FAQs: Legal Services Alabama, Inc. (LSA)

☑ **LSA IS A STATEWIDE 501(C)(3) NON-PROFIT LAW FIRM** that increases access to justice by providing high quality civil legal assistance to low-income individuals and families from ten offices located in: **Anniston, Birmingham, Dothan, Florence, Huntsville, Mobile, Montgomery, Opelika, Selma & Tuscaloosa**.

Eligibility Guidelines for LSA Clients:
The figures in this table are established by the U.S. Dept of Health & Human Services.

Size of Family Unit (# of people)	125% of Federal Poverty Guidelines - 2011 (Maximum Gross Annual Income levels for eligibility for civil legal assistance from LSA)
1	$13,613
2	$18,388
3	$23,163
4	$27,938

☑ Legal services programs were created in the 1970's and **HAVE SERVED FINANCIALLY-ELIGIBLE, LOW-INCOME ALABAMIANS FOR OVER THREE DECADES**.

☑ **LEGAL SERVICES ALABAMA REDUCES THE BURDEN ON THE COURT SYSTEM:**

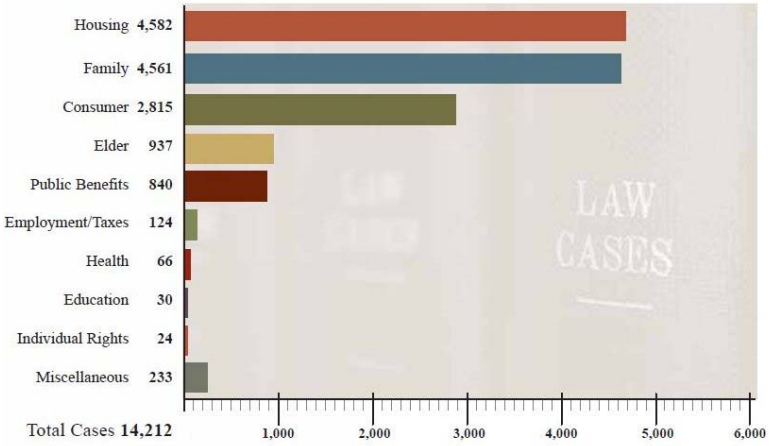
- **LSA RESOLVES THE MAJORITY OF ITS CASES OUTSIDE OF THE COURTS**
- **LSA REDUCES THE NUMBER OF PRO SE (SELF-REPRESENTED) LITIGANTS** - having access to Legal Services means clients are not appearing in court on their own behalf (*"pro se"*), but have an experienced attorney to represent them, which increases court efficiency.

☑ **LEGAL SERVICES ALABAMA'S INTERVENTION AND INVOLVEMENT IS NECESSARY TO COMPLEMENT THE EFFORTS OF FAMILY SHELTERS, LAW ENFORCEMENT, SOCIAL SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH, AND OTHER AGENCIES** by enabling clients to act on the advice, education, or information received from those agencies in an informed way. Without Legal Services, efforts by other agencies are significantly less effective. Such agencies are dependent on Legal Services to provide legal advice to their clients.

☑ **LEGAL SERVICES ALABAMA SERVES VICTIMS OF DISASTERS AND HAS A HOTLINE FOR SPANISH SPEAKERS:**
Disaster Legal Assistance: 1-866-456-4995 **Legal Hotline for Spanish Speakers:** 1-888-835-3505
Online Intake for all case types: http://intake.alsp.org

☑ **LEGAL SERVICES ALABAMA'S LEGAL REPRESENTATION IS CRITICAL TO VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THEIR EFFORTS TO BREAK THE CYCLE OF POVERTY AND/OR VIOLENCE FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR CHILDREN.**

IN 2010, LSA CLOSED 14,212 CASES:



LSA HELPS PEOPLE

- By providing representation on critical legal matters in judicial and administrative forums.
- By providing timely legal counsel and advice.
- Through community education about rights and responsibilities ("*preventative*" law).
- Through development and distribution of legal self-help materials and forms.

Protecting Consumers: LSA advises clients on consumer law cases, such as those dealing with loans, installment purchases, contracts, warranties, unfair sales practices, and credit access. Many of our clients have no healthcare and a catastrophic illness and attendant medical bills can push them into bankruptcy. Our elderly clients on limited incomes may have to choose between paying their bills or buying the medicine they need to stay alive. In those situations where a bankruptcy is a reasonable option to resolve legal problems, we represent clients in filing a bankruptcy case. We also work with banks to prevent the garnishment of social security wages. We also advise clients on warranties on products they purchased or services they received, obtaining credit because inaccurate information was provided to a credit reporting agency, problems with a public utility service, or problems with any other consumer or finance issue.

Preventing Family Violence: This is an area really utilized by LSA clients. LSA assists with family law cases, *when domestic violence (spouse, elder or child abuse) is present.* We assist victims of domestic violence who need an order of protection or a restraining order to protect themselves or their children. We assist victims in filing a Protection from Abuse petition or a divorce. In the course of this representation, Legal Services can also represent victims in seeking custody of minor children, child support, and other relief that will enable them to start a new life that will be free from abuse.

Ensuring Healthy,Stable Families: If a client is eligible for Medicaid or Medicare and is having problems getting them to pay for covered medical treatment, LSA can assist them in obtaining coverage. If clients are having problems receiving public assistance benefits that they are eligible for and need to take care of their children, we can assist them in making sure that eligibility and benefit levels are properly determined.

Assisting the Disabled in Achieving Independence: LSA works to ensure that low-income, disabled individuals in Alabama have access to medical care and a subsistence income, through Medicaid and other forms of government assistance. We promote strategies that enable people with disabilities to live as independently as possible. LSA also represents clients when they are receiving Social Security disability and there is a threat their benefits will cease.

Creating and Sustaining Healthy Neighborhoods and Communities: LSA is exploring the role it can play in helping low-income Alabamians accumulate and retain assets through community economic development. LSA hopes to work with Alabama's educational institutions (including law schools), businesses, churches and volunteer lawyers to: develop micro-enterprises and assist entrepreneurs in low income neighborhoods, form non-profit corporations and train non-profit boards, develop community development corporations (CDCs), promote the development of community-friendly sources of financing as alternatives to predatory lenders and create a land loss initiative—in order to provide opportunities out of poverty for individuals, families, neighborhoods and communities.

Securing Shelter and Preventing Homelessness: LSA helps clients in public housing, Section 8, or other government subsidized housing programs to obtain services, resolve grievances, or contest an eviction. In private housing - where a landlord is not complying with the terms of the clients lease or is trying to evict them - we advise clients concerning their rights and may represent them in court if they are sued. In cases where clients are having problems with the mortgage on their home or other problems concerning the home and land they own, Legal Services is there. Heir property rights and land loss prevention are of particular concern in poor rural areas with small family and minority farmers.

Assisting Seniors: Alabama's senior citizens are faced with multifaceted problems on a daily basis. In partnership with the local office on aging in its Anniston, Birmingham and Montgomery offices, LSA assists elderly clients with Medicaid and Medicare problems, nursing home issues, wills, durable power of attorneys, Advanced Health Care Directives, probate problems and numerous consumer issues where unfair advantage is often taken of the elderly.