

In the late 1960s, the U.S. government was in the midst of its federal War on Poverty. Federal funds from this initiative supported small neighborhood-based legal services offices throughout New York City's low-income communities. In 1967, a group of these programs came together so they could better coordinate their advocacy, training and funding administration. We called ourselves Community Action for Legal Services (CALs), but would eventually become Legal Services NYC.



In 1970 we had an early victory with the landmark case, *Goldberg v. Kelly*, in which the Supreme Court articulated the due process standards for termination of government benefits. We continued to foster close ties to the community and pursue aggressive law-reform litigation, and in 1974, when Congress created the federal Legal Services Corporation (LSC) to fund civil legal programs around the country, we became the New York City grantee.

Throughout the rest of the 70s and the early 80s, we were funded almost exclusively by federal LSC funds. Yet when President Reagan took office and drastically reduced federal funding for LSC, New York State responded by developing the [Interest on Lawyers Accounts Fund \(IOLA\)](#), and we began to diversify our funding: obtaining IOLA funding, other federal, state and city contracts, foundation grants, and private donations. We also began to develop closer ties with the private bar, relying increasingly on their burgeoning pro-bono-oriented culture. In 1989, with a well-diversified funding base, we became Legal Services for New York (Legal Services NYC).

In the 1990s we further expanded our funding sources, allowing us to expand specialized legal assistance under government contracts for a number of services, including eviction prevention, assistance to victims of domestic violence, work with persons affected by HIV and AIDS, disability benefit work, and parent representation in child protective proceedings.

We also reached out to private funders to support a number of innovative and nationally recognized programs, specifically addressing community economic development, foreclosure prevention/predatory lending, and legal issues affecting low-wage workers.

In 1998, in response to New York State's adoption of a mandatory continuing legal education requirement for attorneys, our [Legal Support Unit](#) became a state-accredited provider of Certified Legal Education (CLE) and now provides CLE training to over 2,500 individuals each year. During this period, we also began to strengthen our collaborative work with other organizations and became, for example, a leader in state-wide efforts to plan for and coordinate delivery of legal services. We are also a founding and lead member of the [New York LawHelp collaborative](#), which provides on-line community legal education and referral information, and has been replicated in many states. We weathered the storms of 1996, when Congress reduced LSC funding and imposed a host of new restrictions on LSC-funded organizations.

2007 marked another turning point for us: we officially became Legal Services NYC and adopted a new logo and brand. Our offices continue to be at the forefront of the most important and pressing issues of the day – predatory lending, bankruptcy, and affordable housing, along with a host of other issues affecting the most vulnerable people in New York City.

Funding for Legal Services NYC comes from the federal [Legal Services Corporation](#), grants from the city, the state and federal agencies, private foundations, IOLA and private donations.