

Human Services Are Essential to Urban Health During and Beyond the Pandemic

With quality legal assistance, human services providers can navigate legally compliant strategies for bolstering their programs, operations, and finances.

Lawyers Alliance's human services clients are improving the quality of life for low-income New Yorkers by providing a range of shelter, food, health, nutrition, foster care, victims' assistance, and other social services. For the past two-plus years, these organizations have provided safety net services to individuals, families, and neighborhoods by taking a comprehensive approach to people's well-being, contributing to better health outcomes and positive social change. At the same time, human services organizations are coping with organizational and resource concerns aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

That is where Lawyers Alliance staff and volunteers can and will continue to help. With quality legal assistance, human services providers can navigate legally compliant strategies for bolstering their programs, operations, and finances. Working together, lawyers and nonprofits are helping to build a healthier city.

Delivering Comprehensive Health Care and Related Services

Community health care providers are on the front lines, treating COVID-19 and other health issues in local settings. These organizations will continue to face unique challenges due to the services they provide and the far-reaching effects of the pandemic on urban health.

Case Example: Community Health Initiative's (CHI) Health Center, a Federally Qualified Health

Center, serves the Coney Island, Brooklyn community as a fully integrated clinic, delivering a holistic approach to care, including preventive health and supportive services, regardless of patients' ability to pay. The pandemic exacerbated CHI's need for a larger facility to accommodate its 4,000 patients. To meet community demand and apply lessons learned from the pandemic, CHI is developing a new clinic site with the help of a team of volunteers from **Ballard Spahr LLP**, who supported CHI's New Market Tax Credit (NMTC) transaction, donating many hours preparing for the closing with the Nonprofit Finance Fund. The

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Photo Credit: Urban Outreach Center of NYC

Urban Outreach Center of NYC helps New Yorkers access healthy food and basic resources.

inside



Photo Credit: CareerWise New York

Workforce Development Nonprofits Respond to Change

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volunteers negotiated the loan documents, lease agreement, and the construction contract for the development of the health center. Alex Movshovich, CEO of CHI says, "On our own, CHI, being a small nonprofit, would not have received such robust legal representation." The Ballard Spahr team's expert assistance will allow CHI to complete the new health center and meet the increased demand for quality health services in Coney Island.

Food, Clothing, and Referrals to Supportive Services

Human services organizations provide a full range of necessities and support to people in need. The pandemic exacerbated personal challenges for many New Yorkers.

Case Example: Urban Outreach Center of NYC (UOCNYC) is committed to ending the hunger gap in East Harlem and the Upper East Side by creating spaces of justice-centered hospitality where homeless and food-insecure New Yorkers can access healthy food and basic resources. UOCNYC currently operates a weekly food pantry, community dinner, and social services support and served more than 1,000,000 meals worth of food in 2021 and directly serves 50,000 people annually, reaching countless more throughout New York City. A volunteer attorney from **Vinson & Elkins LLP** advised UOCNYC on its options to license or lease renovated space from its landlord, a church on the Upper East Side, and in turn the client negotiated a new lease with the church. The lease allows UOCNYC to occupy a portion of the building that includes a commercial kitchen for the preparation of food served at its community dinners and

bathrooms with showers for those in need. With this updated space, UOCNYC has improved service delivery and can expand the number of people served. "We are grateful for the help to carefully negotiate the use of our new space to ensure that the Urban Outreach Center will continue to serve tens of thousands of food-insecure neighbors for years to come with dignity and hospitality," says Executive Director Jordan Tarwater.

Psychosocial Support Services

Personal contact and face-to-face communications remain a crucial element for human services and other nonprofits working to establish an open, supportive, and caring environment. Changing case numbers and safety procedures have necessitated shifts of this work between virtual and in-person environments, each with legal considerations for nonprofit providers.

Case Example: Heights Hill Mental Health Service South Beach Psychiatric Center Community Advisory Board is an advocacy and services program for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals seeking mental health services. At its Rainbow Heights Club in Brooklyn, Heights Hill offers support groups, social activities, and meals, providing services and a welcoming atmosphere for its clients. Volunteer attorneys from **White & Case LLP** reviewed the nonprofit's waiver and release form, to help it inform participants of changes and manage risk as part of its return to in-person services amid the pandemic. Volunteer attorneys from **Sidley Austin LLP** assisted with negotiating a sublease for new space, further optimizing Rainbow Heights' return to in-person services and providing a friendly place for LGBTQ populations to take the next step on their road to emotional recovery and wellness. Christian Huygen, PhD, Executive Director of Heights Hill Mental Health Service CAB, says, "The pro bono services enabled Rainbow Heights Club to successfully reopen for in-person member services and negotiate a sub-lease with the New York State Office of Mental Health, ensuring a home for our programming for the next 20 years!"

