

Kentucky Equal Justice Center

July 26, 2023

Staff Report Highlights

Food Justice — Tyler Offerman

Kentucky Food Action Network: We continue to work with the Kentucky Center for Economic Policy, Community Farm Alliance, and Feeding KY to support the Kentucky Food Action Network (KFAN). The campaign work of KFAN is ongoing (see below) and produces many exciting results and opportunities for leadership from directly impacted people. One of the biggest developments is the securing of an additional \$110,000 from MAZON so that we can hire a KFAN Coordinator. We expect the Coordinator to start in August or September.

- **The Farm Bill:** KFAN recently took two members to DC and held lobby meetings with staff from all eight members of the Kentucky Congressional delegation. On July 5, KFAN staff and members along with other organizations including Dare to Care and the Kentucky Department of Education met with Congressman McGarvey around the topic of food insecurity and the Farm Bill. More in-district August recess meetings are being scheduled.
- **Food is Medicine:** KEJC recently received a grant to expand this work (Interact for Health) and there are two more grants pending to help us center farmers and producers who are Black, indigenous, and people of color (Growing Justice & Specialty Crop Block Grant). The fall and winter will be spent completing a landscape analysis of current policies and programs, as well as hosting groups in Louisville, Whitesburg, and Bowling Green with current Food Rx program organizers and participants.
- **Legislative Advocacy:** KEJC and allies are working with KY Senator Westerfield on an infant and maternal health bill that would strengthen the safety net across Kentucky.
- **Administrative Advocacy**
 - **SNAP IPVs:** We are seeing a massive drop in bad IPV decisions from CHFS and we believe this to be the result of our more than three years of administrative advocacy in collaboration with legal aids
 - **SNAP ABAWD Time Limits:** We have been working closely with CHFS, ThriveKY partners, and KFAN members to communicate about the old (and the new) work reporting requirements in SNAP, now coming into effect.
 - See ThriveKY's SNAP Reporting Requirement [Screening tool](#).
 - **SNAP kynectors:** We have successfully supported CHFS in rolling out the SNAP Kynector program and now move to a strategy of assisting legal aids and direct service allies to enroll and then provide feedback from the field to CHFS.
 - **Food Purchasing:** We continue to engage with the KY Department of Agriculture to assist in the successful implementation of the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA).

WIC CIAO: KEJC recently secured funding to work on WIC outreach and program improvements. This 18-month grant will focus on identifying and removing program, policy, *and* language access barriers that might be preventing Latinx, mixed-language, and kinship care families from applying for and receiving WIC benefits. We also secured funding for each of the LSC-funded programs to receive \$30,000 to assist in creating a pipeline of WIC referrals and clients.

Housing Stability — Stefanie Ebbens Kingsley

KHC Eviction Diversion Program (EDP) roll out is going well and Laura has made Warren County #1 for EDP use and applications. Laura is assisting in organizing tenants in a mobile home park that is subject to a TIFF and we are exploring legal options for residents who stand to lose their trailers.

Lexington hires are being made as we speak, and the project is hitting Phase Two, moving from planning to implementation. We will be hosting an Eviction Help Desk every Friday and soon roll it out to the rest of the districts when we are staffed up. Lawyers posting is live. Please help us share it.

Mark your calendars. We are having a rollout launch party for the Housing Stabilization Project at the Thirsty Fox in the last week of August. When we get the details, we will share them with the rest of the board. This will be our first push for a new donor/sustainer drive from our housing supporters.

Communications — Natalie Chambers

Housing outreach materials: The project of refreshing our housing outreach materials is almost complete. With the beginning of our new Lexington housing grant, we've also begun brainstorming and creating project-specific outreach materials

Give for Good: I've been working with Raaziq on a communications/promotional strategy for the upcoming Give for Good Louisville fundraising campaign, as well as with Raaziq and Stefanie on a Lexington housing project join launch party/fundraiser.

