

## California Western Community Law Project Pandemic Years (2020 and 2021) in Review

*“God Bless You”; “Thank you so much for your sincere care and help. I wish I could hug you now.”; “Thank you so much for your attention and guidance.”; “No se imagina lo agradecidos que estamos con usted y los estudiantes de leyes que ayudan en estos casos legales que uno enfrenta en esta vida.”*. These are just a small fragment of the words of appreciation that have been sent to us by Community Law Project clients.



These past two years have been some of the hardest that many of us have had in our lives. And for many of our low-income clients, who lack resources during the best of times, the pandemic years have been even harder. Yet throughout this challenging period, the Community Law Project has held true to its mission of providing sustainable and competent legal services while advancing the legal profession by instilling a commitment to public interest in California Western School of Law Students. Over the last 24 months, our clinics have taken many forms – telephonic, virtual, hybrid, live, outside, masked, the list goes on. During the height of the pandemic, to ensure the safety of our community, we reluctantly had to turn our motto on itself, asking clients to meet *us* where *we* are instead of meeting *them* where *they* are. Despite the changes, our clients have been flexible and gracious; accepting the help we can provide and understanding our limitations.

The Community Law Project has maintained three to four clinics during most weeks, serving higher numbers of total clients over these past two years than in years past. In 2021, we met with 850 individuals in a virtual or live clinical setting. Community legal education also continued to be a key tool in assisting clients. These education efforts took on a new look during the pandemic as our students and volunteer attorneys flexed their creative juices to effectively teach the community while maintaining a safe environment for all. Our students and volunteer attorneys educated close to 300 individuals on legal issues related to immigration, housing, employment, and more. Countless community members benefitted from the materials created by our students – click on this [link](#) to see a student created video on proper court etiquette for an example of the amazing work a group of our students produced. Whether through pre-recorded workshops, Zoom presentations, helpful brochures and handouts, or outdoor live sessions, our students and volunteer attorneys provided critical information to help low income community members understand and stand up for their legal rights.

Over the past two years, the amazing perseverance, dedication, and kindness shown by our law students and volunteers exceeded all expectations and allowed the Community Law Project to not only remain afloat, but flourish. In 2021, our CLP corps of law students, undergraduate students, and volunteer attorneys (over 140 strong) volunteered over 3,500 hours of their time. This allowed CLP to host 141 free legal clinics in the community or virtually, as well as provide 13 legal education presentations and produce three comprehensive sets of legal education materials. These numbers speak to the ability of CLP to stay true to its mission of providing critical legal assistance, even during a challenging time for all of us.



The Community Law Project is proud to be a part of the California Western School of Law family. We cherish the opportunity to offer legal assistance to the community while training law students to be effective and passionate advocates for those most in need. This past year, we were fortunate to work with 34 committed second- and third-year law students. While many of these students worked with us for only one trimester, a record 10 students stayed involved over multiple trimesters. In addition to managing their general curriculum, CLP's law student volunteers have learned how to provide legal assistance flexibly and creatively and have blossomed in the clinical setting. Whether it was dealing with spotty internet during a Zoom clinic, lightning and thunder during an outdoor evening clinic, or 95-degree heat during an outdoor afternoon clinic, our students greeted clients with a smile and were always eager to learn. As shared by our students, CLP is a two-way street; they get as much as they give:

*"Throughout this process of going to law school I would question whether this truly was what I needed to do and if this was the right way for me to help people. This clinic gave me the opportunity to really go in and start seeing what this profession could really do for people. It showed me that the studying, the tests, the stress, was all worth it because there are people who truly need my help. I got to see the reason why I came to law school in the first place." - Nathan, CLP Student Spring 2021*

*"I discovered in my time with Community Law Project that you engage with people at a different level when you sit and ask specifically about their problems, with an aspiration to help with those problems. You see some people at their most vulnerable points in life. As a result, you can feel their hopelessness and despair. At times, it is very difficult to disconnect emotionally. And yet, learning how to disconnect in a manner that is respectful and that enables them to maintain dignity is part of the personal growth you can experience at Community Law Project." - Lynnell, CLP Student Summer and Fall 2022*

With the anticipated return to "the new normal" in the months to come, CLP starts 2022 with new office space on campus and a new clinic location at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in North Park, as well as a continued hope for growth in our law students and equity for our clients. We are excited about the prospects to come, and we welcome and appreciate the continued support from our community. To learn more about CLP, our services, and our clinics, please visit our website ([www.cwclp.org](http://www.cwclp.org)) or Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/CommunityLawProject>). To make a donation to CLP, please visit <https://cosmos.cwsl.edu/giving/communitylawproject/>.

Thank you for your continued commitment to justice and clinical legal education,  
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