

ERIS

EAST RIVER LEGAL SERVICES

2018 - 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



My Friends:

This past year has been one of innovation, accomplishment, and advancement at East River. As a program, we continue to make remarkable progress, which would not be possible without your valued support and dedication. In this report, we are proud to share with you how your partnership is improving the lives of our neighbors most in need. Over the past year, our dedicated team provided high-quality legal services impacting the lives of over 2,500 people — protecting their homes, livelihoods, health, and families.

So much great work has been done, and there is so much great work left to do. We continue to work hard diversifying and stabilizing our financial footing while incorporating new technologies and processes to serve more clients, more efficiently. This improvement is made possible by a growing base of financial supporters, an excellent staff, motivated Board of Directors, dynamic financial and service partnerships, and a variety of volunteers. Together we are making access to justice a reality for all South Dakotans regardless of income.

While this report is a look back on our achievements over the past year, it also provides the opportunity to say thank you to the many individuals and organizations whose generosity makes this possible. This work cannot be done without you. Your gift of time, money, and resources is not a donation, but rather an investment. An investment in the belief that all of us no matter of income, race, gender, or creed should not be denied access to justice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brent Thompson".

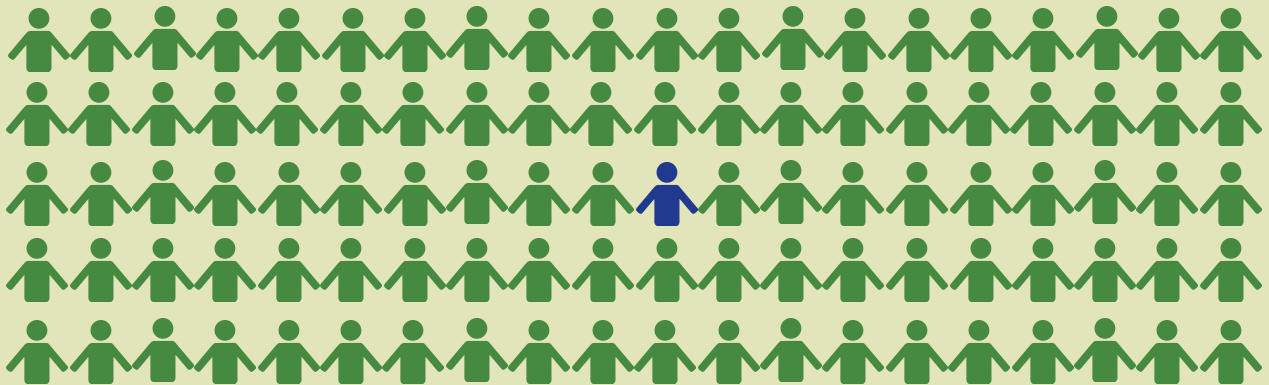
Brent Thompson
Executive Director

FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT



On behalf of the Board, I applaud all East River attorneys, staff and employees for the hard work they have invested this past year. Change does not always take place as quickly as we would like, but as this Annual Report demonstrates, our objective of delivering more legal services to more people has become a reality. And the result is a more complete response to the community's legal needs. The Board and I believe this change will continue in the next 12 months as we expand our program. Thank you, East River, for your able and unrelenting service to the Bar and your community.

Jeff Shultz
President



Our current funding level only allows us to serve less than 6% of the 46,000 people living below the poverty level in the ERLS service area.

About Us



WHAT WE DO

East River Legal Services (ERLS) exists to better the lives of the over 46,000 people living in poverty in Eastern South Dakota. We offer free legal services to our community's Veterans, Older Americans (60+), Disabled, Victims of Violence, and all those facing financial insecurity.

We are committed to the belief that being poor or at risk does not make you less, that equal access to our courts is an essential part of justice, and equal justice is a universal right.

OUR SERVICES

We provide low-income clients with free civil legal assistance, including legal advice and counsel, effective referrals, and legal representation. We do this all for as many people as possible in order to live out our mission statement: Advancing equal access to justice for our most vulnerable citizens.

ERLS is the only provider of free legal services in eastern South Dakota. We serve 33 counties in an area that covers half of the state, roughly 37,000 square miles from Vermilion to Eureka, Webster to Tyndall.

Testimonials

ERLS has helped me navigate through the very confusing legal process of filing a protection order and also child custody hearings. My attorney was very knowledgeable and very empathetic, making me feel very comfortable and safe. Without the help of ERLS, I would have had to figure out how to do it on my own or find an attorney with reasonable costs which would have been difficult with my fixed income and caring for a son with special needs.

