

San Mateo Probation

Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto Annual Evaluation

FISCAL YEAR 2018-2019



Helping People
Build Better Communities

About the Researcher

Applied Survey Research (ASR) is a social research firm dedicated to helping people build better communities by collecting meaningful data, facilitating information-based planning, and developing custom strategies. The firm was founded on the principle that community improvement, initiative sustainability, and program success are closely tied to assessment needs, evaluation of community goals, and development of appropriate responses.

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Program Description

Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto (CLSEPA) provides legal services to enable residents of East Palo Alto and beyond to achieve a secure and thriving future. CLSEPA services include community education, individual legal advice and representation, legal assistance to community groups, policy advocacy, and impact litigation.

CLSEPA receives additional support from law firms, corporations, and law schools throughout the region, who collectively donate millions of dollars in legal services annually to our clients. In 2018, more than 800 volunteers donated over 28,000 hours of service to CLSEPA programs (a market value in excess of \$9 million).

CLSEPA focuses on the following areas:

- **Immigration**—Providing legal assistance to immigrants seeking better lives, allowing families and youth to emerge from the shadows and expand their educational and career opportunities; helping immigrant survivors of domestic violence and other crimes, refugees and asylum seekers, immigrant youth and young adults, abused, abandoned and neglected child immigrants, and immigrants facing deportation in court.
- **Housing**—Providing legal assistance to tenants to improve living conditions, combat unlawful abuses, and prevent homelessness and the dislocation of a diverse low-income community.
- **Economic Advancement**—Working with low-income community members facing barriers to their economic advancement such as past criminal justice system involvement, wage theft, discrimination and harassment. The long term goal is to increase self-sufficiency and an improved quality of life for the community at large.

Programmatic Challenges in Fiscal Year 2018-2019

CLSEPA staff reported that in 2018-2019 “the housing crisis, low wages, and lack of access to resources significantly impact our clients, and in turn, their children.” For example, they noted, “Parents and families come in for assistance with stress and frustration, and often we do not have the bandwidth to ask specific questions of our clients’ children.”

Staff noted the experience of one client as an example. One of their economic advancement clients received a conditional offer of employment which was later rescinded after a background check revealed a prior conviction. This was not her first denial of employment due to her record, and she was in the process of getting her record cleared, so this was a frustrating and distressing experience for her, especially given that she needed a job to support herself and her children.

CLSEPA was able to assist this mother with both record clearance relief and asserting her rights under California’s new Ban-the-Box law, which gives job seekers the opportunity to present evidence of rehabilitation to potential employers.

Evaluation Methods

Programs funded by Probation monitor their programs and report client, service, and outcome data to the department and its evaluator, Applied Survey Research (ASR). The methods and tools used to collect these data are described below.

Clients and Services: Grantee programs collected demographic data (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, etc.) and service data (e.g., type of services, hours of services, etc.) for individual clients. Program staff entered these data into their own data systems prior to transferring the data to ASR for analysis.

Risk Factors: Grantee programs used the Child Adolescent Needs and Strengths (**CANS**) assessment to provide a standard measure of life functioning and areas of need for all youth clients:

- **CANS:** The Child Adolescent Needs and Strengths assessment, also known as the CANS, is a multi-purpose tool developed for children's services to support decision-making in determining level of care and service planning, to facilitate quality improvement initiatives, and to allow for the monitoring of outcomes. The CANS consists of multiple items scored on a 4-point scale of 0-3, with a score of 2 or 3 indicating an actionable need. The assessment is grouped into the following stand-alone modules: Risk Behaviors, Strengths, Behavioral/Emotional Needs, and Trauma. Each grantee completes a different set of CANS modules according to the makeup of their client groups.

Outcomes CLSEPA also collected three program-specific outcome measures to track progress toward helping its clients towards a secure and thriving future.

Evaluation Findings

Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Highlights

- CLSEPA served 45 clients this year, providing an average of 6.8 hours of service.
- Clients improved significantly on the Caregiver Strengths and Needs module of the CANS assessment.

Profile of Clients Served

In FY 2018-19, CLSEPA served 45 participants, who received an average of 6.8 hours of services. Over half of these clients (53%) were female, and mostly Hispanic/Latino (58%). Eighteen percent were white, while 13% were African American and 11% were Asian/Pacific Islander. Their average age was 35 years old. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of services rendered were for legal services, and 31% were for social work.

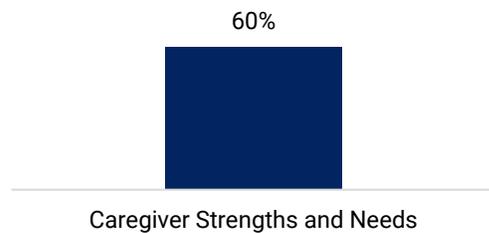
Table 1. Client Services

CLIENT SERVICES	FY 15-16	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19
Number of Clients Served	83	98	1	45
Average Number of Hours Served	8.1	11.5	43.5	6.8
Average Time in the Program (Months)	1.4	6.8	12.0	N/A

Functioning and Service Needs

Pre CANS assessment data was gathered from 25 clients (56%) using the Caregiver Strengths and Needs module. Sixty percent of these clients showed an actionable need. This suggests that the caregivers need help or support in domains like mental health or family stress.

