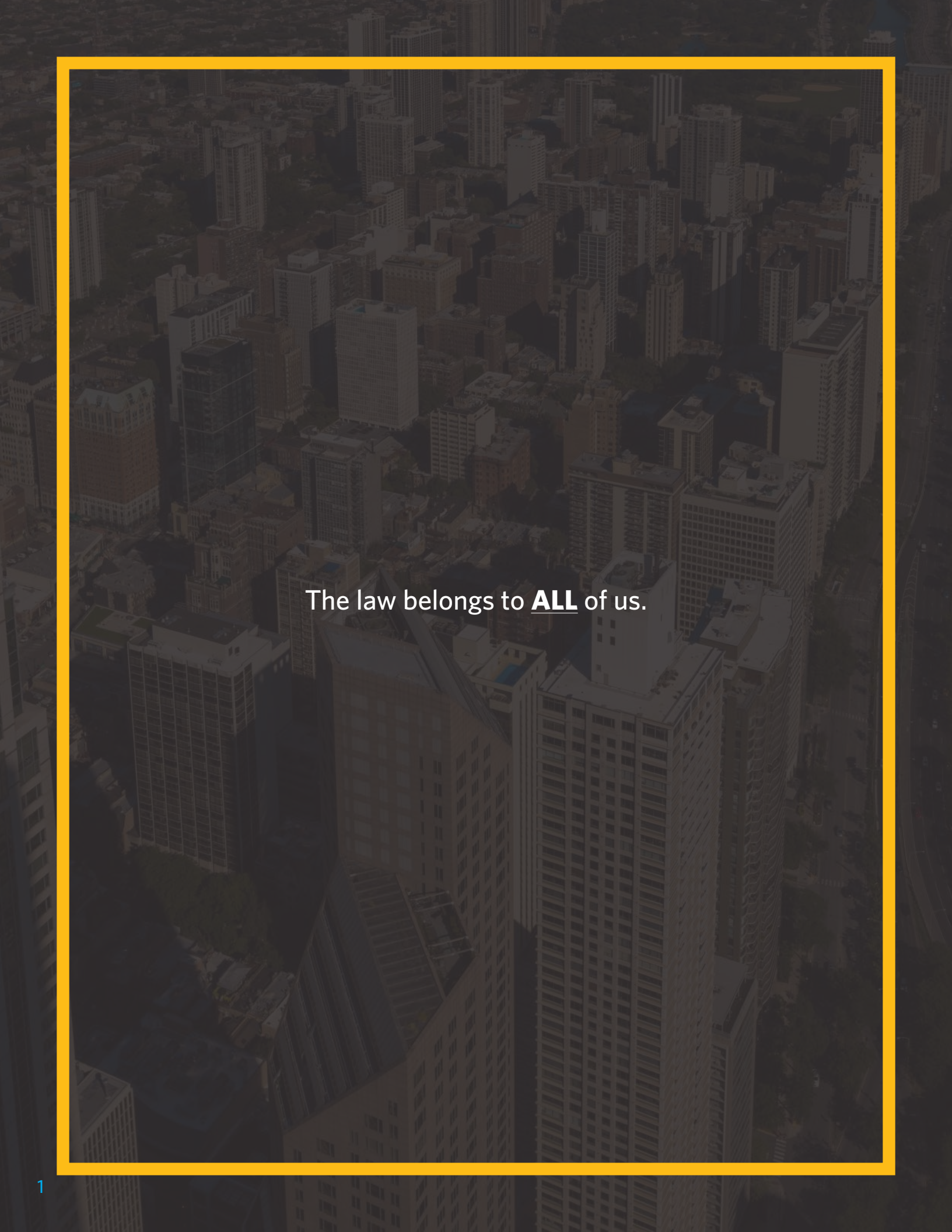
CHICAGO
VOLUNTEER
LEGAL
SERVICES

Because equal access to justice is everyone's fight

ANNUAL REPORT 2023


The law belongs to **ALL** of us.

CHICAGO VOLUNTEER LEGAL SERVICES

Because equal access to justice is everyone's fight

EMPOWERING LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES WITH TAILORED LEGAL SUPPORT

CVLS stands as a crucial lifeline for low-income individuals in Cook County and beyond, offering a broad spectrum of legal services tailored to diverse populations. With flexible guidelines, we extend support to clients often overlooked by other programs, including active service members, veterans, immigrants regardless of status, and marginalized communities. Through strategic partnerships and a robust volunteer network, CVLS ensures access to justice, placing a significant emphasis on pro bono cases to empower volunteers and address systemic inequalities. Despite challenges posed by the pandemic, CVLS continues to adapt and expand our reach, exemplified by the recent expansion of our immigration program, which now includes a dedicated staff attorney to train and support volunteers, reflecting our unwavering commitment to serving those in need and fostering a more equitable legal landscape.

