



2014 to 2015

A REPORT ON THE SAY YES LEGAL CLINICS FROM VLP TO ITS PARTNERS

**This Detailed Report Outlines the Activity and
Progress of the Collaboration Between
ECBA Volunteer Lawyers Project,
Say Yes Buffalo, and
The Buffalo Public School District
for the 2014-2015 School Year**



SAY YES LEGAL CLINICS

2014—2015 ANNUAL REPORT

The 2014—2015 School Year marked the beginning of the exciting partnership between The Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project, Say Yes to Education Buffalo, and the Buffalo Public School District in the creation of the Say Yes Legal Clinics. This innovative collaboration seeks to remove barriers to our students' educational success caused by legal issues in a family by providing free walk-in legal clinics within the schools. In 2014 we completed extensive groundwork and set the foundation for continued partnership success resulting in the January 2015 clinic opening.

Kickoff with Legal Community

On September 24, 2014, Federal Magistrate Judge Hugh Scott, Legal Task Force Co-Chair, hosted a the first informational session in order to build interest among law firms. Of the 15 firms invited, representatives from **5 area law firms** attended. A much larger event was held on October 8, 2014, in which **24 attorneys, paralegals, and support staff from 19 firms** attended. Representatives from Legal Aid Bureau, Western New York Law Center, Neighborhood Legal Services, Minority Bar Association, SUNY Buffalo Law School, and the Buffalo Board of Education also attended the October kick off. These two events affirmed our belief that the Buffalo legal community would embrace Say Yes Buffalo.

Collaborative Work Leading to Clinic Launch

In the months leading up to the Clinic Launch, VLP staff worked collaboratively with Dr. Will Keresztes, principals, and staff of the Buffalo Public School District to identify appropriate space to house the clinics and to address logistics. Four schools in the district were identified to host legal clinics: **PS 54, South Park High, East High, and PS 18**. Our partners agreed that Monday through Thursday between 3:30 and 5:30 pm would be the most appropriate time for clinic operation. Kimberly Boulden, VLP's Say Yes Coordinator worked side by side with Nadia Moore and the Say Yes Family Support Specialists to plan for the clinic opening. Anthony Marshall, Esq. (Harris Beach) and Susan Katzoff, Esq. (Barclay Damon) provided significant guidance from their involvement with Say Yes Syracuse legal clinics.

SAY YES LEGAL CLINICS

2014—2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Local Law Firm

Commitment and Attorney Training

Following VLP's recruitment activities, five area law firms committed to adopting legal clinics in the Buffalo Public Schools:

- **Hodgson Russ** adopted PS 54,
- **Phillips Lytle** adopted South Park High,
- **Harris Beach** and **Hiscock Barclay** (now Barclay Damon), co-adopted East High, and
- **Lippes Mathias Wexler Friedman** adopted PS 18,

Comprehensive trainings were held at each firm for CLE credit. At the free CLE trainings, attorneys learned about Say Yes history, ethics of limited scope representation, use of the Reference Guide, clinic logistics, and cultural competency. At this time, the collaborative partners solidified the clinic schedule, which was distributed to attorney volunteers for sign-up. Gibson, McAskill & Crosby, LLP attorneys will be joining the group for the 2015-2016 school year.

Marketing Efforts

VLP, Say Yes, and the Buffalo Public School District began an intensive marketing campaign. The district sent out a letter detailing the clinic's purpose and coordinated a robo-call to every household in the district. Say Yes advertised in local newspapers, publications, and radio stations. All partners advertised on their respective websites, and the poster below was placed prominently in schools and other locations.

Do you
need **FREE**
legal advice?



Beginning January 20th, 2015 Buffalo public school students and their families will be able to take advantage of *free* legal advice from lawyers at any one of **four legal clinics located within Buffalo public school buildings!**

Legal advice is available for non-criminal matters including, but not limited to: adoption, bankruptcy, child custody, child support, divorce, eviction/foreclosure, government benefits, housing, immigration and income tax.

LEGAL ADVICE WILL NOT BE OFFERED FOR CRIMINAL MATTERS.

Clinics are walk-in only,
on a first come, first serve basis.

