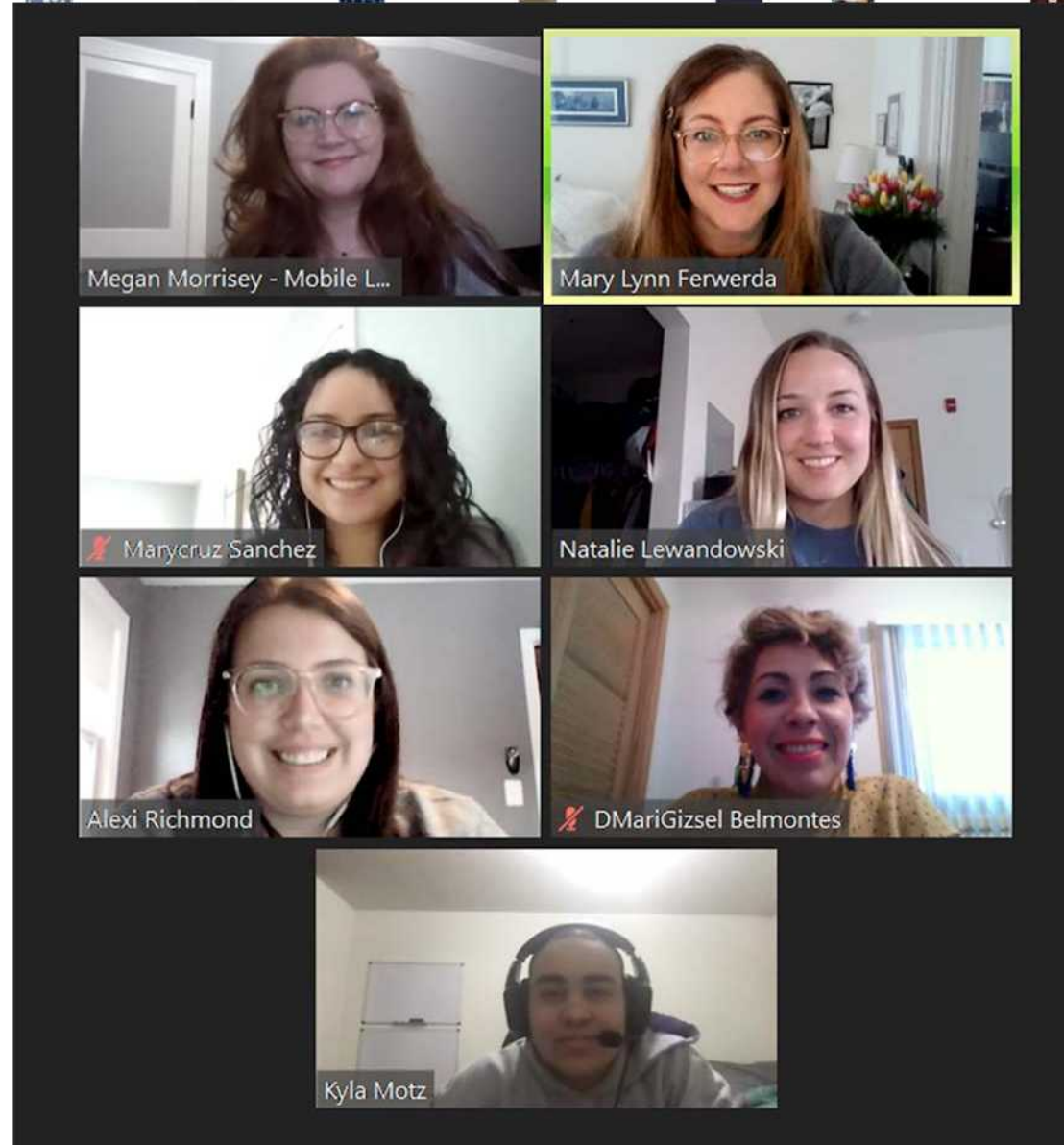


The logo for the Milwaukee Justice Center (MJC) features the letters 'MJC' in a large, white, serif font. A stylized orange flame is positioned above the letter 'J'. Below 'MJC', the words 'Milwaukee' and 'Justice Center' are stacked in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

MJC
Milwaukee
Justice Center

2020

**ANNUAL
REPORT**



YOUR MJC TEAM, 2020

DIRECTOR'S WELCOME



What a year! So much has been said about the utter transformation of our world in 2020, circumstances that also affected the MJC. I am so very proud of our staff, our colleagues at Marquette Law School, and our fantastic volunteers for embracing a level of change that no one could imagine.

