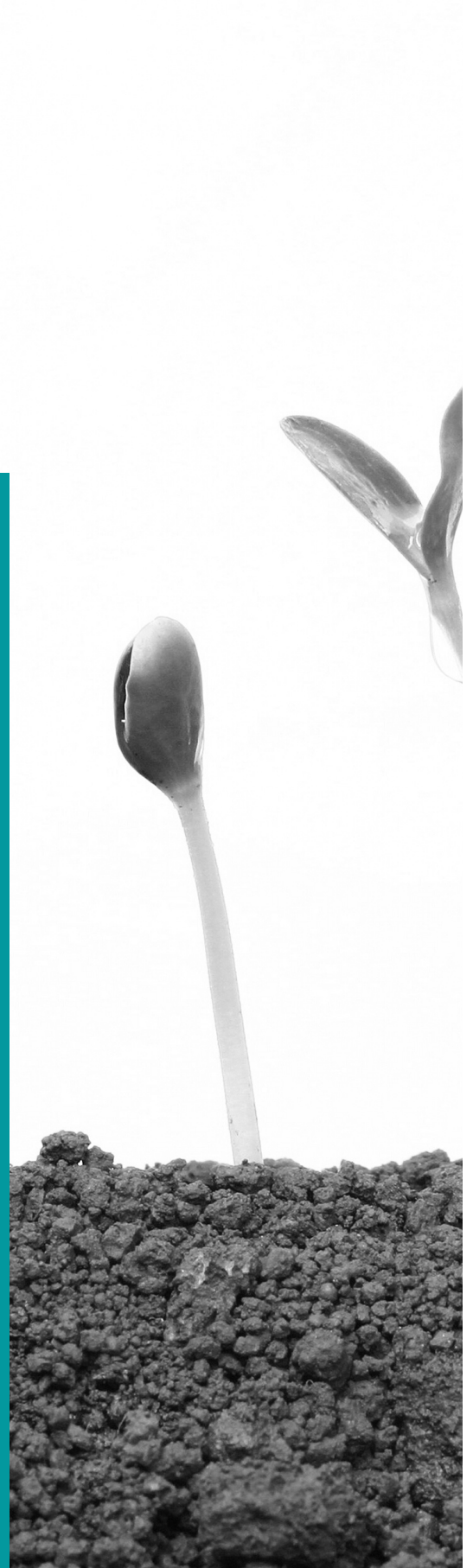




Impact Report

2021



OUR MISSION + VISION

EXPANDING THE LEGAL ECOSYSTEM

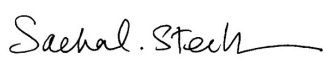
As we reflect on 2021, what stands out most clearly is that the weight of a protracted pandemic has fallen disproportionately on BIPOC communities and those experiencing poverty and housing insecurity. It has also exposed the widening gaps in our legal system. The Justice Gap, as it's commonly referred to, is more of a chasm: recent studies show that nearly 9 out of 10 families do not get the legal help they need to resolve issues related to everyday problems in housing, family, and work.

To work effectively on a solution, we need to understand the problem in its entirety. Legal aid organizations are egregiously underfunded and we recognize the dire need for more attorneys, but the problem is not solely about a shortage of lawyers. Even when legal issues are significantly impacting peoples' lives, they often don't seek legal help. Many people do not view their civil legal problems as legal, they don't know where to look for help, or they decide to deal with the problem on their own. In addition, the legal system is complicated, and was built by and for lawyers, who are the sole providers of legal advice. As a result, people's trust in the legal system is low, which prevents them from understanding their legal rights and accessing the legal protections to which they are entitled. In fact, the World Justice Project recently ranked the United States 41st in the world for civil justice, behind the United Kingdom, France, Uruguay, Malaysia, Rwanda, Chile, Japan, and Australia, among many others. These unidentified and unaddressed legal issues such as evictions, custody disputes, debt lawsuits, and warrants act as barriers to future employment, housing, credit, and stability.

Research shows that what people need is not always a lawyer, but a trusted person with an ability to navigate procedures and rules. These trusted community members and allied professionals already exist, and with the proper training and support, our programs demonstrate that they can successfully act as Community Navigators. Using a legal empowerment model, Community Navigators make the law more transparent and accessible to more people, enable communities to know and access critical legal protections, and remove barriers to poverty alleviation. We see the power of these upstream interventions every day in our work: the navigator who proactively identified a landlord-tenant issue and supported their client to resolve the issue and avoid an eviction, or the navigator who identified a fines and fees issue as a barrier to future stability and helped the client gather the necessary paperwork to get the tickets dropped. Community-based legal navigation adds a critical, missing layer to our legal ecosystem.

To date, Legal Link has trained over 950 allied professionals in legal navigation using our unique Legal First Aid curriculum and provided more than 3,800 legal consultations to our network of navigators and their clients. We are proactively surfacing issues from affected communities on the ground to inform our work, expanding our programs and team, and taking our learnings to the broader legal and social service sectors. There are many challenges ahead, but we continue to be inspired and motivated by our navigators and the clients they serve. As we move forward into 2022, Legal Link is doubling down on our vision: that communities rise out of poverty with equitable access to a just legal system. Thank you for joining us in this work.