Come see us:

Mondays

Dr. Antonia Pantoja
Community School of
Academic Excellence
750 West Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14213
3:30 to 5:30 pm
SPANISH TRANSLATOR
AVAILABLE

Tuesdays

South Park High School
150 Southside
Parkway
Buffalo, NY 14220
3:30 to 5:30 pm

Wednesdays

Dr. George E.
Blackman School of
Excellence ECC
2358 Main Street
Buffalo, NY 14214
3:30 to 5:30 pm

Thursdays

East High School
820 Northampton
Street
Buffalo, NY 14211
3:30 to 5:30 pm

For more information, please visit www.SayYesBuffalo.org or call the Volunteer Lawyers Project's Say Yes Legal Clinic Information Line at 716-828-8491

SAY YES LEGAL CLINICS

2014—2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Developing Resources and Materials

VLP staff developed a number of resources for attorney use at the clinics. Most notably was the user-friendly Reference Guide, which was developed by VLP's Say Yes Coordinator Kimberly Boulden. The Reference Guide, an HTML document, provides information regarding areas of law and community agencies for referral purposes. The Reference Guide became an invaluable resource for volunteer attorneys who were not accustomed to working with the issues presented by clients at the legal clinics.

VLP also collaborated with local law experts to update Jim Morrissey's Rights and Responsibilities of Young People in New York, a book detailing legal issues pertaining to youth. A copy of the latest version will be available on site at each clinic.

Volunteer Lawyers Project Legal and Human Services Reference Guide

Copyright Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project 2015

Contents

Adoption	Abuse	Bankruptcy	Cars/Automobiles
Collection Defense	Consumer Problems	Child Support	Civil Rights
Criminal	Crime Victims	Custody	Domestic Violence
Disabilities	Discrimination	Divorce	Education
Employment	Estates and Wills	Eviction	Ex Offenders

Screenshots of the Reference Guide

Bankruptcy		eagles.dungus.com	
Is bankruptcy right for you? General Bankruptcy Factsheet <small>United States Bankruptcy Court: Call for information concerning previous filings 1-866-222-8029</small>	Western New York Law Center	Chapter 7	855-0203
	Legal Services for the Elderly	Over age 60 homeowners in danger of losing homes in tax or mortgage foreclosure proceedings	853-3087
	Consumer Credit Counseling	Pre-file Counseling and Education. CCCS of Buffalo offers EOUST-approved bankruptcy pre-file counseling and pre-discharge education. Approved to issue certificates in compliance with the Bankruptcy Code.	716.712.2060
Cars/Automobiles	Lemon Laws Arbitration Fact Sheet	Attorney General	Client can Call, or Client can file for arbitration here (716)853-8404
	Fraud/Repairs and Driver's Licenses	Department of Motor Vehicles	The DMV can investigate fraud related to identity theft, as well as odometer and mileage fraud. Find out more on their website Multiple Locations

SAY YES LEGAL CLINICS

2014—2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Legal Clinic Launch and Ribbon Cutting

The Say Yes Legal Clinics officially launched on **January 20, 2015**. A ribbon cutting to commemorate the opening was held on March 24, 2015 at P.S. 18, Dr. Antonia Pantoja Community School of Academic Excellence. Buffalo's legal community, local judges, school officials, and news outlets turned out for the event. Say Yes Legal Taskforce Co-Chairs, Hon. Judge Scott (pictured top left) and Robert Elardo (picture top right) and provided opening remarks followed by the ceremonial ribbon cutting by our law firm partners.



- From Left to Right : James Domagalski, Mark Spitler, Robert Elardo, William Brennan, Bradlee Townsend, Thomas Gaffney, John Amershadian, Judge Hon. Hugh Scott, and Interim Superintendent Donald Ogilvie.

SAY YES LEGAL CLINICS

2014—2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Clinic Spotlights

Between January 20, 2015 and May 31, 2015 we operated **58 legal clinics**. A total of **57 local attorneys volunteered**. These pro bono attorneys handled **96 cases**, benefitting a total of **338 family members** in the district.