MISSION

CVLS mobilizes Chicago's legal community to deliver traditional representation and innovative legal solutions to people working or living in poverty. We are **CHICAGO PRO BONO**.

MESSAGE FROM MEG

Sometimes, good things happen. And when they do, we should celebrate.

Last fall, CVLS received an unexpected gift of $600,000 from Yield Giving, the foundation founded by McKenzie Scott. After conducting their own research into organizations that work to "advance the opportunities of people in underserved communities", the folks at Yield Giving determined that CVLS showed a "high potential for sustained positive impact, including stable finances, multi-year track records, measurement and evidence of outcomes and experienced leadership representative of the community served". Their gift was unsolicited and unrestricted.

CVLS is thrilled with the gift and is putting it to very good use. However, the recognition of our work and who we are is just as significant and worthy of celebrating.

CVLS has served Chicago's low-income communities since 1964, persevering through a lot of economic ups and downs. Our staff has grown from six, including four attorneys, to our present 27, with 13 attorneys. We have more than 2,000 active volunteers providing free services to people in low-income communities, while also serving, through specialty programs, veterans, children, seniors, adults with disabilities and immigrants. We accept court appointments, handle decedents' estates, represent low-income landlords, and help immigrants no matter their status. We accept cases and help populations not served by most other legal aid organizations.

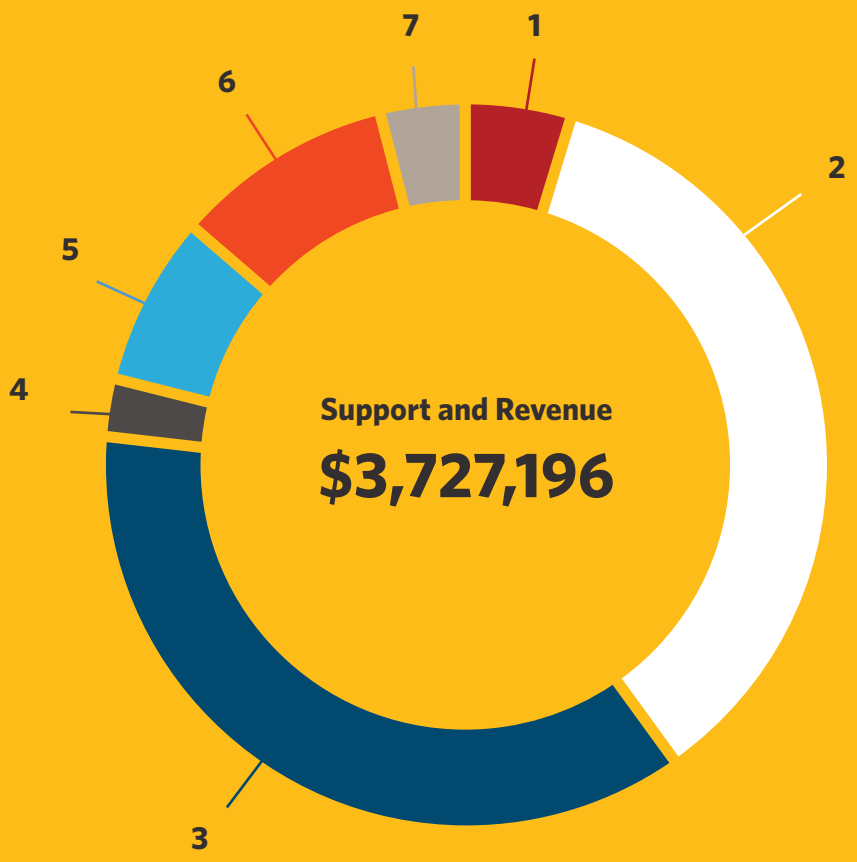
CVLS has always been special—independent and unique. Yield Giving gave us a substantial gift because we are good at what we do--thanks to your support. As we continue to help real people resolve real legal problems, we celebrate and thank Yield Giving and YOU.

We are Chicago Pro Bono.

