



# Fall 2018 Report

SOUTHWEST GEORGIA LEGAL SELF-HELP CENTER, INC.

A Justice for All Project | Lauren A. Kelly, Director | 10/1/2018

## Executive Summary

Our *Creating Law Libraries as Self-Help Resource Centers* pilot project began operations on June 1, 2018. In this report we want to share information about:

- statistical data regarding services provided;
- the results of our patron satisfaction survey;
- our projects with other organizations;
- current and future grants and other funding sources;
- an architectural plan for state-of-the-art office space; and
- future directions.

As we continue this pilot project, we must not lose sight of the goal: to create a comprehensive approach to providing access to justice in rural Southwest Georgia and ultimately across the state.

As of October 1, 2018 we served 1849 people from 49 counties, 17 states and 3 foreign countries. 36% of our users had family law issues, while the other 64% had problems involving a wide variety of other legal topics. The most common service we provided was to discuss and explain legal options to our users. Referring people to the appropriate source of help was our second most common service. The most common referral we made was to private practice attorneys. We referred 499 people to attorneys. 80% of our users were coming for the first-time.

We have received extremely positive feedback on our patron satisfaction survey. More than 98 percent of litigants surveyed at the self-help centers report that as a result of assistance from the center they:

- Understood their situations better;
- Felt less worried about their situations;
- Felt less confused about how the court works;
- Knew what they needed to do next; and
- Rated their experience at the Help Center as Excellent.

They also reported that center staff explained things to them clearly, were prompt and efficient and treated them with respect. Survey responses indicated that the most desired additional service was legal advice from volunteer attorneys. The feedback we received underscores the importance of volunteer attorneys for pro bono, low bono and limited scope representation.

We are partnering with fifteen other organizations as well as with leaders in other counties on a variety of projects. We will soon be adding attorney consultations via videoconference thanks to Sarah Babcock at Lawyers for Equal Justice and members of the Dougherty Circuit Bar Association. Georgia State University's Center for Access to Justice will send law students to produce self-help videos in Albany through an Alternative Spring Break program in March, 2019.

We have received four grants so far, worth a total of \$106,219, and we continue to look for new grants and other sources of funding. We participate in the Amazon Smile program, and we are registering for Georgia Gives. Creativity with funding will keep us financially healthy until we can find a more permanent funding source.

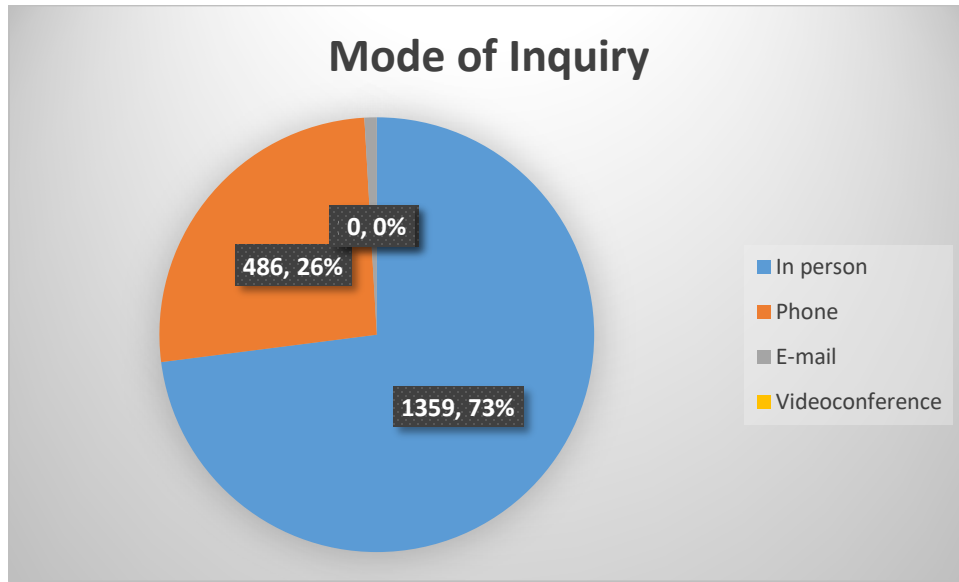
In late May we repurposed the Law Library's conference room into the temporary location of the Southwest Georgia Legal Self-Help Center. Dougherty County's Procurement and Facilities departments have provided invaluable help as we plan for our permanent office space construction. SRJ Architects, Inc. has drawn an amazing layout that fits everything we need into just 1300 square feet. Our new space should be complete by July 2019.

## Statistical Data from Intakes

We chose to create two surveys using Google Documents to gather statistical data about the results of our efforts. The first survey we created allows us to enter our intake data. The second survey is the user satisfaction survey. We distribute it to users in print and then enter the data into the matching Google Documents form. Between June 1 and September 30, 2018 we helped 1,849 people and received 522 responses to the user satisfaction survey.

### Mode of Inquiry

73% of our users come in person, while 26% call and 1% seek help via email. Videoconferencing is not yet offered but will be soon.



### Geographic Locations Served

91% of our users came from Dougherty County, while the other 9% came from 48 other counties. The map on page 3 shows how wide our geographic reach has become in just four months. The chart on page 4 shows how many users came from each county.