SAY YES CASES BY CLINIC



■ PS 18 Cases (25%) ■ PS 54 Cases (28%)
■ South Park Cases (24%) ■ East High Cases (23%)

PS 18

13 days in session

24 cases total

3 days with no clients served

South Park High

14 days in session

23 cases total

3 days with no clients served

PS 54

16 days in session

27 cases total

2 days with no clients served

East High

15 days in session

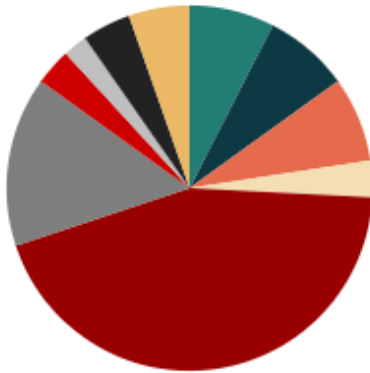
22 cases total

3 days with no clients served

SAY YES LEGAL CLINICS

2014—2015 ANNUAL REPORT

TYPES OF CASES SEEN



Bankruptcy (8%) Consumer (8%) Education (8%)
 Employment (3%) Family (44%) Housing (15%)
 Immigration (3%) Tax (2%) Wills and Estates (4%)
 Other (5%)

How Clients Found Us:

Incoming Referral Sources	# Referred
1. Buff State	1
2. Buffalo News	5
3. Buffalo School Staff	15
4. Challenger	3
5. Child Support Agency	1
6. Family Court	1
7. Letters from School	24
8. Multilingual Education Dept. Seminar	1
9. Parent Network	1
10. Posters	9
11. Radio	3
12. Robo School Call	5
13. Say Yes Staff	6
14. School webpage	5
15. Word of Mouth	5
16. Not Disclosed	11

Case Outcomes:

Clinics offer counsel and advice only. Clients needing further non-legal assistance are provided referrals to social service organizations before leaving the legal clinic. VLP Say Yes Coordinator personally links eligible clients who may require on-going legal assistance with the appropriate legal services office. Please see the graphic to the right for referral information.

WHERE CASES WERE REFERRED



Volunteer Lawyers Project (45%)
 Other Legal Service Org. (19%) Private Bar (14%)
 Community Service Org. (22%)

SAY YES LEGAL CLINICS

2014—2015 ANNUAL REPORT

DETAILED BREAK DOWN OF CLINIC CASES BY TYPE

<u>Problem Type</u>	<u># of Cases</u>	<u>Problem Type</u>	<u># of Cases</u>
Custody/Visitation	14	Other Family	2
Support	13	Guardianship	2
Divorce	8	Other Employment	2
Bankruptcy	7	Other Income Maint.	1
Other Housing	6	Family Violence (DV)	1
Landlord/Tenant	5	Loans	1
Other Miscellaneous	5	Wage Claims	1
Wills/Estates	4	Adoption	1
Mortgage Foreclosure	3	Collection	1
Other Consumer	3		
Ed: Discipline	3		
Immigration	3		
Contracts	2		
Ed: Disabilities	2		
Other Ed.	2		
Job Discrimination	2		
Tax Problem	2		

SAY YES LEGAL CLINICS

2014—2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Lessons Learned and Challenges for the Future:

- **Opening a 5th Site:** The partnership is in process of expanding into an additional site in the 2015—2016 school year. In order to be accessible to families who may not be able to attend the 3:30 to 5:30 clinics, it was proposed that this new clinic be during different hours.
- **Language Access:** Work was done on translating the marketing information (specifically the poster) into the top 6 languages spoken in the district but was not finalized during the 2014-2015 school year. While language access was available for clients (via bilingual VLP staff or use of language line), we received feedback from the community that our efforts could be improved in marketing to these families.
- **Formatting and Language in Marketing Materials:** We received feedback that the original wording of the marketing materials was misleading as it did not specify that there were income limitations for clinic clients needing ongoing legal services. With help of the Say Yes staff, the posters were updated mid-year. Furthermore, the notice sent home by the district was confusing to some non-native English speakers, who mistook the letter as a summons to go to the school. A simpler format (more like the posters) might be a better option.
- **Volunteer Feedback:** VLP is working on preparing a simple survey for attorney volunteers to collect feedback for program improvement. A Legal Task-force Survey Committee will assist in developing the final survey instrument.
- **Increase Marketing and Outreach Efforts:** Unfortunately a number of clinics were poorly attended or unattended on some days. This often occurs with new outreach programs. However, an increase in marketing, outreach, and community visibility could improve traffic to the clinics.