April



My psychologist referred me to East River Legal Services for my divorce. I was so happy to finally receive the news that my divorce was finalized helping me to get away from a violent situation! Everyone who I talked to was very friendly, patient, and helpful. I recommend ERLS to anyone who is in need of legal help.

Anonymous

ERLS has totally helped me feel protected. They not only helped me to the best of their ability but also were able to win my case. I am so happy to finally be moving on in my life all because of their hard work and dedication. Thank you for everything you guys have done. Here's to a way better future.

Libby



I reached out to ERLS for assistance with a stalking protection order. Not only did ERLS exceed my expectations, but they helped me through every step of the process. Without ERLS, I know my day in court would not have gone as well as it did. It felt empowering to have people in my corner that knew what to do and were fighting for me. Thank you ERLS!

Sadie

2018 By the Numbers

2,592
TOTAL PEOPLE HELPED

Advocates worked on 

1,045 Total Cases



8 Staff Members

including 3 full-time attorneys

206  Cases involving
Domestic
Violence

1,228 Children Helped 



274

Disabled Clients assisted



158

Older Americans
Represented

96



Veterans
Served

Last year, ERLS received over 1,600+ requests for assistance. Due to limited resources, we are only able to accept 5% of those requests.

On Average,

1 attorney

handled



348 cases



**EXTENDED
REPRESENTATION
CASES RESULTING
IN POSITIVE
OUTCOMES**

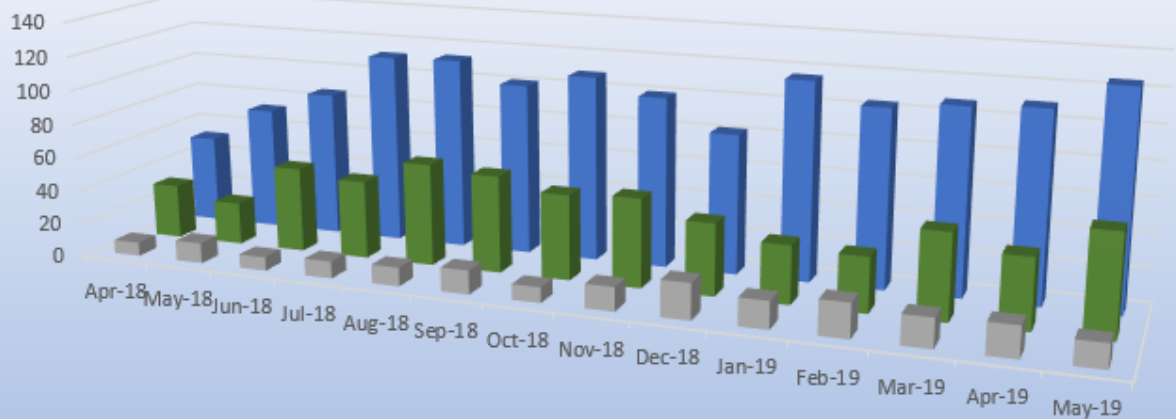
82%

86% **INCREASE IN
APPLICATIONS IN 2018**

TECHNOLOGY ADVANCEMENTS

For the first time in the history of South Dakota, applicants can now apply for assistance online. This is a significant milestone for all South Dakota legal services. Previously, applications could only be taken over the phone or in-person. Now, clients can access the online intake system anytime using their computer or smart device.

Applications per Agency & Month



	Apr-18	May-18	Jun-18	Jul-18	Aug-18	Sep-18	Oct-18	Nov-18	Dec-18	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19
Access to Justice	8	12	8	10	11	14	9	14	21	16	20	17	18	14
Dakota Plains Legal Services	32	25	50	46	60	57	50	52	42	34	32	50	41	59
East River Legal Services	52	73	86	112	113	101	109	100	82	116	104	108	110	125

Access to Justice Dakota Plains Legal Services East River Legal Services

This groundbreaking advancement improves delivery of services not only for ERLS, but Dakota Plains Legal Services and Access to Justice as well. Online intake dramatically reduces staff time, improving program efficiency. In addition, it creates an important access point especially in the rural areas of the state.

6,800+
users in just
14 months!