Margaret Benson
Executive Director

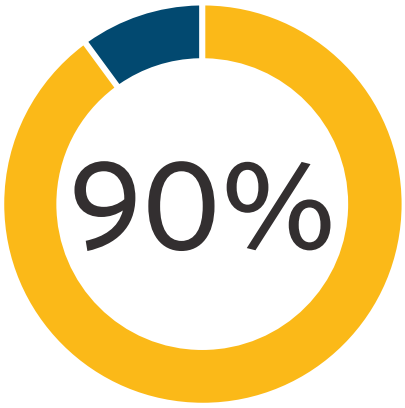
FINANCIAL REVIEW

1. Individual Contributions
2. Government Grants
3. Foundation Grants
4. Law Firms and Corporations
5. Court Awards
6. Special Events
7. Investments

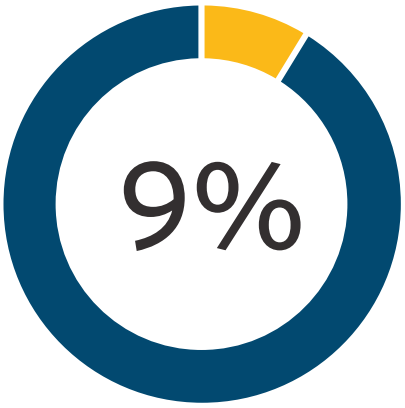


MORE BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

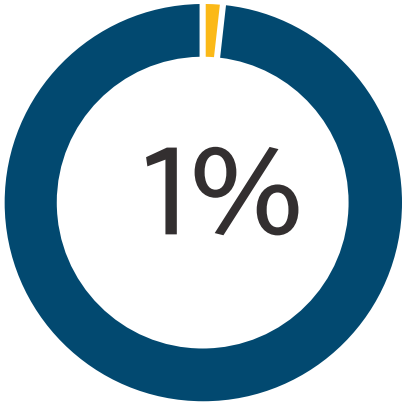
CVLS operates on a cost-effective business model, employing a lean staff of attorneys who train and support volunteers, along with professionals managing administrative tasks vital to the organization's operation. Focused on pro bono work, we handle a substantial caseload annually, ensuring that funds we receive help as many individuals as possible.



Program Services

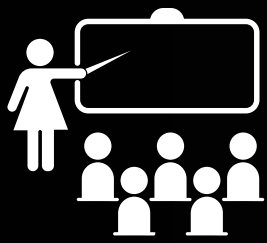


Management and General Expenses



Fundraising

CVLS carefully manages the donations we receive, with 90% of all expenses going towards direct program services.



35 NEW CLE SEMINARS AND TRAININGS

We guarantee our volunteers stay abreast of legal developments and maintain top-notch service to our clients by providing complimentary Continuing Legal Education (CLE) seminars and training sessions.

373 NEW VOLUNTEERS

CVLS continuously expands our volunteer base through monthly new volunteer orientations. All licensed attorneys in Illinois are invited to participate, and we also offer private orientations at law firms upon request.

187 YEARS OF STAFF ATTORNEY EXPERIENCE

The seasoned expertise of our staff attorneys, cultivated over years of dedicated service, forms the bedrock of our organization. Their wealth of experience not only enables us to effectively train and mentor new volunteers but also plays a pivotal role in upholding our commitment to providing unparalleled legal representation to our clients.

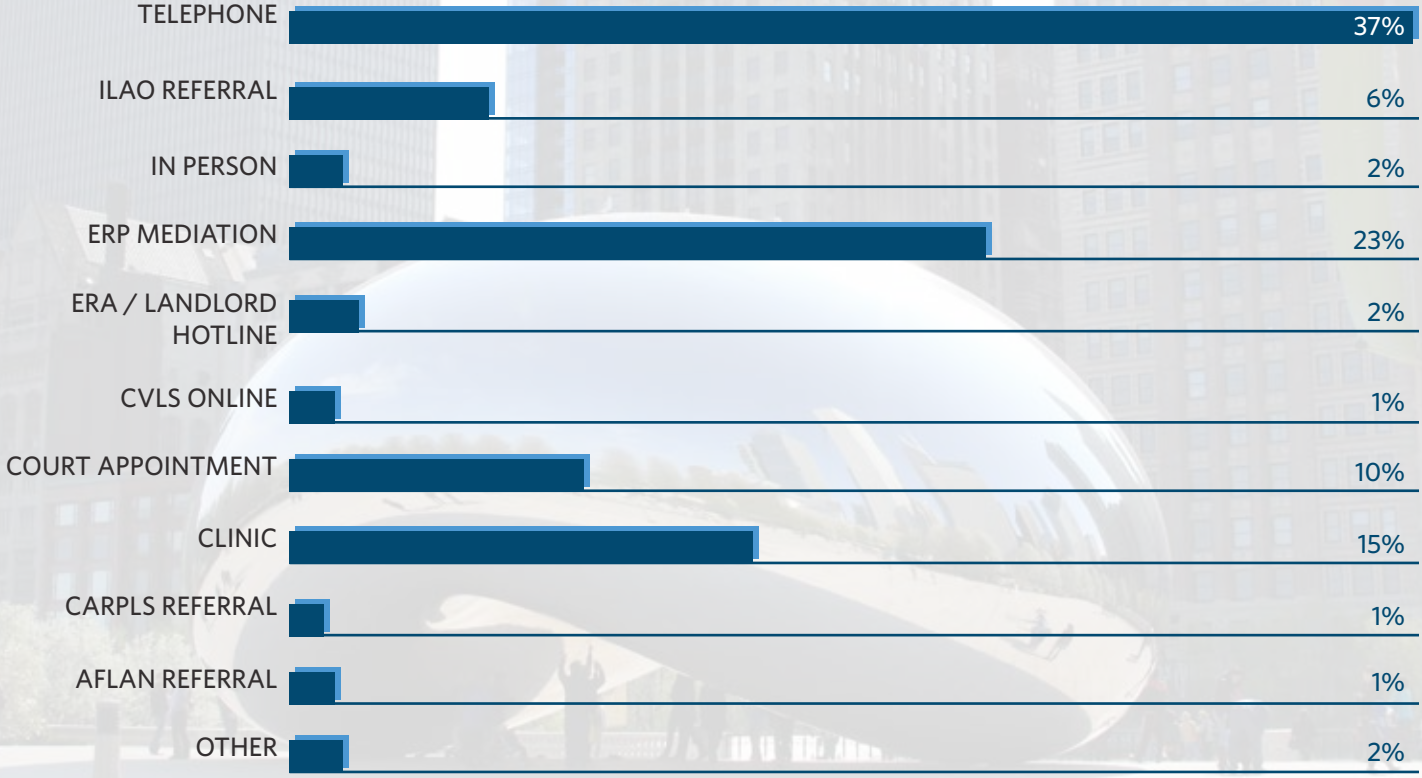
2496
ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS

7515
PEOPLE SERVED

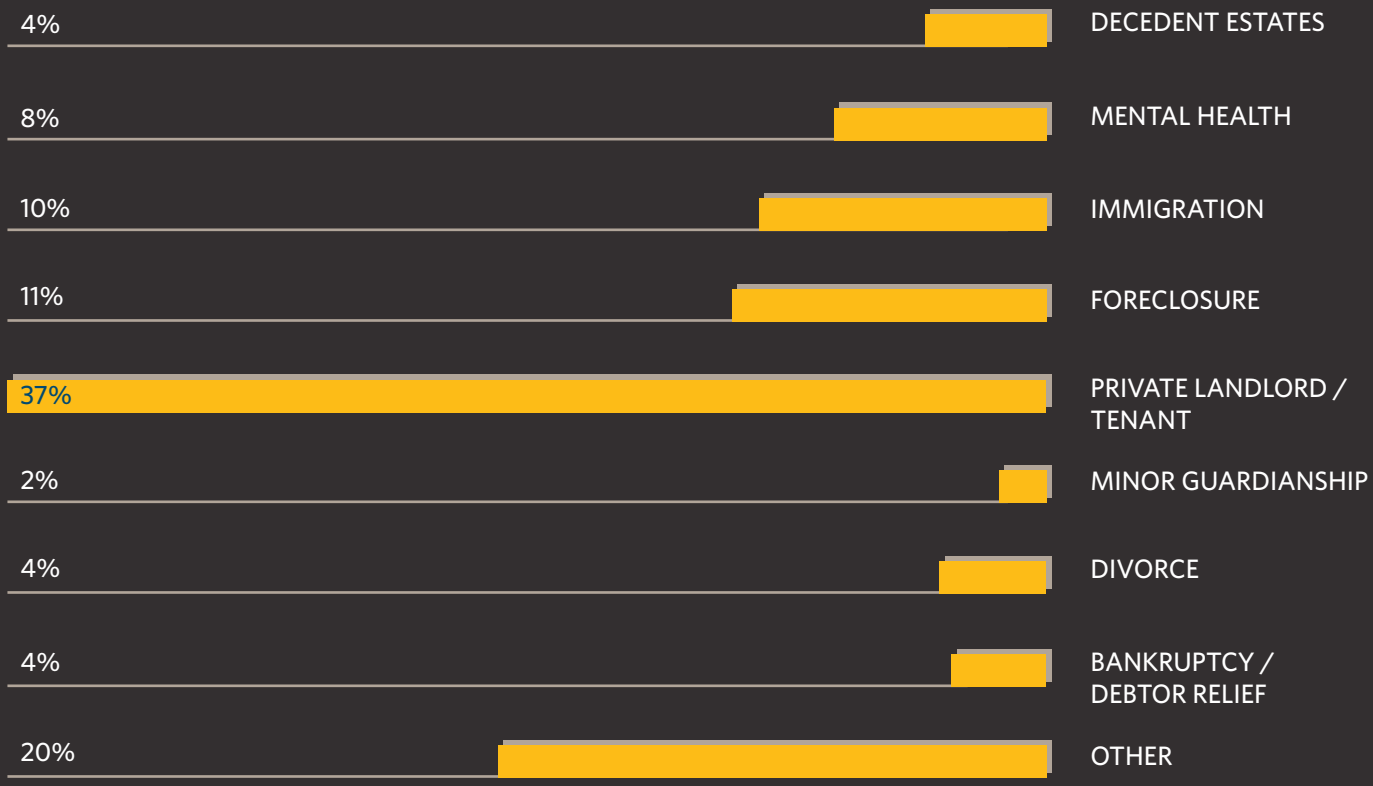
TRUSTED
304
NEW COURT APPOINTED CASES

> With a track record spanning 59 years, CVLS has earned a reputation for trustworthiness, recognized by the courts themselves. Judges rely on our attorneys to deliver top-notch legal assistance, whether it's for vulnerable children, disabled adults, or clients navigating foreclosure proceedings.

