

Draft New Strategic Plan 2023-2027:

November 30, 2022

**To provide the best legal services possible for our area, VLAS will:**

Goal I: Solve Critical Legal Needs

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| Housing safety & stability | **Objectives** | **Strategies** | **Responsible Entity** | **Impact** |
| Increase housing education & outreach | Increase and diversify the types of community outreach on housing issues- legal protections, rights & responsibilities  Empower tenants to advocate for themselves in their dealings with landlords and the Court  Identify and work with local agencies, organizations and community partners to connect clients with community resources and streamline referrals of our clients  Continually evaluate the effectiveness of outreach efforts and implement data driven  based on the results | Attorneys  Housing Paralegals  Outreach staff if available  Housing & Consumer  Practice Group | Increase in tenant and homeowner knowledge of their rights and responsibilities  Increased awareness of the availability of Legal Aid assistance  in housing matters |
| Promote housing stability | Prevent or delay evictions prior to and after the filing of an unlawful detainer using litigation and negotiation  Help tenants and homeowners avoid an eviction, money judgment or foreclosure on their record when possible  Assist tenants with unlawful detainer expungements to support future housing  Prevent unlawful exclusions and look for opportunities to use affirmative litigation to obtain statutory damages  Preserve and promote home ownership-  mobile home, rent to own, foreclosure, etc.  Look for opportunities to empower our client population to be proactive and avoid the court process  Increase the number of in-court Eviction  Prevention Clinics | Attorneys  Housing Paralegals  Outreach staff if available  Housing & Consumer Practice Group | Increase in housing stability for our clients  Reduce the long-term effects of housing instability for our clients  Reduction in evictions for our client population  Increase of tenants and  homeowners able to advocate for themselves |
| Reduce unsafe housing | Educate tenants on the proper legal remedies for unsafe and dangerous conditions and a landlord’s failure to repair or maintain the property  Empower tenants to properly advocate for themselves to address repair and conditions problems with their landlords and what to do in Court  Represent tenants in serious housing conditions case when possible and seek sanctions for repeat offenders  Look for opportunities to strategically  challenge habitually unlawful landlords | Attorneys  Housing Paralegals  Outreach staff if available  Housing & Consumer Practice Group | Increase our awareness of landlords and properties with habitually dangerous housing conditions in our service areas  Tenants will have more success in unlawful exclusion cases in which we provide representation or advice on how to file pro se  Tenants will know what to do in order to be more successful in getting repairs made and unsafe  s addressed |

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| Access to Health Care & Benefits | **Objectives** | **Strategies** | **Responsible Entity** | **Impact Measures** |
| Obtain and protect eligibility for, access to, and quality of government-funded health care programs | Obtain and protect eligibility for Medicaid (including MCO appeals, and dental programs for adults and children), Medicare, FAMIS, FAMIS Moms, and new health care programs    Reduce obstacles to obtaining health care by educating clients about Medicaid transportation and other non-profit transportation resources    Increase community awareness through community education events at such places as schools, DV shelters, other non-profits, and other community events | Local office advocates and staff; LawLine staff, bi-lingual staff, community outreach staff, Practice Group; Enroll VA navigators | Our client population will enroll and remain enrolled in health insurance programs, and have improved access to quality healthcare services  Our client population and community will know more about access to health care programs, Medicaid dental benefits, and transportation options |
| Obtain and maintain government benefits for which clients are eligible, including SSDI, SSI, TANF, SNAP, UI, and energy assistance | Advise and represent clients that apply and qualify  Refer veterans’ benefits cases to other appropriate resources    Increase community awareness through community education events at such places as schools, DV shelters, other non-profits, and other community events | Local office advocates and staff; LawLine staff, bi-lingual staff, community outreach staff, Practice Group | Clients that we assist will obtain and/or maintain benefits they have sought and are eligible for    Our client population and community will know more about public benefit programs and who qualifies |
| Remove barriers to employment | Assist with driver’s license restoration, and expungements when necessary to obtain or maintain employment  Educate clients about transportation options  Consult with other community groups on transportation options | Local office advocates and staff; LawLine staff, bi-lingual staff, community outreach staff, Practice Group | VLAS clients will have fewer barriers to employment |

