



LOS ANGELES COUNTY

CONSUMER & BUSINESS AFFAIRS

Board of Supervisors

August 29, 2025

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First District

Holly J. Mitchell
Second District

Lindsey P. Horvath
Third District

Janice Hahn
Fourth District

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Fifth District

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

Director

Rafael Carbajal

From: Rafael Carbajal
Director

Chief Deputy

Joel Ayala

BIANNUAL WORKLOAD REPORT NO. 32 FOR SELF-HELP LEGAL ACCESS CENTERS (ITEM NO. 23, AGENDA OF MAY 3, 2016) [REPORT #08878]

On May 3, 2016, your Board of Supervisors (Board) directed the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA) to provide written quarterly reports on the Self-Help Legal Access Centers (SHLAC) program. These reports track how the program helps residents who are representing themselves in court.

In Report No. 27, dated March 22, 2023, DCBA informed your Board that reporting would move from a quarterly schedule to a biannual schedule. Each report now includes information on:

- The number and types of services provided.
- Referrals to other resources.
- Demographic information about the people served.
- Sample client stories
- Other key program outcomes.

This report covers the period from January through June 2025.

DCBA contracts with Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County (NLSLA) to administer SHLAC and help unrepresented litigants navigate the Los Angeles Superior Court (LASC) system. SHLAC provides both in-person and remote self-help services, with nine regional locations across the County where residents can get direct support.



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On December 8, 2020, the Board approved a motion, *Saving Our Self-Help Legal Access Centers*, to continue funding the program. Most recently, in June 2025, DCBA executed a new contract with NLSLA to provide SHLAC services from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2030.

I. Reporting Period Summary: January 1 – June 30, 2025

During this reporting period, the primary areas of assistance requested by individuals continued to center on divorce (27%), restraining orders (23%), housing/eviction defense (22%), and paternity/custody proceedings (17%). These topics accounted for approximately 89 percent of all services provided, reflecting consistent trends identified in previous periods.

The total number of services averaged 443 per month across all court locations and through the program's virtual platforms. Among those surveyed, 45 percent were first-time users of self-help services, while 37 percent were referred directly from the LASC system.

From January 2025 to June 2025, SHLAC service outcome data show that:

- **40,118** litigants obtained a general or in-depth understanding of their legal situation as well as their rights and responsibilities under the law.
- **10,220** litigants experiencing mental or physical threats reported feeling safe from abuse and/or threats of harm.
- **4,119** litigants preserved tenant housing in the short term and discouraged illegal lockouts.
- **3,431** litigants improved stability in a child's life.
- **10,687** litigants obtained or modified an enforceable court order.
- **10,707** litigants removed barriers preventing case advancement or closure.
- **7,214** litigants preserved their right to have a say in their case and were better prepared to be self-represented at trial.
- **3,880** litigants mitigated the risk of legal misunderstandings with their cases.
- **26,721** litigants received information on free or low-cost assistance options and were referred to legal and social services.

II. Client Sample Stories

The following stories highlight how SHLAC services impact individuals beyond legal paperwork and procedure, often improving overall stability and well-being.

District 1 – West Covina: *Mandarin-Speaking Son and Ailing Mother Facing Eviction Keep their Home*

One afternoon, a man came to us with his elderly mother. He only spoke Mandarin, and it was clear from the start that he was carrying a heavy weight. His mother, frail and living with Alzheimer's, stayed close by his side. Both looked scared and unsure of what to do. They were facing eviction. Their landlord was accusing them of having unauthorized tenants in the home. But the truth was different—the landlord had originally allowed those tenants to live there and had been collecting rent without saying a word. Now, with little warning, this family was at risk of losing their home.

We took the time to listen and reassure them. Then we helped prepare their eviction response, carefully going through the details so the man could feel confident about standing up for himself and his mother. To make things easier, we filed the paperwork online so they wouldn't have to make the difficult and stressful trip to court—something that would have been especially hard for his mother to endure.

But there was more, the man had also been hurt by one of the tenants. On top of worrying about eviction, he was living in fear and didn't know how to protect himself or his mother. He had heard about restraining orders but didn't understand how they worked. We sat with him, step by step, explaining the process in a way he could understand. Together, we worked out how to keep him and his mother safe.