Users per Georgia County

Dougherty - 1629	Madison - 2
Lee - 27	Turner - 2
Fulton - 20	Worth - 2
Mitchell - 11	Appling - 1
Gwinnett - 8	Bibb - 1
Muscogee - 8	Bryan - 1
Sumter - 7	Chatham - 1
Ben Hill - 5	Cherokee - 1
Clay - 5	Clayton - 1
Tift - 5	Columbia - 1
White - 5	Coweta - 1
Houston - 4	Crisp - 1
Terrell - 4	Douglas - 1
Ware - 4	Early - 1
Calhoun - 3	Gordon - 1
DeKalb - 3	Hall - 1
Grady - 3	Henry - 1
Lowndes - 3	Jones - 1
Randolph - 3	Lanier - 1
Seminole - 3	Liberty - 1
Carroll - 2	Richmond - 1
Cobb - 2	Rockdale - 1
Colquitt - 2	Stewart - 1
Floyd - 2	Dooly - 1

44 users came from other states, including: Alabama (7), Arizona (1), California (2), Florida (11), Hawaii (2), Indiana (1), Kentucky (1), Nevada (1), New Jersey (1), New York (1), North Carolina (4), Ohio (3), Oregon (2), South Carolina (3), Texas (2), Virginia (1) and West Virginia (1).

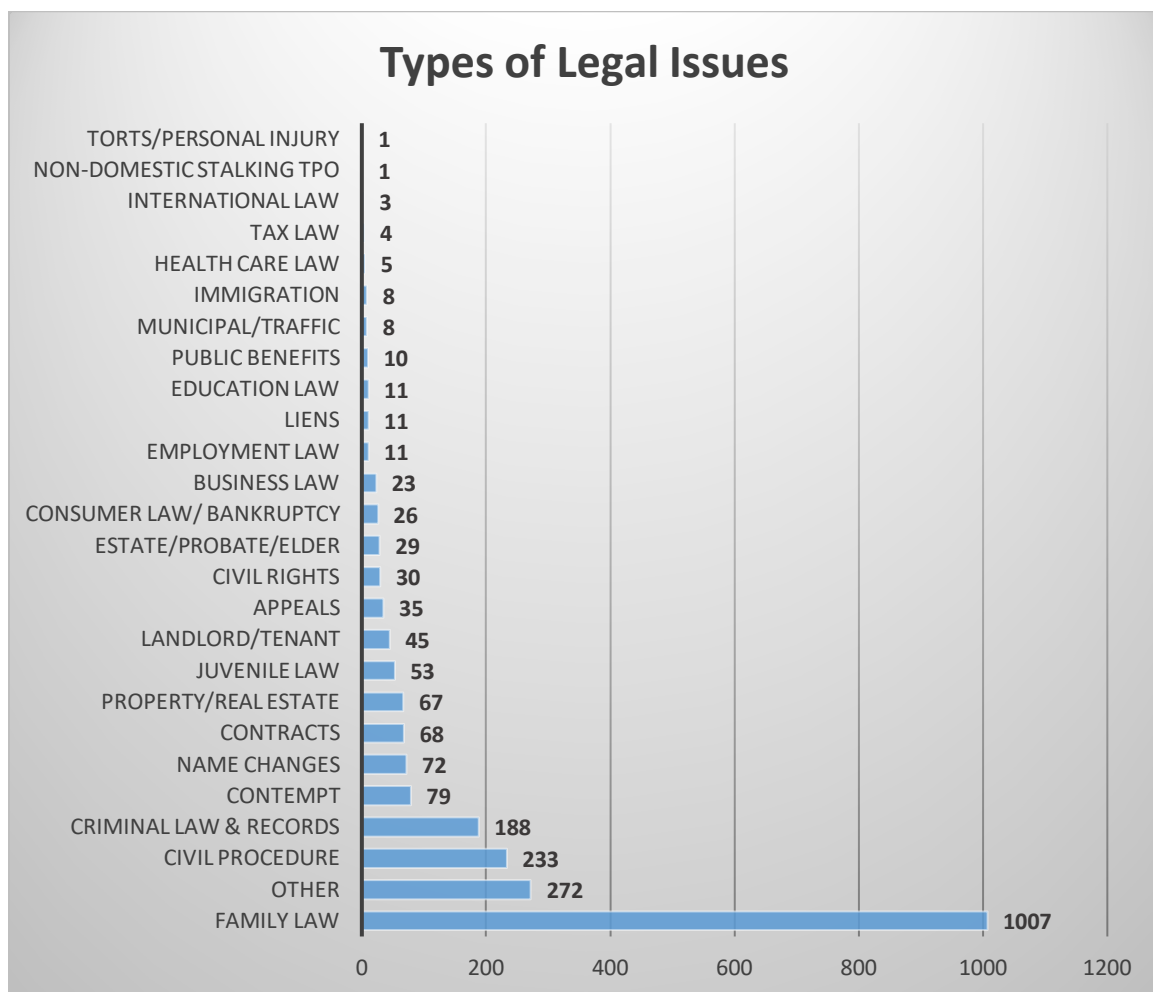
Four users came from other countries: Bahamas (2), Georgia (1) and Liberia (1). 98.5% of our users were fluent in English. Only five needed an interpreter. Four of the five needed a Spanish interpreter and one needed an interpreter fluent in Niger-Congo languages of West Africa.

Our users were 58.2% female, 41.5% male and .3% other gender. 90% of the users were self-represented and 10% were attorneys. 94% of the self-represented users did not plan to hire an attorney, while 6% expressed a desire to hire an attorney. 80% of the users did not already have legal forms, and 20% brought forms with them.

16% of the users needed special assistance due to mental or physical disabilities or problems with literacy. Literacy was the most common cause for special assistance, followed by mental disabilities and finally physical disabilities. Most of our referrals came from courts, court clerks and other government agencies.