SAY YES LEGAL CLINICS

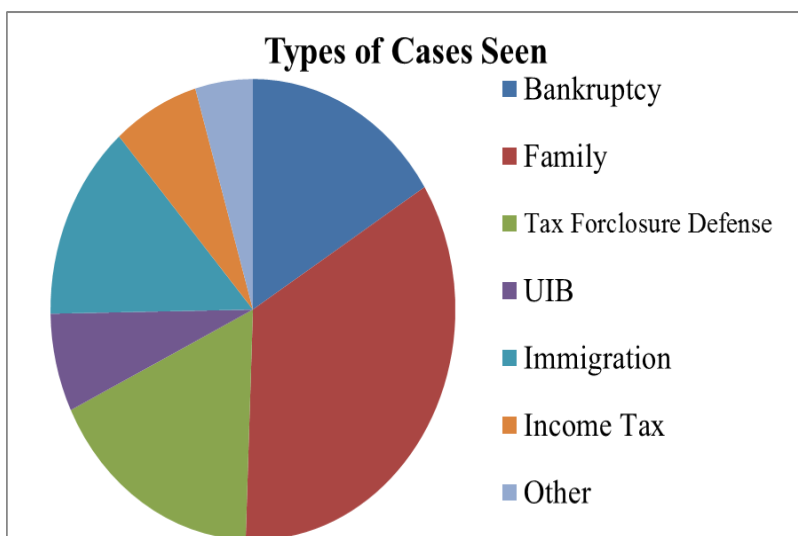
2014—2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Additional Legal Assistance For Say Yes Clients

Since beginning to partner with Say Yes in July 2014, VLP has placed a special emphasis on helping Say Yes eligible families through all of VLP's programs.

Full Representation Models :

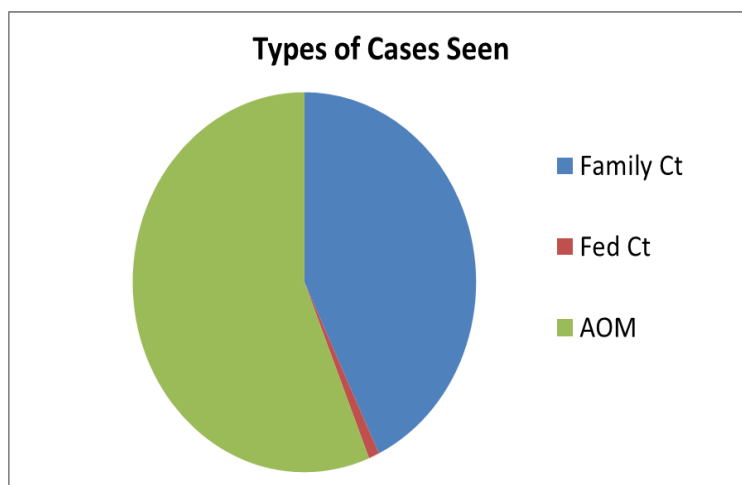
Many of VLP's services offer full representation. During the grant year of **July 01, 2014 to June 30, 2015**, VLP opened **87 files** for Say Yes eligible clients seeking full representation. A total of 9 volunteer attorneys helped serve 12 clients.



Limited Scope Representation:

In addition to the Say Yes Legal Clinics, VLP operates 3 other limited scope programs. They are the Attorney of the Morning Program, providing eviction defense at Buffalo City Court, the Family Court Help Desk and the Pro Se Assistance Program at Federal Court. During the grant year, VLP opened **301 limited scope files** for Say Yes eligible clients at these programs.

A total of **77 volunteer attorneys** helped to serve these **301 clients**.