When everything was finally done, their relief was unmistakable. The man was calm. His mother, though unable to fully grasp all that had happened, seemed relaxed simply because her son was calmer. They expressed deep gratitude—not just for the legal help, but for the kindness and patience they had been shown.

District 2 – Compton: *From Fear to Hope—A Family's Fight Against Unfair Eviction*

A married couple came to the Compton Self-Help Center with their five young children. They were overwhelmed and terrified—out of nowhere, they had learned that a judge had already ruled against them in an eviction case they didn't even know existed. No one had ever properly served them with the papers, so they never had a chance to respond. Now, they faced the very real possibility of losing their home and becoming homeless with their children.

Our attorneys took the time to sit with them, go through the court documents carefully, and figure out what had gone wrong. We discovered that the default judgment had been entered too early and based on improper service. With

patience and compassion, we guided them through preparing their legal response. The court clerk worked with us so that the papers could be filed right away.

When it was done, the change in the couple was immediate. You could see the relief in their faces, and the hope returning as they realized they still had a chance to fight for their home. For them, this wasn't just about legal paperwork—it was about keeping their family together in a safe place, preserving the stability their children so desperately needed.

District 3 – Chatsworth: *Courage Over Fear: A Mother Reclaims Safety at Home*

For months, a woman lived in constant fear inside her own home. Her daughter's boyfriend had turned the place that should have been her sanctuary into a source of pain and anxiety. He yelled at her, threatened her, and at times became physically abusive. Every night she went to bed afraid of what might happen next. But despite the fear, she found the courage to reach out for help—not only for herself, but for everyone in her household who felt unsafe.

That bravery brought her to the Self-Help Center. Our staff listened with compassion and walked her through the complicated process of filing for a restraining order. We explained each step, helped with the paperwork, and stood by her side as she took action to reclaim her safety.

When the court granted the restraining order, everything changed. The nights of fear were over. She could finally breathe again in her own home. This story is a reminder that our work is never just about legal forms—it's about protecting people, restoring peace, and giving families the chance to live without fear.

District 4 – Long Beach: *A Second Chance After the System Got It Wrong*

A woman came to us overwhelmed and afraid. Important court papers about her housing case had been sent repeatedly to the wrong address. Because she never received them, she missed her chance to respond—and the court entered a default judgment against her. Suddenly, she was facing the terrifying possibility of losing her home without ever having had the chance to defend herself. Not only was she worried about homelessness, but she also felt powerless, like her voice had been taken away.

At the Self-Help Center, we sat down with her and carefully prepared a motion to undo the judgment. We gathered the evidence that showed the mistakes in mailing and presented it clearly to the court.

When the judge agreed to reopen her case, everything shifted. She finally had her chance to be heard. With that opening, she was able to negotiate a fair resolution with her landlord—one that included relocation assistance and allowed her to move forward with dignity rather than fear.

This wasn't just about correcting a legal error. It was about giving someone back their voice, their stability, and their peace of mind during one of the most vulnerable times of their life.

District 5 – Antelope Valley: *Turning Legal Struggles into Strength and Confidence*

This client had already faced eviction once and learned to stand up for herself through self-representation. Now, when another eviction threatened her home, she didn't give up. Determined to defend her rights, she came back to the Self-Help Center for support. With guidance from our team, she prepared detailed responses, gathered information through discovery, and filed motions that challenged her landlord's case. Each step showed how much her confidence and legal knowledge had grown.

But her fight for stability didn't stop there. Noisy and harassing neighbors made her home feel unsafe. With SHLAC's help, she successfully obtained two civil harassment restraining orders, giving her the peace of mind she needed to focus on her life and her family.

Her continued engagement with the center didn't just protect her—it inspired her. She began to explore a future in the legal field herself, showing how access to guidance and education can empower someone far beyond a single case.

This story shows how legal support can transform lives, helping people reclaim their homes, their confidence, and even their dreams.

III. Program Referrals

SHLACs connect litigants to a range of legal aid and County resources. Between January and June 2025:

- **2,574** litigants were referred to the Lawyer Referral.
- **2,241** litigants were referred to pro bono attorneys.
- **1,530** litigants were referred to the Stay Housed LA program.
- **688** litigants were referred to social service and/or other agencies (elder abuse, domestic violence, suicide prevention, crisis counseling, etc.).
- **204** litigants were referred to DCBA services.
- **13** litigants were referred to mediation.

