



Annual Report

FY 2019

**East
River
Legal
Services**

2019: A Year in Review

**FROM
THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

The following report introduces you to ERLS and our accomplishments over the past year. We set record numbers for clients served and positive case outcomes. We also provided more community educational events, created much needed informational materials, and established many new clinics. As you read the following pages, I hope you are filled with the same inspiration and pride I feel. Further, I hope it helps you to recognize the immense need for Legal Services in our state.

ERLS stands alone as the only legal aid in eastern South Dakota. That makes it more than just a charity or law firm. It is a necessity, an essential piece of our legal system helping to ensure equal access to justice and fairness under the law. This is our mission. Every case we take on, every advice letter we send, every outreach event we host serves to further that mission.

We are so very proud of our dedicated staff and all they have accomplished. Time and time again, they overcome immense challenges exceeding expectations. We are inspired by the strength and courage of our clients. Their determination and resilience motivate us to work harder and their victories are our greatest reward. We are humbled and honored by the support and trust of our generous donors, volunteers, and supporting organizations who invest in us and our mission. Their support is essential to our effectiveness as an organization. Thank you all for your hard work and continued support.

Sincerely,



Brent Thompson
Executive Director

2019: A Year in Review

FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

As we approach our 50th anniversary in August of 2020, we cannot overstate the value of the first Board of Directors' vision. They saw a need and acted. No doubt they would be astonished by the computer power and software technology housed in the present offices of East River Legal Services. For these innovations, we thank our donors and supporters. We could not have made these investments without your generosity!

Like the present Board, however, that first Board of Directors depends upon its most important asset, its staff, and attorneys, to implement the purpose of legal aid in our region. The people of East River have earned our gratitude during these trying times, going above and beyond the call of duty. We salute your dedication and determination to serve our region and the Bar.

Sincerely,



Jeff Shultz, ERLS Board President
Woods, Fuller, Shultz & Smith, LLP



2019 CASES

71% of the families that received services from East River Legal Services make less than \$25,000 a year.

266

Average Caseload per Attorney

ERLS 2019
Overall Case

85%

Success Rate

13%

of clients served were over the age of 60 (Older Americans)