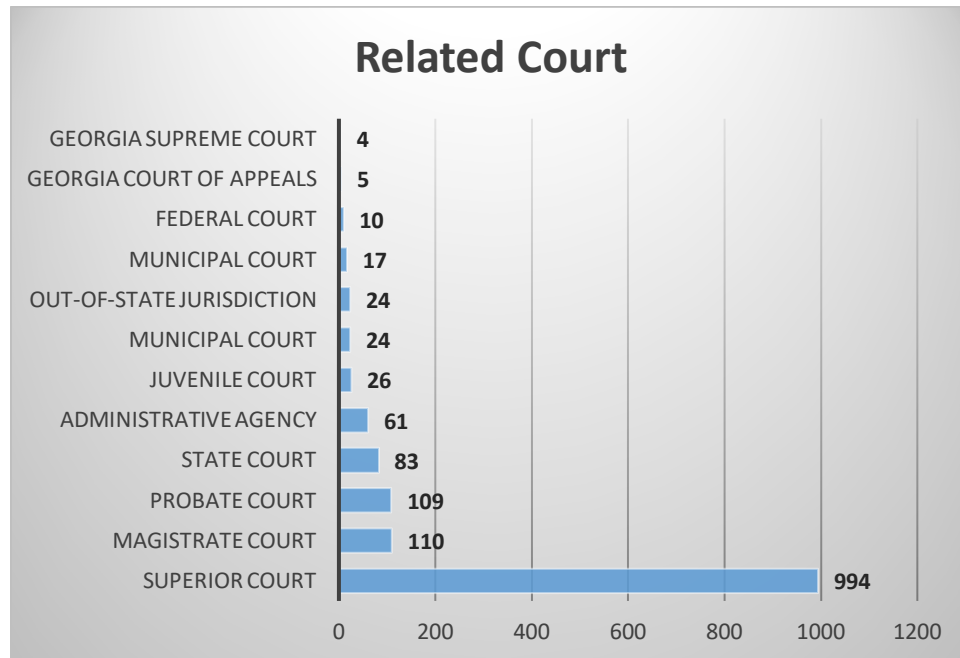
### Types of Legal Issues

36% of the users seeking help had family law cases. The other 64% of users had legal problems involving a wide variety of legal issues. Our intake form allows us to check boxes for multiple legal issues per user. Many of our users have multi-faceted, complex legal problems.



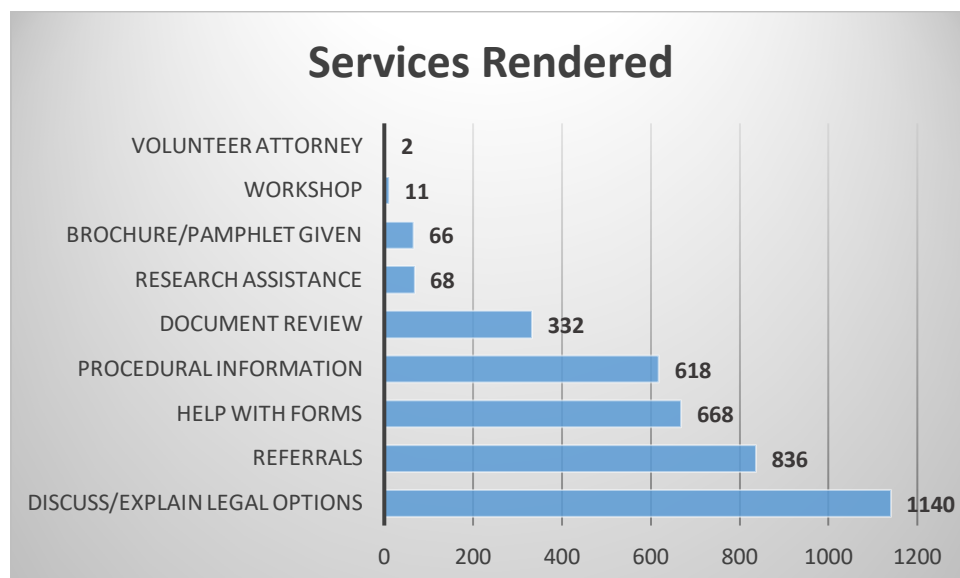
## Related Courts

The majority of our users were filing cases in Superior Court. Most of the other users would be handling their cases in Probate, Magistrate or State Court.



## Services Rendered

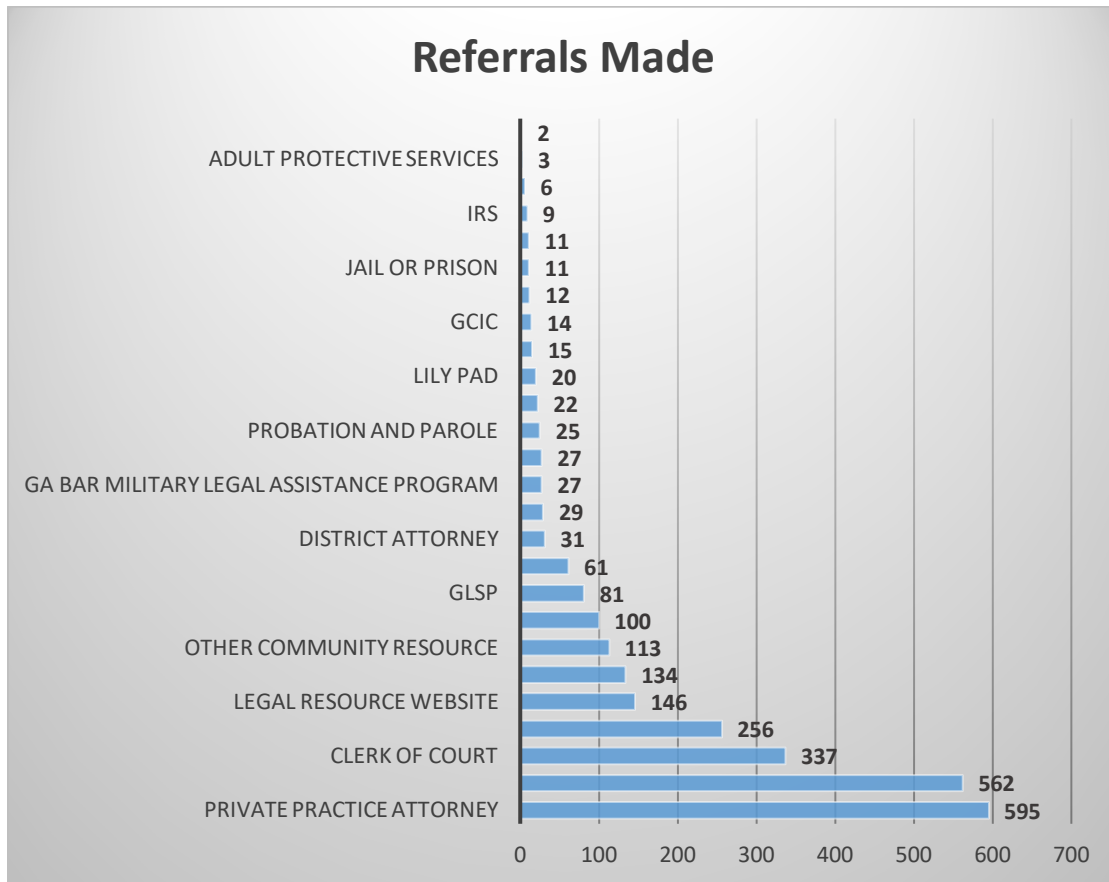
We tracked the types of services given so that we can learn what services are most needed. Most users needed more than one type of service. Those using volunteer attorneys will increase once our volunteer attorney program is in place.





