



**MidPenn**  
LEGAL SERVICES

**PURSuing JUSTICE** - *Improving Lives*

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



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COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR  
MIDPENN LEGAL SERVICES IS  
CRITICAL. TOGETHER WE CAN  
HELP RESOLVE PROBLEMS OF OUR MOST  
VULNERABLE NEIGHBORS. PROBLEMS THAT  
IMPACT THEIR BASIC HUMAN NEEDS. TOGETHER  
WE CAN HELP THEM THRIVE AND TAKE THEIR  
FIRST STEPS OUT OF POVERTY.

— Michael Pykosh,  
MidPenn Board President

”

## ABOUT

Founded in 1969, MidPenn Legal Services is a nonprofit, public interest law firm with staff of 95, including, attorneys, paralegals, support staff and administrators. Since our beginning, we have provided free legal advice and representation to nearly one million low-income individuals, families and survivors of violence. We work to improve the lives of our clients through the provision of high quality impactful legal services.



**FOOD ON THE TABLE** | **STABLE HOME ENVIRONMENT** | **AN INCOME SOURCE** | **ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE** | **PERSONAL SAFETY**

## MISSION

MidPenn Legal Services is a non-profit, public interest law firm that provides high quality free civil legal services to low-income residents and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault in 18 counties in Central Pennsylvania.

*From day one of the pandemic, MidPenn has remained open serving clients in need.*



MidPenn Board Chair, Mike Pykosh recently described the work of civil legal aid advocates as first responders. Specifically, he wrote, "Civil Legal Services attorneys play a largely hidden but essential role as first responders to poverty." While one may not think of the work of civil legal aid attorneys as essential, our work is essential to those facing job loss, loss of housing and being denied access to medical care at all times, but particularly during this period when income, housing and health care which are even more crucial to one's survival. Throughout this pandemic which is now entering its 19th-month, each day our advocates have worked to represent low-income residents who have been denied life sustaining benefits including Unemployment Compensation, Medical Assistance and Food Stamps, in addition to those in danger of losing their housing, or who need to be safe in their homes.

While the pandemic forced us to change how we deliver services, we quickly adapted and utilized technology to reach our clients, and to provide up to date and much needed legal information as our clients worked to navigate all the challenges brought on by this pandemic. I know we all look forward to the time when this public health crisis is behind us, but no matter when that might be, we will not stray from our mission of continuing to provide the highest quality of civil legal services across our client communities.

As 2021 draws to a close, I want to thank each of you for your support, which has allowed us to serve many in our communities who experienced a civil legal problem during these challenging times. The stories that are told in this Report only represent a few of those we helped. We were there for them, and many others, and together with your support, we will continue to be the first responders to poverty, for those who need our assistance to maintain their homes, gain an income source, gain access to health care or to protect their safety.

In deepest gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rhodia D. Thomas". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Rhodia D. Thomas, Esq.  
Executive Director



# *Civil legal services attorneys play a largely hidden but essential role as first responders to poverty.*



Each year MidPenn attorneys handle thousands of cases involving serious issues impacting the health and well-being of families in our community who are experiencing life-altering crises. These critical legal matters include protection from domestic violence, emergency child custody, supportive benefits, housing issues, and elder law, to name just a few.

Your support helps parents feed their children, keep families in their homes, provide vital support and give countless Pennsylvanians the ability to navigate a complicated legal system. As caring members of the community and supporters of legal aid, you and I know that the need for free civil legal assistance is great. No one should be priced out of justice because of their economic status. Your belief in equal justice has kept countless individuals and families from falling deeper into poverty and has saved lives.

On behalf of the MidPenn Legal Services' Board of Directors and the thousands of people who are forever grateful for your support and belief in equal justice for all, we thank you.

Michael J. Pykosh, Esquire  
President  
Board of Directors



## Board of Directors

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Lurnetta Young

## Administration

Rhodia D. Thomas, Esq.  
Executive Director

Laurie Baughman, Esq.  
Deputy Director for Legal Advocacy

Carrie Bowmaster, Esq.  
Deputy Director for Operations

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Director of Finance

Valerie West, Esq.  
Director of Contract Compliance

Eliz Nestorov  
Director of Development

Shawn Geesaman  
Director of Technology

"[MY ATTORNEY] WAS AN ABSOLUTE GOD SEND IN HELPING ME UNDERSTAND MY CHOICES, MY OPTIONS AND HOW TO MOVE FORWARD."

"I WAS VERY AFRAID OF HIM. MY ATTORNEY THROUGH MIDPENN MADE ME FEEL SO MUCH STRONGER AND NO LONGER POWERLESS."

"I AM VERY GRATEFUL FOR THE COURTESY AND RESPECT WITH WHICH I WAS TREATED."

"WORDS CANNOT EXPRESS MY DEEPEST GRATITUDE AS I COULD NOT REBUILD MY LIFE WITHOUT YOU."