63

Cases involving veterans or active duty military members

60%

of the households assisted included children

Applicants were

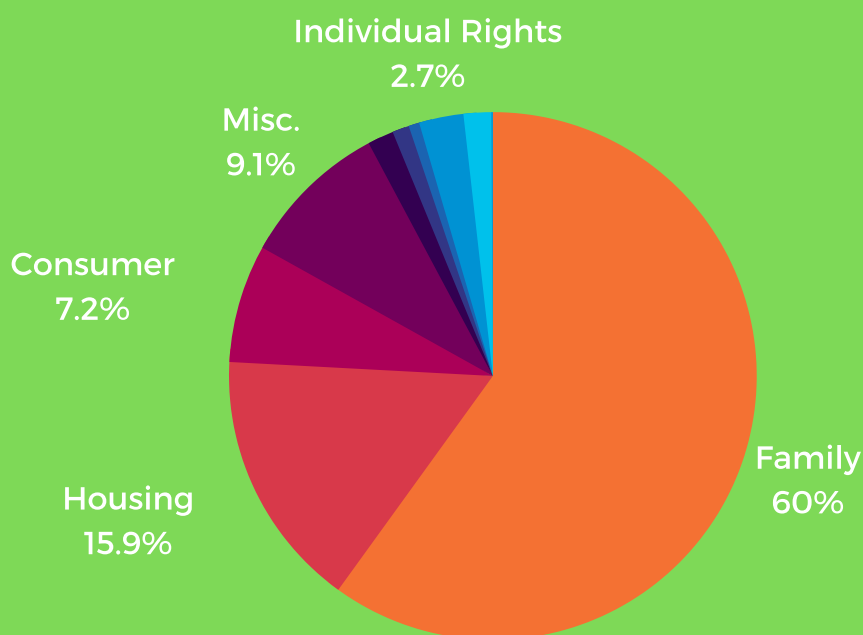
73%
Female

27%
Male

54.7%

INCREASE
IN DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE CASES

Cases in 2019 by Legal Problem Area



ERLS
Closed

638

Family
Law
Cases

26%

OF CLIENTS
SERVED WERE
DISABLED

84%

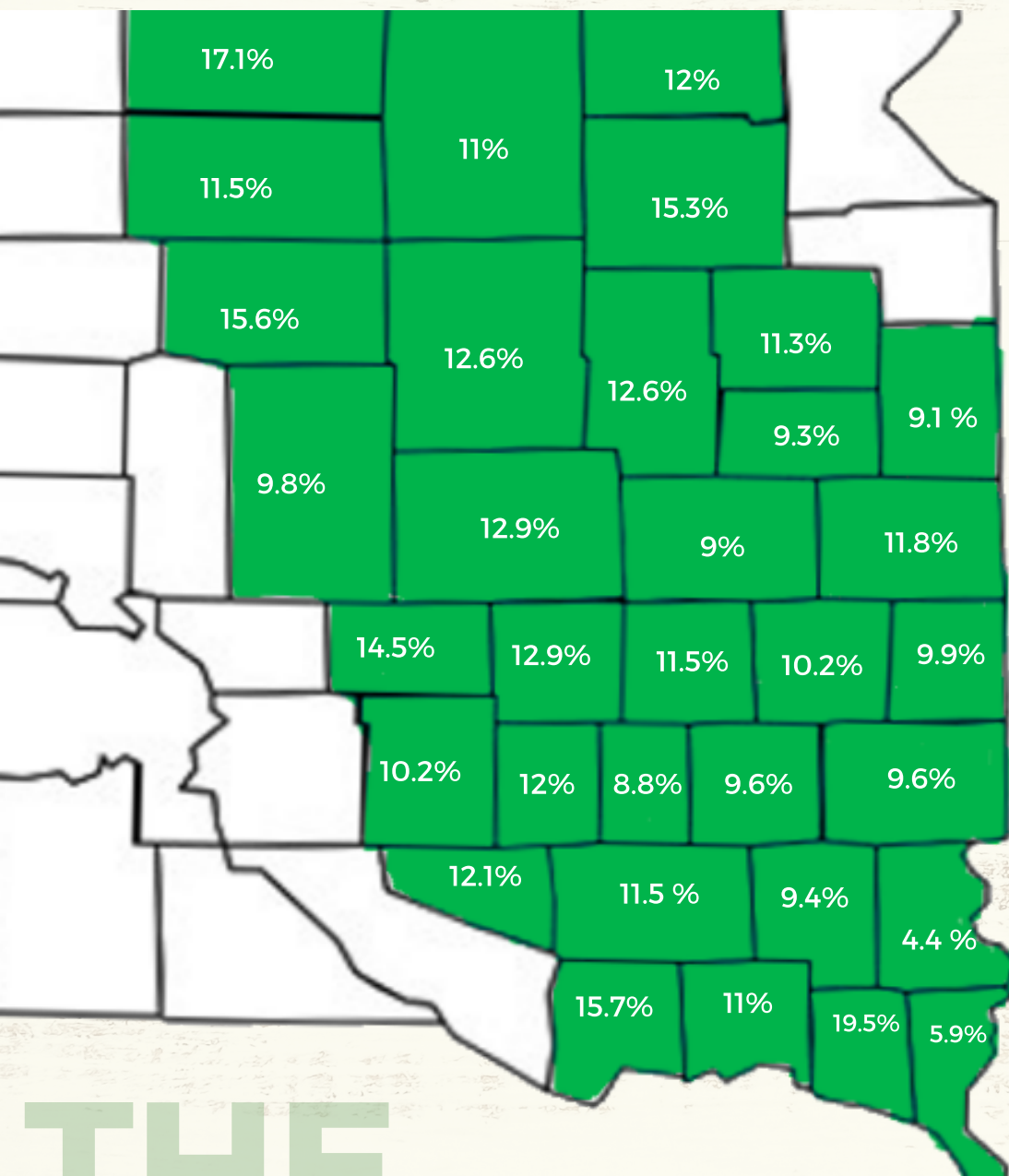
increase in
housing
applications
in 2019

1,404

Children
were
Served

554

Victims of
crime
were
assisted



ERLS is the only legal aid service provider in Eastern South Dakota.

The service area covers

33

counties that spans over

25,500

square miles.

With 4 attorneys, there was only

1

legal aid attorney

for every

13,227

people living in poverty in our service area.

THE SERVICE AREA

The Demand

South Dakota is considered a legal desert. The above map outlines the East River Legal Services service area and the percentage of poverty for each county based on the latest census data.