INTAKE TYPE

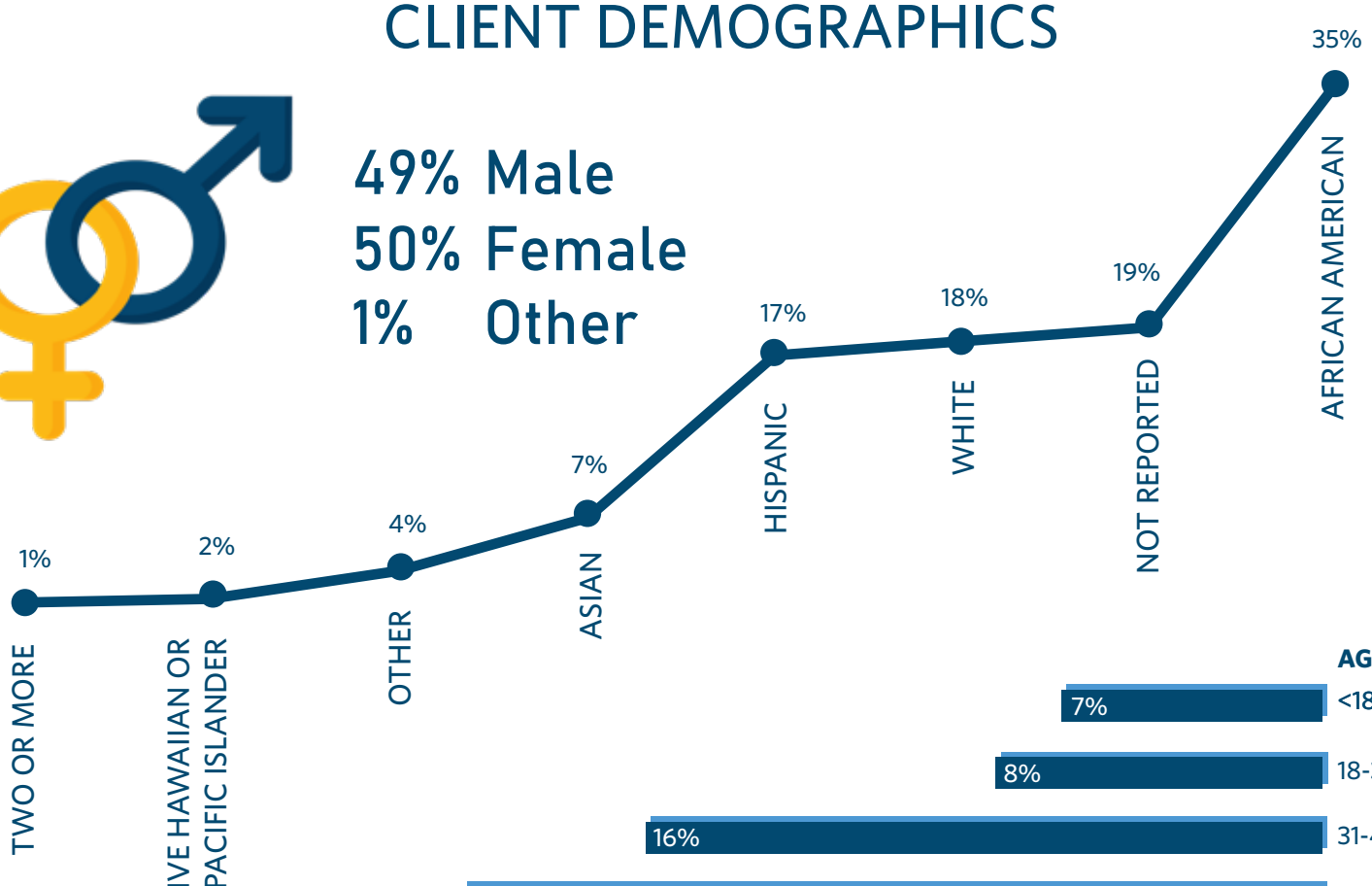


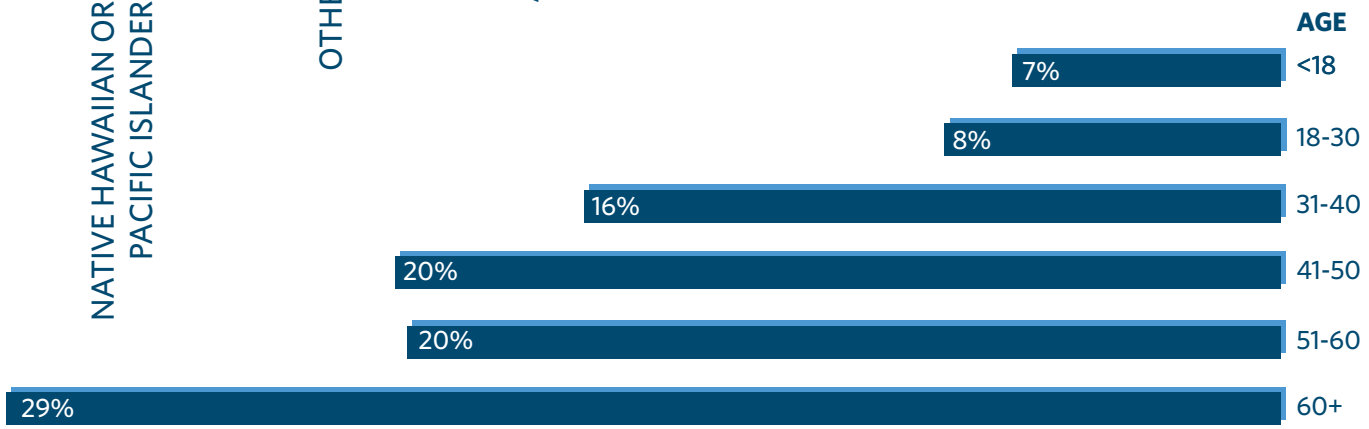
CASE TYPE



CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS

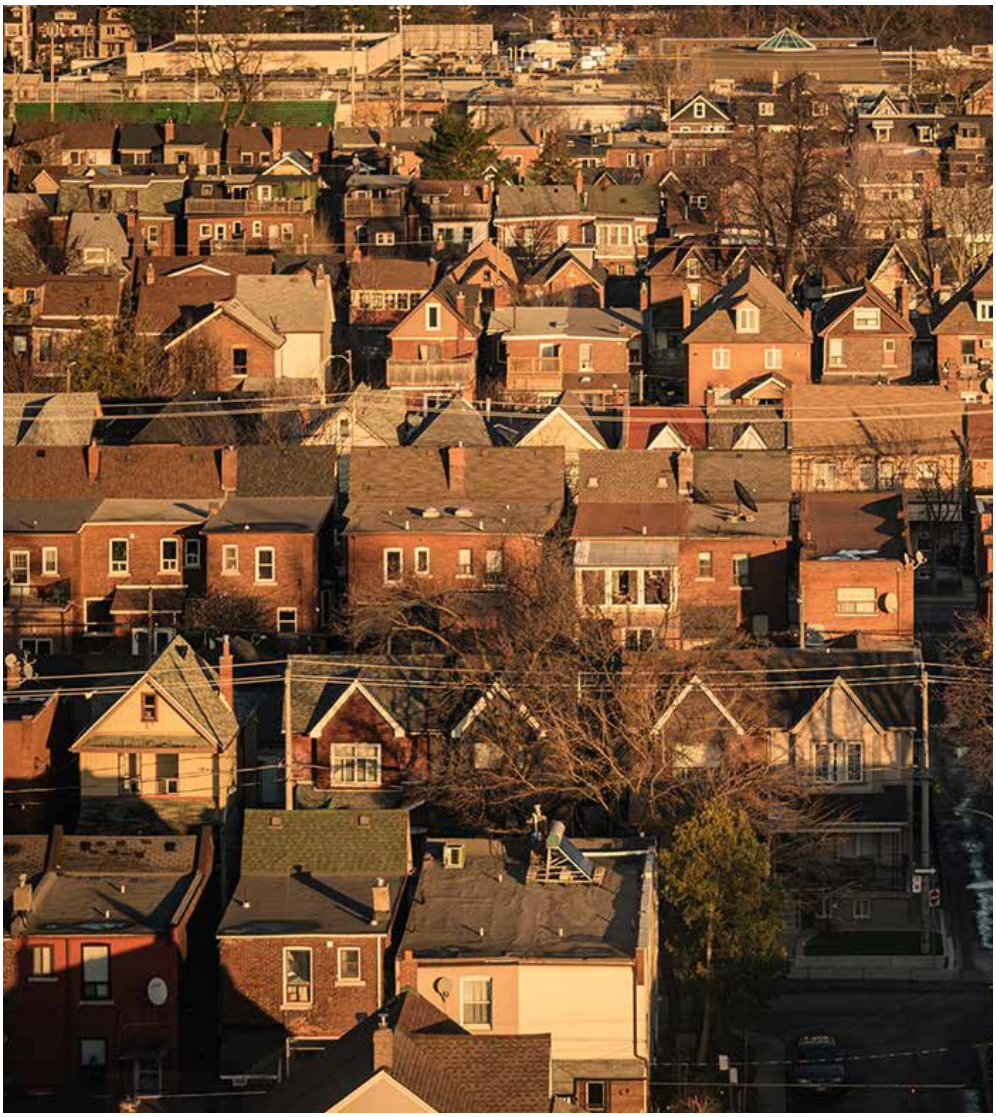
49% Male
50% Female
1% Other





ILLINOIS HOUSING INITIATIVE SAVES HUNDREDS: Breaking Barriers for Homeowners in Mortgage Struggles

Our short-term collaboration with the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) facilitated assistance to over 500 Illinois homeowners. Last year, we announced that CVLS would act as a clearinghouse to aid numerous homeowners who couldn't access state housing funds due to mortgage arrearages exceeding the state's limit. The program faced administrative complexities as mortgage loan servicers declined multiple checks to address arrearages. Consequently, CVLS had to gather the excess amount from homeowners, procure a $30,000 check from IHDA, combine both sums in CVLS' client account, and dispatch a cashier's check to the servicer. Midway through the initiative, IHDA doubled the arrearage limit, rendering many applicants eligible for HAF without contribution. CVLS adjusted the process accordingly, reimbursed those who had already paid, and continued assisting those with arrearages exceeding the limit. The program concluded on October 31, with nearly all cases resolved. In total, CVLS assisted 530 homeowners through this initiative.



CVLS: Leading the Charge in Pro Bono Legal Services for Chicago's Underserved Communities

