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CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES  
IN MINNESOTA

# SEEKING JUSTICE FOR ALL

Senate Committee on  
Judiciary and Public Safety  
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Presented by:

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Justice North

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Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid

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**“You saved my family. I can’t thank you enough. You stepped up, protected us, gave us your time, and kindness, you fought for us, and gave us a future. Thank you for your help. I know it costs a lot, but you did it and let me keep focusing on my job, rent, and food. Without you, we would be hopeless.”**

**-Minnesota Legal Aid Client**



# What is Civil Legal Services?

“

“Most Americans don’t realize that you can have your home taken away, your children taken away and you can be a victim of domestic violence but you have no constitutional right to a lawyer to protect you.”

-James J. Sandman  
President Emeritus  
Legal Services Corporation

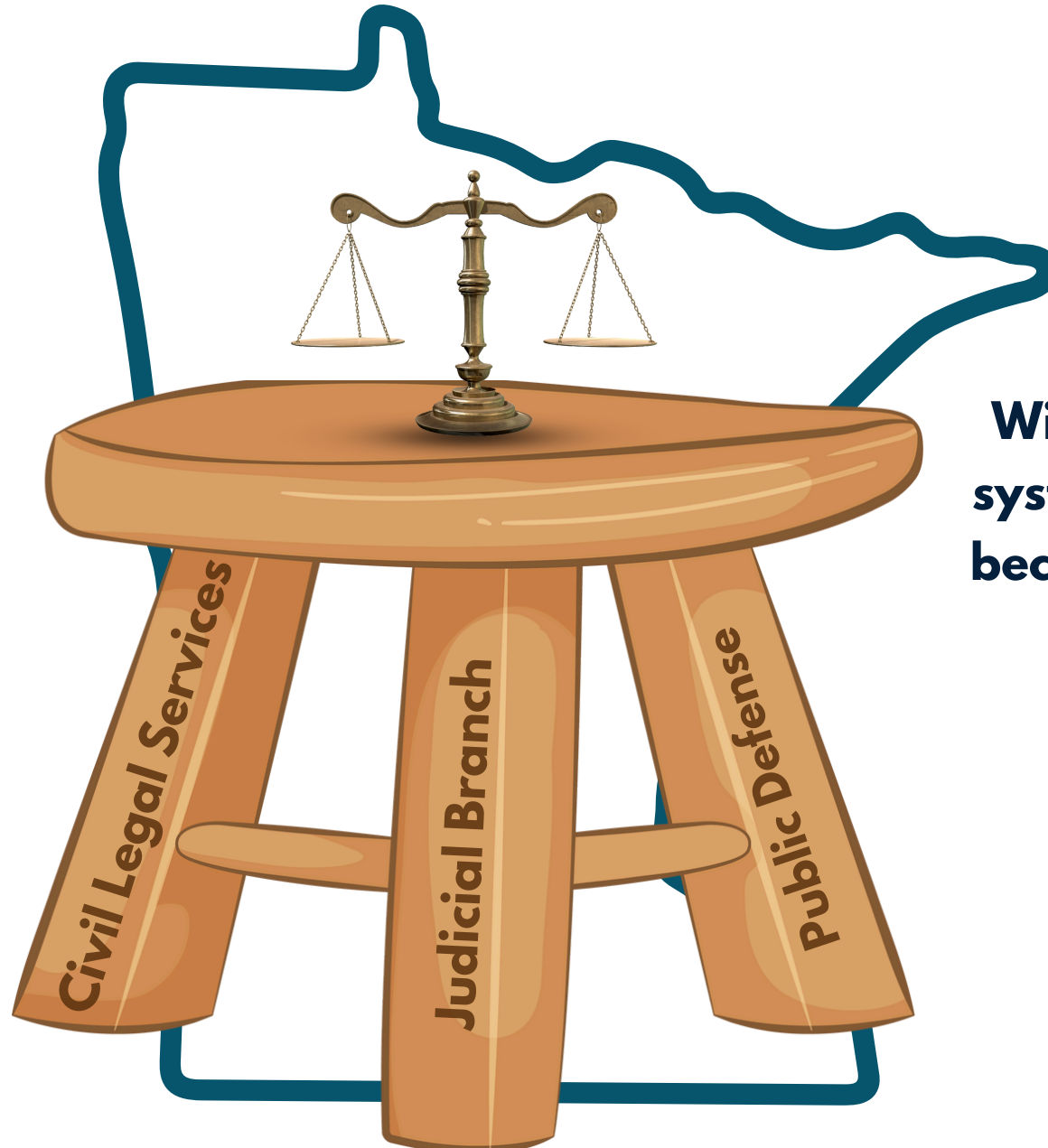
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# Three-Legged Stool

Each "leg" of the stool is equally vital. All three legs need to be strong and evenly balanced to support the whole structure.