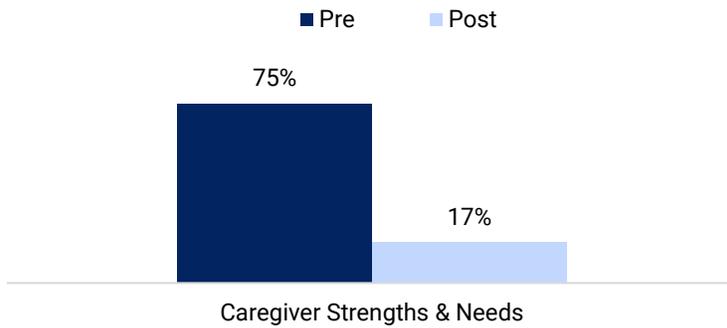
Figure 1. Percent of Clients With At Least One Moderate or Significant Need Based on Pre CANS, FY 2018-19



n=25

Among the 25 clients, 12 clients had matching pre and post CANS assessments. The results show a substantial decrease from pre (75%) to post (17%) on the Caregiver Strengths & Needs module. This shows that programs at CLSEPA might have helped resolve their needs as caregivers significantly.

Figure 2. Percent of Clients with Pre and Post CANS Assessments who reported at least One Moderate or Significant Need, FY 2018-19



n=12

While 45 clients participated in the programs in FY 2018-19, only 25 clients' pre CANS assessments were available. Furthermore, far fewer clients (*n=12*) had matching pre and post CANS assessment data. In order to understand how to more effectively address the needs of all youth served by Acknowledge Alliance, attention should be paid to ensuring that pre and post CANS assessments are provided for every youth on all required modules.

Program Specific Outcomes

CLSEPA tracks their performance on three important outcomes: 1) the number of youth or families receiving legal or social work consults, 2) the percent of youth or families receiving legal representation, and 3) the percent of youth or families receiving immigration legal representation. CLSEPA met their performance measure target for number of at-risk youth or families receiving consults and exceeded the target percentage of youth or families receiving legal representation and overcame an obstacle. The percentage of youth and families who acquired immigration status could not be established as of this report as it requires 8 to 24 months to complete cases.

Table 2. Performance Measures

PERFORMANCE MEASURE	FY 2018-19 TARGET	FY 2018-19 RESULTS
Number of at-risk youth and/or youth involved in the juvenile justice system, and/or family members of these youth who received legal or social work consults and/or services	45 per year	45
Percent of youth and families of youth receiving legal representation who overcame an obstacle to higher education, gainful employment, or stable housing (e.g., criminal record expunged/cleared, resolved debt issue, avoided eviction judgment).	80%	100%
Percent of youth and families of youth receiving immigration legal representation who acquire immigration status.	80%	*

**This information could not be determined by CLSEPA as of this report. It frequently takes 8 to 24 months for an immigration case to be completed, depending on the case type and complexity.*

Client Story

Each year, staff at CLSEPA provides a client story to help illustrate the effect of services on their clients. The following is the client story provided by CLSEPA for FY 2018-19 to help illustrate the effects of their services.

Table 3. Client Story FY 2018-19

Name of Client	John (pseudonym)
Age and Gender	42, male
Reason for Referral	<p>John came in to request legal help after his water was turned off for three days. John is the father of 6 children, works full time, and lives in East Palo Alto with his children and his wife. He was current on his water bill payments but the water company alleged that he owed impact fees. As a tenant, John could not have owed impact fees given that he is not the owner of the property. Essentially, the water company was trying to collect fees from the landlord by taking away a basic necessity from John’s family. After CLSEPA advocated with the water company, the water was turned back on. However, the lack of water and the threats from the water company to turn off the water in the future if the landlord did not pay added to the family’s stress and frustration.</p> <p>In fact, the water company again threatened to turn off the water a couple months later. CLSEPA again advocated with the water company to comply with state law and not deprive the family of their much-needed running water. CLSEPA also contacted the landlord and urged her to pay her bills so that the water would not be terminated. The water company eventually relented and agreed not to shut off the water (though they later shut off the water for a different family living next door).</p>
Client’s Behavior, Affect, and Appearance When They First Started in the Program	<p>John was frustrated when he first came in and upset that he could not protect his family from abusive tactics by the water company. During that period of time, the family had no running water to drink, wash dishes, flush the toilet, or take showers. They had to bring in many bottles of water at added expense. After the water was turned back on, John was more calm, but still frustrated that he and his family were having to ask for help from their church and other community members just to flush their toilets.</p> <p>We know that John’s daughter who is in high school had a difficult year academically, and got in trouble a couple of times for missing classes. In general, she is doing better, but given this situation happened near the beginning of the school year, it was tough for her to recover.</p>

Client's Behavior, Affect, and Appearance Toward the End of the Program	Unfortunately, John had to return about a month later for more assistance when the water company sent him a notice stating that they would again be shutting off the water to his home because of the landlord's failure to pay some bills. John was very frustrated but knew that he had some rights and that it was worth advocating for his family's health and well-being. He worked closely with us during several days where it was unclear whether the water company would again turn the water off. When it was resolved and the water company agreed not to terminate the water, John was relieved and felt empowered to protect his family even when they do not have a lot of resources.
What the Client Learned as a Result of the Program	John learned that it's okay to ask for help and that he should never give up.
What the Client is Doing Differently in Their Life Now as a Result of the Program	This was a situation where the client had done nothing wrong. It's hard to say how he could act differently in the future. As renters, their family is at the mercy of their landlord and sometimes utility companies. But the family now knows that free legal assistance is available and that they can assert their rights when others try to take advantage of them.