



**ANNUAL REPORT
2025**

Law Library Board of Trustees:

Janet Krueger, Esq., Chair

Christopher Coon, Esq., Treasurer

Brenda Benitez, Esq.

Olmsted County Commissioner Bob Hopkins

Elijah Kane, Esq.

Honorable Referee Tammy Shefelbine

Fred Suhler, Esq.

Staff:

Suzanne L. Peterson, Esq., Law Librarian

Dynee Stetzler, Librarian Assistant

Welcome to the Olmsted County Law Library 2025 Annual Report

The year 2025 saw a slight increase in the number of overall total contacts from year 2024; 21 additional contacts to be exact. It's nice to see the numbers go up, even if ever so slightly. Although COVID is 5 years in our rearview mirror, it had a profound impact on our little corner of the world. In 2019, our total contacts were 6358, which then dropped to 4115 in 2020. Historically, both COVID and the relocation of court administration from our floor to the floor below impacted the visibility and use of the law library, but our usage has been climbing ever since.

Our outreach program through the Adult Detention Center (ADC) has seen the largest increase this year. The legal research requests made by detainees through a kiosk program in the jail increased 123% from the year before.

We saw our largest number of clinic participants this year with a total of 226 patrons utilizing the legal clinics, an increase of 10% from year 2024. The legal clinics are a partnership between the law library and Legal Assistance of Olmsted County (LAOC). We are fortunate to have a consistent group of attorneys who volunteer their time and expertise in order to provide free legal advice to Olmsted County community members.

The law library sponsored the second annual half-day CLE at the Rochester Area Foundation in partnership with the Olmsted County Bar Association. The law library contributes to the partnership by suggesting CLE presentations and speakers, gaining accreditation from the Minnesota State Board of Continuing Legal Education for each of the courses offered, advertising the event, and helping to set up and clean up the space. The number of attendees at the event decreased markedly from 2024; perhaps because many attorneys are becoming more aware of free CLEs provided remotely by other organizations.

In 2024, with the help of donations from the wider community, the Law Library dedicated a shelf for children's books to have on hand for children who accompany a parent to the Law Library. In 2025 we benefitted from the generosity of the district court staff; law clerks and court administration staff noticed our supply was becoming depleted and graciously provided us with gently used children's books to help replenish the children's bookshelf.



Table of Contents

Welcome	1
Joint Law Library / LAOC Clinics Program	2-4
2025 Library Administration	4-5
2025 Statistics by Case Topic and Contact Type	6
2025 Usage and Statistics	7
Financing & Budget Basic Primer	8-9
2025 Final Budget Statement	10

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.

2025 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 2025. Without them, this program would not exist. The clinics provided information to 226 patrons this year.

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

Volunteer Attorneys and the number of clinics they provided in 2025:

Criminal

Expungement: Grant Borgen (6) Matthew De Jong (3)

Family: Steve Dittrich (8) Jared Hines (5) Cathy Jones (4)
Lilie McRoberts (3) Morgan Muenster (1) Carole Pasternak (12)
Megan Pierce-Campbell (2) Steve Rolsch (7) Nicholas Rotar (11)

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



2025 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.

Outreach Type	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>
Clinics	208	187	170	149	166	178	177	202	226
ADC	369	488	367	382	115	104	96	73	163
CLEs	311	201	214	0	0	0	0	105	65
Outreach Totals:	888	876	751	531	281	282	273	380	454
Overall Totals	6559	5880	6358	4115	4743	5536	5079	5523	5544
Outreach % of All:	13.54%	14.90%	11.81%	12.90%	5.93%	5.09%	5.37%	6.88%	8.19%

2025 Statistics by Case Topic & Contact Type

	Jan	Fe	Mr	Ap	My	Jun	Jul	Au	Sep	Oct.	Nov.	Dec	Total
Appeals		1	1	3	5	1	3	2	5	3	6	1	31
Bankruptcy/Foreclosures				3					1	1		1	6
Car Titles	3	3		2	3	1	1		2	1		1	17
Child Custody/Visitation	32	39	31	40	28	35	48	44	42	40	23	28	430
Child Support	8	17	12	22	13	14	25	15	11	13	6	5	161
Conciliation Court	15	21	35	23	24	19	28	17	14	26	30	20	272
Contempt	5			3	3	1	2				1	1	16
Criminal Expungement	12	10	9	12	10	10	7	9	7	8	3	3	100
Debtor/Creditor	3	8	2	1	4	10	4	9	7	5	5	3	61
Divorce/Annulment	55	58	51	67	44	42	38	35	53	40	31	36	560
Driver's License		1	1		2	2	3	1	2	3	3	2	20
Eviction Expungement	2	1	1		2	3	4		1	3	2		19
Ex Parte	2	2	2	1	4	1	1	1	6	5	1	2	28
Forfeiture (Car/Other)	1		1		1	3	1			18	6	5	36
General Civil	21	11	13	11	15	13	13	14	21	18	17	14	181
Gen'l Criminal and DUI	11	20	10	23	21	9	22	22	18	17	13	12	198
Guardianship	10	14	10	11	8	5	8	18	6	30	6	5	131
Harassment	9	5	5	3	11	5	11	13	19	10	17	7	115
IFPs	52	54	37	53	39	38	51	35	35	24	21	38	477
Judgment/Garnishment	5	1	4	6	8	10	8	6	6	5	2	1	62
Landlord	11	4	14	4	8	15	12	10	6	13	5	1	103
Legal Research	12	14	8	6	8	6	6	17	10	19	10	17	133
Miscellaneous	19	18	11	16	16	23	17	24	15	18	22	26	225
Name Change	15	21	17	22	13	19	22	22	12	9	8	13	193
Order for Protection	10	2	8	6	7	7	7	15	12	6	5	7	92
Paternity/Adoption	4	2		1	2	3	1	1	2			1	17
Serving Documents	4	9	4	4	3	2	2	4	2	5	1	4	44
Subpoenas	1	1		2	1	1	1	2	1		4		14
Tenant	4		10	8	2	6	8	2	5	7	2	10	69
Wills/Probate	9	9	12	9	6	10	11	10	7	4	9	4	100
Total Walk-In Contacts	277	346	309	362	316	314	365	348	328	351	259	278	3853
Total Attorney Contacts	17	10	7	8	8	4	6	3	6	7	3	11	90
Total Clinic Contacts	22	17	23	15	17	21	19	22	19	19	15	17	226
Total E-mail Contacts	30	25	30	32	31	34	34	34	23	33	23	24	353
Total Phone Contacts	62	62	65	73	79	55	75	49	69	71	58	75	795
ADC and Outreach	6		20	20	18	6	22	16	15	12	16	12	163
CLE		65											65
TOTAL CONTACTS	416	460	454	510	469	434	531	472	460	493	374	416	5544