If your nonprofit organization needs legal assistance, please visit the [Nonprofits section of our website](#).

Rainbow Heights Club provides advocacy and services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals in Brooklyn.



Photo Credit: Heights Hill Mental Health Service CAB

Friends Profile: David Sternlieb

“Lawyers Alliance is an amazing place. Contributions for operating expenses lever vast pro bono services.”

David Sternlieb was Chief Operating Officer and General Counsel at The Atlantic Philanthropies and is now General Counsel at **Pursuit Transformation Company**, a Lawyers Alliance client. Pursuit helps adults from underserved communities develop computer coding and teamwork skills, find mentors, and build networks and confidence.

Q. How did you learn about Lawyers Alliance, and why and how have you remained involved?

It was 20 years ago, and I was with The Atlantic Philanthropies, a charitable foundation. We supported Lawyers Alliance and it interested me. I volunteered to help the Arab-American Family Support Center on a merger. It was fun to use my M&A experience in the nonprofit context and to learn about the Center’s challenges, notably Islamophobia. Eventually, I joined its Board. I also volunteered with the Gowanus Canal Conservancy. It was a start-up and presented questions around who “owns” an organization without shareholders. Practically, ownership then lies more in moral authority and sweat equity.

Atlantic was a limited life foundation, so in 2020 I started consulting. Through Lawyers Alliance, I also volunteered with Pursuit. I was impressed by the mission, people, thoughtfulness of strategy, and high-energy environment. Excited by the prospect of fresh challenges, I joined Pursuit as its General Counsel in October 2021.

Q. Pursuit runs a fellowship program for aspiring engineers from underserved communities. What issues have arisen from the pandemic-altered economy and recovery?

In 2020, Pursuit had to shut down classes for an extended period and reduce headcount by 40 percent before it successfully rebooted for remote classes, a turnaround which revived the organization and returned it to a strong growth track. The pandemic turbocharged the tech industry and created many jobs for Pursuit graduates. It also dispersed employees, which creates compliance obligations, and uncertainty about the future of office space. The expense of an office must be balanced with the value of in-person interaction, particularly for nonprofits delivering services.

The racial and social justice reckoning has accented the importance of Pursuit’s work. Pursuit focuses on helping people realize their potential, bringing underserved communities into fields not traditionally welcoming. Black Lives Matter has spurred tech company eagerness to expand the pipeline with more diverse talent. This eagerness has been a boon for Pursuit’s Fellows. The durability of industry’s commitment to a fairer society remains to be seen.

Q. Why do you feel it’s important to donate to Lawyers Alliance?

Lawyers Alliance is an amazing place. Contributions for operating expenses lever vast pro bono services. In philanthropy that’s the ideal – a major gift or collection of smaller gifts multiplied into critical services and needed systemic change. And a lawyer’s donation is in keeping with the pro bono spirit. Attorneys can donate time, money, or both.



David Sternlieb

About

Employment includes:

Pursuit Transformation Company

The Atlantic Philanthropies

RJR Nabisco

Jones Day Reavis & Pogue

Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher

Graduate of:

Columbia University School of Law

Princeton University

This profile is one in a series about people who have helped to build or been involved in Lawyers Alliance for New York since our founding in 1969.

Pro Bono Attorneys Help Workforce Development Nonprofits Respond to the Changing World of Work

Nonprofits engaged in job readiness, training, placement, and mentoring in New York are helping to build a more equitable and thriving economy.

In a shifting employment landscape, nonprofits engaged in job readiness, training, placement, and mentoring in New York are helping to build a more equitable and thriving economy, especially in tech and related fields. The COVID-19 pandemic altered the way people work and think about work, prompting nonprofit workforce development organizations to refocus on both near-term needs and longer-term opportunities. With these changes come nonprofit legal needs. Lawyers Alliance's staff and volunteer network have helped these organizations address changes in their own work and their work on behalf of those they serve.

Expanding Pathways for Youth and Young Adults

Lawyers Alliance is assisting nonprofits that empower and improve the economic security of young workers, women, new immigrants, and other populations that face barriers to job and career advancement. Frequent legal needs include contract reviews and corporate governance advice.

