



## **ANNUAL REPORT 2024**

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## **Welcome to the Olmsted County Law Library 2024 Annual Report**

The year 2024 saw an 8% increase in the number of patrons assisted in the physical library space. We had an increase in the number of phone calls made to the law library and a decrease in the number of emails to the law library. The number of patrons assisted through the joint partnership law clinics has increased from the year before. We now offer an additional financial clinic each month. The clinics are still conducted via telephone conference. The number of attorneys utilizing the law library fell by about 35% from the year before. It may be because the law library switched to Lexis Nexis digital research several years ago. Lexis Nexis is something utilized heavily in law school but not used as much in law firms. Law firms tend to use West Law so familiarity with the product may have something to do with the decrease. Before we switched, we surveyed the attorneys who utilized the law library the most and even though they indicated they were no longer as familiar with Lexis Nexis, the survey did not indicate they would use it less. We switched because it was a significant cost savings, with Lexis Nexis costing about 28% of what West Law costs related to digital research. The number of detainees requesting legal research is still in the lower numbers. The drop began in 2020, with the onset of COVID-19, and has continued to be utilized less than it was prior to COVID. We will continue to monitor this to make sure the ability to make the requests is streamlined and easy to use.

The Law Library participated in its first annual joint half-day CLE partnership with the Olmsted County Bar Association in February of 2024. It was a resounding success. The Law Library's contribution to the partnership is to make suggestions and to gain accreditation from the Minnesota State Board of Continuing Legal Education for each of the courses offered and of course, help with the set-up of the CLE and clean-up. The CLE half-day was held at the Rochester Area Foundation.

The Law Library received a donation of MN Statutes Annotated books from Hennepin County Library in 2023 and thereafter entered into a contract with Thomson Reuter to receive current updates on a yearly basis. We have re-started our Minnesota Practice Series collection and are up to date on those materials. They are especially useful in attorneys' day-to-day practice. The law library has been visited on a handful of occasions by attorneys who are mid-trial and who are seeking information from the Jury Instructions Guidelines. Both collections have added significant availability to updated documents found within our current printed materials.

Not necessarily on a legal level, but important to the youngest of our community, the Law Library has a shelf dedicated to the children who accompany their parents to the Law Library. We've received many donations of children's books, and they are encouraged to pick one, or five, to read while in the law library and to take home with them so we can encourage reading and build a special memory about the place they visited in the Government Center.



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### **Joint Law Library/LAOC Clinic Program**



#### **Background**

In September of 2011, the Law Library entered into an agreement with Legal Assistance of Olmsted County (LAOC) to provide free, brief legal advice clinics to self-representing litigants who live in Olmsted County, or who have their cases filed and being heard in Olmsted County. The agreement went into effect on October 1, 2011. By January of 2013, the joint clinics had matured into a program offering a regular schedule of Family, Financial and Criminal Expungement clinics.

#### **An Important Community Resource**

The joint clinic participants come from all walks and stages of life, as diverse as the makeup of our community. Based on the statistical information they provide, we know the clinic participants are often of lower income, with fewer resources to turn to for help when they need it. They may not make much, but sometimes it is too much to qualify for any types of

legal aid. Many of those who come to the Law Library have little or no prior experience with the courts, or indeed with anything “legal” in their lives. They are confused, they are scared, some are angry while some are in tears, but they all come to the Law Library looking for help, often in the form of legal advice. Law librarians, however, cannot give legal advice, opinion, or interpretation. Law librarians can offer information, but this falls short of what many clinic participants need.

Our joint clinic program with LAOC is a crucial “gap-filler” for many Law Library patrons. In addition to receiving desperately needed legal advice, clinic participants also benefit in other ways. Being involved in the legal system can be difficult and stressful, especially for someone attempting to represent themselves in a legal system they may not be familiar with or understand, while also trying to deal with the frustration of rules that seem more “guideline” than “bright line.” The ability to meet with an attorney who understands, supports, and advises them, and who gives them *an answer*, is an incredible gift and benefit to a clinic attendee. The clinic statistics demonstrate that these joint clinics are immensely important to the people who participate in them, often bringing them a level of comfort and relief that was not present beforehand.

The Joint Clinics Program is a very important community resource. The Law Library holds its partnership with LAOC in high regard. It is our hope that, together, we can make the Joint Clinics Program a continued reality.

