LOS ANGELES COUNTY
CONSUMER & BUSINESS AFFAIRS

March 7, 2025

To: Supervisor Kathryn Barger, Chair
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell
Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath
Supervisor Janice Hahn

From: Rafael Carbajal
Director

BIANNUAL WORKLOAD REPORT NO. 31 FOR SELF-HELP LEGAL ACCESS CENTERS (ITEM NO. 23, AGENDA OF MAY 3, 2016) [REPORT #08878]

On May 3, 2016, your Board adopted a motion directing the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA) to provide written quarterly workload reports for its system of Self-Help Legal Access Centers (SHLAC). In report No. 27, dated March 22, 2023, your Board was informed that SHLAC reporting would be converting from quarterly to biannual reporting. Reports include the number and types of services provided, referral information, litigant demographics, and other key program outcomes. This report covers the months of July through December of 2024.

The County of Los Angeles (County) contracts with Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County (NLSLA) to assist unrepresented litigants as they navigate the Los Angeles Superior Court (LASC) system by providing them in-person and remote self-help services. In-person services are provided at nine regional SHLACs located throughout the County.

On December 8, 2020, your Board approved a motion, Saving Our Self-Help Legal Access Centers,[1] to continue funding the SHLAC program. On November 30, 2021, DCBA executed a new contract with NLSLA covering a term from December 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022. The latest amendment was executed on June 14, 2024, which extended the agreement through June 30, 2025.

[1] http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/151065.pdf

Regional SHLAC Summary

Since the last reporting period, the primary areas of assistance requested by individuals have remained consistent, focusing on restraining orders (26% of services provided), divorce (24.2%), housing/eviction defense (23.7%), and paternity/custody proceedings (15.5%). These topics comprised 90 percent of total services requested during this period, reflecting trends identified in previous reports. The total number of services averaged 9,585 per month across all court locations and through the program's virtual platforms. Among those surveyed, 53 percent were first-time users of self-help services, while 37 percent were referred directly from the LASC system.

The SHLACs continue to deliver essential services to County constituents, many of whom are either unable to afford representation or lack knowledge about how to obtain it. The program actively monitors specific service outcome data that quantifies its impact. Data collected from clients regarding service delivery outcomes from July 2024 to December 2024 indicates that:

- **37,892** litigants obtained a general or in-depth understanding of their legal situation as well as their rights and responsibilities under the law.
- **11,052** litigants experiencing mental or physical threats reported that they felt safe from abuse and/or threats of harm as a result of receiving self-help services.
- **4,731** litigants were able to preserve tenant housing in the short-term and discourage illegal lockouts.
- **2,759** litigants were able to improve the stability in a child's life.
- **10,012** litigants obtained or modified an enforceable court order.
- **8,904** litigants were assisted in removing barriers to the advancement of their cases, including the prevention of case closure.
- **7,009** litigants preserved their right to have a say in their case and were empowered (and better prepared) to self-represent at trial.
- **3,977** litigants effectively mitigated the risk of legal misunderstandings with their cases.
- **26,321** litigants were able to obtain information on free or low-cost assistance options and received resources and/or referrals to trustworthy legal and social services.

Litigant Stories

The following narratives highlight the achievements of the Self-Help Legal Access Centers from a more personal perspective. The services offered extend beyond basic assistance with forms and court procedures, significantly influencing not only the

resolution of legal matters but also the mental and physical well-being of the individuals served.