IV. SHLAC in Fiscal Year 2025 – 26

On June 26, 2025, DCBA executed a new agreement with NLSLA to continue operating the SHLAC program, following a competitive procurement process that began in February 2025. Under this contract, SHLAC will continue providing vital legal support to residents, helping them navigate housing, family, and other civil legal issues. With demand for these services growing, DCBA continues to advocate for sustained and increased funding to:

- Ensure equitable access to justice for all residents, including immigrants.
- Expand both virtual and in-person service options.
- Support residents in resolving legal issues that affect their homes, economic wellbeing, and livelihoods.

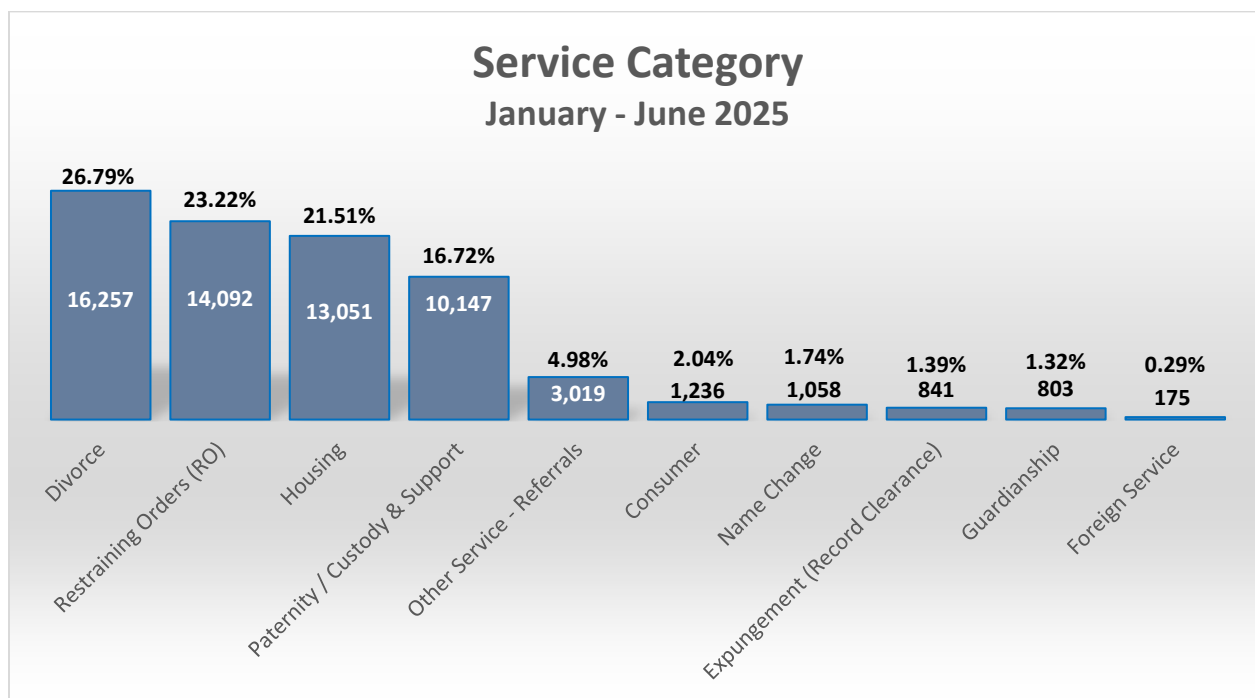
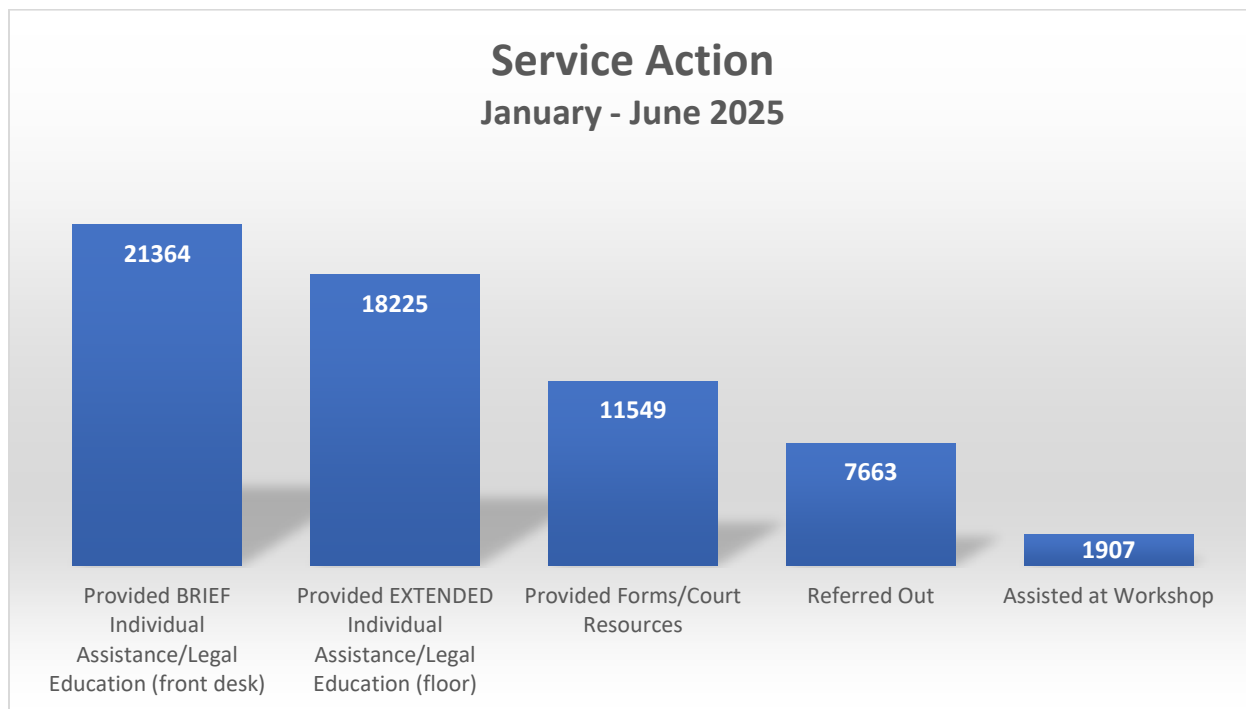
The next biannual report will cover services provided from July 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025, and is scheduled for submission on February 27, 2026. In the interim, if you have questions or need information concerning this report, please contact me or Joel Ayala, Chief Deputy, at JAyala@dcba.lacounty.gov.