Apply Online

<https://www.sdlawhelp.org/apply>

LEGAL PRIORITIES

Housing



- Eviction
- Foreclosure
- Unsafe conditions
- Lockouts
- Utility Shutoff

Family



- Protection from abuse
- Divorce
- Custody
- Child Support

Economic Stability



- Medical care
- Disability benefits
- Employment rights
- Public benefits
- Family law

Veterans



- Disability benefits
- Public assistance
- Bankruptcy
- Debt collection

Older Americans



- Wills and estates
- Power of attorney
- Social Security

Contact Us

335 N Main Ave, Suite 200
Sioux Falls, SD 57104
(800) 952-3015
(605) 336-9230

Apply Online

<https://www.sdlawhelp.org/apply>



ERLS in the Community



Steve Huff board retirement celebration



Testifying in Pierre



Law school Students



Second Circuit Golf Tournament



Jim Sandman, Legal Services President with ERLS ED & DoF&A

ERLS in the Community



Barristers ball



Ballard Spahr event
Dan Fritz & Brent Thompson



Domestic Violence Law Clinic

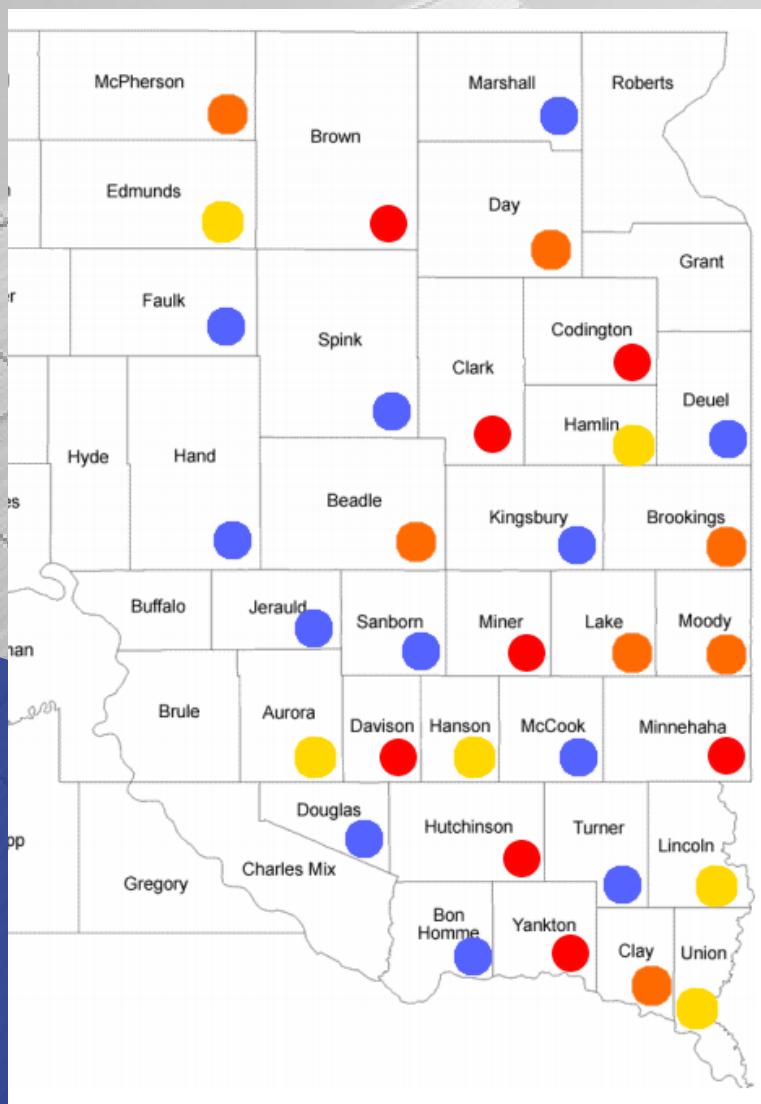


Dress for Success Legal Clinic



ERLS in the media

Poverty Need by County



Demand for services is at an all-time high; much higher than ERLS is capable of handling with its current operating budget. The reality is that counties with the highest poverty rates receive the least amount of assistance.

15%-25% - pop. in poverty

11%-14% - pop. in poverty

8%-10% - pop. in poverty

Less than 7% - pop. in poverty

Contact Us

335 N Main Ave, Suite 200
Sioux Falls, SD 57104
(800) 952-3015
(605) 336-9230

Apply Online

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How To Help

Alternative ways to help

- Class Action Residual Awards
- Authoring articles for SD statewide website
- Provide legal training
- Create a template
- Mentor a young attorney or law student
- Participate in a clinic

LEGAL AID
ROI

For every
\$1.00



invested in East River
Legal Services



\$3.93
was realized
in local
economic
gains.