We were originally told the MJC would be closed for three weeks, from March 16th through April 3rd. The staff used that time to work on long-standing dream projects, including recording "how-to-complete" videos for family forms, updating our checklists to include more plain language and icons, and translating materials to Spanish.

Once it became clear that we were not returning anywhere near early April, the MJC team crafted a way to use Zoom to offer remote appointments for family forms, starting with 2-3 appointments per day. That soon grew to offering 18-20 appointments per day, 3-4 days per week. We also collaborated with the Marquette Volunteer Legal Clinics to offer remote legal advice several days per week. Thankfully, an amazing group of undergraduate, law student, and attorney volunteers joined this experiment in April, extending in May, and then expanding widely in June. We anticipate remaining in remote services for quite some time, until the rest of the Courthouse is running more-or-less regularly. Like you, we can only guess at that timeline.

One key component of these remote services has been the development of the MJC Legal Helpline: a phone number and email address where people can reach out for help with their legal issue. It was intended to serve as the intake desk of the MJC, but soon became much more than that. We are grateful to our four summer Public Interest Law Society (PILS) Fellows, who gave many hours and input on the development and organization of the helpline. Look for more information on this service, its reach, and its volunteers later in this report.

Additionally, the Mobile Legal Clinic Expungement and Pardon clinic experienced growth in 2020, with the ability to assist those who have Wisconsin cases but do not live in Milwaukee County. This service has offered hope and relief to hundreds of people, while offering information and support to even more who would not qualify for an expungement or pardon. Read more about this clinic later in this report, as well as in the Mobile Legal Clinic annual report found on the MLC website: www.mkemobilelegalclinic.com.

Overall, while the year was challenging, the MJC found a way to help thousands of people and provide access to the court system for many. We are filled with gratitude for our work and the many who support us through their time and donations. Together, we will continue our mission into the continued uncertainty of the new year.

Onward, Team MJC!

Mary L. Ferwerda, M.S., J.D.
Executive Director

By the Numbers

1836 total

Pre Pandemic Clients Assisted
(January 6 - March 13, 2020)

- 1325 Family Forms
- 410 MVLC @ the MJC
- 55 Mobile Legal Clinic
- 46 people in 28 conferences
Parenting Conference



2568 total

Remote Services Clients Assisted
(April 1 - December 23, 2020)

- 1063 Family Forms
- 1505 MVLC (all)
- 126 Mobile Legal Clinic Expungement/
Pardon

MJC Legal Helpline Requests for Help (April 20 - December 23, 2020):

5826 requests for assistance

About the People We Serve

Gender Identification:

- 35%..... Male
- 48%..... Female
- 17%..... Unknown/
Did not specify

Age:

- 13%..... 20-29
- 27%..... 30-39
- 45%..... 40-49
- 8%..... 50-59
- 4%..... 60-69
- 1%..... 70+
- 2%..... Unknown/
Did not specify



Racial Identity:

- 1%..... American Indian/
Native
- 1%..... Middle Eastern/
N. African
- 2%..... Asian
- 2%..... Mixed
- 46%..... Black/
African American
- 15%..... Hispanic/Latino
- 13%..... White
- 21%..... Unknown/Did not

of Adults

in the Household

- 68%..... 1
- 23%..... 2
- 6%..... 3
- 2%..... 4
- 1%..... 5 or more

Marital Status

- 32%..... Single
- 35%..... Married
- 6%..... Divorced
- 5%..... Separated
- >1%..... Widowed
- 22%..... Unknown/
Did not specify

of Minors

in the Household

- 55%..... 0
- 16%..... 1
- 14%..... 2
- 8%..... 3
- 4%..... 4
- 3%..... 5 or more



