



INDIANAPOLIS LEGAL AID SOCIETY

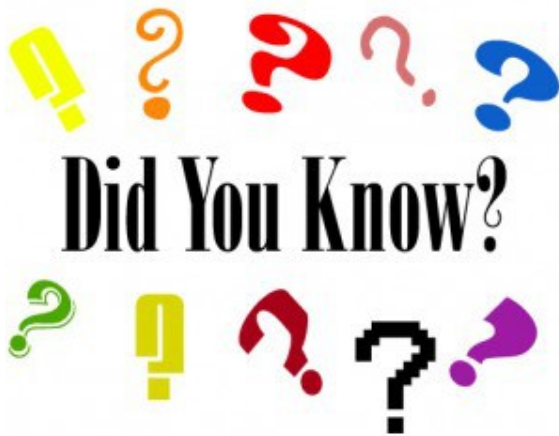
*Advocating with Passion and Purpose*

January 2020



## HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM INDY LEGAL AID

We would like to thank our generous donors for giving to our 2019 Holiday Campaign. These funds allow us to increase the number of individuals who we are able to assist in 2020. Last year our attorneys helped nearly 5000 clients with their legal issues. This number does not take into consideration families, neighbors, and communities positively impacted by Indy Legal Aid's assistance.



**Did You Know?**

... that Indy Legal Aid is the only legal aid organization in Central Indiana that does not receive direct federal funds? We are completely funded by individual donations, grants, and sponsorships from generous people like you.

## Meet Our New Paralegal and Translator/Interpreter, Mari Ochoa

Mari Ochoa brings a wealth of education and experience to her role as paralegal and translator/interpreter for Indy Legal Aid. Before being hired in November 2019, Mari volunteered full-time at

Indy Legal Aid for several months.

Originally from Bogota, Colombia, Mari and her family relocated to the East Coast when she was a young girl. Prior to moving to Indianapolis, Mari was most recently living and working in Washington, DC. She has a B.A. in Criminology and Criminal Justice and an M.A. in Conflict Resolution, both from Portland State University. She also has a Paralegal Certificate from Purdue University and a Certificate in Mediation.



Since Mari is a native-Spanish speaker with prior experience as a medical interpreter, she also provides Indy Legal Aid with interpreting and translating services for Spanish-speaking clients. Specifically, she interprets for non-native English speakers during initial consultations and subsequent meetings with Indy Legal Aid attorneys. She also translates written legal documents and takes incoming calls from Spanish speakers, which may involve giving them referrals to other organizations that may help them or arranging an appointment to see one of our attorneys.

According to Mari, there have been several situations that have impacted her during her time at Indy Legal Aid, and for different reasons. More so than just one case, she has been impacted by her interactions with clients. "For example, when I follow-up with clients by phone, I am frequently thanked for the attention to and interest in their case, which is rewarding in itself," Mari said.

As Mari commented, at Indy Legal Aid she has the opportunity to contribute to a process that promotes accessibility to the legal system. "Whether I am serving as an interpreter or as a paralegal, I feel that the work I get to do contributes to the greater effort of serving disadvantaged populations in navigating the justice system in Indianapolis," Mari said. "It is very rewarding to know that I have assisted in some way in obtaining a desired outcome for a client."



## **January Client Success Story**

Guardianship cases can be extremely challenging for both client and attorney. Indy Legal Aid's Senior Attorney, Jonathan Stewart, recently closed a challenging guardianship

case that began in April 2019.

"Tina," a grandmother in her mid-40's, was still reeling from the recent murder of her daughter when she met with Jonathan. Tina's daughter had given birth to a son, "Joshua," less than a month before she was murdered. Joshua was then removed from the home and placed with Tina.

Tina met with Jonathan to discuss guardianship of Joshua after she realized that she needed more legal protection for her grandson. As Jonathan began looking into Tina's request, he encountered several roadblocks before guardianship could be established. These roadblocks included dealing with a modification of child support order that needed to be addressed before the guardianship case could continue; the modification order being misplaced because it was entered under a wrong name; and Joshua's father, who was incarcerated, refusing to sign off on the guardianship.

After working diligently for eight months, Jonathan was able to resolve all of these issues allowing the guardianship to be granted. According to Jonathan, Tina was very kind and appreciative regarding all of his efforts and the eventual positive outcome. "Without Jonathan's help, I don't know what would have happened with Joshua's guardianship. I know I wouldn't have been able to afford an attorney to help me," Tina said. "I am very grateful to Jonathan and Indy Legal Aid.

## **Volunteer Opportunities**

**VOLUNTEER**



Indy Legal Aid has a number of volunteer opportunities for attorneys, students, and the general public. For attorneys, we have pro bono cases, internships for students, and our spring and fall events, along with light office work.

For more information, click [here](#).

**No time to volunteer? Donate now!**



We have several ways for you to make a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable Hoosiers in Central Indiana. Approximately \$.87 of every dollar donated to Indianapolis Legal Aid Society is directly used to provide programs and services. For more information, click [here](#).

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**Monday - Friday**

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

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*"The Indianapolis Legal Aid Society is dedicated to ensuring that qualified low-income persons living in the Central Indiana community have access to quality legal assistance for civil disputes."*



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