



Dear Friends,

COVID-19 has caused so much hardship this year. While there has been great sorrow, there is also reason for great hope. Legal Assistance for Seniors continues its mission in Alameda County to safeguard the rights and dignity of those in our community who might otherwise have nowhere else to turn.

**I write today to share the success of Legal Assistance for Seniors during the last year and ask for your help to ensure the independence and dignity of Alameda County seniors by protecting their legal rights.**

[\*\*Donate Today\*\*](#)

Our team at LAS is hard at work during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that seniors are provided assistance through our Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP), legal services and community education programs.

## **HICAP**

HICAP provides free and unbiased community education, individual counseling, and advocacy to Medicare beneficiaries about Medicare, Supplemental Insurance, Prescription Drugs and Medicare Advantage plans, Long Term Care Insurance, Medicare Appeals, and Low-Income Assistance programs.

## **Legal Services**

Elder abuse is a crime that affects seniors of all backgrounds. Between 1 and 2 million seniors are abused by a caregiver each year in the United States. And because of COVID-19, many seniors in Alameda County have seen their housing put at risk due to many factors from the loss of employment to increased healthcare costs and other expenses. Every year, LAS represents hundreds of seniors in court and at administrative hearings to protect their health and safety and ensure their rights and independence.

There are so many areas of the law where LAS attorneys provide free legal services to Alameda County's senior population:

*Elder Abuse • Housing • Naturalization • Conservatorship • Guardianship of Minor Children • Public Benefits • Social Security • Health Law • Medi-Cal • Medi-Care*

## **Community Education**

Legal Assistance for Seniors' Community Education program brings vital information on important topics to Alameda County seniors, including Social Security, Medicare and HICAP (Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program).

Typically provided at senior centers in places like Oakland, Fremont, Hayward, Berkeley and Pleasanton, we switched to providing community education via video conferencing shortly after the pandemic began because seniors need vital information about their public benefits and other important issues.

Our non-profit organization has been providing this free community education even during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. LAS provides free and

unbiased community education on a whole host of issues:

- *HICAP • Medicare (Parts A & B) • Medicare Advantage (Part C) • Medigap*
- *Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage & Low Income Subsidy (Part D)*
- *Non-Medicare Fraud & Abuse • Preventive Care Benefits*

When you donate to LAS, your support helps to provide seniors with full-scope legal representation to preserve and stabilize their housing. Our lifeline services help to ensure that seniors will remain housed in our community during these extraordinary times. LAS is present in our community in so many ways.

**Please consider making a donation to LAS today:**

- *A donation of between \$25 and \$175 helps us educate a group of seniors on their Social Security rights.*
- *A donation of between \$250 and \$750 enables a HICAP counselor to meet one-on-one with a Medicare beneficiary to guide them through their healthcare options.*
- *A donation of between \$900 and \$2,500 sends an Elder Abuse Attorney to a homebound senior to ensure their safety and independence.*
- *A donation of any amount is greatly appreciated and will help us to continue our work.*

Please help us in our mission to assist Alameda County seniors who might otherwise have no other place to turn during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Please donate today to make a difference in your community.**

**I'd like to take this opportunity to thank this year's official sponsors of our Legal Assistance for Seniors Annual Appeal. We are so grateful for the partnerships we have formed over the years with organizations and individuals who support seniors in our community in so many ways.**

Sincerely,

James Treggiari  
Executive Director  
Legal Assistance for Seniors

**Our 2020 Annual Appeal Sponsors**

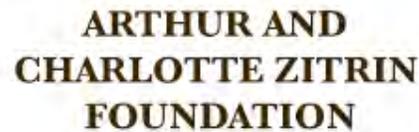
**Diamond**



**Platinum**



**Gold**



**Silver**



**Bronze**



**A.R.M. HOMES**  
**BAUTISTA, BAUTISTA & ASSOCIATES**  
**CONOR MOORE & JOANNE CHANG**



**1,415**  
Legal  
Clients

**1,994**

HICAP  
Clients  
Counselled



**6,242**

CE Presentation  
Attendees



**\$442,522**

HICAP Total  
Client Savings



**74**

HICAP  
Veterans  
Assisted

**168**

Housing  
Stabilized  
for Seniors



**439**

Elder Abuse  
Clients Represented



**221**

Families Helped  
with Guardianship



## Share the Spirit

Bay Area News Group

Sunday, November 22, 2020

### **“Legal Assistance for Seniors: On the Case with Free Advice, Aid”**

By Harry Harris

It was the most difficult and painful decision Diana Dominguez ever had to make. But the 72-year-old widow knew she desperately needed help to restore her peace of mind and personal safety. Her son, a drug user with untreated mental health issues who exhibited bizarre and sometimes threatening behavior while he lived with her, had made the situation untenable. She loved him but was frightened of him and wanted him out of her home and to get treatment. But try as she could on her own, she was not able to, until she was told about Legal Assistance for Seniors (LAS).