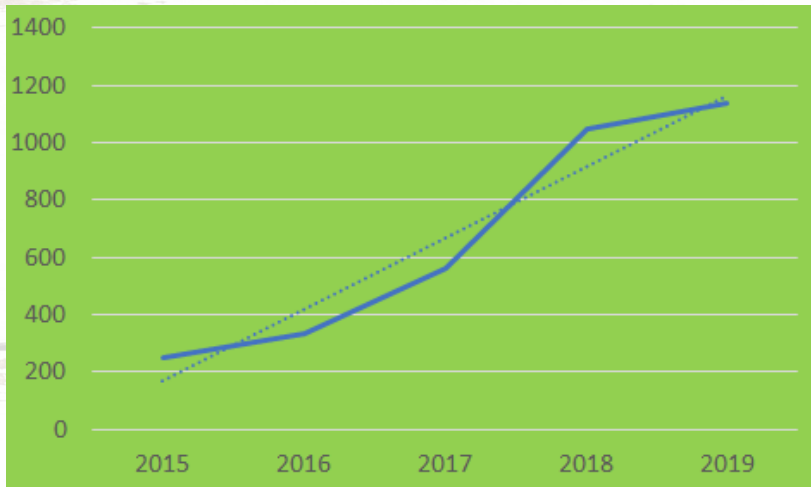
There are

52,907

people living in poverty in our service area.

The Technology

Number of Applications



Technology has given us the ability to reach the most rural parts of our service area by enhancing our service delivery methods.

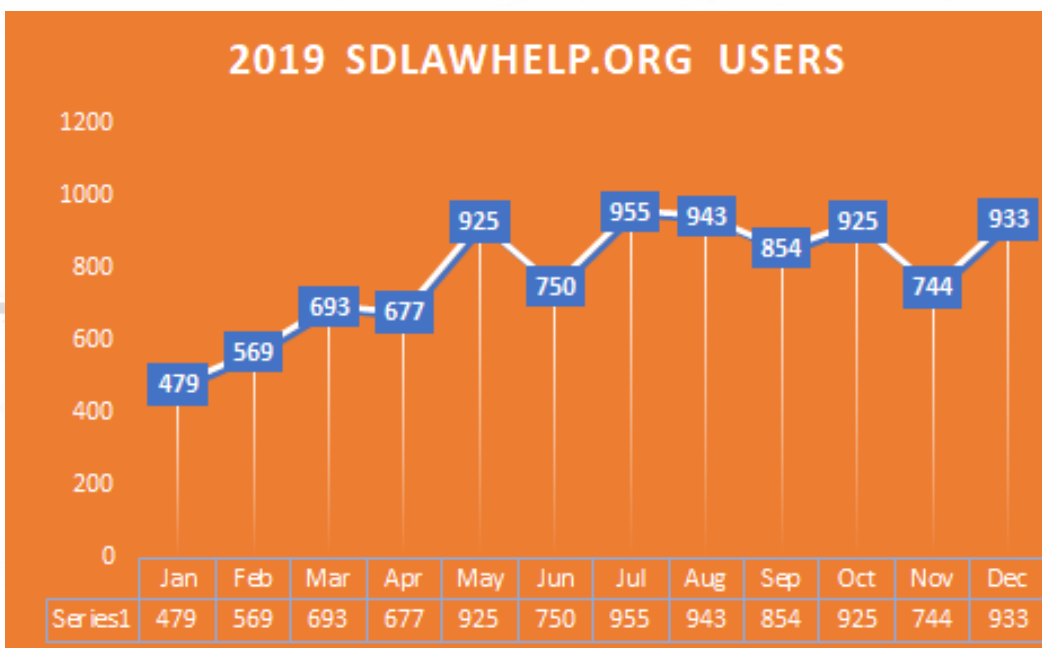
In 2019, ERLS integrated an SMS platform allowing staff to communicate via text information such as appointment reminders and court dates. We have also created more informational materials and videos for the community and are proud to be able to offer our online intake application in Spanish.

Technology has also advanced our data capturing procedures, which helps us properly track legal needs and help redirect resources.



Launched in 2018, SDLawHelp.org is an online resource for people to apply for services and find information regarding a variety of legal issues. Online applications completed at www.sdlawhelp.org are filtered to the appropriate agency based on their program requirements and the county of dispute. SDLawHelp is a partnership between East River Legal Services, Dakota Plains Legal Services (DPLS), and Access to Justice (A2J). There is a wide variety of free legal information available on the site that ranges from self-representation in court to landlord-tenant law to divorce and other family law matters.

2019 SDLAWHELP.ORG USERS



87%

of intakes are now done online. This speeds up processing time, ensures that the application reaches the appropriate agency, and allows people to apply at a time that is convenient and safe for them. Applications can be submitted 24/7, 365 days a year.

The Impact

My divorce was the last thing holding me to my past. As a mother of three, money is tight most of the time. I didn't know how I was going to free myself from it. Then I heard about East River Legal Services. I was very anxious. They walked me through the whole process and kept me up to date on all aspects of my case. Any questions I had were answered. East River helped me free myself and take back my life. I am so grateful for the service they provide. Without them, I would still feel trapped in a marriage where I was viewed as property.