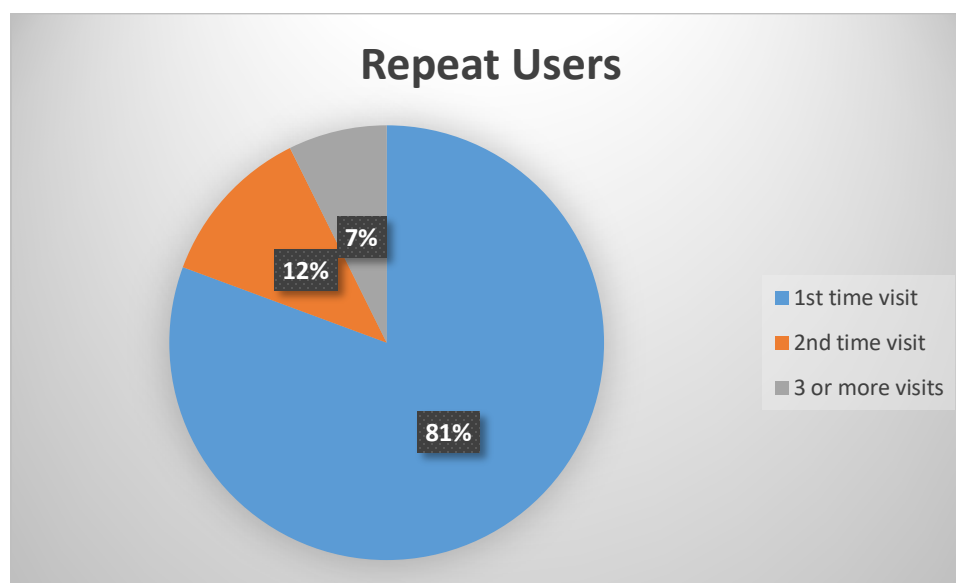
## Referrals Made

Making referrals was the second most frequent service that we gave. One of the reasons that lower and middle income people often do not seek legal help is that they do not know where to find it. The most frequent referral we made was to private practice attorneys. This shows how important it is for us to encourage pro bono, low bono and limited scope representation among members of the bar.



## Repeat Users

Often when people come to the Help Center, they exclaim, “I didn’t know this was here!” We have only just begun providing services, so it is no surprise that most of our users are first-time visitors. The chart on page 8 shows the distribution between first, second and third or more visits.



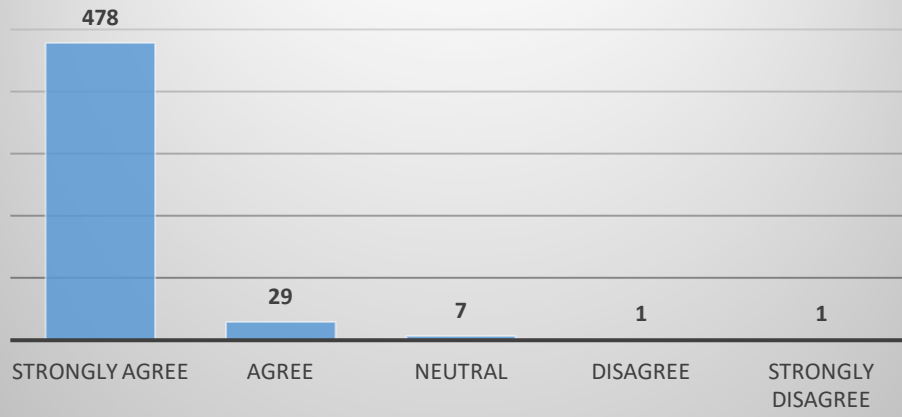
### User Satisfaction with Help Received

At the end of every visit, we ask each person if they are satisfied with the help we gave them. We include this question as part of our intake data. 98% of them say that they are satisfied with the services they received. In addition to asking each person about their satisfaction, we solicited feedback from users.