## Domestic Violence/ Protection from Abuse Order

Dee is a sixty-five-year-old woman who had suffered severe physical abuse throughout her 40-year marriage. After the most recent incident, in which she suffered a broken nose, Dee contacted MidPenn because she wanted a Warning letter. Unsure of the law, Dee was afraid of filing for a PFA, because she feared it would cause her to lose the farm which she shared with her husband.

Dee met with a MidPenn attorney, who explained that a PFA could be structured in such a way to prevent her from suffering further abuse while allowing her to remain living on the family farm. Dee then agreed to seek a PFA, which when granted evicted her husband from the farm. Dee then began the process of seeking a divorce which will allow her to divide the marital property in an equitable way.



## Social Security Income

Jen was referred to MidPenn in February 2020 after she had given birth to twins in January 2020. Unfortunately, in June 2019, the father of the twins passed away unexpectedly and Jen was having trouble obtaining Social Security Survivors' Benefits. Given that the parents had been unmarried before the twins' birth, the father's name did not appear on their birth certificates. When Jen came to MidPenn, it was determined that the best course of action would be to have the court establish paternity. After obtaining the deceased father's DNA from the Coroner's Office genetic testing was done, which showed that he had fathered the twins. The evidence was presented to the Court and an Order legally establishing paternity of the twins was issued, which allowed Jen to obtain Survivors' Benefits for the twins. In addition, the Court order will allow Jen to apply to have the father's name added to the twins' birth certificates.

## Eviction

Gina contacted MidPenn for assistance because she and her four teenage children were facing eviction for non-payment of rent, because their lease had expired. Gina contacted MidPenn and a MidPenn Attorney contacted opposing counsel, who indicated that the landlord was not interested in settling the case or participating in a rental assistance program. Unfortunately, Gina had misplaced her lease, however, opposing counsel presented a copy of the lease at the MDJ hearing. A read of the lease showed that it contained an automatic renewal clause unless the landlord provided the tenant with a 90-day eviction notice. Given that the landlord had not provided Gina with the required notice, our attorney argued that the lease had automatically renewed. The Judge agreed, and found that the lease had not expired, leaving only the issue of back rent. Given that the landlord did not want to participate in rental assistance, the 90-day notice provision provided Gina with time to plan her next steps, and allowed her children to remain in their current school until the end of the school year.



“

I HAD NO IDEA THIS RESOURCE EXISTED IN MY COMMUNITY. I WAS COMPLETELY IMPRESSED WITH THE EFFICACY, COMPASSION AND COMPETENCY AND HOW EASY THE PROCESS WAS FOR THE VICTIM.

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## 2020-2021 *Online Webinars*

### 2021 Updated Child Tax Credit Webinar

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Worker Misclassification

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Navigating Divorce

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Unemployment Compensation

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Eviction Training

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Lawyers in Library Series

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Be a Smart Taxpayer

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Landlord Forum

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Legal Literacy Information Sessions

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Clean Slate & Expungement

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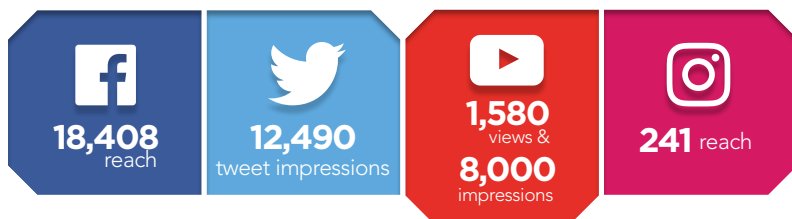
Millions of People Losing Out on Millions of \$\$\$



### Unemployment Compensation

In April 2020 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Tony received a notice that he was financially eligible to receive Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) insurance. However, in March 2021, Tony contacted MidPenn because he had not received any benefits. Our attorney made an inquiry to the Department of Labor and Industry and learned that Tony should have been granted regular UC benefits instead of PUA. Our attorney then worked to have staff at the Department of Labor to change Tony's claim to regular UC and he was able to receive his benefits as well as the additional \$600/week. As a result, Tony has received over \$20,000 in back benefits.

### 2020-2021 Social Media Reach



### Expungement

Robin is a single mother of two, who came to MidPenn seeking an expungement of her criminal record. Robin sought an expungement, because she was having trouble finding employment. A review of her record showed that she had misdemeanor and harassment charges in two MidPenn Counties. Two MidPenn attorneys from different counties worked together to file the necessary paperwork seeking to expunge Robin's criminal charges. This effort met with success in both counties, and all of Robin's criminal charges were expunged. Robin expressed her gratitude for the work of MidPenn and has since been successful in obtaining employment.