-ValNessa

“ I felt better with ERLS by my side. ”



I sought help from East River Legal Services for a divorce from my long-time estranged husband. I do not know how the legal system works and was somewhat intimidated. ERLS provided the legal help I needed, guiding me through the process and accompanying me to court when it was time for the divorce to be granted. I felt better with ERLS by my side. I received much-needed closure to that chapter of my life.

-Donna H

I came to ERLS after my child's father took my child from my house. The police refused to help in getting him back since there was no custody or parenting time order. ERLS helped with a Protection Order (PO) which granted me temporary custody. This PO was presented to tribal police at the reservation where my child's father was hiding and my child was returned to me. ERLS also helped me obtain emergency temporary custody, which resulted in keeping my son safe.

-Myrna



I am a combat veteran who received a favorable decision in my Social Security Disability case after ERLS did an extensive amount of work. ERLS was able to assist in calling the SSA for me a number of times to help navigate the process when the SSA failed to give me back pay. I received my payment and was very complimentary.

-Alan L

The Volunteers

GET INVOLVED, CREATE CHANGE

ERLS believes that pro bono and volunteer hours are more than just acts of service. We believe that they are steps toward creating a "Pro Bono Culture." The transformation to a "Pro Bono Culture" requires commitment from everyone. Every donation made, every case assigned, and each volunteer hour served take us one step closer to a better community. ERLS is truly thankful for all of you.

2019 VOLUNTEER ATTORNEYS

Clair Gerry
Thomas Blake
Rick Mickelson
Elizabeth Overmoe
Eric Kirkvliet

Steve Huff
Eric Schulte
Tim Billion
Tracye Sherrill
Mike McKnight

Jason Krause
Joel Rische
Clifford Katz
Rebecca Harris
Jack Nichols

Dylan Bakken
Chet Groseclose
Kelly Collinsworth
Jesse Ronning
Joshua Brown

2019 VOLUNTEERS & INTERNS

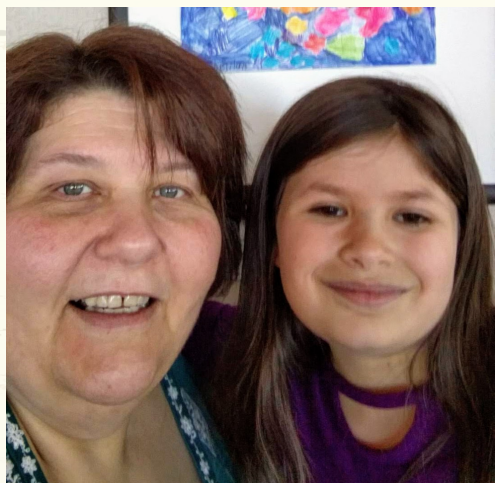
Kylie Beck
Myla Brown
Spencer Determan
Caitlyn Dommer
James Eggert

Candice Gullickson
Samantha Hasbell
Isabelle Hayes
Levi Mitchell
Alex Murdock

Chofian (Juju) Abobakr
Jessica Allen
Alexa Ankrum
Chesney Arend
Renee Gallagher

Elizabeth Petersen
Sara Smalley
Elizabeth Stanley
Nick Thompson
Mallerlyn Vazquez

“From the moment I walked into East River Legal Services yesterday I was treated with the utmost respect and kindness by all the staff. What a great bunch of professionals that patiently listened and helped me with my case”



PRO BONO SUCCESS!

Catherine came to the ERLS Walk-In Forms Clinic seeking help with guardianship forms. She had been trying to obtain guardianship of her niece since 2018. Josh Brown, an attorney at Ballard Spahr was volunteering at the clinic that evening and graciously offered to represent her pro bono. With Josh's help, Catherine was able to get the help she needed to obtain guardianship of her niece. Positive outcomes like this are what happens when the private bar and legal aid work together.

East River Legal Services

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Name: Joshua Brown

Firm: Ballard Spahr, LLP

Areas of Practice:

- Wills and POA
- Trusts and Estates
- Business Planning
- Federal Estate & Gift Planning
- Guardianship/Conservatorship
- Evictions and Hearings
- Tax Planning

I see a very large need and want to do my part to help.

-JOSH BROWN, ASSOCIATE
BALLARD SPAHR, LLP

Josh grew up in Flandreau, SD and earned his J.D. from the USD School of Law and his LL.M. in Taxation from the University of Denver. Prior to joining Ballard Spahr, Josh practiced law in Dell Rapids, SD for three and a half years. Josh is a regular volunteer for East River Legal Services and Access to Justice and has also been a volunteer at the USD Law School VLEG Clinic and the East River Legal Services Forms Clinic. Josh and his wife have 2 children and enjoy hiking and being outdoors.