RC:JA:RR
MG:EV:ph

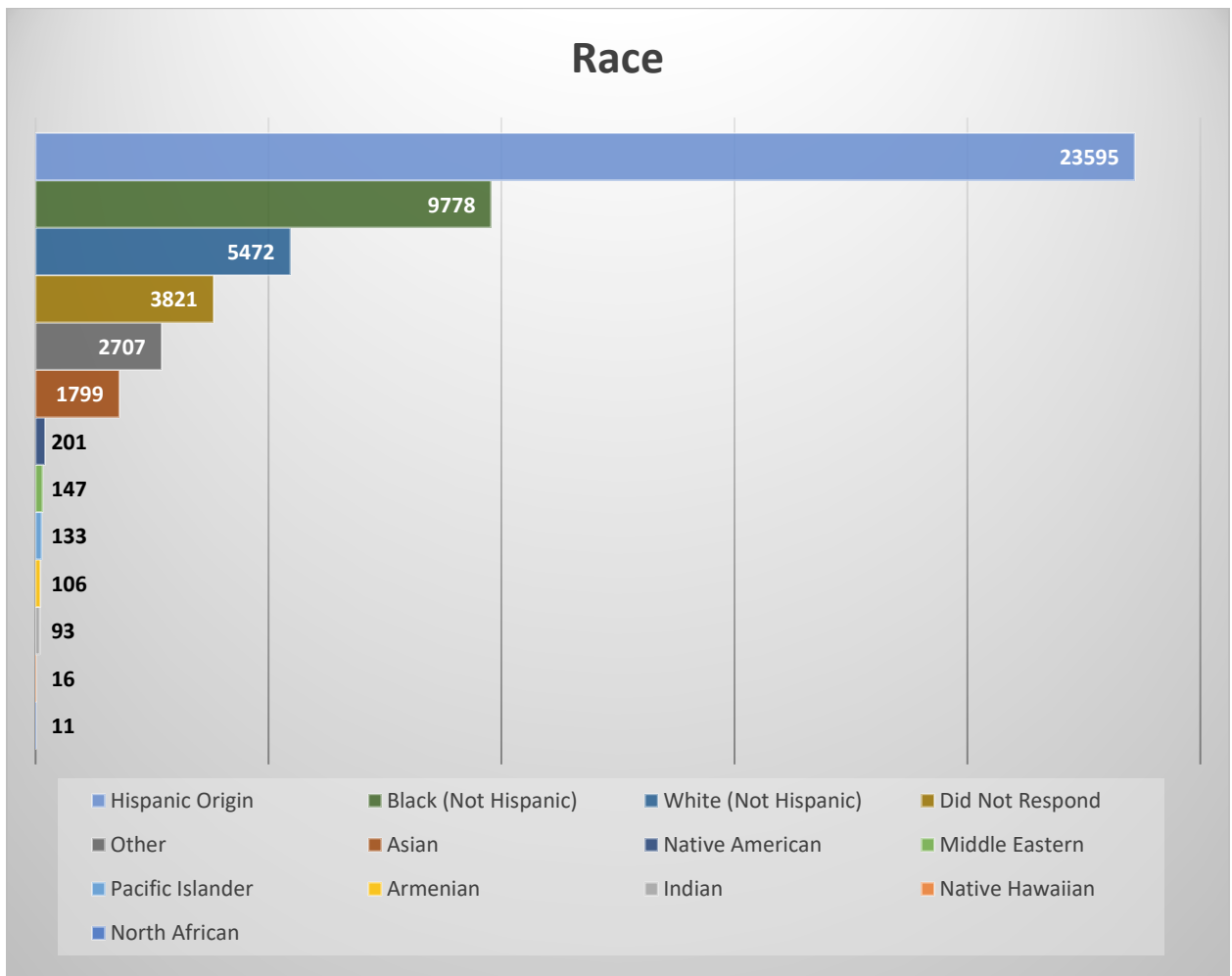
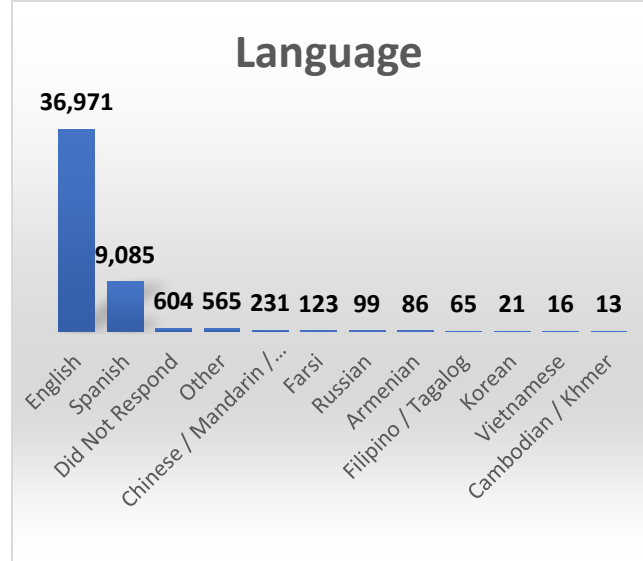
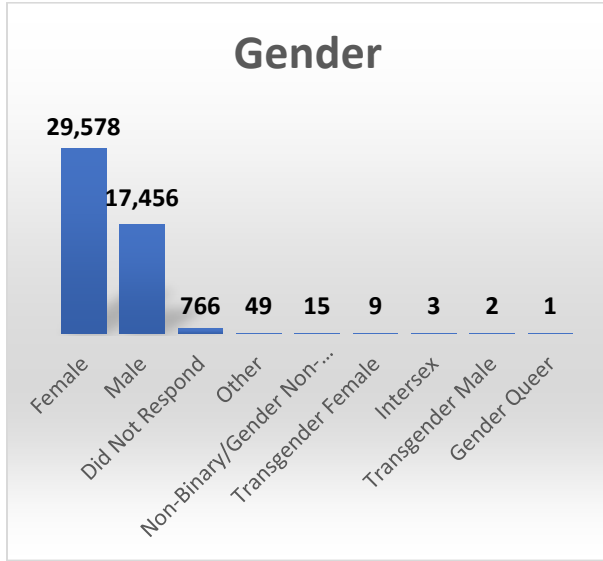
Attachments

