

# Christian Legal Aid of Los Angeles

## Background Information



### THE NEED

With over 10 million inhabitants, Los Angeles County has **a larger population than 43 of the 50 states**. It covers 4,000 square miles and contains eighty-eight cities, plus the unincorporated County government.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately this sprawling size does not mean wealth: **the poverty rate in Los Angeles is higher than any other major American city**.<sup>2</sup> Those in poverty are disproportionately likely to be victims of violent crime<sup>3</sup>, to be threatened with eviction<sup>4</sup>; or to be preyed upon by unscrupulous businesses and financial institutions. ***The law does not entitle them to a lawyer in situations like this<sup>5</sup>, nor can they afford one on their own.***

### OUR MISSION

CLA-LA's mission is to share the love of Jesus Christ by cultivating a passion for justice in our community and providing free legal services and hope to those in need in Los Angeles County.

### OUR WORK

CLA-LA offers **legal urgent care clinics** in conjunction with churches and faith-based charities across Los Angeles County. CLA-LA trains non-lawyers and lawyers to do justice and live up to our pledge to live in a nation "with liberty and justice for all."

- At CLA-LA clinics, clients are able to have a 60-90 minute **in-person consultation** with a trained attorney. This would be cost-prohibitive in many other models. When our clients leave the clinic, it is with an **individualized action plan** that guides them in their next steps, not just generic self-help information.
- Our legal volunteers come from diverse backgrounds, including top-tier law firms, business consulting, solo practice, and the nonprofit sector. We equip them with the knowledge they need to serve our clients by providing them with our **legal urgent care manual** and by relevant continuing legal education.

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<sup>1</sup> US Census, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/06037.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Los Angeles 2020 Commission Report, available at <http://www.la2020reports.org/reports/A-Time-For-Truth.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics Report, available at <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=5137>.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew Desmond, Unaffordable America: Poverty, housing, and eviction (March 2015), available at <http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/fastfocus/pdfs/FF22-2015.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Lawyers are provided for by law only where an individual is charged with a serious crime. Victims of injustice must typically fend for themselves in the legal system. See [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/susan-beck/legal-aid-funding\\_b\\_7744964.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/susan-beck/legal-aid-funding_b_7744964.html) ("[I]f you face the potential loss of your home, your children or your benefits, you may have to go it alone in our complex court system. Even women seeking protective orders from domestic violence don't have the right to a lawyer.")

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- Because we understand that legal issues arise out of real-life problems, our **social and spiritual care** volunteers help our clients address the practical and personal aspects of their legal challenges.
- While we recognize the importance of access to justice and the protection of the courts, our attorneys are trained to help clients think about their problems holistically and explore **non-litigious solutions** including **alternative dispute resolution** when appropriate.

### PRACTICALLY SPEAKING

CLA-LA is entering its twelfth year of operations. We are serving more clients by increasing the role of our volunteers, and we're doing it better than ever.

Thanks to the Hugh & Hazel Darling Foundation, we are able to provide a summer internship program and produce a world-class Legal Aid Manual for our volunteers to use at our clinics. The most recent print version was compiled in September of this year, and an online wiki is continually updated as the law changes.

By the time of the prayer breakfast we will have held 14 clinics in 2017, including a clinic with Real Life Church in Santa Clarita. We also look forward to a special Christmas clinic in December.

### PEOPLE WHO SERVE WITH US

- Legal professionals (lawyers, paralegals, secretaries, interpreters, notaries, etc.).
- Law students
- Clergy and non-clergy spiritual care volunteers
- Non-lawyers: hospitality volunteers, photographers, translators, and more!

### OUR GOALS

We want to ensure that the next victim of injustice has a safe place to go for legal assistance and support. How can we accomplish this?

- First, by continuing to rely on our volunteers. In 2017 alone *more than 150 individuals* volunteered with CLA-LA, donating more than 2500 hours of service.
- Second, by raising the funds to support our operations. We hope to raise at least \$250,000 this year to cover our costs and \$300,000 next year to help further bridge the justice gap.