Pro bono work is especially important in bankruptcy because the financial circumstances of the clients make hiring an attorney incredibly difficult. The typical pro bono client becomes insolvent because of cancer and medical bills, not from lavish spending. The positive impact that pro bono work has on people's lives is immeasurable.

-Jack Nichols, Attorney
Nichols & Rabuck P.C.



Name: Jack Nichols

Firm: Nichols and Rabuck, PC

Areas of Practice:

- Bankruptcy
- Estate Planning
- Family Law
- Trademarks
- Cyber Law
- Business Law
- Litigation

Jack earned his J.D. from Creighton University. He began his career as a business and M&A attorney at Lindquist & Vennum, LLP in Sioux Falls. In 2014, Jack joined Nichols & Rabuck where he has expanded his practice areas to include more family law and estate planning. Jack is a regular volunteer for ERLS, taking several bankruptcy cases a year on a pro bono basis. He believes that bankruptcy is a very difficult situation to be in and wants to help out as often as he can. Jack and his wife are avid foodies. They enjoy traveling, curling, and playing golf.

WAYS TO SUPPORT ERLS

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

DIRECT DONATION

Your donation will support direct client services, provide critical legal assistance, and ensure that justice is not based on what one can afford. Monetary donations can be mailed to our office or made online at <https://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 Nichole Townsend, Pro Bono Coordinator, at nichole@erlservices.org or (605) 275-6931.

PLANNED GIVING

ERLS has been serving the community for almost 50 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 occasion.

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.

For
ERLS

FUNDING AND DONATIONS

East River Legal Services would not be able to operate without the generous financial support of our corporate sponsors.



DONORS

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 Steve Huff, Marlow, Woodward & Huff, Prof. LLC
 Wendy Hess, USD School of Law
 Woods, Fuller, Shultz & Smith, P.C

DONATE TODAY

When you donate to ERLS, your donation goes directly toward helping our clients and your neighbors. Your gift helps adult and child victims of abuse find safety. It helps families stay in their homes. It helps veterans and seniors receive the benefits they need and have earned. If you would like to donate, please contact Nichole Townsend at 605.275.6931 or nichole@erlservices.org.



2019 SECOND CIRCUIT BAR ASSOCIATION

R.D. Hurd

PRO BONO GOLF TOURNAMENT

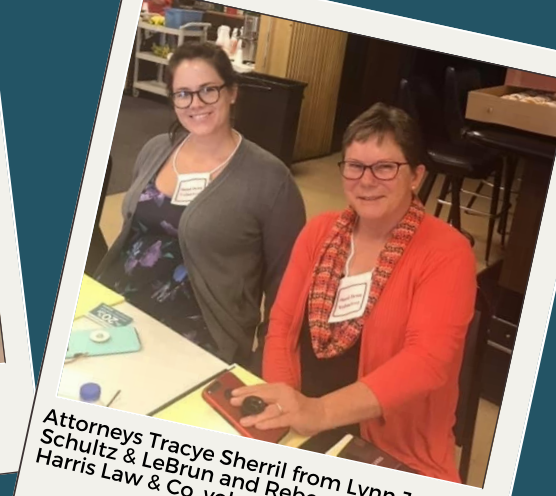




Thank you Heartland Paper for your generous donation of paper products.



ERLS staff Nichole and A2J's Elizabeth Overmoe



Attorneys Tracye Sherril from Lynn Jackson, Schultz & LeBrun and Rebecca Mouw from Harris Law & Co. volunteer their time at the VFW Stand Down



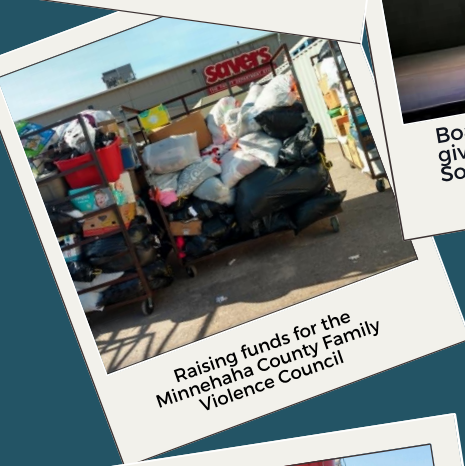
ERLS Interns at the State Bar Convention in Rapid City, SD



Board Member Ken Teunissen giving us a tour of the Alliance! South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance



Brent talking about the census with Patrick Lalley



Raising funds for the Minnehaha County Family Violence Council



Staff Attorney Tillie Bulman speaking at the USD School of Law about family law



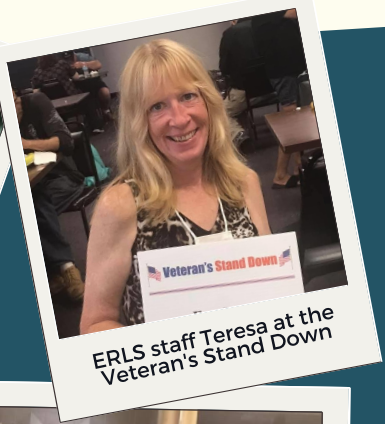
What a beautiful day at the Midwest Directors Conference in St. Louis, MO



Thank you to Tim Billion of Robins Kaplan, LLP for your expertise on Tribal Law!