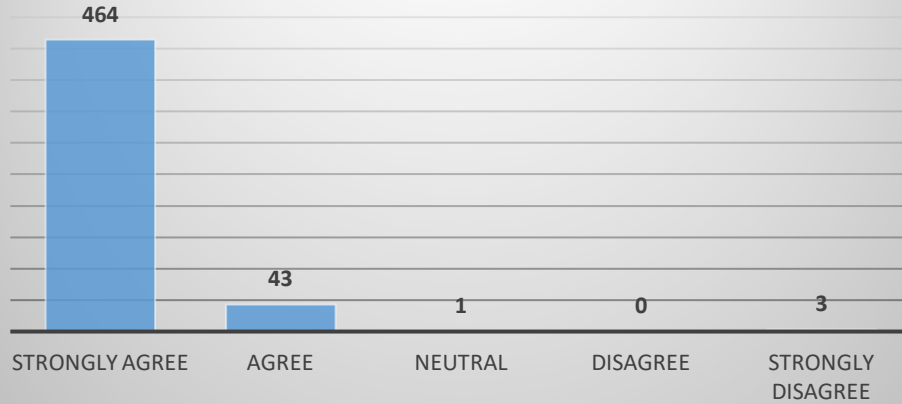
### Statistical Data from the Patron Satisfaction Survey

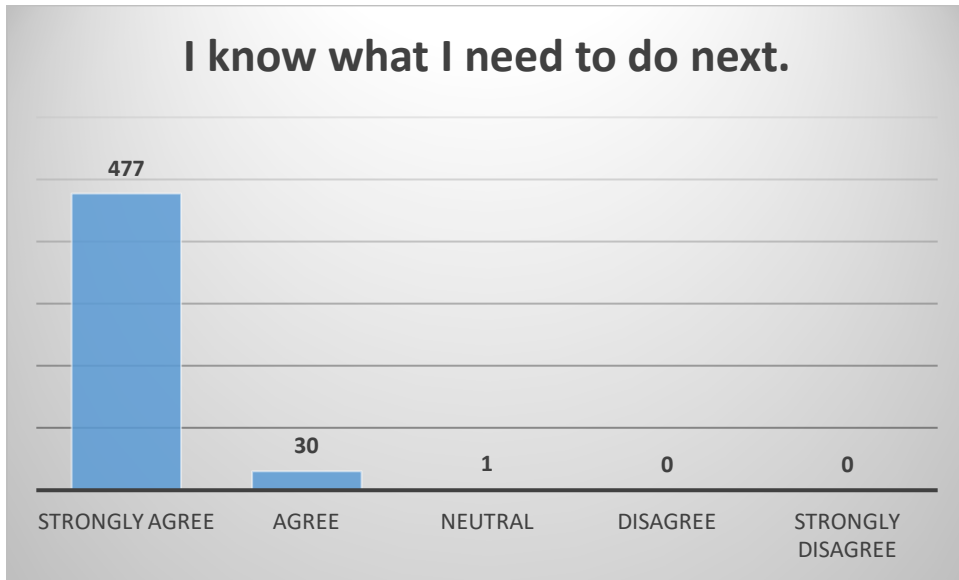
In addition to asking users about their satisfaction on our intake sheet, we created a small flyer-sized patron satisfaction survey that users can complete on their own. This survey allows us to get more detailed feedback from users. Retail customers fill out customer satisfaction surveys only 2% of the time, so we were surprised and pleased with our 28% response rate. The feedback is self-explanatory, so the data results on pages 9 - 14 are given in chart format.

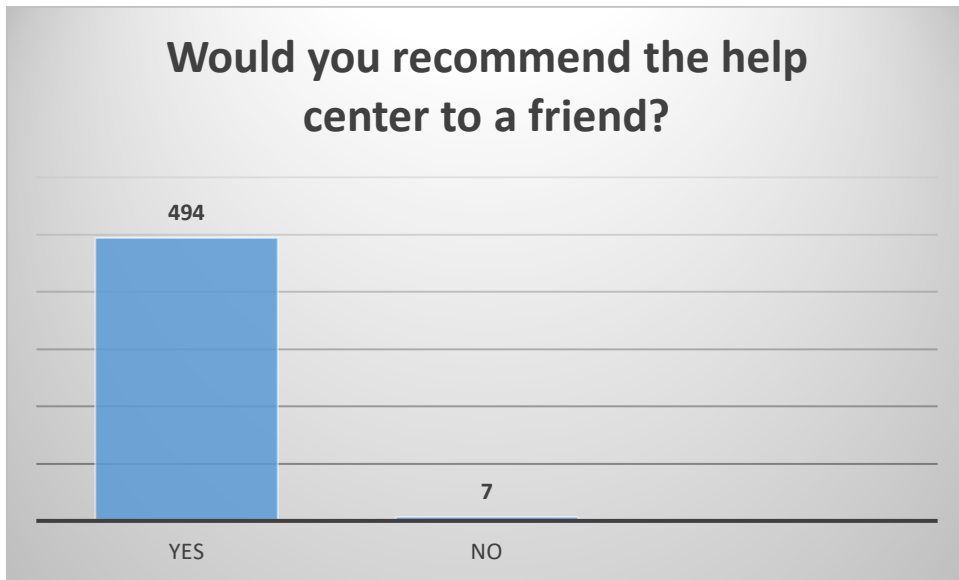
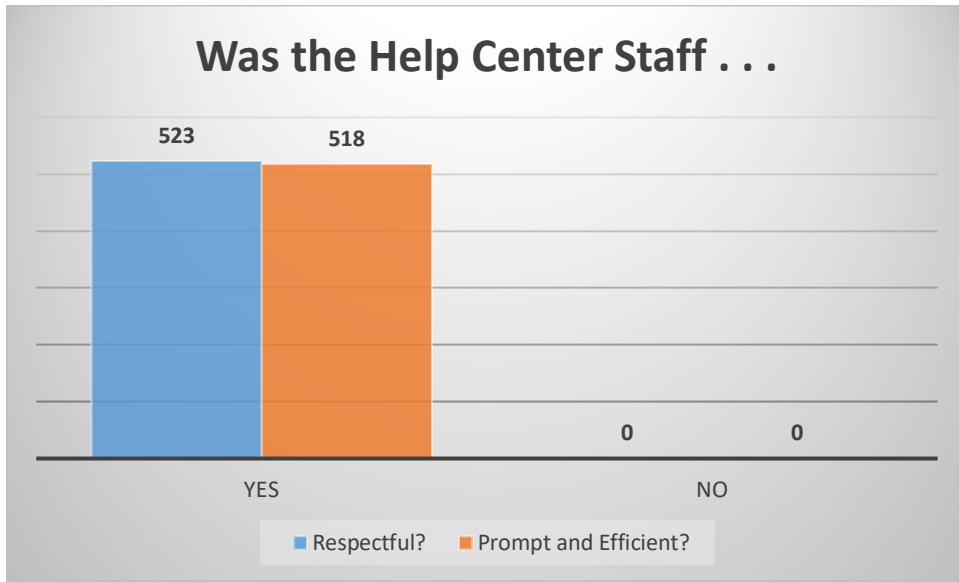
### I feel less worried about my situation.