Together, they ensure that justice is not only accessible but equitable for all Minnesotans, regardless of their circumstances.



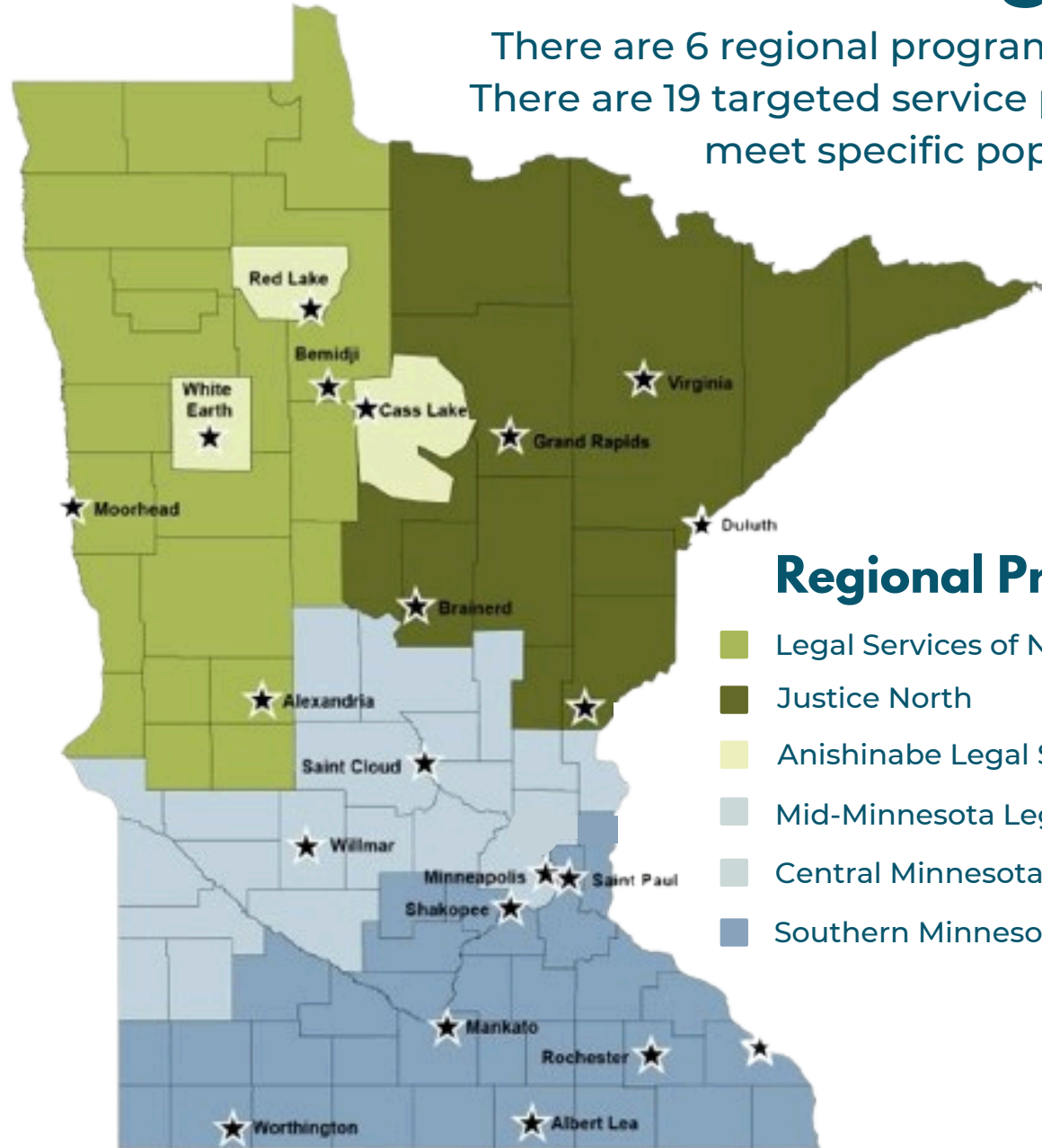
Without one, the system falters and becomes unstable.





# Minnesota Civil Legal Services Programs

There are 6 regional programs covering all 87 counties in Minnesota.  
There are 19 targeted service programs and support organizations that meet specific population or geographic needs.



## Regional Programs

- Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota
- Justice North
- Anishinabe Legal Services
- Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid
- Central Minnesota Legal Services
- Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services

## Targeted Programs

Cancer Legal Care  
Community Mediation Minnesota  
Farmers Legal Action Group  
HOME Line  
Housing Justice Center  
Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota  
Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Law Center  
Legal Assistance of Dakota County  
Legal Assistance of Olmsted County  
LegalCORPS  
Legal Services State Support  
Loan Repayment Assistance Program of MN  
Minnesota Disability Law Center  
Minnesota Justice Foundation  
Standpoint (f/k/a Battered Women's Legal Advocacy Project)  
The Advocates for Human Rights  
Tubman  
Volunteer Lawyers Network



# The People We Serve



## Who We Serve

People who are at or below 125% of FPG.  
(\$40,187.50 for a family of 4.)