Case Example: CareerWise New York is an apprenticeship system offering a three-year applied-learning environment for high school students as well as a talent-acquisition strategy for socially conscious businesses. Students from schools in the Bronx and Brooklyn participate in

apprenticeships, earning a wage, debt-free college credit, and nationally-recognized industry certificates through hands-on experience in information technology, financial services, and business operations. A volunteer attorney from **Goulston & Storrs PC** updated the apprenticeship agreement between CareerWise, the students, and businesses. The agreement clarifies what is expected of the parties, enhancing their participation in a program that adjusts to changing times and creates rewarding career paths. Melinda Chang, CareerWise's Vice President of Employer Partnerships, says, "With the pro bono legal support, we were able to onboard several Fortune 500 companies as clients. These companies employ hundreds of underrepresented youth across New York City for a three-year apprenticeship."

Training the Trainers

Job programs not only link New Yorkers to jobs but also offer important training and skills, including in areas such as technology where local job openings have accelerated. Pro bono legal assistance can help nonprofit training programs navigate legal issues related to their personnel, intellectual property, and other organizational concerns.

Case Example: Working with and training workforce development practitioners, **Workforce Professionals Training Institute (WPTI)** increases the effectiveness of people, programs, and organizations that are committed to generating pathways out of poverty through employment. Trainers and training materials are the foundation for WPTI's activities, and the nonprofit seeks to protect both. A team of attorneys from **Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP** revised drafts of WPTI's template independent contractor agreement and client services agreement, specifically looking at the employment status of the trainers, as well as intellectual property relating to training materials. "After this thorough review, our contracting process is much more streamlined, making it easier and quicker to do business. Best of all, I can be confident that both WPTI and our intellectual property are well-protected," says Michael Grant, WPTI's Chief Operating Officer.

Invictus Enterprises Foundation provides work readiness, job training, and employment opportunities in a culinary program.



Photo Credit: Invictus Enterprises Foundation

Shifting Work Locations

The pandemic and social distancing changed where and how people work. When managing in-person, hybrid, or virtual work arrangements, nonprofits benefit from access to quality legal guidance on corporate structuring, real estate, licenses, and other evolving topics.

Case Example: Invictus Enterprises Foundation provides work readiness, job training, and employment opportunities to people of all abilities in a culinary program based in a bakery in Brooklyn. In September 2020, in response to the pandemic, Invictus created a food operation program to support participants in establishing and operating small home bakery businesses. Volunteer

attorneys from **Clifford Chance US LLP** put the legal structure in place and provided guidance on agreements between participants and Invictus, agreements with suppliers, licensing of the name of the baked goods, and trademark registrations. Invictus Co-Founder Molly Sebastian says, "Thanks to our volunteer attorneys, we were able to finalize our Cottage Business Program and set our bakers up to make and sell select Invictus products from their home kitchens. Our baker/entrepreneurs are baking, selling, earning money, and spreading awareness."

For more information about volunteering with Lawyers Alliance, please visit the [Lawyers section of our website](#).



Resource Call Service Is Available

Do you have a question about a nonprofit legal issue? Try our [Resource Call Hotline](#).

One of Lawyers Alliance's distinguishing features is our attorney staff. We bring, and are eager to share, legal knowledge about nonprofit law and the program and operational issues faced by nonprofits and social enterprises serving New York communities. While Lawyers Alliance's most intensive service is legal representation of clients on specific legal projects, there is an alternative: the Resource Call Hotline.

This service is for clients and non-clients seeking general information, not legal advice. Representative questions, typically answered in a brief telephone conversation, include:

- > **How** do we determine a quorum for Board approval of our organization's real estate transaction?
- > **What** are the latest applicable changes to the City guidance on vaccination or masking requirements for small employers?
- > **When** should our organization begin the process for obtaining or renewing a school-age childcare license for an afterschool program or summer camp?
- > As a volunteer attorney, **where** can I find suggested items to consider when updating the management association's bylaws for a local BID (business improvement district)?

The Resource Call Hotline assists board members, staff, lawyers, technical assistance providers, and members of the public. Hundreds receive general information each year.

Call the Hotline at (212) 219-1800 ext. 224 or e-mail ResourceCall@lawyersalliance.org. Include your question, name, and contact information. We will try to respond in two business days with an answer, suggestion, link to a relevant [Legal Alert](#), or proposed time to speak.