The organization serves thousands of mainly Alameda County seniors 60 and older each year by providing free legal advice and representation, including help with health insurance and housing. After some court hearings, both civil and criminal since her son was in jail for violating previous protective orders and for other crimes, she was granted a five-year civil elder abuse restraining order against him in June.

She said her son, who “is a very pleasant, helpful person,” when not in an agitated state, never got the proper treatment for his depression and mental health issues. Even though taking action against him was painful, she knows it was necessary. “It’s something I needed to do,” she said. “LAS helped me accomplish that. They got help for me and help for him.”

For the full version of the story, please go online to:

<https://www.eastbaytimes.com/2020/12/03/share-the-spirit-woman-credits-legal-assistance-for-seniors-with-restoring-normalcy-to-her-life/>

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## LAS' HICAP Program in Action

HICAP (Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program) at LAS recently assisted a 76-year-old disabled vet, Steve, whose Medi-Cal coverage (secondary to Medicare) was erroneously terminated. At risk of being placed in a nursing home, Steve had applied for and received the VA's Aid and Attendance benefit, allowing him to pay for the additional care he needed to remain at home. It should not have counted as income for purposes of Medi-Cal eligibility but in fact did trigger the termination of his Medi-Cal, causing the Medicare Part B premium of \$144.60 per month to be deducted from his Social Security check and putting him at risk of losing his Kaiser Medicare/Medi-Cal zero premium plan.

Armed with research from LAS's health law attorney about the Aid and Attendance benefit, the HICAP volunteer Counselor diligently worked with the county's Medi-Cal Client Advocate to restore Steve's Medi-Cal coverage (which also should not have ended during the Public Health Emergency). Within a week, Steve's full Medi-Cal benefits were restored retroactively, and he subsequently received a refund of almost \$600 for the Medicare premiums that were taken from his monthly checks. He has also received confirmation that his Kaiser plan would not end.

This is an example of the valuable assistance that LAS/HICAP provides to help seniors and people with disabilities maintain health coverage and avoid threats to their livelihood and independence.

[Donate Today](#)

## Meet the Staff



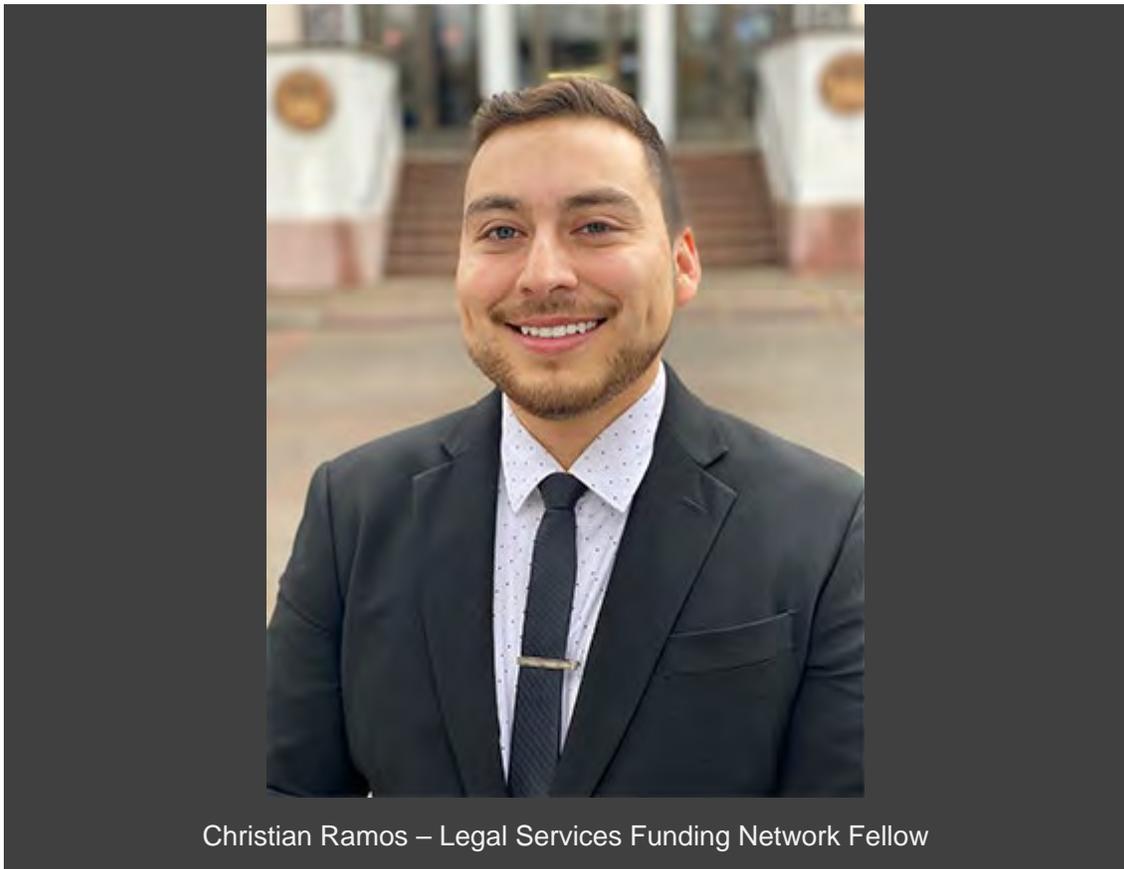
Katy Brady – Community Education Coordinator