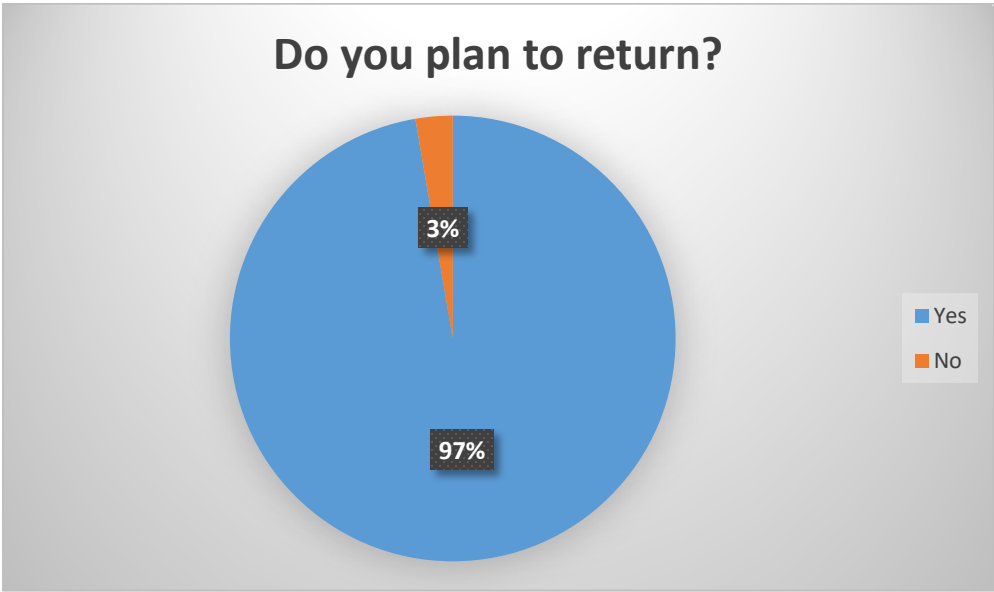
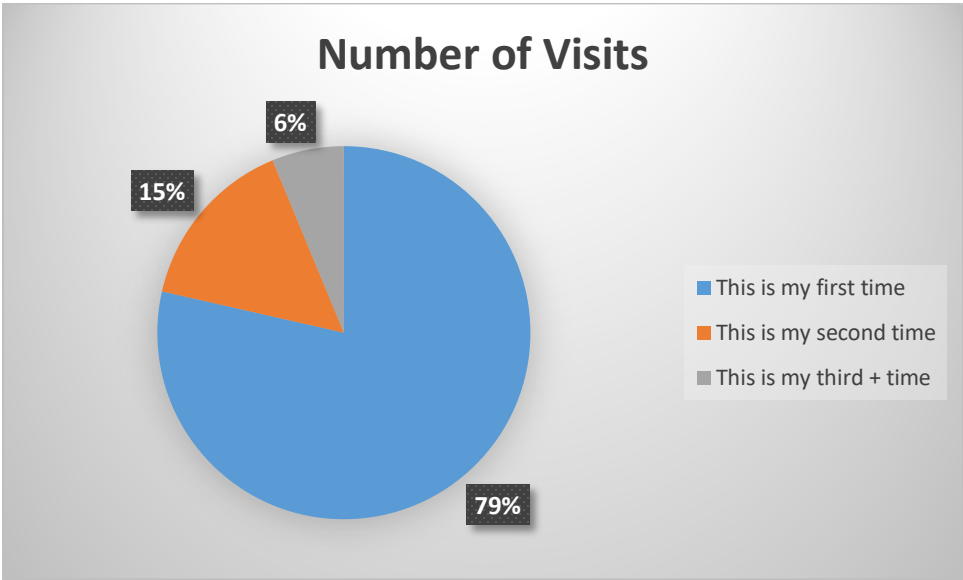


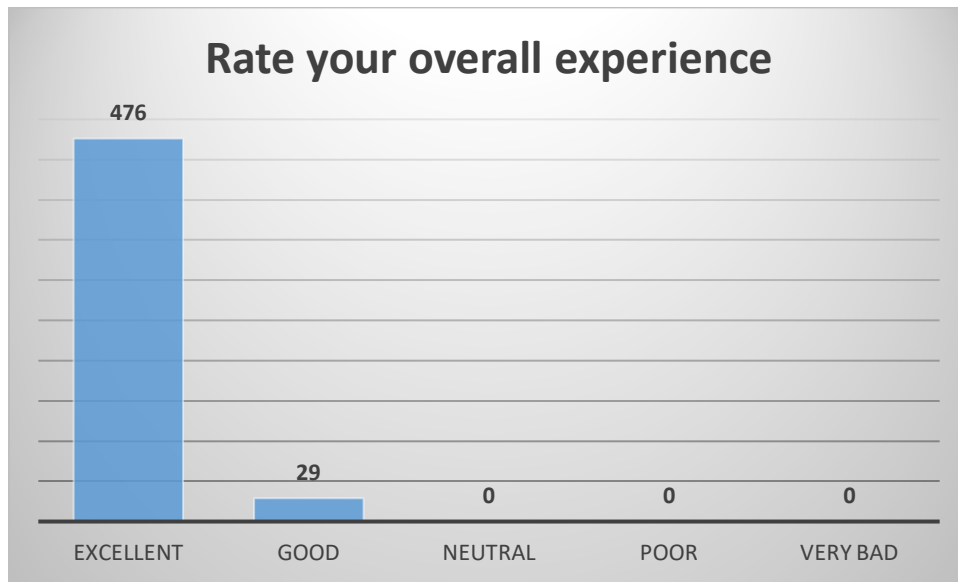
### I feel less confused about how the court works.











