



ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024



Changing Lives Through Justice

OCT. 1ST, 2023 - SEPT. 30TH, 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS



LETTER FROM THE CEO 3

ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP 4

ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP 5

ABOUT US 5

OUR IMPACT 6

OUR IMPACT 7

OUR IMPACT 8

CLIENT SUCCESS STORIES 9

CLIENT SUCCESS STORIES 10

FINANCIALS 11

OUR SUPPORTERS 12

CONTACT US 13

LETTER FROM THE CEO

For over 45 years, Gulfcoast Legal Services (GLS) has proudly provided critical legal aid in the Greater Tampa Bay Area. The 2023-2024 fiscal year was a period of significant growth, allowing us to expand our reach through new and continued partnerships with organizations such as Funding Florida Legal Aid, the Area Agency on Aging for Southwest Florida, the Juvenile Welfare Board, Stetson University College of Law, and many more valued supporters.

We launched our Pro Bono Unit, fully dedicated to recruiting and supporting volunteer attorneys looking to join us in our mission of providing superior legal services to those who otherwise could not afford counsel. Additionally, we expanded our legal aid services to older adults in southwest Florida, including Desoto, Charlotte, and Lee Counties. To support this growth, we successfully staffed and retained 13 new team positions, increasing our capacity to serve those in need.

Throughout 2023-2024, GLS recorded the highest number of hours spent in court to date, underscoring both the demand for legal services and the dedication of our staff to serving the community. We faced unprecedented challenges, as Hurricanes Helene and Milton devastated our communities. Though our offices were temporarily closed in the immediate aftermath of the disasters, GLS team members, several of whom experienced disaster impacts of their own, remained steadfast in our mission, volunteering to show up to outreaches and community meetings to ensure that community members were advised of their rights and had access to services.

As we move into 2024-2025 and beyond, we will continue to show up for our community. GLS remains committed to advancing justice and ensuring access to legal services for all. Join us as we continue expanding access to justice to our neighbors.



"Legal services work is not for the faint of heart or the weak-willed. Our work is challenging, and the battles our clients face are often brutal. I am honored to stand alongside a team of dedicated advocates—from our administrative staff to our direct legal services team—who are fiercely committed to fighting for our clients while bringing passion and joy to the work they do."

**THERESA
PRICHARD, ESQ.**

ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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College of Law



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Private Practice



Tayesha Hiner
4

ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

STAFF LEADERSHIP

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, THERESA PRICHARD, ESQ.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, JODI DUDA

CHIEF ADVOCACY OFFICER, NOELLE CLARK, ESQ.

FAMILY LAW, AIMEE TRINOSKEY, ESQ.

FINANCIAL STABILITY, SARA JONES, ESQ.

HOUSING, JAMES KUSHNER, ESQ.

IMMIGRATION/HUMAN TRAFFICKING, LISA MURRAY, ESQ.

SPECIAL PROJECTS, JERICA JOHNSON, ESQ.