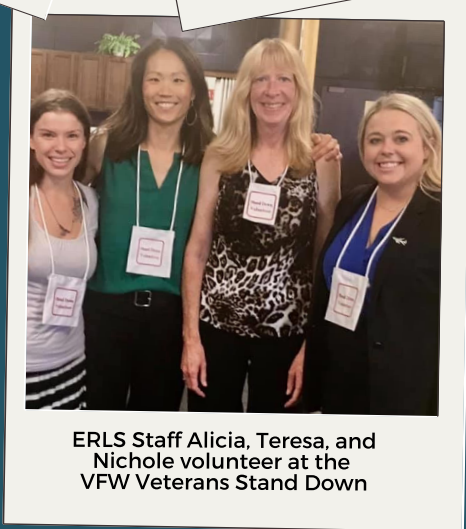
Our new office sign!!



ERLS staff Teresa at the Veteran's Stand Down



Thank you to the SD Bar Foundation for your support of East River Legal Services



ERLS Staff Alicia, Teresa, and Nichole volunteer at the VFW Veterans Stand Down

ERLS IN THE

COMMUNITY

THE EXECUTIVE TEAM



Brent Thompson
Executive Director

Brent became Executive Director of East River Legal Services in April of 2017. Brent comes to East River from Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid (MMLA) where he served as a staff attorney since 2006. Brent brings over 14 years of experience in the nonprofit sector to his role as Executive Director.



Kim Poitra
Director of Finance & Administration

Kim brings over twenty (20) years of experience to ERLS. She previously served as Financial Analyst and Finance Manager for major health care providers. Her broad experience is an asset to ERLS, our clients, and our contributors. Her expertise and hard work is a large part of the program's success.

THE ATTORNEYS



Tillie Bulman
Managing Attorney

Tillie earned her J.D. from the University of Wyoming College of Law. Before joining the ERLS team in 2018, Tillie practiced in Southeastern Wyoming as an Assistant District Attorney for Laramie County, where she prosecuted felony-level domestic violence crimes and crimes involving the physical and sexual abuse of children. In 2007, Tillie was appointed Interim County Prosecuting Attorney in Platte County, Wyoming. In addition to this, Tillie maintained a private practice providing legal advocacy for victims of crime in civil matters, representing parents, and serving as a Guardian ad Litem in juvenile cases.

Tillie enjoys working at ERLS because it allows her to be an advocate for people who are not able to afford an attorney otherwise. Outside of work, Tillie enjoys spending time with her husband, her kids, her 5 dogs, and especially her grandchildren.



Peter Sommervold
Staff Attorney

Peter earned his B.A. in Economics from Augustana College and his J.D. from the University of South Dakota. Peter brings over 25 years of experience as an attorney to ERLS. Prior to joining the ERLS team in the summer of 2019, Peter practiced tort law as a private attorney.

Peter enjoys meeting new clients and working with them to resolve their legal issues. He feels that it is very rewarding to help those who cannot otherwise make their voices heard in the civil justice system.

Outside of work, Peter enjoys spending time with his wife, kids and grandchildren. When he has time he also enjoys being outdoors and fishing.



Kayla McCall
Staff Attorney

Kayla earned her Bachelor of Arts degrees in French and Philosophy at The University of Iowa, and went on to receive her Juris Doctor from The University of Iowa College of Law. Before joining East River Legal Services in the Spring of 2020, Kayla specialized in criminal defense and Indian law, representing the criminally accused in state court and in Indian Country. Kayla also has experience in appeals, legislative drafting, employment disputes, family law, and civil rights. Kayla enjoys working at ERLS because she is able to help clients overcome the obstacles that led to court involvement and find a workable solution to their legal problems.

Outside of work, Kayla enjoys spending time with friends and family, playing tennis, biking, reading, volunteering, cooking, and travel.