What services would you like added to the legal help center?

lawyer (3)

Legal (2)

Ability to give "legal advice" information to save money on consultations with a lawyer

Saturday or night hours

Attorney

Quick and Efficient

attorney

Awesome and very helpful

Civil procedure

lawyers

Civil Procedure

nothing else at this time

pro bono attorney

legal advice

Please share any additional comments or suggestions.

Very helpful, very informative, great information

Mr. Vansant, Esq. referred me to the Law Library/ Can't afford an attorney

Awesome help

The services are truly needed. I would love to partner w/ the legal self-help center.

I thank God for these people who have help me this for with my legal papers. Thank you Jesus

## Collaborative Partners

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF LAW LIBRARIES. Emily Feltren, Director of AALL Government Relations, shared with us strategies to obtain funding for ongoing project sustainability.

ATLANTA LEGAL AID. Kristin Verrill, Michelle Fleetwood, Currey Hitchens, Viveca Sibley and I applied for the Legal Innovations for Rural Georgia Crime Victims Project. If we had been awarded this grant, we would have received \$50,000 per year for two years to pay for a paralegal to provide civil legal assistance to crime victims. Unfortunately, we were not awarded the grant. I am sure we will do other joint projects with Atlanta Legal Aid. Its Executive Director Steve Gottlieb is on the Justice for All Project Working Group.

CITY OF ALBANY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (DCED). We have connected with Betty Jackson-Burton of DCED so that we can collaborate on community workshops and make referrals to one another as needed.

DOUGHERTY CIRCUIT BAR ASSOCIATION. Past President John Kirbo obtained 501(c)(3) status for the Southwest Georgia Legal Self-Help Center, Inc. Current President Shaleia Threadcraft is allowing Sarah Babcock of Lawyers for Equal Justice to teach bar members how to include limited scope representation into their practices. We hope that this will encourage local attorneys to work with the Help Center to expand options for legal services in Southwest Georgia.

GEORGIA APPLESEED. We are working with the local committee of the *Dismantling the School to Prison Pipeline* initiative. As we help with this project, we will spread the word about our pilot project with other community agencies. We are helping coordinate a community event, All In 4 Youth, on Saturday, October 27.

GEORGIA COMMUNITY SUPERVISION. We have been introduced to several local organizations by Leslie Lamb, the Community Coordinator at the



Department of Community Supervision, Georgia Prison Reentry Initiative. Leslie shared with us her very comprehensive list of community resources for referrals.

GEORGIA LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM. Our local Albany GLSP Office is working with us to hold a workshop for victims of domestic violence. We are participating in the GLSP Family Law Day on Friday, October 5, 2018. Two GLSP attorneys are on the Help Center's Board of Directors.

GEORGIA PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM. I will be speaking at the Winter Georgia Public Library Directors Meeting on Thursday, December 6 in Savannah. I will kick off our efforts to inform public libraries across the state about our pilot project. Training public librarians about the legal information resources available to them will greatly expand our outreach across Georgia. We can train public librarians on how to handle legal reference questions as well as when and how to make appropriate referrals.

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR ACCESS TO JUSTICE. Georgia State University won a Fellows grant for \$8,500 to support their Rural Justice Initiative. They are going to partner with GLSP and our pilot project to host an "Alternative Spring Break" trip. Students who go on this trip will visit our Help Center and circuit ride with GLSP attorneys. The students will work with us to create instructional videos for self-represented litigants.

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF GEORGIA'S ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS. We are working with the AOC's Standing Committee on Access to Justice to ensure the future sustainability of our pilot project. We are advocating with the judiciary in hopes that they will eventually advocate with the Georgia Legislature on our behalf. Staff Attorney Tabitha Ponder has visited us twice and is a tireless advocate for our pilot project.

LAWYERS FOR EQUAL JUSTICE. Director Sarah Babcock has visited us twice to plan how L4EJ lawyers will provide free consultations via videoconference and possibly also limited scope representation. She is teaching a free CLE class for the Dougherty Circuit Bar Association on October 31.

LOS ANGELES LAW LIBRARY. Emily Feltren, AALL's Director of Government Relations, introduced us to Sandra J. Levin, Director of California's LA Law Library. Sandra shared with us the lessons she learned when she successfully advocated with the California Legislature for improved county law library funding.

NEW YORK JUSTICE FOR ALL AWARDEES. On August 14, 2018 we had our first telephone conference with the New York JFA awardees. As required by the JFA

grant, we will meet regularly to share implementation and evaluation strategies, activities and lessons learned.

OTHER COUNTIES IN SOUTHWEST GEORGIA. Our outreach efforts have met with a good reception so far in Worth, Lee, Calhoun and Mitchell Counties. We are continuing our outreach efforts.

STATE BAR OF GEORGIA. We are greatly indebted to the Access to Justice Committee for their help in making possible the Justice for All *Creating Law Libraries as Self-Help Resource Centers* pilot project. Mike Monahan, Director of the State Bar of Georgia's Pro Bono Resource Center, has given tremendous help and support to our pilot project. Len Horton, Executive Director of the Bar Foundation, has been instrumental in helping us obtain funding for our project. There are too many State Bar of Georgia bar members to name them all individually, but we are grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with them.