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Cornerstone Awards Honor Outstanding Pro Bono Achievements

On December 2, 2021 more than 100 volunteers, nonprofit clients, colleagues, and family gathered virtually for the Cornerstone Awards honoring two law firms and 13 individual attorneys. “These extraordinary legal volunteers have been extremely responsive and supportive, providing their time, energy, and talents to nonprofits during challenging times,” said **Elizabeth M. Guggenheimer**, Executive Director of Lawyers Alliance. Meet our awardees:

Institutional Honorees

Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP, a firm with a longstanding commitment to pro bono legal services, has partnered closely with Lawyers Alliance for more than 30 years, serving nonprofit clients with the determination and legal excellence that define the firm’s broader culture. Davis Polk received one of the first Cornerstone Awards in 1997, and is the rare recipient of a second Institutional Cornerstone because of the continued breadth of its corporate law and transactional pro bono work, especially as nonprofits have needed timely legal help during the pandemic. For example, the firm provided guidance on a strategic alliance involving New York Disaster Interfaith Services and another organization that provides readiness and response services during disasters and public health emergencies.

Sidley Austin LLP cultivates a strong commitment to pro bono service and devoted more than 169,000 hours total in 2020. For more than three decades, Sidley has partnered with Lawyers Alliance and handled a wide range of timely and complicated legal projects. During this time, Sidley attorneys have taken on increasingly complex matters, and amplified the firm’s positive impact on nonprofits serving low-income New Yorkers. As Sidley’s national presence has grown, so too has its commitment to Lawyers Alliance and high-quality pro bono work by business and transactional lawyers. Recognizing the “force-multiplier” effect of business law and transactional pro bono work for nonprofits, a Sidley representative shared: “Not only are we helping nonprofits with their legal needs, but we also are enhancing their ability to serve more individuals in their communities, many of whom are from disenfranchised and underrepresented populations.”



Individual Honorees

We thank all of the 2,100 attorneys who volunteered for our cases during the past year, with a special shout out to the 2021 Cornerstone cohort:

Prem Amarnani, Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP: His corporate law and related work on more than ten pro bono cases has helped nonprofits understand and comply with relevant statutes.

Alnisa Bell, Seyfarth Shaw LLP: Multiple community-based and other nonprofits are grateful for her guidance on delicate employment law issues.

L. Minnie Bellomo, Greenberg Traurig, LLP: Her real estate law expertise guided a multi-service organization on complex transactions so it can better assist low-income seniors.

Peter S. Borock, Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP: His real estate law skills are making a positive difference for nonprofits that provide affordable housing to New Yorkers in need.

Alexander J. Callen, Goodwin Procter LLP: This financial regulatory lawyer has provided valuable pro bono legal services to nonprofits improving the financial well-being in low-income communities.

Preetha Chakrabarti, Crowell & Moring LLP: Her legal assistance is helping to protect the valuable intellectual property of nonprofits involved in women’s rights, education, mentoring, and the arts.

Gregory M. Davis, Morgan Stanley: This dedicated in-house counsel deftly answered many pandemic-related legal issues for nonprofits concerning their employees and other workers.

Christina De Vuono and Kaitlin Descovich, Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP: Their teamwork and pro bono commitment has led nonprofits to adopt corporate governance best practices.

Anna M. Pomykala, Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP: Many nonprofits are stronger because this client-focused attorney helped them to address employee benefit and other business law questions.

Rich Reilly, DLA Piper LLP (US): This talented partner repeatedly has lent his transactional expertise to nonprofits navigating community partnership and funding issues.

Ashley B. Rowe, MetLife: Throughout the pandemic this corporate and insurance attorney has shared her legal and practical insights with nonprofits bettering the lives of New Yorkers.

Kyle Zhu, Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP: This thoughtful and diligent attorney provides a stable presence to a chamber of commerce foundation as their legal needs have evolved.

For additional details, please visit our [website](#).

Lawyers Alliance Advances Advocacy Goals

Lawyers Alliance works to advance public policy issues of importance to nonprofits serving New York City communities. We recently achieved two successes and seek your support for our ongoing campaign to remove obstacles to nonprofit advocacy.

In November 2021, Governor Hochul repealed a law requiring charitable nonprofits to file with the New York Department of State the same annual financial report that they already file with the New York Attorney General's Charities Bureau. The reports are publicly available on the web, so the requirement to file those reports with the Department of State would not have increased transparency.

Lawyers Alliance staff drafted the repeal bill, testified before the legislature, and worked with allies to persuade both houses of the legislature to pass the bill and the Governor to sign it. The importance of this work to the charitable sector is evident from the fact that more than 460 nonprofits joined us in asking the Governor to sign the bill.