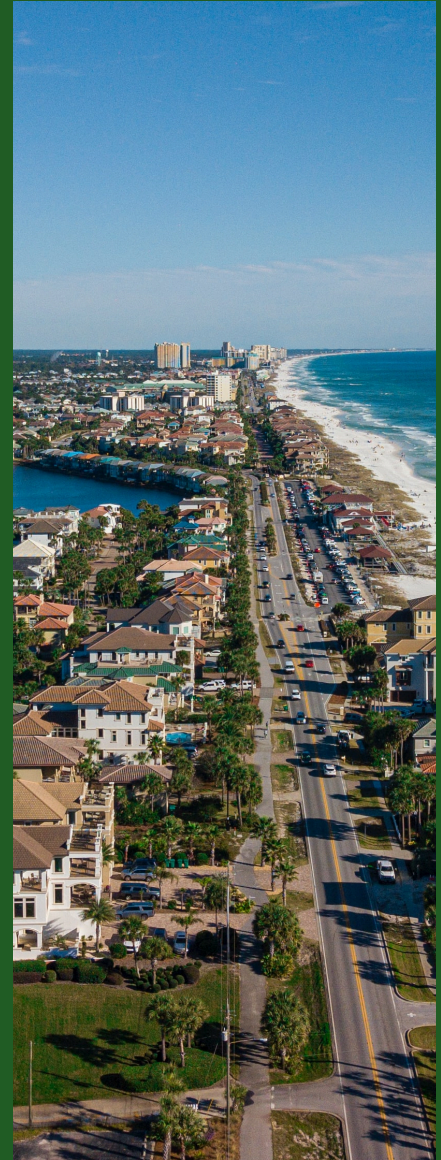
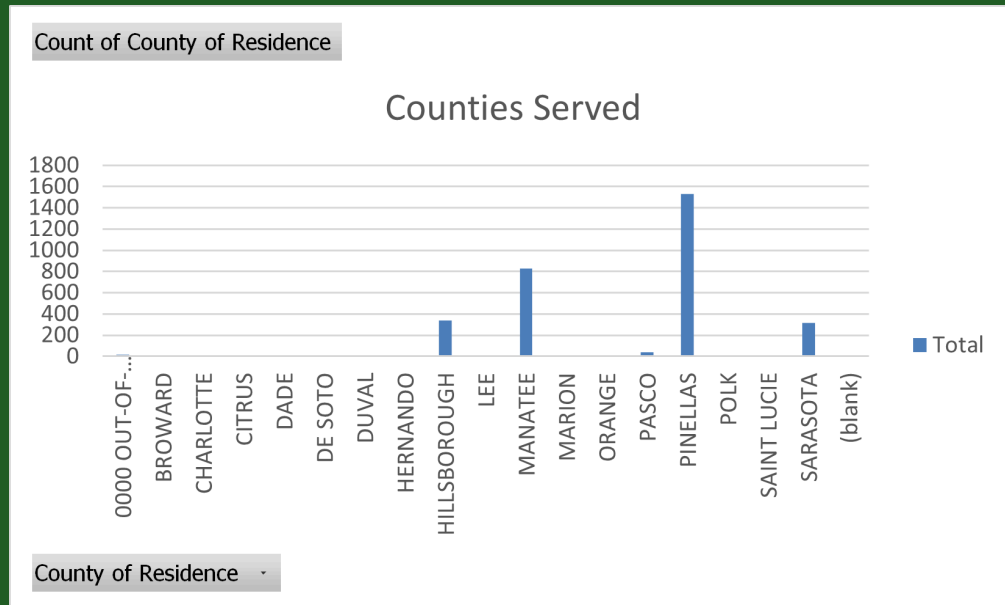
ABOUT US

Established in 1978, Gulfcoast Legal Services (GLS) stands as a non-profit legal aid organization, dedicated to serving low-income clients unable to afford legal representation. Operating in the greater Tampa Bay area with offices in Pinellas, Manatee, Sarasota, and Hillsborough counties, GLS boasts a team of skilled attorneys, paralegals, and support staff. Our commitment extends to delivering high-quality legal services in civil matters, covering consultation, advice, and full representation in court or administrative proceedings. Clients do not pay attorney fees. This Annual Report serves as a testament to our ongoing dedication to providing access to justice and making a meaningful impact in our community.

MISSION

We champion justice by enhancing access to the legal system, especially for those whose race, ethnicity, income, age, disability, gender, or sexual orientation pose obstacles. We strive to provide exceptional advocacy, vigorous representation, and effective legal education for the communities we serve.

OUR IMPACT: WHERE WE SERVE



"The service was outstanding. Attorney Kathryn Hynes was very efficient, knowledgeable, and personable. She put me at ease immediately, eliminating my anxiety." - Past Pinellas County Client



Total individuals impacted, including household members

6,991



Clients Helped

2,908



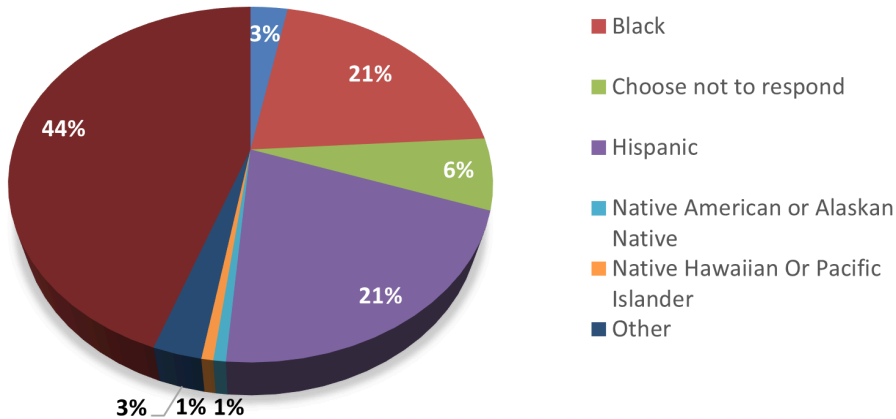
Referrals to other agencies (not including clients helped)