Chicago's legal landscape relies heavily on the presence of a well-organized, high-caliber legal services entity to bolster the efforts of volunteer attorneys in representing low-income individuals across a spectrum of legal matters. In this regard, Chicago Volunteer Legal Services (CVLS) stands out as a beacon of support, annually engaging over 2,000 attorneys in pro bono cases, many of which involve litigation. What sets CVLS apart is its unparalleled ability to mobilize volunteers within Cook County courtrooms, allowing the organization to tackle complex and diverse cases that other legal aid programs might shy away from. Whether defending clients in mechanic's lien disputes or representing parties in decedent's estate cases with foreclosed family homes as the sole asset, CVLS's flexibility knows no bounds, enabling a truly comprehensive and accessible

CVLS's unique position as the sole legal services organization accepting direct court appointments from the Circuit Court of Cook County underscores its vital role in the community. With over 300 clients represented through direct appointments in various divisions, including Probate, Domestic Relations, and Chancery, CVLS ensures that justice is accessible to those most in need. By operating clinics in client neighborhoods and collaborating with ethnic bar associations, CVLS extends its reach to serve diverse populations, further enriching its robust pro bono program. As the legal profession continues to emphasize the importance of pro bono work, CVLS remains at the forefront, excelling in training and supporting attorneys of varying skill levels, practice areas, and interests. In a profession where ethical and social obligations intersect, CVLS fills a critical void by providing a skilled, well-funded, and efficiently run pro bono platform, ensuring that access to justice remains a cornerstone of our legal system.

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Stop by our downtown office or introduce yoruself at one of our annual events.

Share Your Time

If you are an attorney licensed in Illinois, or other professional interested in providing **pro bono services** to low-income residents of Cook County, then you are exactly who we are looking for. Sign up for one of our New Volunteer Orientations and join a team that has a direct impact in the lives of thousands of people each year.

Visit **www.cvls.org/volunteer** for more information.

Invest In Justice

The support of individuals thoughout the City of Chicago is essential to core mission of providing high quality pro bono services to those who need it most. Make a donation today at **www.cvls.org/donate** and ensure this important work continues into the future.

Become a Corporate Partner

CVLS partners with hundreds of law firms and corporations each year. We will work with your team to create the best opportunity catered specifically for your group. From event sponsorship, to a la cart volunteer opportunities, CVLS has a package that's right for you; and if we don't, we'll make one!

Follow us on Social Media

We have a presence on **Facebook**, **Twitter**, **LinkedIn** and **Instagram**. You'll be up to date on all of our upcoming events, success stories, new volunteer opportunites and more.

DONORS

The dedicated volunteers at Chicago Volunteer Legal Services champion the cause of justice in court, effectively balancing the scales in favor of those they serve.