> ***Los Angeles*** *– A litigant contacted the remote support line seeking assistance with her divorce case filed at the downtown courthouse. The litigant's primary language was Tagalog, and she divided her time between the Philippines and Los Angeles. The remote team identified errors in her initial petition that were hindering her progress in the case. To prevent any delays, the team continued communication with her via email while she was in the Philippines. After several months of dedicated support, the remote team successfully guided the litigant through the divorce process and assisted her in obtaining her divorce judgment. The litigant expressed her sincere gratitude for the assistance.*
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> ***Inglewood*** *– An elderly individual sought assistance at the center due to experiencing mistreatment from his granddaughter, who was residing with him at the time. Due to severe tremors, he was unable to write, so staff members assisted him in typing his declaration for an Elder Abuse Restraining Order (EARO). He successfully filed his EARO on the same day and was granted an immediate temporary restraining order that included a move-out provision. The following day, the Sherriff served the restraining and move-out orders to his granddaughter. As a result, he is now able to live and rest peacefully in his home.*
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> ***Chatsworth*** *– In November, an individual approached the center for assistance with an unlawful detainer case related to non-payment of rent. She expressed her concerns about a lack of understanding regarding her rights, the eviction process, and her inability to afford legal representation. SHLAC staff provided her with a thorough explanation of the process, assisted her in form preparation, and referred her to Stay Housed LA for potential legal representation. Knowing that she would have a place to live during the holiday season was particularly comforting for her.*
>
> ***Long Beach*** *- A resident of Long Beach contacted the remote assistance line regarding his divorce case. The individual, who is legally blind, expressed difficulty in completing the necessary forms independently and also faced challenges in travelling to the courthouse. He requested that we include his sister in our email communications, as she was assisting him in reading his documents. Staff provided remote support and, at his request, mailed the filed final divorce judgment paperwork. The staff later received confirmation that his divorce was finalized in early January, approximately one month after staff assisted with the mailing process.*

> ***Antelope Valley*** *- A litigant had been visiting the Antelope Valley Self-Help Center for over six years for assistance with two custody cases. Initially, he would enter the center in a distressed state, struggling to articulate his needs. Recognizing that new and stressful situations often heightened his anxiety, the staff adapted their approach to providing information and support, focusing on minimizing his stress levels. They practiced patience and broke down instructions into manageable steps. Over the years, the staff witnessed a significant transformation in this individual; he evolved from someone overwhelmed by fear and anger about the custody process to a person who trusted the SHLAC staff and felt empowered. Ultimately, he successfully gained custody of all his children. Recently, he visited the center again after being served with a modification request. He asked a few questions and expressed gratitude for the resources available to him. It has been rewarding for the staff to observe the progress he has made over the years.*

Referrals

The SHLACs serve as a valuable resource for litigants, providing information on additional assistance options, including County services. Numerous constituents may not be fully informed about the various County services that are accessible to them, and the SHLACs play a crucial role in connecting them with these additional resources. The following data illustrates the number of referrals made by SHLAC to both County and external support agencies.

- **3,273** litigants were referred to various legal aid organizations.
- **2,881** litigants were referred to specific pro bono attorneys.
- **1,595** litigants were referred to the Stay Housed LA program.
- **1,085** litigants were referred to other social service agencies that assist with elder abuse, child abuse, suicide prevention, domestic violence, and other crisis counseling.
- **197** litigants were referred to DCBA services.
- **13** litigants were referred to mediation.

Future of SHLAC

DCBA continues to advocate for increased, ongoing funding for this program. As part of its submission for the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Recommended Budget, DCBA requested an increase in annual funding from the $3.0 million authorized in 2020 to $5.1 million. The increase of $2.1 million annually attempts to address operational and budgetary shortfalls being experienced by the current program and is necessary to maintain existing service levels. This specific request was also highlighted as a critical unmet need and discussed

with your Board as part of DCBA's Department Budget Presentation on February 12, 2025.[2] Running concurrent to the budget process, DCBA has released a Request for Proposals[3] for which interested respondents must submit multiple proposals for administering the SHLAC program, one with the assumption of the requested increase in funding and one contemplating existing funding levels. Proposals were due February 27, 2025, and are currently being reviewed and scored as part of the selection process. The selection of a vendor is expected to take place in time to enter into a new agreement when the current contract expires on June 30, 2025.

The next biannual report will cover the months from January 2025 through June 2025 and will be submitted on August 29, 2025.

