children, and the subsequent appeal, *Nicholson v. Scoppetta*.

In addition to her responsibilities managing the legal program of the White Plains and Peekskill Offices, Joanne's job duties include coordination and substantive supervision of domestic violence legal services program-wide, guiding the professional development of staff regarding domestic violence work, and serving as a resource about DV-related issues to all Legal Services of the Hudson Valley staff and justice communities.

Joanne received her J.D. from Brooklyn Law School, where she was an Edward V. Sparer Public Interest Law Fellow, and she received her B.A. from SUNY Albany.