“MOST EMPLOYERS WOULD NOT EVER GIVE ME AN INTERVIEW WITH A CRIMINAL RECORD. THIS [EXPUNGEMENT] WILL GO A LONG WAY IN MY EMPLOYABILITY.”



“MADE ME FEEL I HAD HOPE.”

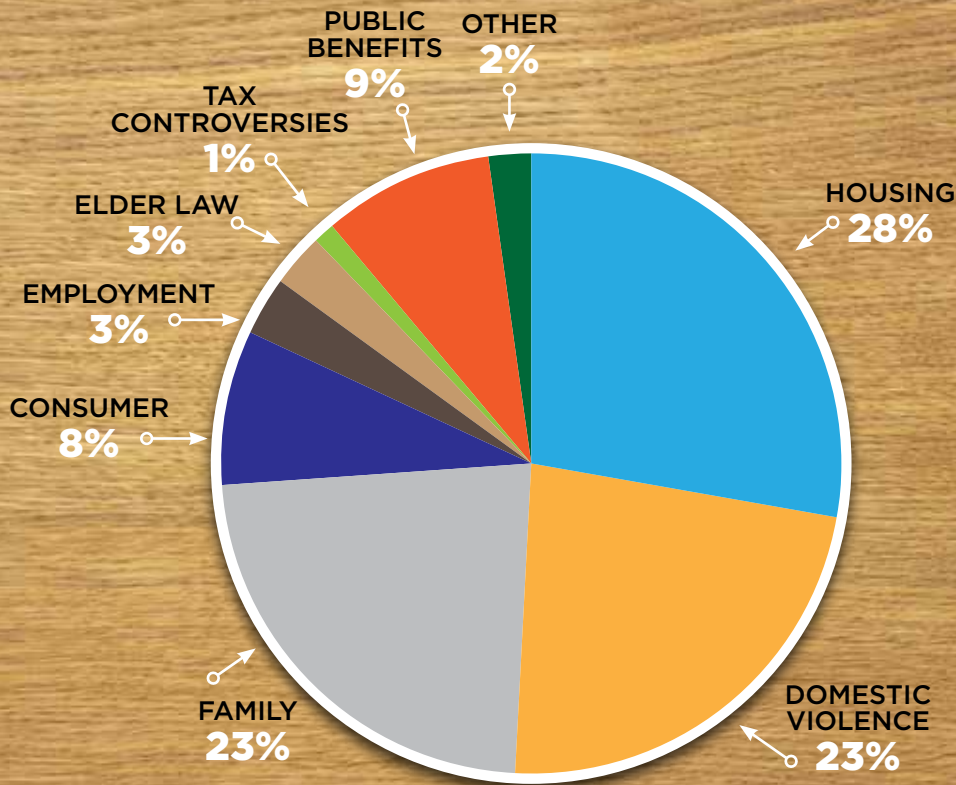


## Driver License

Jim sought our assistance to obtain an Occupational Limited License (OLL), after his driver's license had been suspended due to an expired car registration and lapsed insurance. Jim purchased car insurance, renewed his car registration and paid the fines. He thought the matter had been resolved.

However, a few months later, Jim received a letter from PennDOT informing him that his driver's license was being suspended for a period of three months. Jim is the sole support of his family, as his wife is disabled and they have a minor child. Without a license, Jim would be unable to get to and from work, which would put him in danger of losing his job, and his ability to support his family. Our attorney explained the process to obtain an OLL and worked with Jim to complete the process. Our attorney also had Jim's employer to write a letter explaining that without his license Jim would lose his job. The documents were then submitted to PennDOT and Jim was granted an OLL, which he will continue to use until his driver's license is reinstated in December.

“I AM SO HAPPY THAT I HAD MIDPENN ON MY SIDE, IT GAVE ME PIECE OF MIND AND COMFORT TO KNOW I HAD SOMEONE IN MY CORNER.”



**103,279**

hours spent on cases

**\$4,388,323**

in savings and economic benefits to MidPenn clients and their communities

**15,222**

adults and children benefited from MidPenn's advocacy

Fiscal Year 20-21 Overview	MidPenn Staff	Volunteer Attorneys	Total	%
Housing	2,721	61	2,782	28%
Domestic Violence	2,169	103	2,272	23%
Family	1,604	692	2,296	23%
Consumer	597	165	762	8%
Employment	261	9	270	3%
Elder Law	159	95	254	3%
Tax Controversies	154	1	155	1%
Public Benefits	858	37	895	9%
Other	150	16	166	2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,673</b>	<b>1,179</b>	<b>9,852</b>	<b>100%</b>

