

Program Outputs: Your Dollars at Work

There are over 11,199 people in King County who are homeless.



We estimate that there are between 3,600 and 8,500 people in King County that need our help each year



In 2019, BLC provided services to 1,427 individuals



On average, BLC spends \$602 to help one person navigate the Social Security system to achieve economic independence



BLC Staff Photos look a bit different these days, with BLC advocates working from home to keep our community safe while still providing life changing advocacy. From top left to right: Becca Maloney, Luwam Gabreselassie, Kate Means, Peter Grieser, Madeleine Harnois, Marcos Zuñiga, Daniel Parker, Shannon Wong, Donna Whitford and Alex Doolittle.



Photo by Daniel Berman

“ I am a survivor because of these angels. Because of these wonderful people, with their unconditional love and support I will survive for many more years to come.”

-BLC Client

2019 Board of Directors

Kelly Berg
Tom Charlesworth
Abigail Daquiz
Jay Doran
Stacey Krynsky
Shari Marion
Tim Moran, Treasurer
Maryann Nelson, President
Jay Stansell

Staff

Alex Doolittle Executive Director	Kate Means Paralegal
Madeleine Harnois SSAP Directing Attorney	Luwam Gabreselassie Paralegal
Peter Grieser Staff Attorney	Donna Whitford Development Associate
Daniel Parker Mobile Attorney	Shannon Wong Development Director
Becca Maloney Staff Attorney	Marcos Zuñiga DHAP Directing Attorney

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Letter from the Executive Director

We are an organization built to improve the path that people living with disabilities take to obtain and maintain monthly income when physical and mental disabilities prevent them from being able to work. When a person faces barriers to accessing monthly income, BLC is there to help. It has been rewarding to work with the board and staff to deliver on our organization goal of expanding our capacity to deliver high-quality legal aid. In 2019, we made a considerable amount of progress in making our strategic plan a reality through four primary strategies. In 2019, over 1400 people engaged with our legal advocacy. The volume of people needing help with our services has increased over the past several years. In an effort to work toward providing more critical legal services to support the community's economic goals, we have increased our program staff by 70%.



BLC Executive Director, Alex KF Doolittle

In addition to the expansion of our programs, working with our volunteer marketing committee to establish clear messaging around our work is moving us closer to being able to streamline our capacity to affect systems change with a lens of race equity and inclusion.

Where we show up and who we partner with affects the population of people we serve. We have expanded our capacity to deliver services to clients in the field by expanding the number of field locations where we deliver services from 2 to 13, and we have launched a mobile legal unit. The first mobile legal unit in Washington, the Justice Bus, allows our community-centered work to occur right within the communities that have identified a need for the services we provide. The most recent addition to the Justice Bus Route is the tiny house village in the neighborhood of Georgetown. The services we deliver there are exactly the services that we would deliver from our headquarters in the Central District, just in a format and mechanism of delivery that works better for folks that want to engage with.

We are looking forward to continuing the work of our strategic plan throughout 2020, while maintaining our commitments to dignity for all.

With Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex Doolittle".

Alex KF Doolittle
Executive Director

Maryann Nelson BLC's 2019 Volunteer of the Year



BLC Board & Staff Members (from left to right): Abigail Daquiz, Tim Moran, Maryann Nelson and Alex Doolittle

Maryann has been a Board Member at Benefits Law Center (BLC) since 2009 and currently serves as the President of our Board of Directors. Since Maryann was introduced to our organization, she has been a stalwart supporter of BLC clients and has helped steward unprecedented growth within the organization since our creation in 1997.

After leaving a successful 30 year career in the banking industry, Maryann relished the opportunity to offer her time and skillset to an organization that was doing vital work in the community. "I came on board to support the miraculously fabulous people who do the work, and I fell in love with the organization."

Looking back on her first days volunteering for BLC, Maryann is reflective about how far BLC has come. "I remember when we had our first LOL for BLC, and it raised about \$13,000. We've come a long way since then. Thinking about it makes my cry when you have a chance to put it into perspective."

Under Maryann and many other talented Board Members' leadership, BLC has quadrupled in size, undergone a successful rebranding, and created innovative projects such as the Justice Bus.

We are grateful for Maryann's valuable skillset and passion for supporting BLC clients. Her contributions and the passion she and other volunteers bring to our mission have positively transformed the way we operate as an organization. "I am enormously proud of how much our organization has grown during my time here," Maryann stated.

We are grateful for the leadership and dedication volunteers like Maryann bring to our organization, and could not do the work that we do if it were not for the support of our generous community. Keep an eye out for Maryann at BLC events, or in our community using her expertise to make the world we live in a better place.

2019: Our Year In Review

This year BLC responded urgently to protect the rights of people who are living with disabilities and are experiencing homelessness by successfully achieving long-term strategic goals.

January

Our program staff is increased by 70%



July

Introducing: Benefits Law Center, a rebranding 14 months in the making

September

The Justice Bus hit the road



70%



BLC endorses the SSI Restoration Act



Over 14,000 people served throughout the year

December

Did you know?