Monthly Income:

- 11%.....\$0
- 24%.....\$1-\$1000
- 33%.....\$1001-\$2000
- 19%.....\$2001-\$3000
- 8%.....\$3001-\$4000
- 5%.....Greater than \$4000

Public Benefits Received:

- 24%.....Foodshare
- 63%.....BadgerCare/Medicaid
- 20%.....SSI for Self
- 2%.....SSI for Children
- 2%.....W2
- >1%.....Veterans' Benefits
- 62%.....Unknown/
Did not specify



About the MJC Legal Helpline

by Alexi Richmond, MJC Legal Assistant and
MJC Legal Helpline Coordinator



The MJC Legal Helpline was established at the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis when in-person services and walk-in clinics were no longer a safe option. Starting in late April, the helpline originally was staffed by student workers and MJC employees. In May, we welcomed four Public Interest Law Society (PILS) Fellows, all from Marquette Law School: Suzanne Caufield, Payton Roberts, Maggie Wixted, and Zach Zeichart. The PILS Fellows' involvement was critical as the helpline capacity grew rapidly. From a few calls per day to over 1000 calls in a month, the helpline became a resource for many people, in and outside of Milwaukee, to access legal assistance and referral information.

The Helpline work continued to grow and the MJC team knew that, without additional assistance, the influx of calls would be overwhelming. For the fall of 2020, the helpline became a new *pro bono* project for Marquette Law Students, based on the input and feedback of our summer PILS Fellows. Additionally for the fall, the helpline implemented new, donated technologies to organize calls, manage communications, and set appointments. The helpline team transitioned from Google sheets to online databases and appointment calendars with automated reminders for all MJC and MVLC appointments. This streamlined process allowed the helpline to become more effective, in fact receiving and responding to over 700 calls in the first 20 days of September.



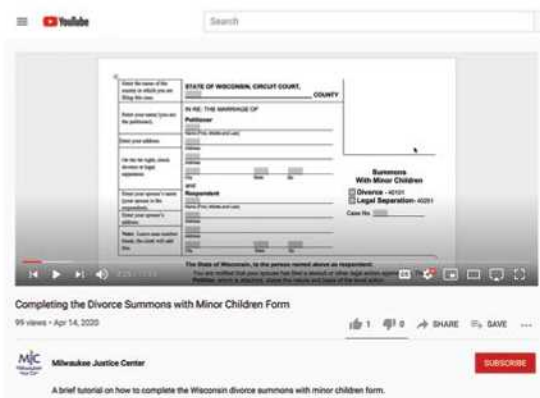
Helpline volunteers consistently speak with 1,000 clients per month, providing referrals, offering legal information, and setting appointments each weekday. The helpline is now staffed by 30 law student and community member volunteers who give 60 hours of *pro bono* time per week. In 2020, the helpline responded to over 5826 people seeking help, mostly from Milwaukee County, but also across the state of Wisconsin (and in one case, from Italy!). For 2021, the helpline will expand to a Saturday morning shift in the hopes of reaching more people "live" and limiting the back-and-forth of voicemails.

Thank you to all our volunteers who joined a brand new volunteer opportunity and made it a success. We cannot do what we do without you!

About Family Forms Assistance

by Kyla Motz, MJC Legal Director

As with many organizations, 2020 was a year of change for the MJC Family Forms Assistance. Following the closure of the Milwaukee County Courthouse in March, the MJC Team needed to rapidly change the traditional MJC methods of service. Initially, a series of tutorial videos showcasing how to complete forms were created and added to our website, but we knew that videos and guides, alone, could never replace the one-on-one services the MJC offers in person. In April, Forms Assistance team began the transition to online help, using the Zoom video conferencing platform. A small team of adept undergraduate and law student volunteers were identified to help clients, virtually, and with the use of the “screen-share” function so the clients could see the forms as the volunteers were completing them. From a handful of students only working on “Divorce/Legal Separation Part 2” paperwork in April, the clinic program grew to nearly 30 student volunteers offering help with the full cadre of family forms. Although the program is not yet reaching the previous in-person numbers, the remote forms program has grown every semester and allowed us to serve hundreds of people who would otherwise be alone to navigate the forms and new filing processes.