174

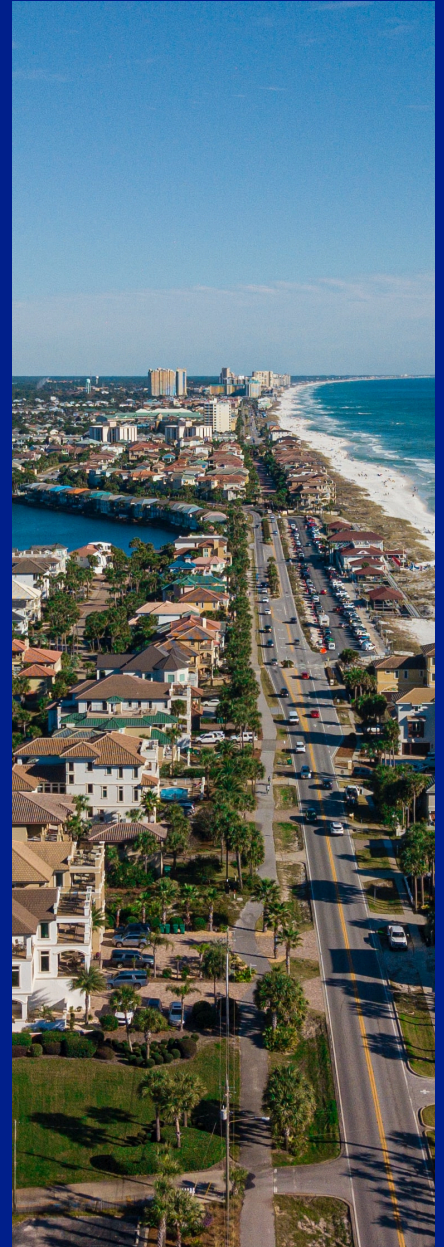
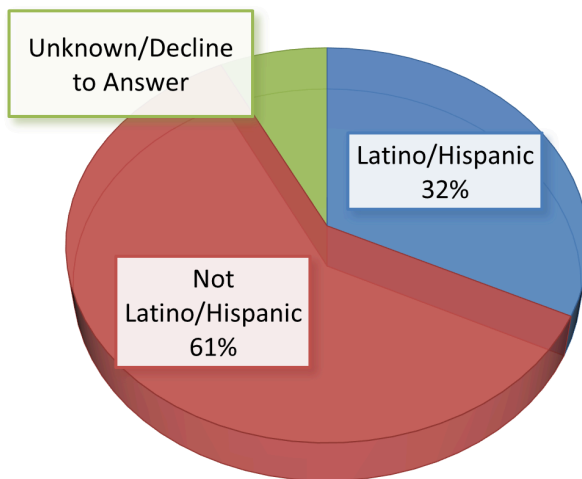
OUR IMPACT: WHO WE SERVE

Count of Race

Client Demographics: Race



Client Demographics: Ethnicity



Clients Average Annual Income

\$15,554



Clients that were ages 55 and older

37%



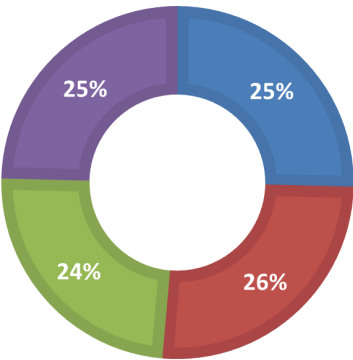
Volunteers provided more than

800 HOURS

OUR IMPACT: WHO WE SERVE

CASE BREAKDOWN BY UNIT

■ Family Law ■ Housing ■ Immigration/Human Trafficking ■ Financial Stability





GULFCOAST

LEGAL SERVICES

“They have always taken care of my needs and exceeded my expectations; I am very grateful for their services.”

– Past Pinellas County Client



Assisted over 500 individuals who reported having a disability

500



Households with Limited English Proficiency

25%



Clients who learned about GLS from a friend, family member, or past client

17%

RESTORING STABILITY AFTER THE STORM

Lynn, a mother of three young children turned to Gulfcoast Legal Services (GLS) for help after her former landlord refused to refund her security deposit. Following the devastation caused by Hurricane Ian, the property she was renting sustained severe damage. The landlord, unwilling to make necessary repairs, agreed to terminate the lease early and return her deposit.

However, after she vacated the property, the landlord refused to return the deposit, citing unreasonable and unconscionable lease terms as justification. Despite her repeated requests, the landlord staked an unfair claim to the funds. A GLS attorney stepped in to represent her in small claims court.

Through determined advocacy, GLS successfully negotiated the return of \$1,000 from the security deposit, helping the client recover much-needed financial stability during a challenging time.



STANDING UP AGAINST AN UNLAWFUL EVICTION



John, a hardworking tenant, sought help from Gulfcoast Legal Services after being served with an eviction complaint. His landlord had attempted to terminate his month-to-month tenancy but failed to provide the legally required notice. Recognizing the unfairness of the situation, Gulfcoast Legal Services stepped in to assist John. Our team helped him respond to the complaint and assert his legal defenses. As a result, the landlord's attorney voluntarily dismissed the eviction case.

