

DAVID SPITZER ESQ.  
Executive Director



Tuesday, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Attention: Brad Lewis  
Nevada Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission  
State Bar of Nevada  
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Las Vegas, NV 89102  
Phone: 702-382-2200  
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*Re: Access to Justice Commission Report*

Honorable Justices and Members of the Commission:

Northern Nevada Legal Aid continues to serve thousands of individuals in our community, conduct important community outreach, and develop new and innovative programs such as our Self-Help Center in partnership with Nevada Legal Services at the Reno Justice Court. We are in the process of re-establishing a vigorous Pro Bono program, having recently hired a Pro Bono program manager. Efforts to expand our services to more northern Nevada counties continue. In spite of uncertainty regarding our grant funding for some programs, we remain committed to growing our services and continuing the excellent work our attorneys and staff do every day.

### **Recent developments**

In the last nine months Northern Nevada Legal Aid has stabilized its operations, reduced significantly employee turn-over and expanded its programs. While we have a couple of unfilled attorney positions, we have successfully recruited staff for several positions, including a Pro Bono program manager whose mission it will be to re-vitalize our presence in the Pro Bono space in Northern Nevada and a new supervisor in the Senior Center and Housing/Consumer unit, who has lead those units to several important victories for our clients in unlawful eviction cases. Our Immigration department recently saw tow of our staff achieve partial certification with the Department of Justice allowing them to expand their services to our clients.

Although a union was certified to represent our employees last June, they have not made any contact with management to begin negotiations on a collective bargaining agreement.

It is possible we may have an opportunity to expand the scope of our work to provide Guardian Ad Litim services to the Second Judicial Court, fulfilling a need the Family Court Judges in that jurisdiction have longed for.

The following are some statistics and highlights of our work since June of 2024.

**Matters worked from June 2024 through February 2025**

Date of Service: June 2024-February 2025

Row Labels	Count of Matter/Case ID#
Adult Guardianship	1096
Child Ad	1032
Consumer-Housing (General)	724
General (Misc)	4
Immigration (General)	519
Intake	6
Jail	905
MLP	2
Not Entered	2
Pro Bono	6
Self Help	9921
SLC	606
Victim Advocacy	64
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>14887</b>

**Client Stories**

**Stories that Highlight the good work NNLA has done from June 2024 through February 2025** Names and details have been changed to preserve anonymity.

NNLA staff attorneys helped tenants with a variety of issues, including habitability matters and tenant evictions. One of these cases included Elana Butko of the Civil Self Help Center assisting a disabled client with terminating her lease under VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) as a result of domestic violence and correcting the tenant’s ledger.

**NNLA helps disabled nursing home resident avoid eviction to the homeless shelter**

A case involved the threatened eviction of a nursing home resident for non-payment. The local nursing home issued an eviction notice to the resident that would have discharged the disabled resident to the homeless shelter, which is in violation of the Federal Nursing Home Reform Law. Attorney Sarah Molleck successfully prevented eviction by negotiating with the facility and resolving the payment issues, which resulted in dismissal of the pending eviction case.

### **NNLA recovers monetary damages in multiple illegal lockout cases**

November was a big month for the Housing & Consumer Unit. On October 30, 2024, a property that rents weekly/monthly housing to low income persons was condemned by the City of Reno and Northern Nevada Health Department due to blight, human waste, and drug paraphernalia in the common areas of the premises. This resulted in the immediate homelessness of an estimated 200-300 persons. While the City of Reno had some housing resources available, the majority of residents at this complex were left unhoused and without any community resources. The problem was exacerbated when the landlords, who own several other properties in the area, temporarily re-housed residents in their other properties but then illegally evicted those residents several days later without proper notice. NNLA's Housing & Consumer Unit and the Senior Law Center united to provide immediate legal assistance to multiple clients, from disabled seniors to mothers with children. The team, comprised of Melody Luetkehans, Taylor Marie Bassell, Sarah Molleck, and Jennifer Richards, filed complaints for illegal lockout and attended multiple hearings. The hearings resulted in successful findings of illegal lockout on behalf of our clients against the landlords. Later, when counsel appeared on behalf of the landlords, the success continued with NNLA attorneys negotiating monetary settlements for the damages sustained by our clients. Some of the highlights are as follows:

- 81-year-old disabled veteran, court found that two illegal lockouts had occurred against him, client received maximum statutory damages, with a recovery of \$2,913.33.
- 62-year old senior citizen, represented to hearing stage of illegal lockout. After substantial briefing on damages, attorney negotiated settlement with total recovery of \$4,037.99, including statutory damages and attorney's fees. Client received \$3,513.47 and NNLA received \$524.52.
- 35-year old disabled mother with children, case proceeded to a hearing on the illegal lockout. After counsel appeared on behalf of landlord, attorney negotiated monetary settlement of \$1,207.50 to client, plus one month's free rent in client's new housing location. Client was thrilled to be able to provide Christmas presents to her children.

There are multiple other cases with this landlord pending as a result of the condemnation, and NNLA attorneys continue to provide legal services to clients, including negotiating the return of personal property left at the units and eviction sealing for prior evictions from the property.

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### **Outreach and Community Events**

- Temporary Protection Order Classes weekly
- Custody Basics Classes weekly
- Power of Attorney/Estate Seminars monthly
- Monthly “Ask a Lawyer” events at Washoe County Senior Centers/congregate meal sites in Washoe County
- Senior Resource Fairs- Tabling events at the Neil Road community center and the Sparks Senior Center, among others.

### **Conclusion**

Despite an uncertain climate on some fronts, Northern Nevada Legal Aid remains committed to its mission to provide free legal services to the broadest possible population we can reach.