



# Legal Services of the Hudson Valley

## *2021 By The Numbers*

Main Office: 90 Maple avenue, White Plains, NY 10601  
Tel. (914) 949-1305 | www.lshv.org



**11,984**  
CASES  
HANDLED

**27,376**  
INDIVIDUALS  
IMPACTED

**3,282**  
SENIORS  
IMPACTED

**9,440**  
CHILDREN  
IMPACTED

### **165** Staff Members including:

- 96** Attorneys
- 33** Paralegals
- 29** Admins
- 4** Housing Counselors
- 3** Social Workers/Parent Advocates

### **9,173** clients served including:

- 2,200** Domestic Violence Survivors
- 4,546** Persons with Disabilities
- 818** Veterans
- 597** Cancer Survivors
- 168** Breast Cancer survivors

*We provide free, high-quality civil legal services to poor and low-income individuals and families in the lower and mid-Hudson Valley. Our experienced and compassionate attorneys, paralegals and support staff employ a holistic approach to making sure we provide the advice, counsel and representation needed. In 2021, over **477,000** Hudson Valley residents were within 200% of the federal Poverty guidelines and eligible for our services. We are here when they need us!*





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## 2022 KEY STAFF MEMBERS

**Rachel Chazin Halperin**  
Chief Executive Officer

**Jill Bradshaw-Soto**  
Chief Program Officer

**Jazmine Leon, D.B.A.**  
Chief Development Officer

**Myra Loewenstein**  
Chief Financial Officer

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

**Lara Kasper-Buckareff**  
Chief Operating Officer

**Mary Grace Ferone**  
Disability Counsel

**Shira Galinsky**  
Intake Director

**Joanne Labrusciano**  
Director, Grant Initiatives & Reporting

**Christopher Oldi**  
Pro Bono Director

**Brian Payamps**  
Director of Accounting

**Christa Ring**  
Human Resources Director

**Melinda Bellus**  
Attorney-in-Charge, Yonkers Office

**George Asante**  
Attorney-in-Charge, Mount Vernon Office

**Erin Burud**  
Attorney-in-Charge, Kingston Office

**Ashley Desir**  
Attorney-in-Charge, Peekskill Office

**Sarah Maida**  
Attorney-in-Charge, Goshen & Monticello  
Offices

**Rachel Saunders**  
Attorney-in-Charge, Poughkeepsie Office

**Rachel Simons**  
Attorney-in-Charge, Newburgh Office

**Joanne Sirotkin**  
Attorney-in-Charge, White Plains Office

**Antonio Smith**  
Attorney-in-Charge, Nanuet Office

## BIOS

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### **Rachel Chazin Halperin** Chief Executive 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. Appointed as CEO in 2021, she oversees every aspect of Legal Services of the Hudson Valley.

Rachel joined LSHV in 2014 as the Deputy Director and was promoted to Chief Program Officer in 2016. In that position, she oversaw all aspects of the program delivery, including the nine local offices. In her role as CEO her priorities remain steadfast in the belief that everyone should have the right to legal counsel regardless of their socio-economic status and that LSHV is an organization with an anti-racist and social justice mission.

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 low-income residents in housing, family, domestic violence, and public benefits cases. 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 sat on the Board of Directors of the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence from 2010-2020. She is a member of the NYS Permanent Commission on Access to Justice, the NYS Bar Association's Committee on Legal Aid as well as the Women Bar Association's Access to Justice Committee. She is admitted to practice law in NY. In her free time, Rachel enjoys reading, binge-watching shows, and hanging out with her husband and three kids.

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### **Jill Bradshaw-Soto** **Chief Program Officer**

Jill Bradshaw-Soto recently stepped into the role of Chief Program Officer. She is responsible for the overall strategic and operational aspects of the program and the supervision and support of nine attorneys-in-charge.

Mrs. 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 then Attorney-in-Charge of the Mt. Vernon 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 has built strong ties within 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.

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, prior to entering law school. Mrs. Bradshaw-Soto is a skilled litigator and her areas of legal expertise include Housing and Benefits Law.

Mrs. Bradshaw-Soto is a mother of 4 adult children and the proud grandmother of 3.