Katy Brady arrived at LAS through happenstance in 2013. Having retired after 27 years in the pharmaceutical sector, Katy was looking to give back to the community. Interested in a position she saw advertised by the City of Hayward, Katy called and was told she would be a perfect fit for the HICAP program with Legal Assistance for Seniors. Soon after, Katy was volunteering her time as a certified senior advisor.

After 18 months as a volunteer counselor, Katy was asked by LAS to work on a contract basis. Soon after, in 2015, she was brought on board as the Community Education Coordinator—the role she maintains to this day. Katy’s motivation has been driven by the interaction she has had with seniors throughout Alameda County.

“Demystifying Medicare so that seniors can make the right decisions for themselves is what makes my job at LAS so worthwhile,” said Brady. “When I see the heads nodding after answering a question about prescription drug coverage, we know we’re succeeding,” she said.

In the fourth quarter of 2019, the LAS Community Education Department delivered 96 presentations to seniors all throughout Alameda County. COVID-19 has required these in-person presentations to become video conferences, but that has not stopped LAS from performing its mission to educate seniors about their rights and the opportunities available to them.



A native of Newark, California, Christian Ramos is currently working at LAS

through a fellowship program funded through the Legal Services Funders Network. The LSFN Fellows Program was designed during the COVID-19 pandemic to help address the needs of the Bay Area's legal services organizations to serve more clients during these challenging times.

Originally, Christian had been introduced to staff at LAS through his previous employer, Donahue Fitzgerald, LLP, where he worked as a paralegal in the estate planning department. In the summer of 2019, Christian became acquainted with LAS staff members Kirsten Voyles and Mariel Kusano and was brought on board as an intern that summer. The connection was so strong that when the opportunity for the LSFN Fellows Program opened up this year, Christian and Mariel worked together to submit an application. Fortunately for LAS, their application was a success.

Much of Christian's work in 2020 has focused on communications with prospective clients in the area of elder abuse, working to determine whether or not LAS is able to take their case. During his time at LAS, he has also performed legal research for guardianship and housing cases in addition to elder abuse.

"There's a passion about helping the community here at LAS that I identify with," said Ramos. "I appreciate the camaraderie here and the exchange of ideas that helps all of us in our practice," he continued. Ramos related that he sensed a great deal of appreciation from clients he spoke with on the phone during the pandemic that there is an organization like LAS looking out for their best interests.

Christian is currently awaiting his results from the California Bar. In the meantime, under the supervision of his colleagues, he has already had the opportunity to make his first appearance in court. Christian looks forward to a time in the not-too-distant future when he is able to do so as a brand new attorney.

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Mariel Kusano – Supervising Attorney

Supervising Attorney Mariel Kusano began her tenure at Legal Assistance for Seniors as an intern. It's a familiar pattern here at LAS. Katie Burba, Christine Sung and Kathleen Thaete also became attorneys at LAS following this path. Mariel saw her title change over the years, from Intern, to Legal Advocate, to Staff Attorney, to Senior Staff Attorney; her latest promotion to Supervising Attorney happening earlier this year.

Originally from Hawaii, Mariel graduated with a Juris Doctor from UC Hastings in San Francisco in 2006. After interning at LAS during her first summer as a law student, Mariel continued to volunteer at LAS throughout law school and was offered a job at LAS after graduation because she kept asking for one. LAS remains thankful for her persistence to this day.

"I love the people that I work with at LAS and I think of them as family," said Kusano. "I began my career, married my husband, David, and had my kids, all while being with LAS," she continued. "The work here is special to me as are the clients I represent, many of whom go on, themselves, to help other people in our community," Kusano said.

Whether concerning guardianship, health law or public benefits, Mariel has

helped many clients at LAS over the years, assisting over 200 individuals in becoming naturalized as US citizens from places all over the globe, including Eritrea, Afghanistan, China, Peru, Mexico and the United Kingdom.

One client Mariel assisted, originally from Vietnam, suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder and depression as a one-time POW. He had been denied a disability waiver from the federal government, complicating his application for citizenship. Mariel contested this determination and won on appeal. As a result, her client was naturalized, finally becoming a citizen of the country he had assisted decades ago in the Vietnam War.

Reflecting on her work, Kusano said, "I like to imagine my clients that I helped naturalize all in line to vote. The line would curl around the block. It's a happy image, a proud one." When the attorneys from LAS say their clients are important to them, they follow through to prove it; ask any of those 200 citizens in line to vote.

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You are receiving this email because you have generously supported LAS in the past.

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