An initial concern of the MJC Team was that clients would be wary of the changes or struggle with the technological aspects of it, however those worries were unfounded. While some of our clients need initial assistance connecting to Zoom, most people seem to find it relatively easy, especially when they can join either by phone or video. The transition to remote services has actually made the MJC *more accessible* to people. Clients are now able to meet with volunteers during their breaks at work or while waiting to pick up their kids from school.

Many of these clients couldn't access our services before because of the difficulty of accessing the Courthouse, and they have expressed the huge benefit remote services are to them and their lives. But even those clients who would prefer to meet in person are grateful to have the MJC to lean on as they navigate the legal issues arising from a very strange year. One returning client shared that she took comfort from the fact that **“everything is different, but [the MJC] is still here.”** We are honored to be a stabilizing force in people's lives.

Although it is hard to predict the future, remote services will remain a part of the MJC, in some form or another, even when in-person services return to the Courthouse. As a new year begins, the MJC forms assistance team continues to innovate ways to deliver quality services in a unique environment, while also reflecting on what has been accomplished this year. The MJC took a difficult situation and dealt with it well, but would not be this far without our amazing volunteers and our wonderful clients who were willing to take a chance on something new.

About the Mobile Legal Clinic

by Megan Morrisey, MLC Director



Expungement / Pardon Clinics:
126 people served in clinic • 360 eligibility screening calls

Of all the MJC projects, none was more affected by the pandemic than the Mobile Legal Clinic. A 2020 schedule had been set with more community partners hosting clinics at their organizations than any previous year. Unfortunately, for everyone's safety, all the Mobile Legal Clinic dates were canceled beginning March 16th.

The community legal clinics were put on hold at a time of increased vulnerability and legal needs in Milwaukee. Knowing how important the MLC services are to community partners and clients, the clinic needed to adapt. In April of 2020, the MJC and the MVLCs created a virtual platform to host remote legal clinics. The MLC used its extensive community contacts to encourage organizations to refer their clients, patients, and families to the remote clinics, now over the internet and accessible over a Smartphone!



The MLC joined the remote services starting in June 2020 with clinics offered every Monday afternoon and one Saturday morning per month. Additionally, the MLC's Expungement/Pardon Clinic was added, occurring every Wednesday afternoon.

The Expungement / Pardon clinic offers advice for expungement or pardon on a variety of convictions. Many individuals have non-violent and/or drug felony convictions on their records. They have struggled for years, even decades, being denied employment, career advancement, educational financial assistance, and safe and sustainable housing. A felony conviction even impacts the ability to secure home loans and other financing, further hindering upward mobility. The list of the collateral consequences of a felony conviction is long and one that many don't think of, until you carry the label of 'felon.' Many of the clients share the lifelong psychological impact of 'feeling less-than' and 'not worthy,' often due to an immature or impulsive action from their youth.

Individuals seeking a pardon are not entitled to a lawyer. They either are left to hire their own lawyer or attempt the arduous 11-page application and pardon process on their own. The clinic's trained volunteer lawyers and law students assist clients with the pardon application process and the gathering of supporting documentation. The pardon application process can evoke very traumatic experiences in clients' pasts. The volunteers are sensitive to the client's experience and the clinics are designed to provide a continuity of care. Clients are encouraged to seek up with further questions with questions and to schedule a final review of their pardons before submission.

The innovative response to COVID-19 by the MLC team and its amazing volunteers expanded the MLC services in ways not previously envisioned. Moving forward, the MLC has created a space to engage with our clients remotely as well as at our community partner locations, allowing us to reach more people than ever before.

To see the MJC Mobile Legal Clinic's full annual report visit www.mkemobilelegalclinic.com.