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| Personal & Family Protection & Stability | **Objectives** | **Strategies** | **Responsible Entity** | **Impact Measures** |
| Protect personal safety | Obtain permanent protective orders  Assess clients’ circumstances holistically to identify and meet other legal needs related to safety  Ensure access to legal services by the entire client population, with a focus on our historically underserved communities (people of color, rural communities, elderly, youth)  Utilize bi-lingual staff throughout the service area  Educate the client population about available resources within the community | Local office advocates and staff; LawLine staff, bi-lingual staff, community outreach staff, Practice Group | More victims of domestic violence will receive protective orders or other positive legal outcomes; higher case numbers in the underserved communities |
| Obtain divorce, support, custody, in significant cases such as:   * Achieves another legal priority goal * Involves domestic violence * DCSE not involved or available * Initial petition or client’s order challenged * Attorney on the other side | Increase number of uncontested  divorces using pro bono attorneys when available  Assess clients’ circumstances holistically to identify and meet other legal needs related to safety  Add or allocate staff to handle family law cases, providing training as needed  Ensure access to legal services by the entire client population, with a focus on our historically underserved communities (people of color, rural communities, elderly, youth) | Local office advocates and staff; LawLine staff, bi-lingual staff, community outreach staff, Practice Group, pro bono attorneys | VLAS clients will receive increased family stability or other positive legal outcomes; higher case numbers in the underserved communities |
| Protect educational rights of children | Provide advice and representation in denials of appropriate special education services, access to special education services, long-term suspensions, expulsions, and discrimination in any services    Educate the client population about available resources within the community | Local office advocates and staff; LawLine staff, bi-lingual staff, community outreach staff, Practice Group, pro bono attorneys | More low‐income and disabled children will receive appropriate special educational services and assistance with discipline cases    More low‐income parents and the community will know more about education rights |
| Protect parental rights in CPS cases | Provide assistance in child removal cases where court‐appointed counsel unavailable  Educate the client population about available resources within the community | Local office advocates and staff; LawLine staff, bi-lingual staff, community outreach staff, Practice Group | More parents will be assisted with their parental rights when they are endangered and other representation is unavailable  Parents will know more about their parental rights |
|  | Provide advance planning and guardianship documents | Create general and medical POAs, wills, living wills, guardianships    Provide as requested and appropriate; use pro bono when available | Local office advocates and staff; LawLine staff, bi-lingual staff, community outreach staff, Practice Group, pro bono attorneys | Clients needing advanced planning documents will receive them, and receive assistance with guardianships |

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| Consumer Rights & Financial Stability | **Objectives** | **Strategies** | **Responsible Entity** | **Impact** |
| Increase consumer education & outreach | Increase community outreach about consumer rights and remedies  Increase consumer knowledge of legal protections, rights and responsibilities  Empower consumers to advocate for themselves in consumer matters  Identify & promote financial literacy opportunities  Track the number of people affected by our  outreach & assess its effectiveness | Attorneys  Housing & Consumer Practice Group  Outreach Staff if available | Our client population will be more knowledgeable of their consumer rights  Our client population will be better equipped to advocate for themselves in consumer matters  Financial literacy will lead to  increased long term financial  security for our client population |
| Protect consumers through individual representation & impact advocacy | Encourage and support more consumer advocacy & litigation through co-counseling or pro bono referrals when available & appropriate  Look for opportunities to use consumer statutory protections in other substantive areas- housing, etc.  Look for opportunities for impact advocacy &  litigation | Attorneys  Housing & Consumer Practice Group | Better protection of consumers in our program service areas  Increase in consumer advocacy in our program  Increase in the financial stability of our client population |