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

SHLAC DEMOGRAPHICS – JANUARY THROUGH JUNE 2025

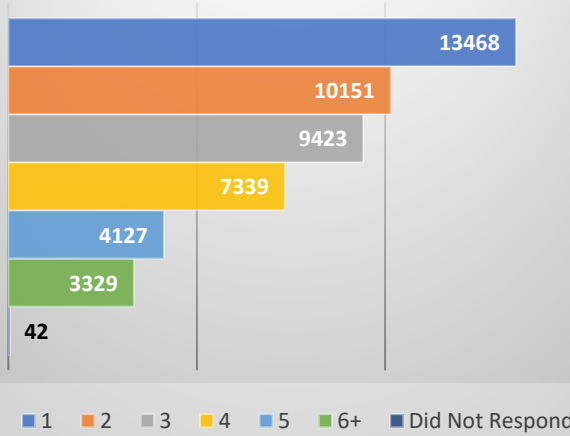


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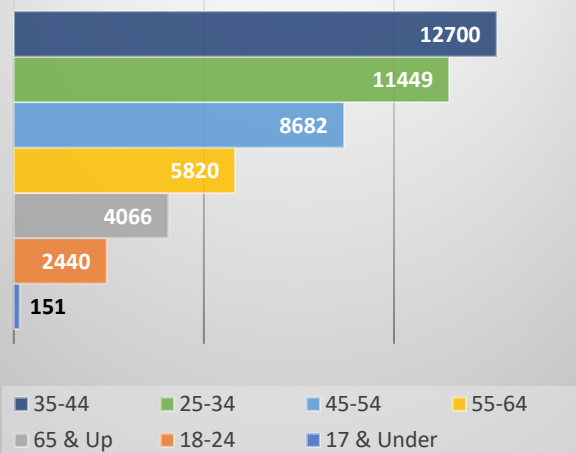


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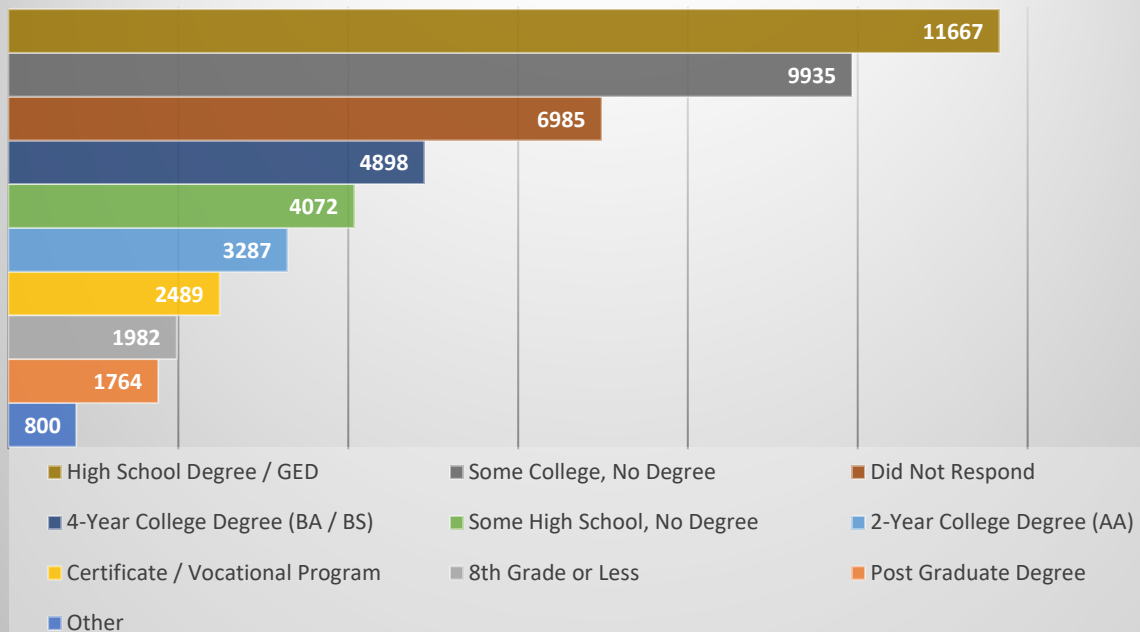
Family Size



Age at Intake



Education



First Visit to Center