MJC 2020 Summer Fellows

Each year, the MJC welcomes Marquette Law Students as full-time summer fellows, working in a variety of settings and on a variety of projects up to 32 hours per week from May to August. In 2020, the MJC was fortunate to welcome four fantastic students whose involvement and energy were integral to the development and expansion of the remote services across the board. Meet them here!



"My work as a Fellow with the Milwaukee Justice Center helped me fully appreciate the importance of the MJC in helping self-represented litigants get civil legal assistance. The impact of the pandemic on pro-se litigants getting civil legal help, is profound. The development of the Civil Legal Helpline and the transition to offering services in a remote manner was a major development. It demonstrated the ability of the MJC to pivot and adapt and still meet the needs of the community. It was an honor to be part of the team developing and providing these services." -Suzanne Caulfied



"I truly believe the MJC is having a positive impact on the community, especially during these times. From what people have said, it's very hard to find legal help right [now. People] that came to the MJC were able to get the assistance that they needed and I'm very glad I got to experience this.

I would definitely recommend this placement to another student. The staff at the MJC are truly amazing. They work so hard to make sure that people can get the help that they need and this was especially true this summer. They are also amazing, flexible, accommodating, and caring people. Beyond law, this summer showed me how good the work environment can be when everyone works together and I hope I can carry that into the future." -Zach Zeichert



"My summer at the Milwaukee Justice Center (MJC) reinvigorated my passion for ensuring that all citizens within our community, including those who cannot afford legal representation, still have access to the tools necessary to successfully navigate the legal system. My time at the MJC exposed me to just how great the need is for free and low-cost civil legal assistance within the Milwaukee area." -Payton Roberts



"The summer I spent at the MJC allowed me to practice essential lawyering skills that cannot be learned in the classroom, like managing client emotions and identifying the legal issues in a client's situation. My experience also afforded me crucial insight into issues of accessibility in the civil legal system. I have a much better appreciation for the speedbumps pro se litigants face when they navigate their own way through a case. I am so thankful for that understanding, and it is something I will carry forward into my future work and practice." -Maggie Wixted

2020 DIY Run for Justice

The Annual MJC Run for Justice should have celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2020. The large, in-person event was canceled because of health concerns and limits on the number of people gathering in public. Instead, the MJC team turned the event into a virtual run, calling it the "Do-it-Yourself (DIY) Run for Justice."

Participants were asked to "sign up" by donating to the MJC and running, walking, skipping or cycling the equivalent of a 5k on or before June 17th. At 5:30pm on June 17th, participants received a Thank You video from the MJC that also announced our annual Jon Allen "Pace Setter" Volunteer of the Year Awards. The 2020 honorees were:

Attorney Volunteer of the Year: Mont Martin, Wiernick, Martin & Neumaier, S.C.

Mont volunteers with the MVLC @ the MJC regularly and is a great contributor to our Run for Justice planning.

Community Member Volunteer of the Year: Debbie Kasle

Debbie volunteers in every MJC service, many hours per week. She has great rapport with clients and always says "Yes, I can do that" when we ask for her help.

Law Student Volunteer of the Year: Robert Maniak, 3L MULS

Robert has been a part of the MJC student volunteer team since before his 1L year. In 2019-2020, he served as the Student Coordinator for the forms assistance clinic.

Intern Volunteer of the Year: Julie Tranetzki

Before leaving to work full-time, Julie volunteered several hours per week in our family forms assistance clinic, helping clients and training volunteers.

Administrative Support of the Year: Karen Hoffman, Marquette University

Karen serves as an internship coordinator for Marquette University and recruits a large number of undergraduate volunteers for the MJC.

Mobile Legal Clinic: Jim Cauley, ret.

Jim wears a number of hats at the MLC, volunteering in the civil clinics, recruiting volunteers, and assisting with fundraising.



The event raised about \$7000, which exceeded everyone's expectations! Thank you donor participants! While we have yet to know what 2021 will bring, we know we are all in this together.

From Our Clients

"I was very pleased with all of the information and help that I received. I am very thankful for the help. The best free legal advice service I have ever had...I knew nothing of what the file or how and after 30 minutes they filled out the correct paperwork and went over everything with me. I now know exactly what to do which I am very thankful for." -Anthony N.