The transformative work of CVLS is fueled by the generous support from a community of individual donors, businesses, and foundations. Their unwavering commitment enables the provision of vital legal services to numerous underprivileged families across Chicago. Our heartfelt appreciation goes out to all our benefactors, and we proudly acknowledge them as follows.

$30,000 and over

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Joseph Konrad

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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Board of Trustees
of Chicago Volunteer Legal Services Foundation

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of Chicago Volunteer Legal Services Foundation (a nonprofit Foundation), which comprise the statement of financial position as of June 30, 2023, the related statements of activities, functional expenses, and cash flows for the year then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Chicago Volunteer Legal Services Foundation as of June 30, 2023 and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are required to be independent of Chicago Volunteer Legal Services Foundation and to meet our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements relating to our audits. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Responsibilities of Management for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, and for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is required to evaluate whether there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about Chicago Volunteer Legal Services Foundation's ability to continue as a going concern within one year after the date that the financial statements are available to be issued.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Misstatements are considered material if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, they would influence the judgement made by a reasonable user based on the financial statements.

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In performing an audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards, we:

- Exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.

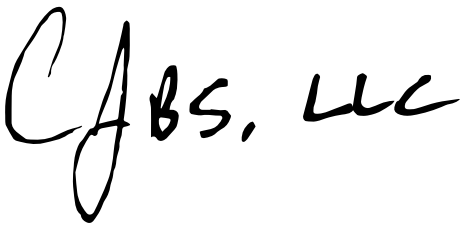
- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements.

- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of Chicago Volunteer Legal Services Foundation's internal control. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.

- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluate the overall presentation of the financial statements.

- Conclude whether, in our judgment, there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about Chicago Volunteer Legal Services Foundation's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time.

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit, significant audit findings, and certain internal control related matters that we identified during the audit.



Northbrook, Illinois
February 5, 2024

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	June 30, 2023
ASSETS	
Current Assets:	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	$ 1,352,337
Restricted Cash - Client Deposits	384,709
Short-Term Investments	1,682,191
Contributions and Grants Receivable	810,174
Prepaid Expenses and Other Current Assets	173,637
Total Current Assets	4,403,048
Property and Equipment:	
Furniture, Equipment, and	179,533
Leasehold Improvements	46,367
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	(202,534)
Total Property and Equipment - Net	23,366
Other Assets:	
Long-Term Investments	1,109,078
Operating Lease Right-of-Use Asset	552,973
Total Other Assets	1,662,051
TOTAL ASSETS	**$6,088,465**
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	
Current Liabilities:	
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	$100,842
Current Portion of Operating Lease Liability	270,966
Deferred Revenue	17,932
Client Deposits	384,709
Total Current Liabilities	774,449
Long-Term Liability:	
Operating Lease Liability	404,063
TOTAL LIABILITIES	**1,178,512**
Net Assets:	
Without Donor Restrictions	
Undesignated	4,336,463
With Donor Restrictions	
Restricted in Perpetuity	326,549
Restricted by Purpose and Time	246,941
	573,490
Total Net Assets	4,909,953
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	**$6,088,465**

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2023

CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES	
Change in Net Assets	$559,705
Adjustments to Reconcile Change in Net Assets to Net Cash Provided by (Used In) Operating Activities:	
Depreciation	6,436
Non-Cash Lease Expense	228,817
Donated Stocks	(514)
Net Unrealized and Realized (Gains) Losses on Investments	(73,924)
(Increase) Decrease in Assets:	
Contributions and Grants Receivable	139,780
Prepaid Expenses and Other Current Assets	(142,262)
Increase (Decrease) in Liabilities:	
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	(56,617)
Operating Lease Liability	(259,225)
Deferred Rent	17,932
Client Deposits	373,687
Net Cash Flows Provided by Operating Activities	793,815
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES	
Proceeds from Sales and Maturities of Investments	16,618
Purchases of Investments	(286,738)
Purchases of Property and Equipment	(23,703)
Net Cash Flows Used in Investing Activities	(293,823)
CASH IN CASH, CASH EQUIVALENTS, AND RESTRICTED CASH	499,992
CASH, CASH EQUIVALENTS, AND RESTRICTED CASH, BEGINNING OF YEAR	1,237,054
CASH, CASH EQUIVALENTS, AND RESTRICTED CASH, END OF YEAR	$1,737,046
NON-CASH FINANCING ACTIVITIES	
Derecognition of deferred rent, operating lease liability	$152,464
Right-of-use assets obtained in exchange for operating lease liabilities	$781,790

See accompanying notes and independent accountant's compilation report located in the full audit.
The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.
Full audit can be viewed at www.cvls.org/audit2023

CHICAGO VOLUNTEER LEGAL SERVICES

Because equal access to justice is everyone's fight

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