### **Related Experience:**

Vice President, Westchester Black Bar Association  
Member of the Westchester County African American Advisory Board  
Village of Port Chester Taxi Commission and Ethics Committee Member  
St. Francis AME Zion Church — Missionary and President of the New Life Choir

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### **Jazmine Leon, D.B.A.** **Chief Development Officer**

Jazmine Leon is a Development, Public Relations, and Marketing professional with thirteen years of experience in fundraising, public relations and marketing within the non-profit industry. Throughout her career, Ms. Leon has raised millions of dollars and generated over 2,000 media hits for various non-profit organizations.

Jazmine received her Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Manhattanville College in 2007, and in 2011 went on to receive her Master's Degree in Sports Business Management. In 2016, she received her Doctorate Degree in Business Administration with a specialization in Strategy and Innovation with Capella

University after successfully defending and publishing her dissertation. Her research focused on the correlation between NBA video game participation and the consumption of NBA related products and services.

Ms. Leon currently works as a Chief Development Officer and continues to volunteer with several NY Tri-state based non-profit organizations.

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### **Myra Loewenstein**

#### **Chief Financial Officer**

Myra Loewenstein joined Legal Services of the Hudson Valley in 2012, becoming CFO in 2015. Myra began her finance career in Equity Research at Morgan Stanley. After graduate school, she held director level positions at Thomson Reuters and Reader's Digest as well as several corporate finance and consulting roles, including both start-up and large corporations.

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 and resides with her family in Westchester County.

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### **Lara Kasper-Buckareff**

#### **Chief Operating Officer**

Lara Kasper-Buckareff oversees agency-wide initiatives at LSHV, including grants, technology, affirmative litigation, pro bono, and intake. She also acts as LSHV's liaison to LSHV's affiliate, the Hudson Valley Justice Center.

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, victims of domestic violence in family court and matrimonial matters, and low-income children and their families in various 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. In her free time, Ms. Kasper-Buckareff enjoys running, hiking, meditating, and spending time with her spouse and young son.

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### **Sheeba Mathai**

#### **Chief Diversity Officer**

As Chief Diversity Officer, Sheeba Roy Mathai is responsible for leading the agency's initiatives around Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging. In 2019, Sheeba started in this role part-time and it became full-time in 2021. From 2015-2021, Sheeba was 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. Sheeba is a member of the Board of Directors of Community Awareness Network for a Drug-Free Life and Environment (CANDLE). Sheeba lives in Rockland County with her husband and two children.

Sheeba earned a Diversity and Inclusion Certificate from Cornell University. She received her J.D. degree from the University of Connecticut School of Law and a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from The George Washington University. She is admitted to practice law in New York and New Jersey. Sheeba's areas of expertise include family law and general practice.

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### **Mary Grace Ferone**

#### **Disability Counsel**

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 Disability Counsel at Legal Services of the Hudson Valley. Ms. Ferone welcomes this opportunity to work more closely with case handlers on issues and litigation affecting persons with disabilities.

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 board member of the Max Michael Rosenfield Foundation dedicated to children's sports and literacy; and a board member of the Westchester Women's Agenda. In her spare time, Ms. Ferone loves singing, hosting parties and spending time with her rescue dog, CoCo Chanel.

Ms. Ferone received her law degree from Franklin Pierce Law Center at the 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  
a mentor with the Her Honor Mentoring program;  
Former White Plains Democratic District Leader

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**Shira Galinsky**

**Intake Director - 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.

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**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) Requests for Proposals and other public funding opportunities; (2) ensures contract terms for new and renewal grants are agreeable and paperwork is properly executed; (3) acts as primary liaison between LSHV funders and the program and finance staff; (4) ensures preparation, of funders' monitoring visits; (5); produces reports for internal and external use indicating performance metrics and special information requests; (6) reviewing database content to improve collection of statistics; (7) assisting with special projects through technology and online tools.

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.

Ms. Labrusciano resides in Westchester County. 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. She is licensed to practice law in New York.

**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. Prior to this role, Christopher was a Supervising Attorney in the Yonkers office, supervising 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, and a member of the New York State Bar Association. Because of his community work throughout the County, the Westchester County Legislature named two "Christopher Oldi" days in his honor – June 22, 2016 and September 28, 2017.