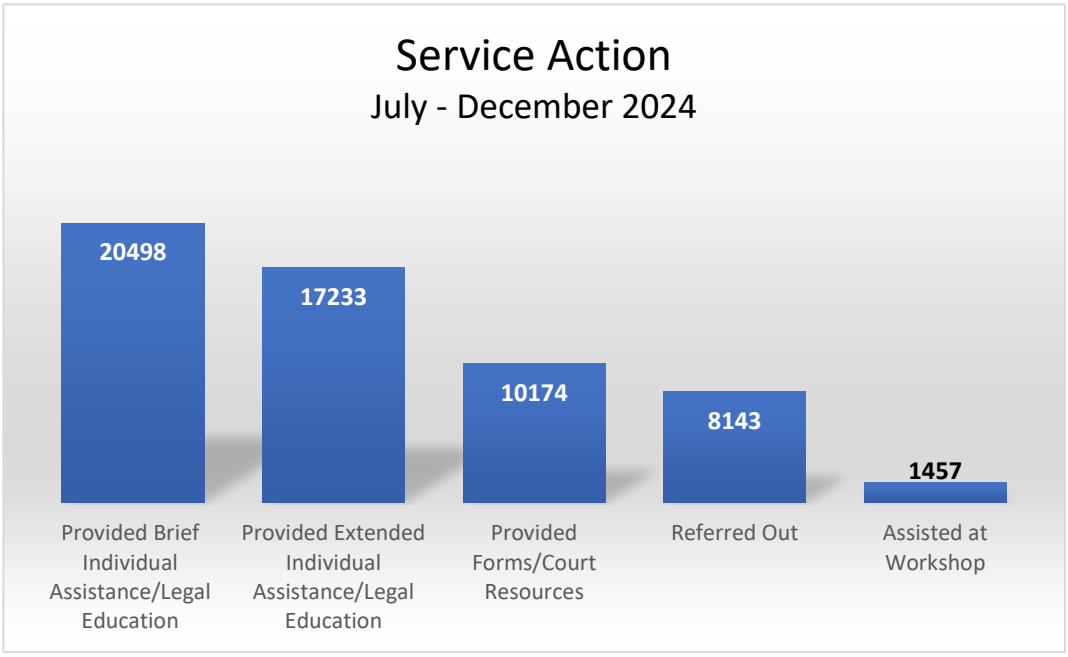
Should you have any questions concerning this report, please contact me or Joel Ayala, Chief Deputy, at (213) 974-9750 or JAyala@dcba.lacounty.gov.