Taylor Hayes
Staff Attorney

Taylor joined ERLS in May 2020 and is passionate about helping people in need. He considers East River Legal Services to be the front line of service to our community. Taylor graduated from the Campbell University School of Law in North Carolina in 2012. Taylor has worked in a variety of legal settings from the nonprofit sector, to the public sector, to private practice. Taylor's diverse background brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the clients and staff at ERLS.

Outside of ERLS, Taylor is a member of the SD Air National Guard, the Catholic Diocese of Sioux Falls, and the Knights of Columbus. He also coaches lacrosse for Sioux Falls Spark Lacrosse and plays for Sioux Falls' box lacrosse team, Sioux Falls Stealth. Taylor and his wife have two children.



Brendan Stratton
Staff Attorney

Brendan received his B.S. in Political Science, with minor degrees in History and Criminal Justice from South Dakota State University and his Juris Doctor from the University of South Dakota School of Law. Before joining East River in the Spring of 2020, Brendan specialized in the criminal prosecution of misdemeanor and felony crimes in Minnehaha County.

Brendan's unique insight into the criminal justice system, along with his belief that everyone should have access to an attorney to help them navigate their legal issues, makes him a valuable asset to the clients and staff at ERLS.

In his spare time, Brendan enjoys spending time with his wife, swimming, hiking, and playing tennis.

THE STAFF

ADMINISTRATION



Becca Wiersma
Technology Manager



Nichole Townsend
Pro Bono Coordinator



Tammy Bies
Staff Accountant

SUPPORT STAFF



Cassie Jackson
Legal Secretary



Leah Kornmann
Legal Assistant



Kayla Hanson
Legal Assistant



Emma Ward
Legal Assistant



Teresa Blom
Paralegal



Alicia Vogler
Paralegal

THE **ROI** OF LEGAL AID

Investing in legal aid is not only instrumental in providing equal access to justice, it also benefits the economy.

For every

\$1.00

invested in
East River Legal Services,

\$4.84

is realized in economic gains.



Economic Gains

Supporting civil legal aid creates a measurable and positive economic impact for everyone. We regularly obtain federal benefits, restitution, spousal support, child support, wages, and unemployment compensation for our clients that is then in turn spent in South Dakota. Our federal grants bring jobs into the state. Public money is saved as our work reduces courtroom costs and attorney fees by reducing pro se litigants and educating and empowering those clients who do appear pro se. Not only is legal aid essential to an equal and fair judicial system, it is just sound economic policy.

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS



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.

FY16 - June 2020 YTD FINANCIAL ACTIVITY

REVENUES AND OTHER SUPPORT

	June 2020 YTD Actual	2019 Actual	2018 Actual	2017 Actual	2016 Actual
LSC - Basic Field Grant	\$ 195,316	\$ 375,950	\$ 369,045	\$ 325,470	\$ 364,520
LSC - Private Attorney Involvement	35,336	59,933	54,276	70,831	31,781
LSC - Technology Initiative Grant	7,500	10,000	20,000	32,000	
LSC - COVID-19 Grant	25,000				
LSC - COVID-19 Telework Capacity Grant	16,100				
Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)	184,839	230,028	73,873		
Technology Services Contract - AJJ & DPLS	3,550	27,614			
Veterans (Commission on Equal Access to Courts)	52,750	92,000	53,648	38,000	17,333
Older Americans	3,549	64,368	58,575	50,202	50,202
Minnehaha County (A&N Cases)		(2,524)	2,524	41,668	62,502
Corporate (Guardianship Cases)				25,000	-
Collaborative Legal Incubator Program				8,702	51,298
Law Student Clinic (RD Hurd Program)			595	2,715	
GOAC Settlement				25,000	
Technology Initiative Grant - SD Bar Foundation				111,202	
Unrestricted Contributions - SD Bar Foundation			30,000		
Unrestricted Contributions - Second Circuit Bar	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000
Contributions/Donations	870	35,425	47,977	8,510	17,100
Interest Income	1	33	5	84	81
TOTAL REVENUE	\$ 549,811	\$ 917,828	\$ 735,518	\$ 764,384	\$ 619,817

EXPENSES, ENDING NET ASSETS

	June 2020 YTD Actual	2019 Actual	2018 Actual	2017 Actual	2016 Actual
Personell & Benefits	\$ 449,356	\$ 624,753	\$ 562,704	\$ 475,184	\$ 448,232
Operating	163,235	301,231	255,116	270,432	181,191
TOTAL EXPENSES	612,591	925,984	817,820	745,616	629,423
Excess (Deficit) of Revenue over Expenditures	(62,780)	(8,156)	(82,302)	18,768	(9,606)
Beginning Net Assets	39,418	47,574	129,876	111,108	120,714
NET ASSETS, ENDING	\$ (23,362)	\$ 39,418	\$ 47,574	\$ 129,876	\$ 111,108