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### **Brian Payamps**

#### **Director of Accounting, Headquarters**

Brian Payamps joined Legal Services of the Hudson Valley in February 2022 as the Director of Accounting. Brian oversees many of the day to day functions of the Accounting Department and is located in the White Plains office. Prior to coming to LSHV, Brian worked at RiseBoro Community Partnership Inc. for six years as the Assistant Comptroller. RiseBoro is a non-profit in Brooklyn, NY servicing a wide range of people, from seniors to youth. They develop affordable housing across all five boroughs in New York City and runs a Homecare agency. As Assistant Controller Brian was responsible for conducting official financial inspections of RiseBoro's accounts.

Brian earned his Bachelor of Science in Accounting from Lehman College in the Bronx..

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### **George Asante**

#### **Attorney in Charge, Mount Vernon Office**

George Asante is the Attorney-in-Charge of Legal Services of the Hudson Valley's Mount Vernon office.

George joined Legal Services of the Hudson Valley in 2014 as a general practice attorney in its Spring Valley office. Since that time, he has worked as a housing attorney and senior staff attorney in its Yonkers office. Most recently, George was the Supervising attorney of the Yonkers office.

George received his J.D. from University of Dayton School of Law and his B.A. from SUNY Albany

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### **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.

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. 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.

**Related Experience:**

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

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**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.

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**Ashley Desir**

**Attorney-in-Charge, Peekskill Office**

Ashley is the Attorney-in-Charge of Legal Services of the Hudson Valley's Peekskill Office.

Ashley joined Legal Services of the Hudson Valley's Spring Valley office in 2015 as a staff attorney. Her practice areas include housing, elder law, government benefits and disability advocacy.

She received her J.D. from New York Law School and her B.A. from SUNY Albany and is admitted to practice law in New York.

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**Sarah Maida**

**Attorney-in-Charge, Goshen & Monticello Offices**

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.

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**Rachel Saunders**

**Attorney-in-Charge, Poughkeepsie Office**

Rachel Saunders is the Attorney in Charge of LSHV's Poughkeepsie office, where she oversees a staff of almost 20 attorneys, paralegals and support personnel. Prior to joining LSHV, she worked at Mental Hygiene Legal Service for five years as an Associate Attorney and Senior Attorney. Rachel has also held positions at Children's Law Center in Brooklyn and the Bronx, Legal Aid Society in the Bronx, as well as at the Afghanistan Justice Sector Support Program and the International Legal Foundation both in Kabul, Afghanistan.

She received her J.D. from Howard Law School, a BA in American Studies from Bard College, and is admitted to practice law in New York.

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**Ray Simons**



### **Attorney-in-Charge, Newburgh**

Ray Simons oversees Legal Services of the Hudson Valley's Newburgh office. Prior to being appointed Attorney-In-Charge, Ray 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 Ray was employed for the City of New York's Department of Housing Preservation and Development in their Housing Litigation Division, enforcing the Housing Maintenance Code and Multiple Dwelling Law against private landlords in Kings County, and in the Division of Tenant Resources, assisting in all aspects of the administration of HPD's Section 8 Program.

Ray has a J.D. from Brooklyn Law School, where they were an Edward V. Sparer Public Interest Law Fellow and has a dual degree in Political Science and American Cultural Studies from Bates College. Ray currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Orange County Rural Development Advisory Corporation, Compass Arts Creativity Project, and the Orange County Continuum of Care, where they chair the Strategic Planning and Development Committee. Ray is admitted to practice law in New York and Connecticut. In 2018, Ray was presented with the Orange County Human Rights Award by the Orange County Human Rights Commission.

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### **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 office, 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 office, 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.

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### **Antonio Smith**

#### **Attorney-in-Charge, Peekskill Office**

Antonio is currently the attorney in charge of the Nanuet office. Prior to beginning this position, he was supervising attorney in the Spring Valley Office as well as the Yonkers office. He began his career at LSHV as a Staff Attorney in both the Mt. Vernon and Spring Valley offices.

Antonio received his BA from John Jay College of Criminal Justice with a degree in Forensic Psychology and a minor in Forensic Science. And received his JD from CUNY Law.

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