SAY YES LEGAL CLINICS

2014—2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Our Say Yes Clinic Volunteers for the 2014 - 2015 School Year:

- Christina Arthurs
- William Brennan
- Craig Bucki
- Joanna Chen
- Marissa Coheley
- Kimberly Colaiacovo
- Jessica Copeland
- Kevin Cross
- Ryan Cummings
- Mark Davis
- Elise DeRose
- Jillian Deck
- Joanna Dickinson
- Emily Dinsmore
- Joshua Feinstein
- Sarah Fenster
- Thomas Fennell
- Michael Ferdman
- Jeffrey Fiut
- Terrance Flynn
- Thomas Gaffney
- Eric Glynn
- Adam Haney
- Patrick Hines
- Rebecca Hoffman
- Gregory Ivansic
- Kevin Kearney
- Leslie Kellogg
- David Kernan
- Karl Kristoff
- Colleen Lamarre
- Craig Leslie
- Tracie Lopardi
- Amanda Lowe
- Todd Miles
- Sarah Miller
- Stacey Moar
- Oriana Montani
- Deena Mueller
- Mathew Palmieri
- Seth Pullen
- Sarah Ranni
- Amy Habib Rittling
- Matthew Rosno
- Matthew Scherer
- Sharon Schwartz
- Frank Sciremammano
- Marnie Smith
- Sarah Tambakuchi
- Bradlee Townsend
- Jeffrey Weiss
- Catherine Wettlaufer
- Benjamin White
- Ryan White
- Benjamin Wisniewski
- Mengyi Xu
- Arnold Zelman

SAY YES LEGAL CLINICS

2014—2015 ANNUAL REPORT

SAY YES LEGAL CLINIC TASK FORCE

The Say Yes Legal Task Force is a consortium of Buffalo professionals who meet monthly to discuss the status, progress, and continued development of the Say Yes Legal Clinics. The Say Yes Legal Task Force directly involves community stakeholders whose input is essential to the success of the legal clinics. Below is a list of our 2014-2015 Task Force Members:.

Task Force Chairs: Hon. Hugh Scott (United States Magistrate Judge WDNY) and Robert Elardo, Esq. (Volunteer Lawyers Project).

Say Yes Buffalo: David Rust, Naida Moore, Betsy Behrend, Esther Annan, Daytuan Antonetti, Kelly Luce, Heather Turner, and Beth Zaccarine.

Buffalo Public Schools: Dr. Will Keresztes.

ECBA Volunteer Lawyers Project: Gayle Murphy and Kimberly Boulden.

Judges: Hon. Paula Feroletto (Administrative Judge, 8th Judicial District), Hon. James A. W. Mcleod (Buffalo City Court), Hon. Susan Eagan (Buffalo City Court), Hon. Paul Buchanan (Erie County Family Court)

Law Firm Partners: Robert Heary (Barclay Damon), William Brennan (Phillips Lytle), Joshua Feinstein (Hodgson Russ), Thomas Gaffney (Lippes Mathias Wexler Friedman), Richard Sullivan (Harris Beach), Tracie Lopardi (Harris Beach), and James Schwegler (Harris Beach).

SUNY Buffalo Law School: Melinda Saran (Vice Dean Student Affairs) and Rebecca Donoghue (Executive Assistant to Dean).

Public Servants: Michael Russo (NYS Office of the Attorney General), David Edmunds (New York State Liquor Authority), Michael Siragusa (Erie County), Timothy Ball (City of Buffalo).

Bar Association Representatives: Jennifer Scharf (Women's Bar Association), Re-

becca Hoffman (Women's Bar Association), Stephanie Saunders (Minority Bar Association) and K. John Bland (ECBA Lawyers for Learning)

Legal Services Corporations: Karen Welch (Neighborhood Legal Services), Penny Selmonsky (Neighborhood Legal Services), and Pam Neubeck (Legal Aid Buffalo)

Non Profit Representatives: Elizabeth Harned (Planned Parenthood), Julie Loesch (Child & Family Services), Bridget O'Connell (Child & Family Services),

Members of Private Bar: Sarah Frederick (Frederick Law Offices), and James Morrissey.