Bloggng: I wrote a well-received blog post on the ongoing battle between Kentucky Gardens Mobile Home Park residents and a developer threatening to displace them in Bowling Green.

Links: [Redesigned housing collateral](#)
[Bowling Green riverfront development blog post](#)

Maxwell Street Legal Clinic — Allison Hight

Staffing Changes

Since the last board meeting, we have made strategic additions to our team by hiring two new practitioners, Abigail and Benji. Their expertise and commitment to our mission have already proven invaluable. These new practitioners have brought fresh perspectives and specialized skills, enhancing our capabilities to serve a broader range of clients effectively. Unfortunately, after five years of service, Michelle departed Maxwell Street in June of 2023, which has placed additional responsibilities on the remaining team members.

Current Atmosphere

The dedication of our practitioners has been evident in the constant and escalating demand for our services. Our phones have been ringing off the hook, flooded with client calls and new case inquiries. This surge in demand signifies the growing need for immigration assistance within our community. Despite the successful addition of new practitioners to our team, we find ourselves almost constantly at capacity due to the overwhelming number of cases and clients seeking our aid. Our ability to effectively respond to this surge in demand underscores the urgency and significance of the services we provide to vulnerable individuals seeking immigration assistance.

Case Highlight

One of the most rewarding moments for MSLC was the recent completion of a case that had been ongoing for nearly five years. This specific case involved a victim of human trafficking who came to Maxwell Street in 2018. He was in deportation proceedings and at risk of being forcibly removed from the United States before he could seek humanitarian protection as a trafficking victim. The client was unable to find an attorney to represent him in removal proceedings, so even though our office does not typically represent clients in immigration court, we agreed to represent him both for the T visa and immigration court.

Over the last five years, we have fought tirelessly for this client, including compiling his T visa application; submitting extensive additional evidence to the government when they doubted his victimization; applying for asylum for him in immigration court as protection against deportation while we waited on an answer on the T visa; submitting repeated inquiries to the government when his case pended for nearly four years, including enlisting the assistance of his congressional representative to finally receive a decision from the government; and coordinating with the Department of Justice to request that the immigration judge terminate his case when his T visa was finally granted.

Last month, an immigration judge dismissed his deportation case. The client is finally safe from further trafficking, can access crucial benefits, be reunited with his family, and apply for permanent residence in the United States.

While our accomplishments are significant, the increase in demand and workload has also presented challenges. As we strive to maintain our high standard of service, it is crucial to

address the strain on our team members and ensure they have the necessary support and resources to continue their essential work.

Health Justice — Chloe Atwater

Medical debt

- **UK Health Care:** We have a trial set for late August through early September in our ongoing case against UK HealthCare. We anticipate that Judge Van Tatenhove will rule on a motion that could either end the case prior to the trial date or yield a ruling that opposing counsel will promptly appeal, but we are preparing ourselves and our class representatives for appearing in federal court in Frankfort soon.
- **Multi-pronged approach:** KEJC is also preparing for what comes next. Regardless of the outcome of the case, UK HealthCare will now have to sue patients to recover on medical debts just like any other hospital. We know that [27% of Kentuckians have medical debt in collections](#) and that the percentage rises to 49% in predominantly nonwhite areas. We are creating a multi-pronged approach to address medical debt at every step: before it forms, at the hospital, after discharge, after a dunning letter, and after being sued.

Coalitions and Partnerships

- Legal
 - Assisting an attorney from Kentucky Legal Aid in Bowling Green brief in a SNAP intentional program violation case in advance of a filing deadline in September
 - Collaborating and sharing resources with an attorney from Legal Aid Society in Louisville as well as an attorney at [ABC for Health](#) in Wisconsin to build out our medical debt work
- Non-legal
 - Prepared a wrap-up on the Supreme Court session and cases to watch for non-legal health advocates
 - Met with a nurse practitioner who cares for children who are victims of sexual violence and abuse to discuss limitations on provider speech pertaining to abortion
 - Joined the All-Payer Claims Database workgroup to shape APCD legislation in advance of the 2024 legislative session

Racial Justice Institute

Alongside Ebony and Raaziq, Chloe is part of the Shriver Center on Poverty Law [Racial Justice Institute 2023 Cohort](#). The KEJC team recently traveled to Chicago for Part II of the three-part program, which was a four-day deep dive into using racial justice principles to shape our work and practices, both internally and externally.