Goal II: Increase Our Effectiveness

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| Increase Impact | **Objectives** | **Strategies** | **Responsible Entity** | **Impact Measures** |
| Provide support and guidance to advocates and staff to ensure they have the appropriate skills and knowledge | Ensure staff are adequately trained on all priority areas and advocacy and technology tools    Increase co-counseling opportunities for advocates with more experienced attorneys both inside and outside of the program.    Develop a mentorship program | Executive Director, Director of Advocacy, Local office Managing Attorneys, Practice Group leaders & Director of Administration | VLAS advocates will increasingly obtain remedies and case outcomes that help more of our client population    VLAS staff receive regular, but at least annual, technical trainings    VLAS has an active mentorship program for all positions |
| Seek maximum program-wide impact in all casework and advocacy efforts | Regularly hold senior staff meetings to direct advocacy, discuss trends and case work across the program.    Address systemic problems for low-income individuals, and systemic outcomes in routine cases    Monitor internal and external data sources to identify legal service delivery trends | Exec Director, Director of Advocacy, managing attorneys, Practice Group leaders, and Administrative Staff | VLAS staff attorneys will increasingly obtain remedies and case outcomes that help more of our client population    VLAS will adjust legal service, advocacy, and outreach strategies to adapt to new and emerging data trends and community needs |

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| Develop a Foundation for Success | **Objectives** | **Strategies** | **Responsible Entity** | **Impact Measures** |
| Improve technology and advocacy tools to meet the needs of our client communities | Develop technology plan    Obtain funding for new technologies    Implement technology improvements    Update website to improve accessibility and user-friendliness | Executive Director, Directors of Administration, Development & Advocacy | Adopt technology plan    Introduce new technologies    New and improved website |
| Ensure VLAS maintains staffing resources to meet the demands of the client community and strategic plan | Perform an external infrastructure and staffing analysis for optimal organizational performance and impact    Create and implement a staffing plan | Executive Director, Managing Attorneys and Director of Administration | Increase in attorneys to ensure an equal distribution of representation across the VLAS service area, but maintain at least the minimum staffing of three attorneys in each office    Increase in non-attorney casehandlers, community navigators and outreach workers    Creation of new administrative and support positions in local offices, finance & HR, development & communications, and technology to meet organizational needs |
| Ensure top talent is attracted to and retained by VLAS | Consider racial, gender, geographic and age diversity on the Board and staff to reflect the communities we serve    Identify innovative retention practices for existing staff    Identify new recruitment strategies for new staff    Establish succession plans for senior leadership, including cross-training and mentorship opportunities | Executive Director, Director of Advocacy, Director of Administration, Director of Development and Managing Attorneys | Increase and retain the number of diverse of staff and board members    Decrease in turnover and hiring lag time    Leadership training and performance development opportunities are provided to staff |
| Increase funding to implement the strategic plan | Develop annual fundraising plan to meet program objectives    Increase existing funding sources    Identify new funding sources | VLAS Board of Directors, Executive Director, Director of Advocacy, Director of Development, Director of Administration and Managing Attorneys | Annual revenue increases to meet strategic plan objectives and initiatives |