Breakdown of Net Assets

	June 2020 YTD Actual	2019 Actual	2018 Actual	2017 Actual	2016 Actual
Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions	\$ 41,453	\$ (21,459)	\$ 495	\$ 44,149	\$ 34,542
Net PPP; applying for forgiveness Sep 2020	\$ (131,600)				
Net Assets With Donor Restrictions	66,784	60,877	47,079	85,727	76,566
NET ASSETS	\$ (23,362)	\$ 39,418	\$ 47,574	\$ 129,876	\$ 111,108



2019 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Ruth Henderson
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LeeAnn No Heart
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Ken Teunissen
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EAST RIVER LEGAL SERVICES

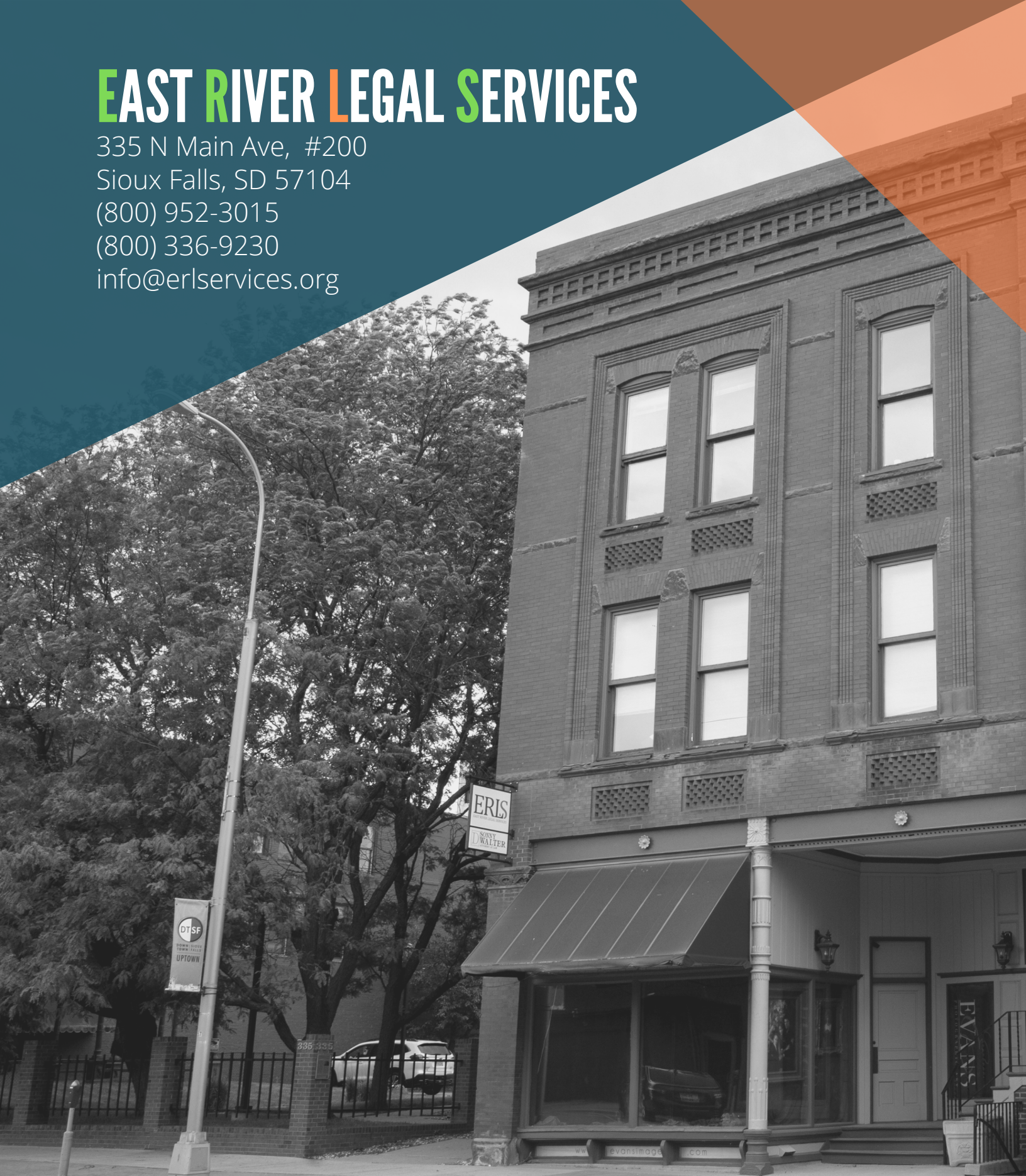
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