VOICES FOR CIVIL JUSTICE. On August 21, 2018 we had our first telephone meeting with Voices for Civil Justice. As required by the JFA grant, we are working with Martha Bergman at Voices to develop a communications plan that supports one or more grant objectives and to implement the plan over the remainder of the grant term.

## Grants Awarded

### JUSTICE FOR ALL GRANT – \$75,000

Full-time Assistant \$37,440

P/T Assistant (2) @ \$16,640

Coordination and travel to New York partner \$4280

### IOLTA GRANT- \$25,000

We got much less than we applied for, and the grant did not specify how the money is to be spent.

### FELLOWS GRANT- \$6,219

Equipment- \$1,821

Supplies- \$1,192

Telephone- \$280

Travel- \$1,478

Insurance- \$515

Marketing/Website- \$933

**ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES OF THE COURTS JUDICIAL STANDING  
COMMITTEE ON ACCESS TO JUSTICE GRANT- \$5,000**

Outsource accounting- \$4,640

Chromebooks- \$860

## New Grant Opportunities

**COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF SOUTH GEORGIA – \$5,000**

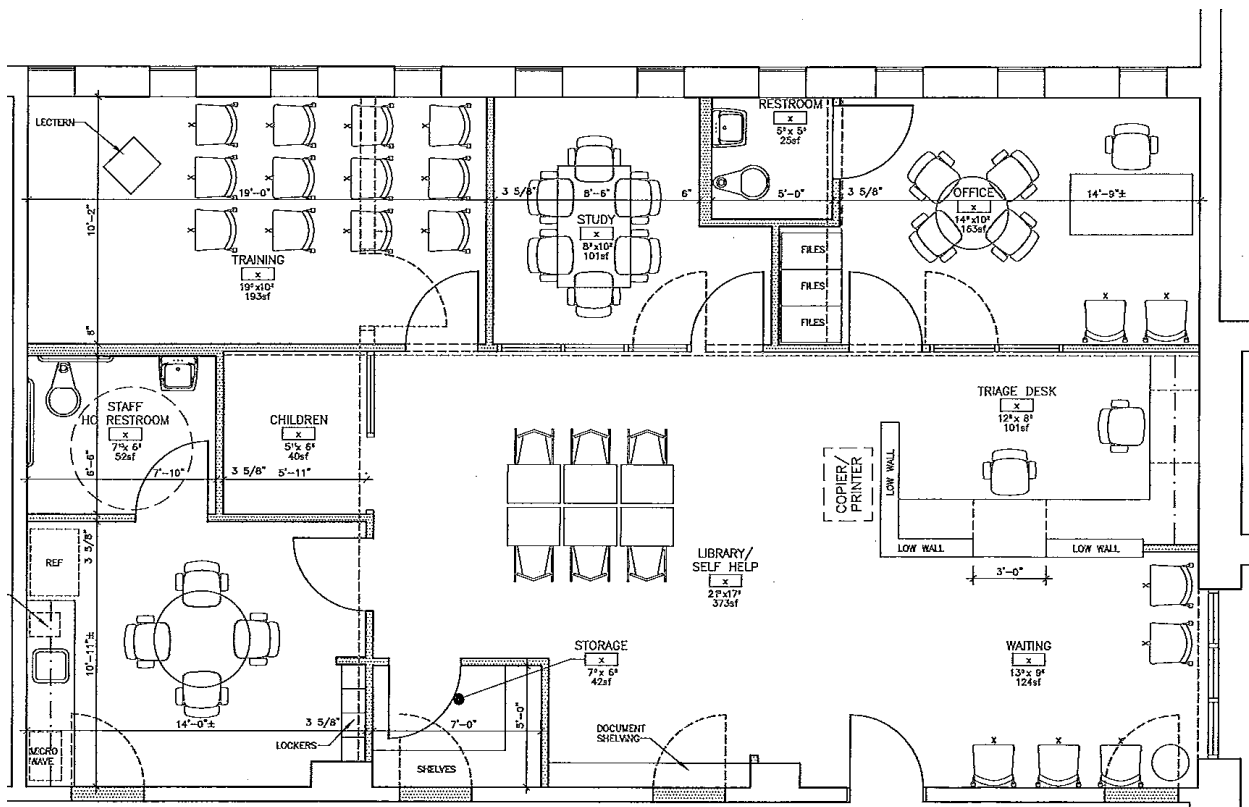
Salaries -- \$5,000

We are continuing to look for other grant opportunities as well as other sources of funding such as fees for providing attorney referrals, the Amazon Smile Foundation, Publix Super Market Charities, Georgia Gives Day and others.

## Looking Forward

We have achieved a great deal in four months, but we have much more to accomplish. As we find new sources of funding, we will buy more time to secure a permanent source of funding. We are organizing help centers and county law libraries across Georgia to join us as we advocate for replicating our pilot project in all ten of Georgia's judicial districts. Garnering statewide support for the pilot project is key to influencing decision makers.

An architect has designed plans for our permanent location:



. SELF-HELP CENTER FLOOR PLAN

The architectural plans are state-of-the-art, based on self-help center best practices literature. The Dougherty County Law Library will provide the money for these renovations from its modest long-term savings because Dougherty County is not able to contribute any money to the project at this time. We have asked for money for construction in some of our grant applications, but so far those requests have not been successful. The space is small: roughly 1300 square feet. We will do everything we can to contain the renovation costs. Construction should be complete at the end of June or beginning of July, 2019. We are very excited that we will have space designed to support our activities.

Dougherty County State and Superior Courts began requiring e-filing via PeachCourt on September 1, 2018. As a result, we need to change our forms and instructions packets to be more compatible with e-filing. Ideally, we should use document assembly forms such as the ones developed by the National Public Automated Documents Online (NPADO) project. As we continue designing the self-help center's website, we will include information that explains how to e-file.

We are honored by the confidence that has been placed in us, and we are excited about the future of access to justice in Georgia.