Resource Organizer — Raaziq El-Amin

Comms & Development Synergy: Natalie and Raaziq rolled out their first joint giving day campaign for KY Gives Day. KEJC raised \$3,318 from 33 supporters. In terms of dollar amount, we raised \$92 less this year than we did last year. However, we saw the highest number of donors we've had for KY Gives Day in the last three years.

Grants Management: Raaziq continues to coordinate with staff to identify funding opportunities, apply for grants, and report on our work. So far this year, the KEJC team has submitted 15 proposals and 15 reports. We've also got a number of prospects to research and follow up on in the coming months.

Mapping: Summer has offered Raaziq space to plan what donor communication is going to look like leading up to the end-of-year giving season. In the coming weeks, Natalie and Raaziq will work together on two giving days (Give for Good Louisville and Good Giving Challenge), a sustainer drive, and KEJC's annual report.

Outreach and Language Access — Miranda Brown

Networking/Outreach/Communications

- **Outreach:** KEJC staff spoke directly with over 350 people in the last three months! Some unique opportunities this quarter were staffing information tables at Lexington's Mother's Day Festival, Whitesburg's Seedtime on the Cumberland Festival, and Lexington's Pride Festival. Our health law team met with new Community Action kynectors in the Bluegrass region and Miranda also interviewed with La Casita Center about Medicaid renewals and health insurance information on their Facebook Live show "Somos un círculo", which has attracted 230 views.

Direct Service

- **Health Coverage Enrollment Assistance:** Miranda helped one new family with health coverage in addition to previous clients. She is coordinating with other kynectors to train and support them in assisting more immigrant clients, especially with navigating nuances of health coverage for trafficking survivors and for undocumented Kentuckians. Miranda has 211 open kynect cases, but is not taking new clients at this time.

Advocacy Feedback Loop

- **Notice Improvement Project:** The Cabinet for Health and Family Services has resumed the Notice Improvement Project, but now on a monthly basis as a part of workflow for reviewing any new notices and for improving the way notices are handled on a systematic level. In May, the work group reviewed notices for the new FAST (Family Assistance Short Term) program, formally the FAD program. In July, the group gave feedback and raised questions regarding Deloitte's proposals to update correspondence bundling logic, merge notices of the same type for multiple CHFS programs, automate returned mail processing, and enhance electronic communication. These proposed changes will save over three million envelopes per year, cutting the number of envelopes program participants receive by more than half,

and saving over one million dollars. From a consumer perspective, the changes help clarify important information and deadlines, and reduce the amount of mail that consumers must sift through to find the critical, time-sensitive information that they need to respond to.

- **Medicaid Technical Advisory Committees (TACs):** Miranda serves on the Consumer Rights & Client Needs TAC, which made recommendations to the Department for Medicaid Services this quarter to clearly communicate the status of dental, vision, and hearing services to providers and kynectors.

Language Access

- **Language access protocols:** We have standardized language access protocols across the organization and set up new accounts with our primary interpretation provider, Access Language Solutions, so that we now have seven accounts to facilitate billing and grant allocation for our various programs. We are maintaining Language Line as a back-up provider.
- **Making connections:** Miranda met with Access Language Solutions for recommendations on best practices, including staff training and language proficiency assessments. She also met with Kentucky Office of Refugees to discuss current issues in language access across Kentucky as well as share data, resources, and opportunities for train-the-trainer type outreach and advocacy.
- **Language Access Plan:** Our Language Access Committee finalized a draft of our updated Language Access Plan, incorporating feedback from staff.