Ways to Support ERLS

Each and every donation has a direct, positive impact on life in our community. To learn more about making a gift that works for you, please contact info@erlservices.org or (605) 275-6938.

Direct Donation

Your donation will support direct client services, providing critical legal assistance and ensuring that justice is not based on what one can afford. Gifts can be mailed to our office or made online at <http://erlservices.org/donate/>

Volunteer

The demand for legal assistance in South Dakota is high and growing rapidly. If you are an attorney, looking to make a donation of time and service, please contact ERLS . To learn more or to volunteer, please contact Josh Nour, Pro Bono Coordinator, at josh@erlservices.org or (605) 275-6931.

Planned Giving

ERLS has been serving the community for over 40 years. To ensure that the same service is available to coming generations, please consider making a planned gift, either as part of your estate or to commemorate a cornerstone event: a birth, graduation, retirement, or other joyous occasions.

BECOME A CORPORATE PARTNER

We believe the dynamic partnerships with corporations are essential to solving complex community challenges. This program has been specifically developed to enhance not only your relationship with East River Legal Services, but also your relationship with the clients and communities we serve.

Staff Spotlight

Kim Poitra



After an extensive search, East River Legal Services was very pleased to announce the appointment of Kim Poitra as its new Director of Finance and Administration. She brings with her over twenty (20) years of audit, accounting, and financial analysis experience. Kim has previously served as a Financial Analyst for Sanford Health and the Good Samaritan Society as well as serving as the Finance Manager for Avera McKennan Hospital.

Kim is responsible for monitoring, reviewing, and reporting on all financial operations at ERLS including the preparation of the program's financial reports, oversight of financial performance, forecasting, and budget preparation. In this role, she has quickly proven a tremendous asset to the program. Her broad experience will serve our clients and our contributors well. She is a large part of the program's success over the past year.

Our Attorneys



Amber Walter

Amber has a long history of working with victims of domestic assault. Her passion and dedication to serving survivors and their families makes her an invaluable asset for our clients. At ERLS Amber's practice primarily involves representing victims of domestic violence in family law matters and Veterans, although she also does significant work in housing, consumer, and public benefit/administrative law issues.

Melissa Sommers

Melissa is dedicated to serving veterans and victims of crime. After serving in the military and previously serving as a victim advocate for a shelter, Melissa brings experience to her practice of law and provides excellent advocacy for our Veterans and victims of crime.



Tillie Routh

Tillie has extensive experience as a prosecutor of intimate partner violence and crimes against children, and in providing legal advocacy for victims of crime in civil practice.



Staff Members

The East River Legal Services Staff work hard and are dedicated to the idea that being poor or at risk does not make you less, that equal access to our courts is an essential part of justice, and equal justice is a universal right.

Brent Thompson
Executive Director

Kim Poitra
Director of Finance and Administration

Becca Wiersma
Technology Manager

Tillie Routh
Staff Attorney

Melissa Sommers
Staff Attorney

Amber Walter
Staff Attorney

Josh Nour
Pro Bono Coordinator

Alicia Boyum-Lanoue
Paralegal

East River Legal Services is governed by a Board of Directors which is composed of attorneys and client representatives from various organizations. They provide oversight in the provision of legal services and help with strategic planning.

Executive:

President - Jeff Shultz

Vice President - Sharon Chontos

Treasurer - Melissa Fiksdal

Attorney Board Members:

Kimberly Dorsett

Dan Fritz

Wendy Hess

Timothy Cummings

James Taylor

Anthony Teesdale

Client Board Members:

Ruth Henderson

LeeAnn No Heart

Ken Teunissen

Corporate Sponsors

Without the continued support from our corporate sponsors, we would not be able to help the most vulnerable citizens of South Dakota.

OUR FUNDERS



*South Dakota Second Circuit
Bar Association*

Platinum Sponsors

\$5,000+

- Woods Fuller Shultz & Smith P.C
- Davenport Evans Lawyers

Silver Sponsors

\$1,000-\$2,499

- Richardson Law Firm
- Lynn, Jackson, Schultz & Lebrun Lawyers, P.C.
- Jeff Larson Law, LLP
- Gerry & Kulm Ask, Prof. LLC
- Green Roby Oviatt Lawyers LLP
- Johnson Janklow Abdallah, Reiter Lawyers LLP

Gold Sponsors

\$2,500-\$4,999

- Marlow, Woodward & Huff, PLLC
- Cutler Law Firm, LLP
- Ballard Spahr LLP

Bronze Sponsors

\$500-\$999

- The Krause Law Firm PC
- Boyce Law Firm LLP

Financial Snapshot



Legal Aid uses the power of the law to ensure access to basic needs and lift people out of poverty. Thanks to thousands of supporters and community partners, Legal Aid provides services that improve clients' safety and health; promote education and economic stability; secure decent, affordable housing; and ensure that the justice system and government entities are accountable and accessible.