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| Reduce Barriers & Increase Diversity | **Objectives** | **Strategies** | **Responsible Entity** | **Impact Measures** |
| **Internal education and action**  Provide staff and Board trainings on access to justice barrier issues such as, diversity, equity, and inclusion (“DEI”), bias, implicit bias, and systemic racism.  Foster and advance an inclusive VLAS work culture that is collaborative and respectful of diversity, equity and inclusion principles. | Educate and empower staff and board using webinars, webcasts, live presentations, CLEs, recordings, and printed materials    Provide DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) and bias training opportunities for staff and Board at program-wide, statewide, and Board meetings.    Offer opportunities to discuss DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) and bias matters through mentorship, small group or roundtable discussions, diversity committee and other engagement settings. | Diversity Committee  Executive Director  Director of Administration  Training Responsible Person  Case handlers/advocates  Managing Attorneys  Director of Advocacy | . Improved staff awareness of how culture and biases may affect communication amongst staff and clients.    VLAS attorneys will increasingly recognize and address denial of access to justice or inconsistencies in the justice system based on systemic barriers and biases.    VLAS will increasingly reach broader audiences in online and printed educational materials.    Increased mentorship interactions and engagement amongst VLAS staff at local offices and organization wide.    Increased representation of diverse demographics, cultures, languages and abilities in client representation, community partnerships, and staff and board recruitment. |
| **Community Outreach**    Educate and raise awareness with clients and community on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), bias, implicit bias, and systemic racism.  Engage with cultural/community partners to be better informed on how or why cultural or religious beliefs and customs may impact delivery of or acceptance of available legal services. | Conduct outreach to the community at large, partners, bench/Bar.  Consumer education in public schools—financial literacy class, community centers, churches, etc.  “So, you’re 18 now”—general education—targeting diverse population  Provide domestic violence education, using in person, or virtual presentations, and printed materials, with an emphasis on understanding cultural divides that may inhibit request for services. | Diversity Committee  Partner Agencies/Local Bar  Grant Writing & Communications Coordinator  DV Outreach Coordinator  Housing Outreach Coordinator  Managing Attorneys  Director of Development | Increase VLAS awareness of issues in the community and visual presence of VLAS.  Clients and community partners will be better informed when to seek legal assistance.  Improved likelihood of increasing awareness of legal issues that tend to affect one’s credit, housing, food security and family safety in young adults and older adolescents. (Educate students and young adults to help reduce the cycle of poverty)  Decrease gaps in services to certain cultural groups in areas such as domestic violence and housing. |
|  | **Case Acceptance**  Train case handlers how to consider the presence of systemic racism, barriers, bias, or inequities in case facts in determining the level of assistance to provide to clients.  Ensure VLAS services are provided equitably. | Maintain a log for each office to document reports of denial of or delay in access to justice based on systemic racism, bias or other cultural or demographic disparities  Consider any of the above factors as a basis for accepting a lower tier case or non-tier case for representation in the managing attorney, Executive Director or Advocacy Director’s discretion. | Managing Attorneys  Executive Director  Director of Advocacy  Board-for client filed grievance  Designee, in absence of above | Improved communication to judicial, court clerk, and magistrate staff of implicit bias, policies or systemic barriers that prevent or delay access to justice. or the appearance of such to the community.  Decreased hesitancy of clients to seek out redress in the legal system.  Reduced discrimination in housing, increased access to public education, improved accommodation, and access to courts for the disabled or clients with LEP/ESL.  Increased cultural awareness by government agencies involved in adult/child protective services or domestic violence matters |
|  | **Fundraising**  Seek funds to assist in the goals and initiatives of the DEI-Structural Racism Committee and related clientele work  to assist diverse clientele, recruit and retain diverse staff, and fund DEI committee staff and work. | Conduct grant research and submit viable grant application with target of additional advocate to handle case work involving such matters and hiring internal VLAS DEI staff personnel or add-on duties | Executive Director  Director of Administration  Director of Development  Grant Writer Coordinator  Director of Advocacy | With additional funding, VLAS will increasingly address systemic barriers and bias in access to justice issues.  Increased acceptance for cases with systemic barriers, diversity, and bias issues that may impact access to justice for client eligible population.    Increase access to timely training, and current resources on diversity, bias, and inclusivity issues in the workplace and civil legal aid issues.    Increased staff retention and increased diverse staff recruitment, including bilingual and DEI staff; and additional outlets to foster diverse, inclusive, open and safe workplace engagements. |