In another recent victory, in December 2021 the New York Department of State removed misleading information from its website that made it appear as if charitable nonprofits were delinquent in required filings. The problem arose when the department launched a new, publicly available corporations database. A "next statement due date" field, likely intended for business corporations, contained fictitious dates often years in the past, even though charitable nonprofit corporations are not required to file annual reports with the Department of State.

Two weeks after we wrote to the department, the database was updated to remove the misleading dates and affirmatively acknowledge that statements are not required.

Lawyers Alliance is working with the **A Place at the Table** coalition to exempt nonprofits that engage in only a small amount of lobbying from the New York State and New York City lobbyist registration requirements. In New York, a nonprofit organization that spends just \$5,000 in a year lobbying must register as a lobbyist, even if it does not hire a professional lobbyist. Many nonprofits are surprised that the government defines their routine communications with the government as lobbying. Employees may be lobbying if they urge a City Council member to renew a discretionary funding grant to the organization, or if they help clients explain to their local elected officials why the legislature should increase the budget allocation for child care.

Daunted by the administrative burden associated with frequent lobbying filings, many nonprofits avoid speaking up for the communities they serve. S6398/A6943 would raise the lobbying expenditure threshold to \$10,000. Lawyers Alliance's data analysis shows this would still capture 99 percent of the lobbying dollars spent in the state, while removing the administrative burdens currently imposed on the many nonprofits that spend only a small amount on lobbying.

[Click here](#) to join our campaign to pass this bill.

Lawyers Alliance Staff

Laura Abel
Senior Policy Counsel

Veronica Aksu
Staff Attorney

Wilma Alexander
Office Administrator

Emily Barry
Cleary Extern/Staff Attorney

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Staff Attorney

Emily Crossan
Marketing and Communications Director

Junior Duplessis
Program Associate

Stacey O'Haire Fahey
Pro Bono Counsel

Dan Greenman
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Elizabeth M. Guggenheimer
Executive Director

Nissa Heman
Executive Assistant and Development Associate

Allison B. Kline
Director of Development

Judith Moldover
Senior Staff Attorney

Lori Moses
Senior Staff Attorney

Hedwig O'Hara
Legal Director

Aaron Perlson
Information Systems Manager

Gina Pujols-Johnson
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Anna Saum
Pro Bono Associate

Laura Israel Sinrod
Corporate Engagement Counsel

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Special Counsel – Pro Bono Strategy

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James Valentin
Development Manager

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Law Firm Appeal Supports Quality Legal Services that Strengthen Nonprofits

Lawyers Alliance's 2021-2022 Law Firm Appeal welcomes the leadership of Co-Chairs **Bradley J. Butwin** and **Daniel S. Shamah** of **O'Melveny & Myers LLP**. Funds raised help Lawyers Alliance respond to the changing business law and transactional needs of nonprofits building a better New York.

This appeal is Lawyers Alliance's largest source of general operating support. It enables staff and the staff-supported pro bono program to reach a wide range of organizations, including hundreds working hard to improve economic vitality, advance racial justice, and overcome the pandemic's disparate impact on disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Mr. Butwin, the Chair of O'Melveny, leads a global law firm widely acclaimed for its dedication to excellence, commitment to inclusion, and sense of civic responsibility. In addition to his leadership role, Mr. Butwin maintains an active practice in securities and commercial litigation. He co-founded and serves on the Board of Advisors of the Law Firm Antiracism Alliance.

"O'Melveny is pleased to lead this year's Law Firm Appeal to provide vital financial support to Lawyers Alliance, which sets the nation's gold standard for high-quality business law pro bono for nonprofits," says Mr. Butwin. "Daniel and I thank the scores of law firms that have joined or will join the appeal before it closes in June 2022."

Mr. Shamah is a partner specializing in bankruptcy and restructuring, in both litigation and transactional matters. He advises on legal issues surrounding complex commercial and financial instruments across a broad range of industries and practices. He also strongly encourages and actively engages in pro bono.

Mr. Shamah says, "As a Lawyers Alliance volunteer, I have seen the value of its pro bono program, both in the experience gained by attorneys and the benefits for nonprofits and communities. Support of the annual Law Firm Appeal enables this important work to continue."

To donate, please contact James Valentin at jvalentin@lawyersalliance.org.



Bradley J. Butwin



Daniel S. Shamah



Lawyers Alliance
FOR NEW YORK

171 Madison Avenue
Ninth Floor
New York, NY 10016

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED