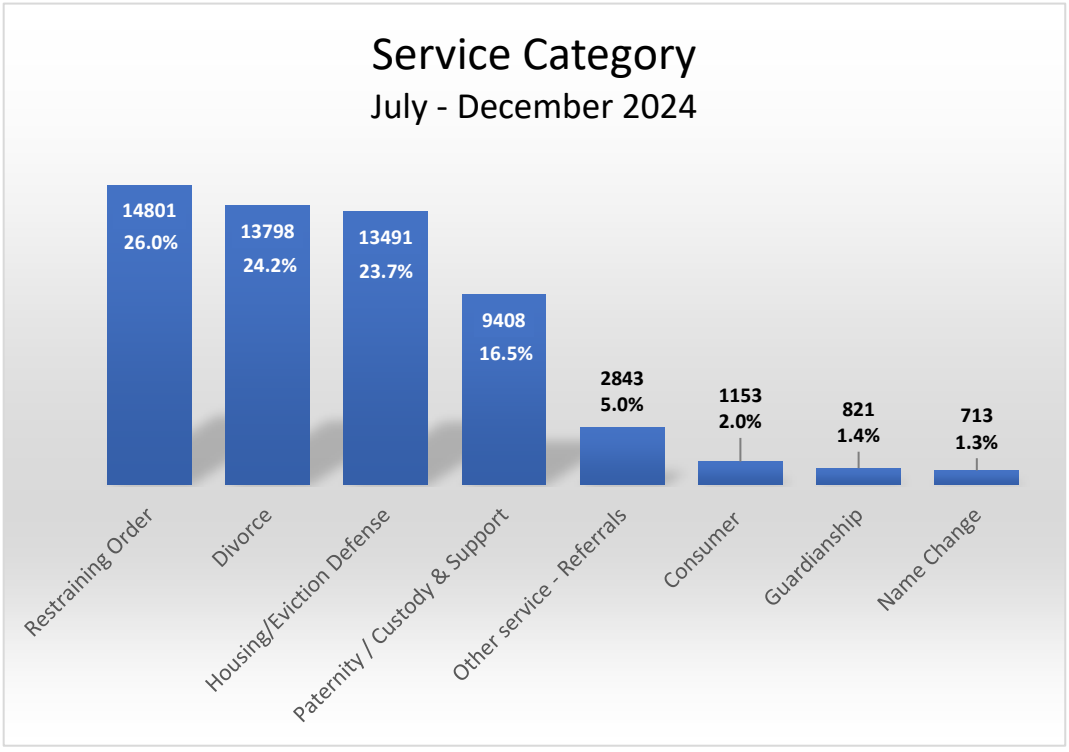
RC:JA:CO:MR
JP:ER;ph

Attachments

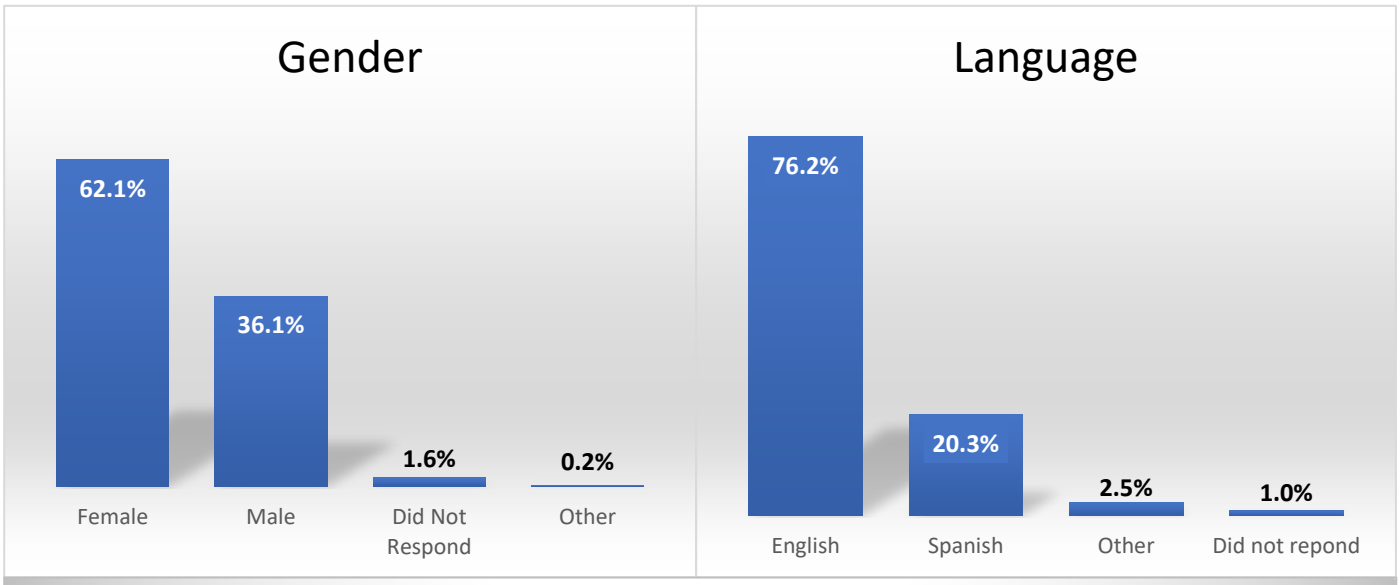
c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Chief Executive Office
County Counsel