Goal III: Increase Community Engagement

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| Build Community Capacity | **Objectives** | **Strategies** | **Responsible Entity** | **Impact Measures** |
| Build our communities’ capacity to help themselves | Develop a “curriculum” to teach our partners how to help their clients with basic legal issues.  Develop a network of people among our community partners qualified to explain basic legal issues to their clients and understand when to seek VLAS help.  Build on first two strategies by launching a Community Navigator pilot program that eventually expands throughout VLAS’s service area.  Look for “untraditional” partners – churches, hair salons, flower shops, etc.. – who might be especially plugged into our communities. | Development Team, with assists from LawLine, Managing Attorneys, and other senior attorneys | Complete curriculum.  New printed/online materials to advance community’s legal education.  Partner survey on effectiveness of our training.  Partner estimate on number of their clients receiving legal education.  Number of VLAS materials distributed, number of visits to online education materials.  Launch of at least one Community Navigator pilot program. |
| Increase our contact with and impact on underserved communities (including rural areas, ESL population, African Americans, the elderly) | Create partnerships with organizations and informal community leaders that reach these populations.  Equip these partners with the tools and skills they need to serve as effective, trusted messengers on our behalf.  Meet as needed with these partners to provide education, replenish outreach materials and receive feedback from them to ID the key needs of the communities they serve. | Outreach Coordinator, Development Team | Number of partnerships.  Partner survey on effectiveness of our training.  Partner estimate on number of their clients receiving legal education.  Number of VLAS materials distributed, number of visits to online education materials. |

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| Improve Materials | **Objectives** | **Strategies** | **Responsible Entity** | **Impact Measures** |
| Improve public education content to make our materials more attractive and easier to use for our target population. | Continually edit VLAS education materials to be more easily digested.  Develop new online outreach content  Translate more materials into languages besides English.  Develop guidelines to increase the effectiveness of online outreach (e.g., time limits for presentations). | Communications Coordinator, Development Team | Pieces of edited materials  Feedback from partners on clarity, effectiveness of our materials. |

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| Increase Access to VLAS | **Objectives** | **Strategies** | **Responsible Entity** | **Impact Measures** |
| Overcome transportation barriers that make it difficult for clients and potential clients to come to us. | Partner with city/county transportation agencies, existing VLAS partners and other groups to make public transportation more useful and affordable.  Partner with organizations that offer free or low-cost car rides to VLAS clients. | Development Team | Free or low-cost bus passes issued  Number of partners agreeing to provide transportation to people in need.  Number of monthly trips given by these partners. |
| Set up more “kiosks” that bring VLAS information and services to locations visited by our target population. | Create more partnerships with libraries, DSS’s, churches, community colleges, retailers and others to carry permanent VLAS displays of information.  Offer regular clinics (legal education events) at select locations to promote VLAS education.  Deploy social media to supplement and promote our remote education and outreach | Development Team | Number of locations that present VLAS materials.  Number of brochures distributed.  Number of clinics held.  Number of educational social media posts.  Number of engagements with educational social media posts. |

Goal IV: Increase Funding

| Increase significant grants | **Objectives** | **Strategies** | **Responsible Entity** | **Impact Measures** |
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| Increase significant grants ($5,000 or more) from foundations and government programs | Identify areas of future community need likely to attract funding support, such as (from recent past) evictions and domestic violence and (potential next areas) opioid abuse and veteran support.  Build on our increasing experience with government-based grants to apply successfully for similar grants.  Continuously learn from successful and unsuccessful grant applications and apply those lessons to increase our chances for success in future applications  Increase development staff. Add position to focus on smaller grants, freeing Development Director to build relationships with our largest donors. | Development Team  Add position to assist Development Director in recruiting and maintaining relationships with smaller funders | Number of large grants  Number of new large funding organizations  Number of government grants  Dollars raised from large foundation and government grants. |

| Increase individual giving | **Objectives** | **Strategies** | **Responsible Entity** | **Impact Measures** |
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| Increase individual giving | Continually increase and update potential donor database  Build relations with community influencers  Boost our online donations  Help donors better understand what their contributions accomplish. Tell more stories about the work we do. | Development Team, led by development admin | Number and amount of individual donations increases |

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| Maintain event funding | **Objectives** | **Strategies** | **Responsible Entity** | **Impact Measures** |
| Maintain funding from special events | Continue staff-led major special events honoring individuals and VLAS anniversaries  Supplement staff‐generated major special events with smaller events led by board members or friends of VLAS | Development Team | Amount raised from special events continues and increases |