

Missouri Legal Services

Legal aid programs providing free legal help to the low-income and disadvantaged in Missouri



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Legal Aid Success Stories



1. Monica and her children are free from their abuser - They had Legal Aid on their side.

Monica finally took the children and left Art when he told her she owed him sexual favors because he had given her \$100. Art sent Monica several threatening text messages after she left him, including one message in which he vowed to kick down her door, kill everyone there, and then kill himself. Soon after, Monica obtained an order of protection against Art with help from a domestic violence shelter.

Two months later, Art hired an attorney and filed for divorce. Monica contacted Legal Aid for

assistance. Her Legal Aid attorney represented her through the discovery process, including defending her deposition, and took the case to trial. The Court awarded Monica sole legal and sole physical custody of her children.

Art was granted visitation with the children on a graduated plan, contingent upon Art completing a twelve-week parent education program. The Court found that Art had subjected Monica to a pattern of domestic violence and that this parenting plan best protected Monica and the children from any further violence. Art was ordered to pay child support.

2. Legal Aid attorneys on different teams worked together and obtained great results for Fred.

Fred was referred to Legal Aid by a community partner. His Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments had been suspended for an unknown reason. While his Legal Aid attorney was investigating his SSI benefits, she learned he was also having an issue with his subsidized housing.

One of Legal Aid's housing team attorneys accepted the housing case. Due to Fred's SSI being suspended, he missed a few months' rent and the Housing Authority was threatening to evict him if he did not pay all monies owed plus late fees.

While Fred's first Legal Aid attorney worked to get his SSI reinstated, his housing team attorney worked with the Housing Authority to complete a new budget showing Fred had no current income. Fred's attorney then negotiated to allow him the chance to pay the back due rent once his SSI was reinstated without losing his home.

Both attorneys were successful. Fred now receives SSI and is living in his apartment clear of any debt to the Housing Authority.

3. The help Legal Aid provided Joanna positively impacted her neighborhood as well.

Joanna was tricked into buying the mortgage on a vacant and blighted home in Kansas City's urban core by an investor who had purchased the property upon a prior foreclosure. Joanna is low-income but she was promised the investor would rent out the home and repay the mortgage with the revenue made by renting the property. However, the investor never rented the home and failed to pay Joanna.

After threats of legal action, Joanna settled the matter by taking a deed in lieu of foreclosure. Unfortunately, she couldn't find a suitable management company and was being cited by the City for property code violations. She was prepared to abandon the property and cut her losses when she decided to contact Legal Aid.

Joanna's Legal Aid attorney repaired a title defect and arranged for a local nonprofit community development organization to purchase the home for \$5,000. The nonprofit repaired the home and is now renting it to a low-income family, with the eventual goal of selling to the family.

The neighborhood association affected by this case has since identified three other vacant,

blighted homes on the same block. Legal Aid is currently seeking remedies for those homes as well, which will result in more livable homes for low-income families in this neighborhood.

4. Thanks to his hardworking paralegal, Allen had the transplant surgery he needed.

Allen was born with kidney failure. At six months old, he was one of the youngest people in Missouri to receive a kidney transplant and he has been on medications his entire life.

Allen is now 34 and his kidney is failing again. He must receive a new kidney or he will die. His sister is a match and he has a transplant surgery scheduled. To ensure a successful surgery, he must first undergo many expensive compatibility and blood tests. Unfortunately, the surgery will cost over \$250,000 and declining health forced Allen to give up his successful career as a mortician. Allen applied for Medicaid and was denied.

Allen came to Legal Aid for help with his Medicaid denial. A Legal Aid paralegal requested all his medical records and asked for an administrative hearing. Allen's health care providers were slow to respond, so the most important medical records arrived and were faxed to the hearing officer on the morning of the hearing.

Allen and his paralegal arrived at the hearing and waited for the administrative hearings office to call. Ten minutes after the scheduled hearing time, the paralegal received a call and was told that the hearing officer had a chance to review the records sent that morning and had made an on the record decision in Allen's favor.

UPDATE: Thanks to help from Legal Aid, Allen had the life-saving transplant surgery and is ready to get back to work.

5. Legal aid helped Cheryl combat a fraudulent payday lender.

Cheryl is a sixty-four year old woman and for the first time in her life, she was being sued and it was by a payday loan company. Cheryl was worried about how this would impact her ability to maintain her household. As a great-grandmother, she maintained a four-generation household and her monthly income was not always enough to provide for daily needs.

Cheryl contacted Legal Aid and met with a Legal Aid attorney. During the meeting, her attorney discovered that Cheryl had been renewing and paying interest on the payday loan for a period of more than three years. It also appeared that the lender had violated state laws through their manner of accepting payment on the loans and how they chose to renew the loan.

The Legal Aid attorney agreed to represent Cheryl and through the discovery process, he requested information from the lender. This information seemed to indicate that some of the loans were not legally made. Essentially, the lender kept applying payments to the interest on the loans without properly paying down the principal balance.

The attorney filed a counter-suit on Cheryl's behalf and eventually, after 18 months of litigation, the parties agreed to mediate the dispute under a retired judge. This mediation resulted in a significant monetary award to Cheryl.

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