A person living with disabilities is **3x as likely** to be approved for benefits if they have attorney representation

In King County,

1 in 3 homeless people live with severe mental or physical disabilities

If denied benefits upon initial stages of the appeals process it can take

14 months

for a hearing to be scheduled at Social Security's Office of Hearings

BLC helps people from whom SSA wrongfully attempts to recover past benefits. In 2019, a total of:

\$73,964

was eliminated from 8 individuals and families BLC completed advocacy for

The Justice Bus

This year, we took our ability to deliver our life changing and in some cases life-saving services one step further. By launching the Justice Bus in the Fall of 2019, we gained the ability to offer our services anywhere, anytime.

In 2019, there were an estimated 1,276 persons living in tents/unsanctioned encampments. This represented a 32% increase compared to 2018*. In response to this shift, BLC created a plan to respond to this increase and launched WA states first Mobile Legal Unit, the Justice Bus.

Barriers like transportation, communication, mental and physical health problems, and the need to prioritize tasks required for everyday survival make our clients some of the most marginalized in the community and perpetuate the barriers they face in seeking our services. This is why we built the Justice Bus. Because of your support, we are able to drive to where our clients are at in the community, open our doors, and deliver our services in a warm, dry and safe environment.



BLC's Executive Director, Alex Doolittle, and Councilmember Joe McDermott stand with the Justice Bus.

We Rebranded our Organization

After fourteen months of hard work by volunteers, staff, partners, and supporters, we successfully navigated a name change and rebrand so that we can better reflect our mission. Staff started the process by brainstorming and describing our work and values to the design team. With the help of over fifty stakeholders including clients, donors, grantors and community partners, we arrived at Benefits Law Center.

It was important that our new name clarify what we help people with (public benefits), and to make clear that we are not limited to the geographic area of Seattle. Further, it was important to stop using the acronym SCLC, which is used by MLK Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

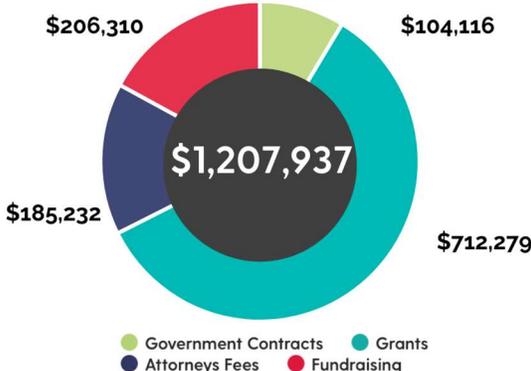
We carried forward representation of the central core of our mission, community members, in the silhouettes within our logo. Our clients still drive every decision that we make. We continue to deliver client-centered Social Security advocacy with a holistic approach to ensuring they gain access to their basic needs.

We Increased Program Staff by 70%

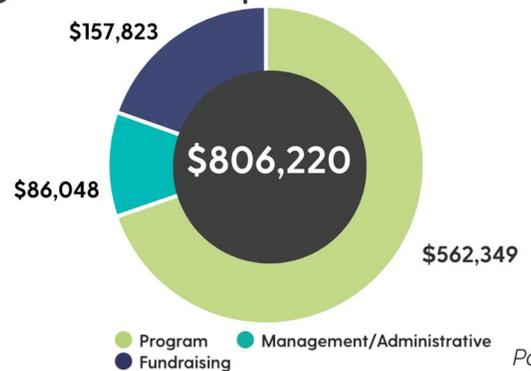
A person is three times as likely to be approved for benefits if they are represented by an attorney. That is why we have been working for years to meet clients where they are at and have structured our programs to best meet the needs of people who experience multiple barriers in accessing our services. This year, we were able to deliver more advocacy than ever before with the 70% increase in our staff.

2019 Financials

Income



Expense



Benefits Law Center
1404 E. Yesler Way Ste. 203
Seattle, WA 98122

**In the community
in 2019:**



We created 8 new community partnerships that resulted in 13 total field locations where BLC delivers services outside of our headquarters.



We conducted more than 10 trainings for service providers.

Stamp

SAVE THE DATE
09.26.2020

BENEFITS LAW CENTER PRESENTS



A COMEDY EVENT FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

2019 New Community Partnerships

- DAWN
- Enumclaw Community Center
- Georgetown Tiny House Village
- Iraqi Community Center of Washington
- Lavender Rights Project
- Mary's Place
- North Shore Senior Center
- Path with Art
- Pike Place Commons

Thank you, 2019 Funders!



King County



Thank you, 2019 Sponsors

DOUGLAS
DRACHLER
MCKEE &
GILBROUGH
LLP
ATTORNEYS



TINTE CELLARS BARRON | SMITH | DAUGERT
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Number of Clients Served in 2019

1,427



New Benefits Awarded to Clients in 2019

\$555,501

in annual income added to the local economy, totaling:

\$46,291

per month to individuals living with disabilities so they can meet their monthly expenses



Back Pay & Debt Relief Secured for Clients in 2019

\$467,023

Typical uses of these funds include repaying outstanding credit card debt, to pay security deposit and first month rent to become housed, and to purchase medical devices