A civil legal need.

(Focus on basic needs, safety, shelter, health, and sustenance.)

Legal merit.

There are no other available resources.

## Demographics

CLS provides access to the justice system for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color; people with disabilities, the elderly; the LGBTQ+ community; and veterans. These populations have disproportionate numbers of people with low income who qualify for CLS services.

2023

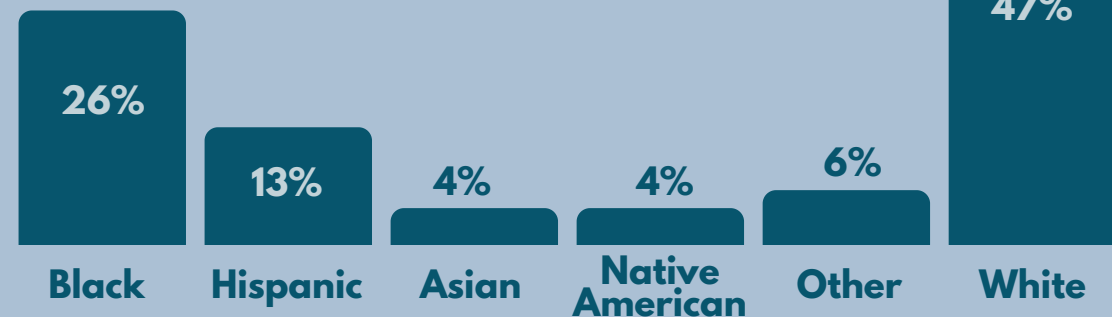
114,593 Minnesotans served

47,708 cases closed

246 staff attorneys closed 75% of cases

1,745 pro bono attorneys closed 25% of cases

In 2023, 53% of clients served by CLS were BIPOC.





# The Need for Civil Legal Services

In Minnesota, there is 1 private attorney for every 432 potential paying clients compared to 1 legal aid attorney for every 5,773 low income individuals.



Private Attorney

432 potential paying clients



Legal Aid Attorney

5,773 low-income individuals

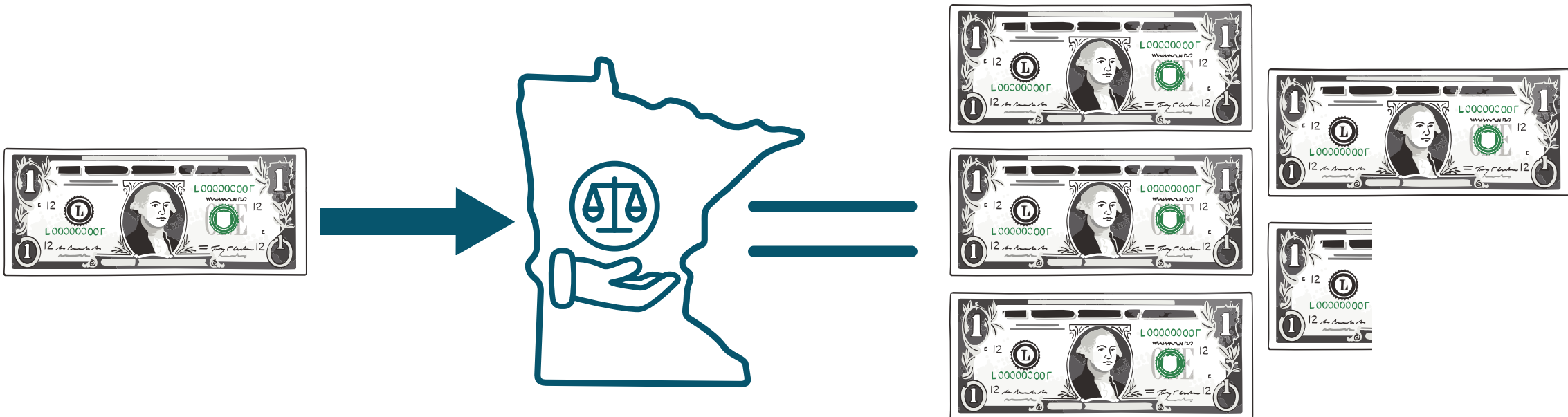


# Civil Legal Services Return on Investment

For every **\$1** invested in Minnesota Legal Aid services during 2023, the citizens of Minnesota receive **\$4.32** of immediate and long-term financial benefits.

# 432%

Social impact return on investment.