Revenues and Other Support	2021	2020
Contracts and grants	\$ 9,847,956	\$ 8,312,785
Contributions:		
In-kind	\$ 463,179	\$ 787,102
Other	\$ 203,315	\$ 238,450
Interest Income	\$ 183,672	\$ 171,606
Net realized & unrealized gain on investments	\$ 609,548	\$ 37,159
Other	\$ 13,771	\$ 13,954
<b>Total Revenue and Other Support</b>	<b>\$ 11,321,441</b>	<b>\$ 9,561,056</b>
 <b>Expenses</b>		
Program Services	\$ 8,675,747	\$ 8,478,460
Management and general	\$ 1,165,792	\$ 1,164,532
Fundraising	\$ 8,777	\$ 8,268
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 9,850,316</b>	<b>\$ 9,651,260</b>

## Major Funders

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|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adams County Bar Association</li> <li>Adams County Commissioners</li> <li>Alexander Stewart, M.D. Foundation</li> <li>AmazonSmile Foundation</li> <li>Berks County Bar Association</li> <li>Big Spring Community Chest</li> <li>Blair County Bar Association</li> <li>Centre County Office of Aging</li> <li>Centre County United Way</li> <li>Centre Foundation</li> <li>Commonwealth of Pennsylvania - The Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania</li> <li>Cumberland County Bar Association</li> <li>Dauphin County Bar Association</li> <li>Dauphin County Bar Foundation</li> <li>Dauphin County Community and Economic Development</li> <li>Dickinson School of Law - Penn State</li> <li>Domestic Violence Services of Cumberland &amp; Perry Counties</li> <li>Eastern District of PA Bankruptcy Conference</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Franklin County Bar Foundation</li> <li>Huntingdon-Bedford-Fulton Area Agency on Aging</li> <li>Internal Revenue Service</li> <li>Lancaster Bar Association Foundation</li> <li>Lancaster County Coalition to End Homelessness</li> <li>Lancaster County Office of Aging</li> <li>Lancaster General Hospital</li> <li>Lebanon County Area Agency on Aging</li> <li>Lebanon County Bar Association</li> <li>Legal Services Corporation</li> <li>PayPal Charitable Giving Fund</li> <li>Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency</li> <li>Pennsylvania Department of Human Services</li> <li>Pennsylvania Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts Board</li> <li>Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network</li> <li>Regional Housing Legal Services</li> <li>SafeBerks</li> <li>Schuylkill County Commissioners</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schuylkill County Office of Senior Services</li> <li>Southwestern PA Legal Services</li> <li>State College Community Land Trust</li> <li>United Way of Bedford County</li> <li>United Way of Berks County</li> <li>United Way of Blair County</li> <li>United Way of Carlisle &amp; Cumberland County</li> <li>United Way of Franklin County</li> <li>United Way Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey</li> <li>United Way of Lancaster County</li> <li>United Way of Lebanon County</li> <li>United Way of Mifflin-Juniata</li> <li>United Way of the Capital Region</li> <li>United Way of York County</li> <li>Veterans Multi-Service Center</li> <li>WellSpan Health</li> <li>York County Area Agency on Aging</li> <li>York County Bar Foundation/ Association</li> <li>York County Commissioners</li> </ul> |
|--|--|---|

# PURSuing JUSTICE - *Improving Lives*

## Administration

213-A N. Front Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
For Admin: 717-234-0492

## Altoona

171 Lakemont Park  
Boulevard  
Altoona, PA 16602  
For Services:  
800-326-9177

## Bedford

232 E. Pitt Street  
Bedford, PA 15522  
For Services:  
800-326-9177

## Carlisle

401 E. Louthier Street  
Suite 103  
Carlisle, PA 17013  
For Services:  
800-822-52880

## Chambersburg

230 Lincoln Way East  
Suite A  
Chambersburg, PA 17201  
For Services:  
800-326-9177

## Clearfield

211 East Locust Street  
Clearfield, PA 16830  
For Services:  
800-326-9177

## Gettysburg

123 Baltimore St.,  
Suite 301  
Gettysburg, Pa 17325  
For Services:  
800-326-9177

## Harrisburg

213-A N. Front Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
717-232-0581

## Lancaster

38 N. Christian Street  
Suite 200  
Lancaster, PA 17602  
For Services:  
800-732-0025

## Lebanon

1150 Chestnut St., Suite 1  
Lebanon, PA 17402  
For Services:  
800-732-0025

## Lewistown

3 W. Monument Square  
Suite 303  
Lewistown, PA 17044  
For Services:  
800-326-9177

## Pottsville

315 N. Centre Street  
Suite 101  
Pottsville, PA 17901  
570-628-3931

## Reading

501 Washington Street  
Suite 401  
Reading, PA 19601  
For Services:  
800-326-9177

## State College

3500 E. College Avenue  
Suite 1295  
State College, PA 16801  
For Services:  
800-326-9177

## York

29 N. Queen Street  
York, PA 17403  
For Services:  
800-326-9177



**Mid Penn**  
LEGAL SERVICES

## Administrative Offices

213-A N. Front Street  
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<https://www.midpenn.org/>