In Solidarity,



Sacha Steinberger + Kate Crowley Richardson
Legal Link Co-Executive Directors

2021 YEAR IN REVIEW



305

navigators trained
in Legal First Aid



98%

of navigators reported an
increase in legal capability



345

free legal consults
to navigators +
their clients



12

trainings delivered to
partner organizations



600+

active members in
navigator network



3000+

families reached
across the Bay Area

967

all-time
navigators trained

3809

all-time
legal consults

LEGAL FIRST AID TRAINING PROGRAM

Through our unique Legal First Aid training program, we support allied professionals to act as navigators for families inadequately supported by the legal system. Trained navigators have the knowledge, ability, and confidence to: identify legal issues, connect clients to relevant legal resources, and deliver targeted navigator support.

We currently offer our Legal First Aid training and support to 60+ leading community-based organizations throughout the Bay Area. This year, we welcomed new organizational partners to our network of trained navigators, including The Women's Building, Shepherd's Gate, Code Tenderloin, and the Roots Community Health Center, among others. In total, Legal Link attorneys trained 305 frontline allied professionals in Legal First Aid from across the social services, health, and faith-based sectors in 2021.



Legal First Aid Training in action

“

I have had multiple experiences with the civil legal system and was unaware of the resources available to me...I'll be taking [the training] with me in my pocket everywhere.

- Legal Link Trained Navigator, 2021

This training was really helpful in building an understanding of different legal issues that come up and using easy to navigate resources....This information seems basic now that I have finished the training but prior to this week I felt lost. This will greatly improve the types of support I can offer my clients.

- Legal Link Trained Navigator, 2021

Thank you for this training! It was excellent and SO helpful. I feel much more confident in my ability to help my clients be empowered in legal proceedings or situations.

- Legal Link Trained Navigator, 2021

”

COMMUNITY NAVIGATOR FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Legal Link's Community Navigator Fellowship Program trains and supports staff at partner organizations to be fluent in community-based legal navigation. The one-year Program allows for additional training and mentorship so that Fellows have increased capacity to move the needle on poverty-related outcomes and promote participation in our legal system as a means to strengthen accountability and equity.

2020-2021 COHORT

Our inaugural class of Community Navigator Fellows graduated in August of 2021. The first year program data confirmed that Community navigators undoubtedly hold a valuable role in our legal ecosystem. In addition to providing ongoing legal navigation support to their active caseloads, fellows opened 31 legal navigation cases, 61% of which involved housing issues such as habitability, rent increases, and eviction.

2021-2022 COHORT

In the fall of 2021, we launched an expanded program with six fellows from three partner organizations: Homeless Prenatal Program, Compass Family Services, and Hamilton Families.

“

After this Fellowship, I feel more confident, calmer, and more knowledgeable. When I work with my clients, I am listening in a different way, looking out for anything that might be a legal issue. I am better at asking questions and diving deeper, and making sure to focus on the whole picture, which has also improved my relationships with my clients. I'm also more confident in sharing resources and ideas with my colleagues.

- Traci Cook, Community Navigator Fellow 2021, Homeless Prenatal Program

This program was an incredible experience for me...not only in learning how to navigate legal resources for clients but as an overall training on how to advocate and access information that might not always be immediately available or accessible for low income families.

- Clark Wininger,
Community Navigator Fellow 2021,
Compass Family Services

The Fellowship was an incredible experience for me, teaching me how to navigate legal resources for clients, advocate for resources for my clients, and provide them with support on accessing those resources...I am a transformed professional, from scrambling to educated. I can't thank the program enough for that. With a little help, families can feel empowered with knowledge and more confident in navigating legal issues.

- Oscar Aparicio, Community Navigator Fellow 2021,
Homeless Prenatal Program

”

OUR IMPACT

As an evidence-informed organization, we use validated assessments and objective data analysis to regularly inform our work. We use two metrics to measure our success and evidence our impact: the increased legal capability of the navigators we train, and the impact of the navigators' work on clients' poverty-related outcomes.

Legal Capability is an emerging concept that refers to the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to deal effectively with the law – including mobilization to resolve legal problems, obtain relevant advice, and achieve better outcomes.

98%

of navigators report an increase in their legal capability following our Legal First Aid training

97%

of Fellows' legal navigation cases had a successful outcome

Successful outcomes include cases that resulted in either a non-legal win (defined as client averted the problem or resolved the issue without use of the courts or attorney action), legal win (defined as a court process or attorney action that is successful), or neutral win (defined as information and support provided, but no change in legal circumstance).



In nearly a third of cases, Fellows identified an issue requiring attorney intervention and assisted their clients in obtaining limited or full-scope attorney representation.



Nearly half of Fellows' cases resulted in a "non-legal win", when the client averted the problem or resolved the issue without the use of courts or an attorney.



Nineteen percent of Fellows' cases resulted in a successful outcome that involved a lawyer or court.



Eighty-four percent of Fellows' legal navigation cases had a positive impact on clients' economic, family, or housing stability.

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

WE ARE GRATEFUL TO THE BROADER LEGAL LINK COMMUNITY FOR SUPPORTING OUR WORK

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MAYOR'S OFFICE OF
HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



**TIPPING
POINT
COMMUNITY**



van Löben Sels/RembeRock Foundation



**COVID-19
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