The mission of East River Legal Services is to provide equal access to justice for our most vulnerable citizens by providing high quality legal services and working for systemic solutions.

2019 ACTUAL vs BUDGET as of April 30 / FY 2018 ACTUAL vs BUDGET / FY 2017 ACTUAL

REVENUE AND OTHER SUPPORT		January 1 - April 30, 2019			January 1 - December 31, 2018			2017 Actual
		Actual	Budget	Variance	Actual	Budget	Variance	
Legal Services Corporation Basic Field Grant	LSC	\$ 132,715	\$ 125,629	\$ 7,086	\$ 369,045	\$ 370,406	\$ (1,361)	\$ 325,470
Private Attorney Involvement	LSC	13,013	17,947	(4,934)	54,276	52,915	1,361	70,831
Technology Initiative Grant	LSC	-	-	-	20,000	30,000	(10,000)	32,000
Technology Services Contract - A2J & DPLS	State	9,205	8,755	450	-	-	-	111,202
Older Americans	DHS	9,365	9,365	-	58,575	50,202	8,373	50,202
Veterans (CEAC)		42,000	25,833	16,167	53,648	62,000	(8,352)	38,000
Victims of Crime (VOCA)	DSS	6,273	24,054	(17,781)	73,873	60,000	13,873	-
Minnehaha County (A&N Cases)	County	-	-	-	2,524	4,500	(1,976)	41,668
Corporate (Guardianship Cases)	Avera	-	-	-	-	-	-	25,000
Collaborative Legal Incubator Program (Pilot)	SD Bar	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,702
Law Student Clinic (RD Hurd Program)		-	-	-	595	906	(311)	2,715
Pro Bono	SD Bar	-	25,000	(25,000)	25,000	25,000	-	25,000
GOAC settlement	SD Bar	-	-	-	-	-	-	25,000
Contributions/Donations - SD Bar Foundation		-	-	-	30,000	-	30,000	-
Contributions/Donations - Corporate		5,000	14,500	(9,500)	41,333	59,100	(17,767)	-
Contributions/Donations - Private		300	2,457	(2,157)	5,990	18,375	(12,385)	-
Fundraising Events		-	-	-	654	10,000	(9,346)	8,510
Interest Income		-	4	(4)	5	50	(45)	84
TOTAL REVENUE		\$ 217,871	\$ 253,544	\$ (35,673)	\$ 735,518	\$ 743,454	\$ (7,936)	\$ 764,384
EXPENSES		Actual	Budget	Variance	Actual	Budget	Variance	2017 Actual
Program Services		\$ 235,445	\$ 222,964	\$ (12,482)	\$ 650,709	\$ 695,692	\$ 44,983	\$ 659,443
Fundraising and Development		6,257	-	(6,257)	16,029	-	(16,029)	
Management and General Expenses		42,653	39,347	(3,307)	151,082	122,769	(28,313)	86,173
TOTAL EXPENSES		284,356	262,310	(22,046)	817,820	818,461	641	745,616
Excess (Deficit) of Revenue over Expenditures		(66,485)	(8,766)	(57,719)	(82,302)	(75,007)	(7,295)	18,768
Beginning Net Assets		47,574	54,869	(7,295)	129,876	129,876	-	111,108
NET ASSETS, ENDING		\$ (18,911)	\$ 46,103	\$ (65,014)	\$ 47,574	\$ 54,869	\$ (7,295)	\$ 129,876
Breakdown of Net Assets		Actual	Budget	Variance	Actual	Budget	Variance	2017 Actual
Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions		\$ (18,969)	\$ 11,526	\$ (30,495)	\$ (3,181)	\$ 13,717	\$ (16,899)	\$ 44,149
Net Assets With Donor Restrictions		\$ 58	\$ 34,578	\$ (34,520)	\$ 50,754	\$ 41,152	\$ 9,602	\$ 85,727
NET ASSETS		\$ (18,911)	\$ 46,103	\$ (65,015)	\$ 47,572	\$ 54,869	\$ (7,297)	\$ 129,876

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