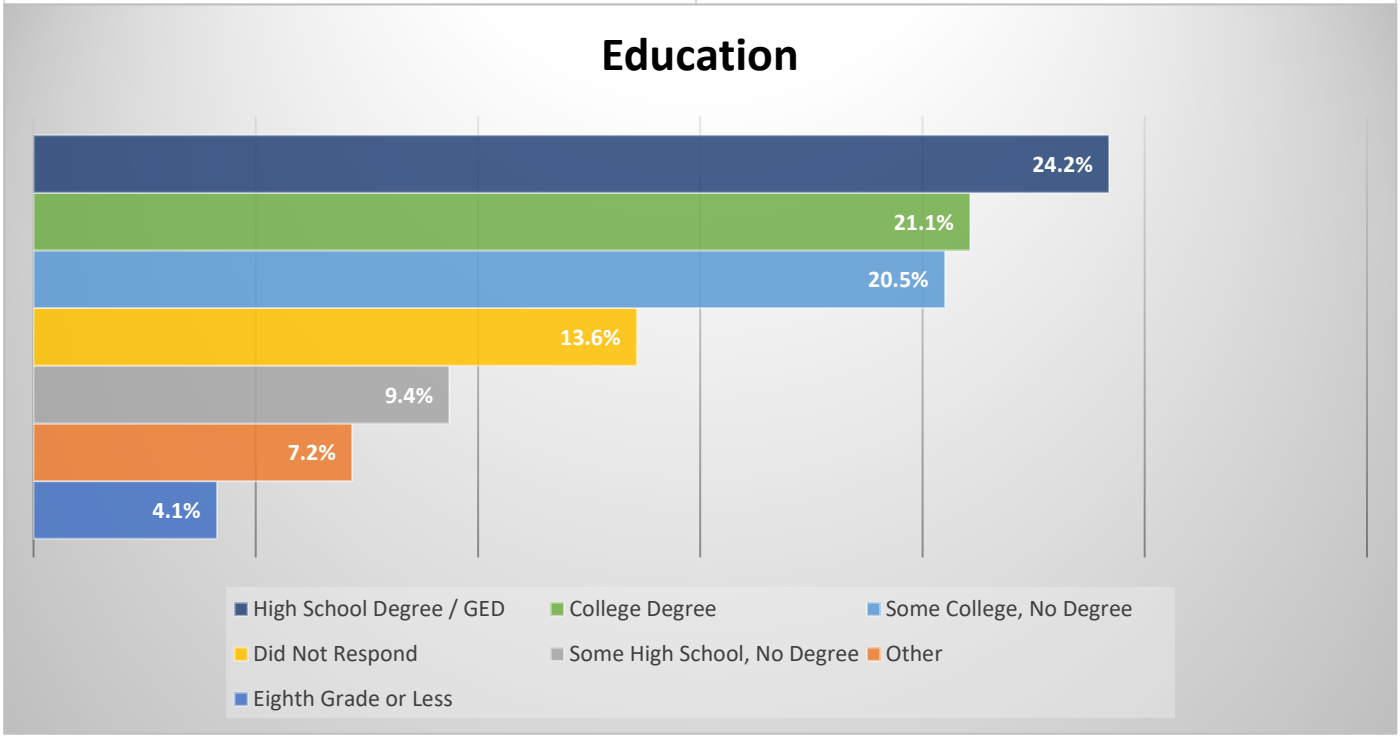
[2] https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/200323.pdf
[3] https://doingbusiness.lacounty.gov/solicitation


Service Action
July - December 2024
20498
17233
10174
8143
1457
Provided Brief Individual Assistance/Legal Education
Provided Extended Individual Assistance/Legal Education
Provided Forms/Court Resources
Referred Out
Assisted at Workshop


Service Category
July - December 2024
14801
26.0%
13798
24.2%
13491
23.7%
9408
16.5%
2843
5.0%
1153
2.0%
821
1.4%
713
1.3%
Restraining Order
Divorce
Housing/Eviction Defense
Paternity / Custody & Support
Other service - Referrals
Consumer
Guardianship
Name Change

SHLAC DEMOGRAPHICS JULY – DECEMBER 2024





SHLAC DEMOGRAPHICS JULY – DECEMBER 2024