To date, the landlord has not issued a new notice or filed any further eviction actions. With the support of GLS, John was able to protect his housing rights and maintain stability in his life.

A NEW BEGINNING THROUGH LEGAL SUPPORT

Isabella, a Pinellas County resident, turned to Gulfcoast Legal Services (GLS) after escaping an abusive marriage marked by physical, emotional, verbal, and sexual violence. With her husband's arrest, GLS's Family Law unit helped her secure a divorce, ensuring safety for her and her three children.

However, Isabella faced another challenge—her immigration status. Her U.S. citizen husband had never filed the necessary paperwork, leaving her future uncertain. GLS's Immigration unit stepped in, successfully helping her obtain legal permanent residency so she could remain in the U.S. with her children.

Later, Isabella encountered work authorization issues that prevented her from receiving crucial tax benefits. The GLS Financial Stability team assisted her in obtaining an SSN and work authorization, then successfully fought for her denied tax refund. A Tax Court Petition secured the full refund, plus \$1,271.34 in interest—totaling \$16,113.34. Through GLS's collaborative efforts, Isabella also qualified for \$8,541 in tax credits, providing her family with much-needed financial stability and a fresh start.



LEGAL ADVOCACY IN ACTION

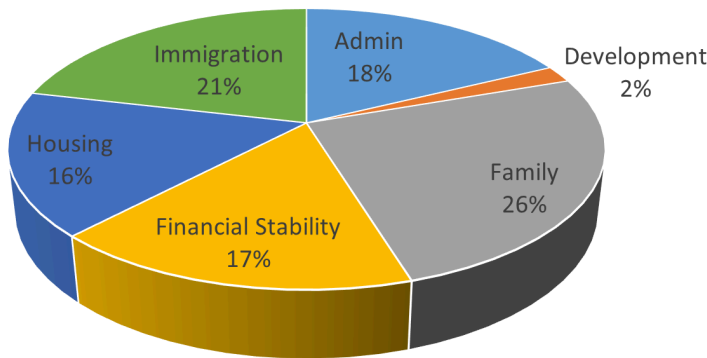


Ms. Johnson, a low-income senior, came to GLS after a judgment creditor improperly garnished \$16,598.84 from her bank account. The funds seized were proceeds from her late husband's life insurance policy, in which she was the named beneficiary.

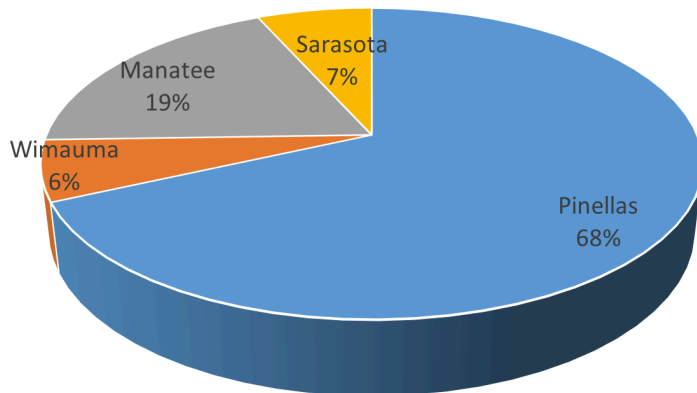
Under Florida law, life insurance proceeds are exempt from creditor garnishment. A GLS attorney took swift action to advise Ms. Johnson of her rights and assisted her in filing a Claim of Exemption. As a result, the full amount was promptly returned to her.

FINANCIALS

Breakdown by Unit: \$3,637,684



Breakdown by Office Location: \$3,637,684



Reported domestic violence

36%



Over 100 veterans received assistance

100+



Average age of clients served

46

OUR SUPPORTERS

We extend our deepest gratitude to each and every one of our individual donors for your generosity during the 2023-2024 fiscal year. Your contributions, totaling **\$97,753** in unrestricted funding, have provided critical support to our mission, allowing Gulfcoast Legal Services to continue offering free civil legal aid to those in need.

Unrestricted funding is especially valuable because it helps cover essential expenses that restricted grants often do not, such as rent, utilities, and staff salaries. It provides the flexibility to address urgent client needs, sustain day-to-day operations, and serve our community without the limitations that come with designated funding. These funds also act as a financial cushion during lean times or unexpected challenges, ensuring we can continue our work no matter the circumstances.

Because of you, justice remains accessible to those who need it most. Your support helps individuals and families facing housing instability, domestic violence, immigration challenges, financial hardships, and other critical legal matters. Thank you for standing with us and making a lasting impact in our community. We couldn't do this without you!



CONTACT US

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