"[The attorney] was amazing! Answered all my questions with confidence and efficiency. He made me feel so comfortable talking about my situation and put me at ease about my upcoming court date. Thank you so much!!" -Kayla L.

"Both the attorney and student had a welcoming demeanor. The attorney shared helpful information using layman's terms. He checked in multiple times to ask if I had any further questions. I greatly appreciated the legal help." -Siobhan G.

"This service you provide is amazing! To be able to toss some questions back and forth with an attorney to help understand my rights was such a blessing. I can not thank you enough, what a wonderful thing you guys do!" -Melissa B.

"Great experience. [The attorney] was very helpful and pointed us in a number of directions that will help us with our case. Answered questions succinctly but thoroughly, and I ran out of things to ask! Also told me that we could come back [for] help...if the resources they gave us could not." -Karen M.

"They were very polite and professional and very reassuring that I am on the right track. I had a great experience with both. I'm so happy that you have this program and I hope that it continues. I had lost all hope, they restored it. Thank you all for your services. It is truly appreciated." -Anonymous

"Excellent legal help and guidance, great community resource, very thorough and much appreciated." -Laurie K.

"I appreciate the quickness of the Marquette Law School and the respect I was shown. [The attorney] and the Marquette law student listened to me and answered my questions. They also gave me a couple of agencies that I could go to for help. Both of them did a good job. Especially considering we had a zoom meeting over the phone due to Covid19. I also feel I learned a few things about the court system." -Carolyn

"The whole process was smooth and just great! The research we did beforehand combined with the advice we received, we felt confident and well prepared in moving forward [with our legal issue]. And it worked! Thank you all so much." -Morgan H.

"This was an easy and convenient service. I'm grateful to [the attorney], who was not only knowledgeable about my issue, but sympathetic to my daughter's situation. And to [the law students], thank you for taking such detailed notes and sending them to me at the end of the meeting." -Kathy B.

Volunteer Comments

"Getting to see how complicated and confusing any legal process is for a pro se litigant helped me learn about the importance of nonprofits like MJC to help them navigate the court system. The process can be especially frustrating, time-consuming, and scary for many people, and resources such as MJC are necessary to help them accomplish their legal goals." -Lauren, UW-Madison

"I expected to be challenged with the ins and outs of the legal system and struggle a little bit to figure everything out, and I expected to interact with people and hear their stories. This experience fulfilled both of those things. Even after a full semester, I still was learning new things and improving. Interacting with the clients was one of the best parts of the experience." -Lucas, UW-Whitewater

"I think things work so well in this clinic. The virtual experience is running as smooth as it could. Students are given real responsibilities, but guided through them when they need help. I always tell people it's my greatest professional experience I've gained."

-Keely, Marquette

"Through interviewing the clients, I learned that I'm good at identifying the real issues and potential problems. I have found that I legitimately enjoy interacting with clients and helping them deal with stressful situations."

-Micah, Marquette Law

"I continue to volunteer with the MJC because I love the people and interactions I have here. Nothing makes me happier than working with a client and knowing that they are getting peace from our support in resolving this legal issue."

-Maeve, Marquette



Remote MVLC, Fall 2020

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\$50,000+
Frank Daily & Julie Ebert
Bob & Linda Davis

\$10,000+

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DID YOU KNOW?

IT COSTS...

\$50 for copies for 3 clients
 seeking help with divorce

\$100 to fill the Mobile Legal
 Clinic with gas

\$150 to produce training materials
 for intern training each semester

THE VALUE OF A...

3.5-4 hour shift for one
 undergraduate intern is **\$200**

2 hour shift for one law
 student volunteer is **\$250**

2 hour shift for one attorney
 volunteer is **\$500**

You can donate online at: milwbar.org/Milwaukee_Justice_Center

2020 VOLUNTEERS

REMOTE CLINICS, MJC & MVLC

Camryn Arroyo	Ann Bowe	Alexander M. DeGuire	Scott W. Hansen	Akunna Korieh	Bridget Montes	Bela Roongta Eitel	Mishkat Torania
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