



## The Justice Gap: A Crisis on the Courthouse Steps

**California’s legal system is in crisis.** There is an unmet need for legal help for the most vulnerable in our communities. When our friends and neighbors who seek help for the most basic of needs—safety, housing, and stability—don’t have access to a lawyer or advocate to help them with their legal problems, they are forced to navigate a legal system that is not prepared for millions of people trying to represent themselves. As a result, court time and judicial resources are strained, and people aren’t able to obtain the legal relief that they need. This widening justice gap perpetuates injustice and degrades the role of our justice system in society.

**There are more than 8 million people in California who are considered “indigent”** – more than 20% of the state’s population. This means that a family of four earning a household income of just over \$30,000 per year qualifies for free legal services at organizations funded by State Bar grants under Business & Professions Code sec. 6210 et seq.

Nationally, **71% of poor people face a broad range of civil legal problems each year.** The rate is even higher for some households with survivors of domestic violence or sexual assault (97%), with parents/guardians of kids under 18 (80%), and with disabled persons (80%).

Whether people can adequately address these legal problems often directly affects their ability to feed their families, stay in safe homes, and access healthcare. IOLTA-funded legal services nonprofits serve 270,000 individuals directly, but are forced to turn away over 1.1 million Californians due to lack of resources.

There are 189,000+ attorneys licensed to practice law statewide, for a ratio of about 208 lawyers per Californian. There are about 1,072 legal service attorneys in California providing legal help to indigent people. That means **there are more than 7,556 potential clients per legal aid attorney.**

**You can make a difference!** Just over 8% of California attorneys give their time to pro bono work, and nearly 6% of California’s attorneys participate in the State Bar’s efforts to increase funding to support legal assistance programs. There is more we can do! Contact your local legal services provider for pro bono opportunities in your community and make a donation to the Justice Gap Fund. Donations to the Justice Gap Fund directly support legal services organizations and the important work they do in our communities. Use your dues bill or go online to help bridge the Justice Gap today!

**Donate online** at [www.CAforJustice.org/donate](http://www.CAforJustice.org/donate). **Learn more** at [www.CAforJustice.org](http://www.CAforJustice.org) or by calling the State Bar’s Legal Services Trust Fund Program at (415) 538-2252.