### **2024 Joint Legal Clinics Offered**

**Family Law Clinics**, where topics include divorce; legal separation; annulment, parenting time (aka visitation); custody; child support; adoption; and maintenance. The typical appointment length is 30 minutes. *(CHIPs cases are specifically **excluded** from these clinics, as parents in these proceedings usually have court-appointed counsel of their own. Detailed property division or settlement questions are also excluded, as inappropriate for a “brief advice” meeting.)* One Family Law Clinic is offered each week.

**Financial Law Clinics**, where topics include debtor/creditor or pre-bankruptcy counseling; real estate / mortgage foreclosure; answering a debt-related lawsuit against you; and garnish/asset levy (from the debtor side only). *(Landlord/Tenant cases are specifically excluded from these clinics, as LAOC provides a Landlord/Tenant 24-hour hotline, and a Tenants’ Rights clinic each week.)* One Financial Law Clinic is offered twice each month, which constitutes a change from previous years due to the increased need for this kind of clinic.

**Criminal Expungement Clinics**, a class-room style clinic that includes review of the statute and procedure; tips for completing and serving the paperwork; and an opportunity for participants to briefly discuss their own case(s) privately with the volunteer attorney. One Criminal Expungement Clinic is offered every month.

The Law Library receives incredible effort and support from our partner for this program, Legal Assistance of Olmsted County. We thank them for helping make this program a success. We also thank the wonderful local attorneys who generously volunteered their time and expertise in 2024. Without them, this program would not exist.

LAOC: Karen Fairbairn Nath, Executive Director; and Samantha Fletcher, Volunteer Coordinator.

**Volunteer Attorneys and the number of clinics they provided in 2024:**

**Criminal**

**Expungement:** Grant Borgen (4) Matthew De Jong (6)

**Family:** Kayleen Asmus (1) Steve Dittrich (8) Jared Hines (5)  
 Dan Honsey (4) Cathy Jones (3) Carole Pasternak (10)  
 Steve Rolsch (12) Nicholas Rotar (8)

**Financial:** Alec Osland (12) Denise Kelly (1)



**2024 Library Administration**

The Law Library provides many important services, but underlying these efforts are the administrative responsibilities and duties that keep the library functioning at the high level deserved by our patrons. These tasks include but are not necessarily limited to:

**Community Outreach:**

*Create and present programming and services for focused populations, such as the Joint Clinics program, the Pre-Trial Detainee (ADC) service, and Continuing Legal Education (CLE) sessions for members of the judiciary and local bar association.*

Materials/Resources Acquisition and Cataloging/Indexing:

*Maintaining an adequate mixture of print and electronic materials to satisfy the research and interest needs of the library's patrons, including acquiring, cataloging, and making the items available for public use. This includes continually seeking additional resources to assist self-representing litigants in the Self-Help Corner.*

Reference and Research Support:

*Provide all library patrons with help in using all available resources in any format and assist with expert legal research tips and tricks.*

Space Management:

*Everything to do with the library's physical space, from designing the layout of furniture and location of shelves and equipment, to making sure the tops of the stacks get dusted.*

Technology and Communications:

*Design, implement and maintain the Law Library's technology, equipment, and website.*

<b>Outreach Type</b>	<b><u>2016</u></b>	<b><u>2017</u></b>	<b><u>2018</u></b>	<b><u>2019</u></b>	<b><u>2020</u></b>	<b><u>2021</u></b>	<b><u>2022</u></b>	<b><u>2023</u></b>	<b><u>2024</u></b>
<b>Clinics</b>	188	208	187	170	149	166	178	177	202
<b>ADC</b>	269	369	488	367	382	115	104	96	73
<b>CLEs</b>	197	311	201	214	0	0	0	0	105
Outreach Totals:	654	888	876	751	531	281	282	273	380
Overall Totals	6020	6559	5880	6358	4115	4743	5536	5079	5523
Outreach % of All:	10.86%	13.54%	14.90%	11.81%	12.90%	5.93%	5.09%	5.37%	6.88%

## 2024 Statistics by Case Topic & Contact Type

	Jan	Fe	Mr	Ap	My	Jun	Jul	Au	Sep	Oct.	Nov.	Dec	Total
Appeals			2		1	2	3	2	3	5		1	19
Bankruptcy/Foreclosures	1							1					2
Car Titles	2		8		1	3		1		2		2	20
Child Custody/Visitation	39	30	33	39	52	22	36	33	28	41	18	44	415
Child Support	11	14	4	19	15	18	17	16	6	10	5	3	142
Conciliation Court	29	24	26	21	24	27	25	26	39	32	36	27	336
Contempt	1	3	1	2					1	5	1	4	18
Criminal Expungement	15	6	4	11	3	4	13	14	7	6	5	5	93
Debtor/Creditor	2	3		2	7			3	6	9	2	5	39
Divorce/Annulment	54	39	48	56	67	27	44	55	45	56	34	38	563
Driver's License		1	2			1							4
Eviction Expungement	1		1				1	2		1	3		9
Ex Parte	1	4	1		1	5		3	2	3	1	1	22
Forfeiture (Car/Other)		2	1				4	2	4	1		1	15
General Civil	21	24	8	10	17	8	39	29	9	25	10	15	215
Gen'l Criminal and DUI	15	17	24	9	12	13	13	16	14	16	9	9	167
Guardianship	15	11	13	10	12	4	8	11	14	11	4	12	125
Harassment	9	5	5	13	7	5	7	11	9	9	9	5	94
IFPs	36	36	40	43	48	35	58	50	38	57	30	55	526
Judgment/Garnishment	1	5	3	12	3	9	4	2	3	4	1	3	50
Landlord	8	10	4	7	12	7	17	16	8	15	13	13	130
Legal Research	9	7	13	10	5	3	8	16	15	17	9	3	115
Miscellaneous	21	19	22	14	26	17	25	27	27	24	8	23	253
Name Change	19	21	26	22	21	11	15	23	26	30	12	22	248
Order for Protection	6	9	3	7	14	9	2	6	6	15	3	7	87
Paternity/Adoption	2	2	2	6	1	1	2	1	4	1		4	26
Serving Documents	4	1		2	1		2	3	2	5	2	5	27
Subpoenas			1						1	1		1	4
Tenant	5	5	3	5	4	1	8	4	8	7	2	8	60
Wills/Probate	16	13	6	10	7	12	9	10	15	5	10	7	120
Total Walk-In Contacts	343	311	304	330	361	244	360	383	340	413	232	323	3944
Total Attorney Contacts	9	2	13	6	4	1	10	2	13	17	11	3	91
Total Clinic Contacts	14	16	20	14	22	16	20	14	14	19	17	20	202
Total E-mail Contacts	30	37	41	39	51	34	17	36	25	35	27	28	399
Total Phone Contacts	70	61	69	98	76	54	60	48	71	58	69	68	814
ADC and Outreach	4	12	5	4	3	4	12	3	5	12	2	7	73
TOTAL CONTACTS	470	439	464	491	517	353	479	486	468	554	358	448	5523

## 2024 Usage and Statistics

### IN-PERSON SERVICE STATISTICS BY TOPIC

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>FAMILY</b>	1167	1252	1271	1446	820	969	1189	1260	1521
<b>CIVIL</b>	1443	1836	1583	1617	713	940	1163	1195	1422
<b>CRIMINAL</b>	259	247	281	290	130	234	296	314	260
<b>PROCEDURAL</b>	733	775	596	298	311	428	619	698	741
<b>TOTALS:</b>	3602	4110	3731	3651	1974	2571	3267	3467	3994

**FAMILY** includes: Divorce/Annulment, Child Custody/Visitation, Child Support, Ex Parte, Paternity/Adoption, Name Changes, Orders for Protection, and Contempt.

**CIVIL** includes: Car Title issues, Conciliation Court, General Civil, Harassment, Landlord, Tenant, Eviction Expungement, Guardianship, Wills/Probate, Debtor/Creditor, Car Forfeiture, Drivers' License, Bankruptcy/Foreclosure, and Miscellaneous.

**CRIMINAL** includes: Criminal Expungement, General Criminal/DUI.

**PROCEDURAL** includes: Legal Research, IFPs, Judgment/Garnishment, Appeals, Subpoenas, and Serving Documents.

### STATISTICS BY SERVICE TYPE

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Walk-in</b>	3602	4110	3731	4023	1974	2571	3226	3440	3994
<b>Atty.</b>	388	402	325	240	72	43	74	140	91
<b>Clinics</b>	188	208	187	170	149	166	178	177	202
<b>Email</b>	175	111	323	428	632		884	491	399
<b>Phone</b>	1233	984	837	1021	1110	1216	1070	775	814
<b>CLE</b>	197	311	201	214	0	0	0	0	105
<b>ADC</b>	143	369	488	367	382	115	104	96	73
<b>Totals</b>	6020	6559	5880	6358	4115	4743	5536	5119	5628



## **Olmsted County Law Library Financing and Budget: A Basic Primer**

(a copy of the 2024 final budget follows this page)

***Where does the Law Library's funding come from?*** County law libraries in Minnesota are governed by Minnesota Statutes chapter 134A, and "library fees" are in section 134A.10. In all counties other than Hennepin and Ramsey, the county law library may collect a fee on civil filings, and a fine on criminal matters. These fees are set with the permission of the local judicial bench and are also approved by the County Board.

The Olmsted County Law Library has no other source of revenue than what is received through court fees and fines, although it would be statutorily possible for the county to make an appropriation to the Law Library's budget fund, should they see the need or have a desire to do so. In addition, the Law Library Fund is dedicated to use for law library needs and programs only, and by statute funds can only be disbursed at the express direction of the Law Library Board of Trustees. (MN Statutes 134A.13.) In addition, because this is a dedicated fund, any balance unused at the end of a budget year automatically rolls over and continues to be part of the Law Library's continuing Fund Balance, giving the Law Library an opportunity to build up funds in anticipation of upcoming capital expenses, and to do longer-range planning than would otherwise be possible.

***What does the Law Library's funding pay for?*** In a word – everything. Law Library funds support all the library's functions and services – the books and electronic resources; the technology and equipment; the furniture, shelving, and office space needs; all special program expenses; and all staff expenses.

### ***What assumptions did the Law Library Board make when determining the scope and detail of the 2024 annual budget?***

As part of creating a budget for any year, the Law Library's Executive Committee (Board Chair, Board Treasurer, and law librarian) first determine a set of presumptions to work from. These presumptions change as needed with each new annual budget cycle. Our Base Assumptions include the following:

#### **Base 2024 Budget Assumptions**

1. The Law Library's Reserve Balance (Reserve) should be maintained at a level equivalent to one/half year's expenditure (about \$100,000). A balance below that level should be considered a "red zone".
  - a. We cannot justify asking for a fee increase unless the Reserve is projected to enter the "red zone", which is not projected to happen in 2025.
  - b. The level of income from fees dropped during COVID. Since then, the revenue stream has risen to levels more in line with pre-COVID years. Although the

income stream is not a guarantee, it appears it has stabilized.

2. The current level of staffing (1.2 FTE) is sufficient to provide an acceptable level of service.
  - a. The Law Library hours are from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm with full staff coverage;
  - b. The law librarian should receive a COLA increase equivalent to county employees; and
  - c. The law librarian should begin receiving ICHRA benefits beginning 2024.
3. The current level of investment in print and on-line resources (\$70,000/year) is sufficient to provide an acceptable level of service.
4. The LAOC contract should be renewed for 2024 with the same level of service as was provided in 2023 at the rate of \$1,000 per month.

2024 Final Budget Statement  
Adopted Budget versus Actual Usage

	2024 Adopted	2024 Actual	Percent	Under/(Over)
EXPENSES	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Usage</u>		
6111 Salaries	74,840	73,207		
6120 PTO	6,439	5744		
6121 Holidays	3,872	3,315		
6100 Payroll Exp	6,386	6,991		
6153/54 FICA	6,514	6,201		
6155/56/22 UI OTP	0	0		
6157 ICHRA	0	6560		
Salaries Subtotal	98,051	102,018	(104%)	(3,967)
6206 Staff Dev	250	316	(26%)	(66)
6211 Tel/Internet	2,382	2,330	97%	52
6212 Postage/Frght	200	131	65%	69
6259 LAOC Comp	12,000	12,000	100%	0
6288 VD, DS	6192	5,649	91%	543
6410 Office Sup	4,800	3,391	71%	1409
6441 Books Print	32,606	43,437	133%	(10,831)
6443 Elec Mtrls	6,426	5,766	89%	660
6610 Furniture	300	0	0%	300
6611 Comp Equip	1,600	0	0%	1600
6801 Bank Fees	10	0	0%	10
6810 Acct/Payroll	5,200	5,129	99%	71
6910 Inv. Fees	0	8	(8%)	(8)
Materials Subtotal	71,966	78,157		(6191)
Expense Total	1770017	180,175		
REVENUE				
5312 Gen Gov't Fines/Fees		197,909		
5520 Interest Rec (MM acct)		<u>1,418</u>		
Revenue Total		199,327		