# Civil Legal Services Turn Away Rate



Minnesotans who apply and are eligible for legal assistance from a CLS organization.



**45%** receive some legal services



**55%** are turned away  
for lack of resources



# Civil Legal Services Average Salary Comparison

**Assistant City Attorney**

average starting salary

**\$103,174**

**Assistant Public Defender**

current starting salary

**\$88,380**

**Assistant County Attorney**

average starting salary

**\$87,133**

**Civil Legal Services**

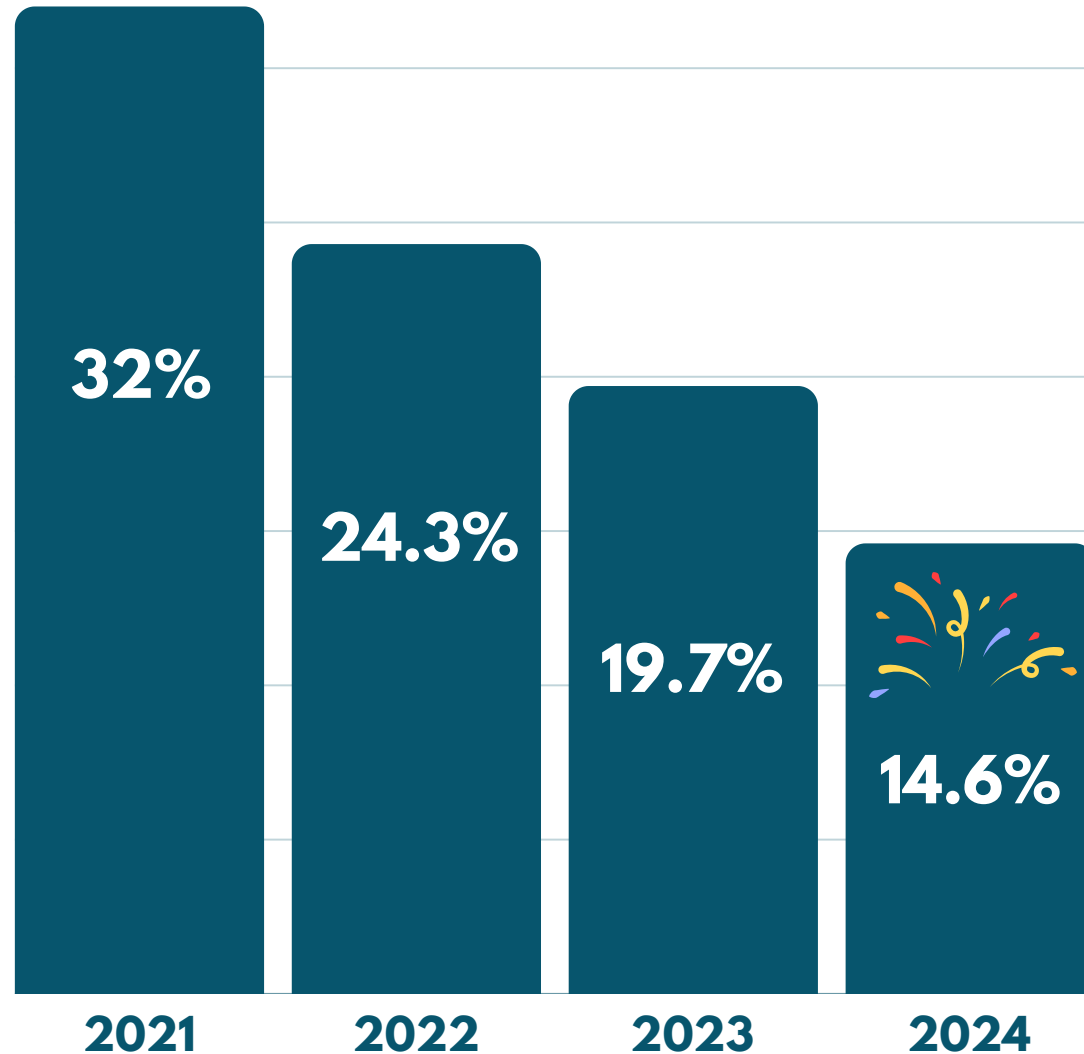
current starting salary as of 7/1/24

**\$80,000**





# Civil Legal Services Turnover Rates



The annual turnover rate has decreased by over half since 2021.

Direct legal service organizations have also increased staffing by 50 FTE since the last biennium, an increase of 10.6%.



# Civil Legal Services

## Budget Request FY 26-27

	FY26	FY27	FY26-27
<del>6-year plan</del>	<del>\$26.643m</del>	<del>\$50m</del>	<del>\$76.643m</del>
10-year plan	\$8.83m	\$20.508m	\$29.338m

These numbers represent the request for Civil Legal Services over the base amount.





# Q & A

## Contact Information:

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