2025 Usage and Statistics

IN-PERSON SERVICE STATISTICS BY TOPIC

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
FAMILY	1252	1271	1446	820	969	1189	1260	1521	1497
CIVIL	1836	1583	1617	713	940	1163	1195	1422	1355
CRIMINAL	247	281	290	130	234	296	314	260	298
PROCEDURAL	775	596	298	311	428	619	698	741	761
TOTALS:	4110	3731	3651	1974	2571	3267	3467	3994	3911

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

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Walk-in	4110	3731	4023	1974	2571	3226	3440	3994	3853
Atty.	402	325	240	72	43	74	140	91	90
Clinics	208	187	170	149	166	178	177	202	226
Email	111	323	428	632		884	491	399	352
Phone	984	837	1021	1110	1216	1070	775	814	795
CLE	311	201	214	0	0	0	0	105	65
ADC	369	488	367	382	115	104	96	73	163
Totals	6559	5880	6358	4115	4743	5536	5119	5628	5544

Olmsted County Law Library Financing and Budget: A Basic Primer
(a copy of the 2025 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 source of revenue beyond what is received through court fees and fines, although it is statutorily possible for the county to make an appropriation to the Law Library funds, should they see the need or have a desire to do so. By statute, law library funds are dedicated to be used for law library needs and programs and 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 unused balance at the end of a budget year automatically rolls over and continues to be part of the Law Library’s continuing fund balance, enabling the Law Library to build up funds in anticipation of upcoming capital expenses and 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 2025 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 2025 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 2026.
 - b. The level of income from fees dropped during Covid. We have seen an increase in our funding stream and believe most of the backlog has been addressed and the court is now resuming a more normal course of business.

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 library staff should receive a COLA increase equivalent to county employees.
3. The LAOC contract should be renewed for 2026 with the same level of service as was provided in 2025 at the rate of \$1000 per month.
4. The Law Library has re-started some of the legal material subscriptions they let go in 2018 and during COVID due to some of the other cost savings it achieved through securing different vendors, e.g., digital research and internet/phone. Being current with MPS and MSA is important for the legal community patrons, as well as community patrons.
5. The Law Library has committed to providing some compensation for healthcare costs for the librarian staff. The current level of contribution is 7% of SLP staff wages.

2025 Final Budget Statement
Adopted Budget versus Actual Usage

	2025 Adopted	2025 Actual	Percent	Under/(Over)
EXPENSES	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Usage</u>		
6111 Salaries	77,111	76,168		
6120 PTO	6,634	6,194		
6121 Holidays	3,898	3,534		
6100 Payroll Exp	6,580	6,472		
6153/54 FICA	6,712	6,201		
6155/56/22 UI OTP	0	0		
6157 ICHRA	5720	5,720		
Salaries Subtotal	106,655	104,289	98	2,366
6206 Staff Dev	250	334	133	(84)
6211 Tel/Internet	2,457	2660	108	(203)
6212 Postage/Frght	150	0	0	150
6259 LAOC Comp	12,000	12,000	100	0
6288 VD, DS	6300	7,274	115	(974)
6410 Office Sup	3289	3,627	110	(338)
6441 Books Print	50,492	45,894	91	4598
6443 Elec Mtrls	6,593	6621	.4	(28)
6610 Furniture	500	0	0	500
6611 Comp Equip	6890	2570	37	4320
6801 Bank Fees	10	110	1100	(100)
6810 Acct/Payroll	5,389	5,876	109	(497)
6910 Inv. Fees	0	7		(7)
Materials Subtotal	94,320	86,905		7347
Expense Total	200,975	191,194		9713
REVENUE				
5312 Gen Gov't Fines/Fees		203,452		
5520 Interest Rec (MM acct)		<u>1,063</u>		
Revenue Total		204,515		