



FFELA

FUNDING FLORIDA LEGAL AID

2024-25 Annual Report

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Message from 2024-25 President Roberto R. Pardo, Esq.



I am delighted to share that fiscal year 2024-25 was another outstanding year for FFLA, defined by thoughtful stewardship, meaningful reform, and a steadfast commitment to ensuring access to quality civil legal representation.

During my term, our dedicated board members and staff rolled up their sleeves and undertook a comprehensive review of our IOTA Implementation Work Plan, transforming it into a streamlined Implementation Policy and Guidelines document. This was no small feat. Among the most significant changes, we reduced the required years of demonstrated successful experience for prospective grantee organizations from five to three years. This is a deliberate step toward welcoming more qualified providers into our network and broadening the reach of civil legal aid across the state.

We also refined our Fair Distribution Plan to better articulate FFLA's primary funding objectives and to ensure our distribution processes maximize compliance with the IOTA Rule.

On the financial stewardship front, our board approved a carefully crafted sub-policy for the investment of Grantee IOTA reserves. This conservative, short-term fixed income strategy, managed by BlackRock's Low Duration Bond Fund, is designed to preserve capital, protect principal, and generate income with low volatility, all while maintaining liquidity. Every dollar of realized gains and interest earned in this reserve will accrue to the sole benefit of our grantees.

Additionally, our Investment Committee completed a rigorous, seven-month review of our investment advisory relationship. After evaluating proposals from 13 firms and conducting interviews, the board retained Morgan Stanley/Graystone Consulting as FFLA's investment advisor and secured an \$18,000 annual fee reduction. This is the kind of prudent fiscal management that ensures every available dollar is directed toward its highest purpose: helping those who need legal aid.

Finally, FFLA increased the annual loan amount available through our Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP) from \$5,000 to \$10,000, to support the recruitment and retention of qualified civil legal aid attorneys.

Behind every policy revision and financial decision is the same driving force — the families facing eviction, the survivors seeking protection, the elderly and veterans in need of an advocate. Our work is ultimately measured by the lives our grantees help transform.

With the continued partnership of our grantees, the Florida Supreme Court, The Florida Bar, and the many volunteers and legal professionals who give so generously of their time and expertise, I am confident that FFLA will continue to expand access to our justice system for years to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roberto R. Pardo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Roberto R. Pardo, Esq., FFLA President, 2024-25

Reported Impact: IOTA Distributions

A general distribution of
\$89,748,976
in IOTA collections
was made to
35 legal aid organizations.

From 2024 to 2025,
the number of lawyers
employed to provide
qualified legal services
using IOTA funds
increased by 111%

Free, direct legal services
were provided to
65,540
clients



While not directly represented,
187,978
low-income Floridians
were nevertheless assisted
by qualified legal services
providers for matters
like divorce, custody,
bankruptcy, adoption, eviction,
wills, veterans' benefits,
and disaster relief.



1,080,552
hours were spent
delivering qualified
legal services
funded by IOTA, an
88%
increase over the
previous year

An increase in
IOTA funding
resulted in a
12%
decrease
in the number
of clients
turned away.

\$47,201,859
was obtained for clients in the form of
judgments, awards, fees, costs,
reimbursements and other benefits.

8,301 referrals were made by legal aid providers
and accepted by pro bono attorneys



"Diego's" identity was stolen, and the perpetrator opened a credit card in his name then racked up thousands of dollars in charges. Diego was sued by the credit card company when the charges went unpaid. **Southern Legal Counsel** stepped in to defend him, and ultimately got the case dismissed. SLC's work, funded by IOTA, prevented Diego from being liable for more than \$16,000 in charges he didn't incur.

After falling behind on rent after a family emergency, "Joan", a teacher and mother of two, asked her landlord for a payment plan. Instead, she was told to vacate her house and the power was shut off. Scared, she turned to **Lee County Legal Aid**. Cutting off utilities to force a tenant out is prohibited by law. Joan's legal aid lawyer, funded by IOTA, helped her prove what the landlord had done in court, and the eviction was dismissed.

"Lucy's" husband stabbed her in the neck at a bus stop. Good Samaritans thwarted his attempt to kill her, and Lucy had emergency surgery to save her life. While the domestic violence proceedings were ongoing, **Dade Legal Aid** handled Lucy's divorce. After months of protracted litigation, Lucy was granted sole parental responsibility of their children and was awarded all of the time sharing as well as tax exemption.



Legal Aid Society of the Orange County Bar partners with Family Court Case Management at the courthouse to assist all eligible family law clients. Clients often face substantial roadblocks due to incomplete or inappropriate filings. They conduct immediate eligibility and conflict checks, then serve those clients thanks to IOTA dollars.

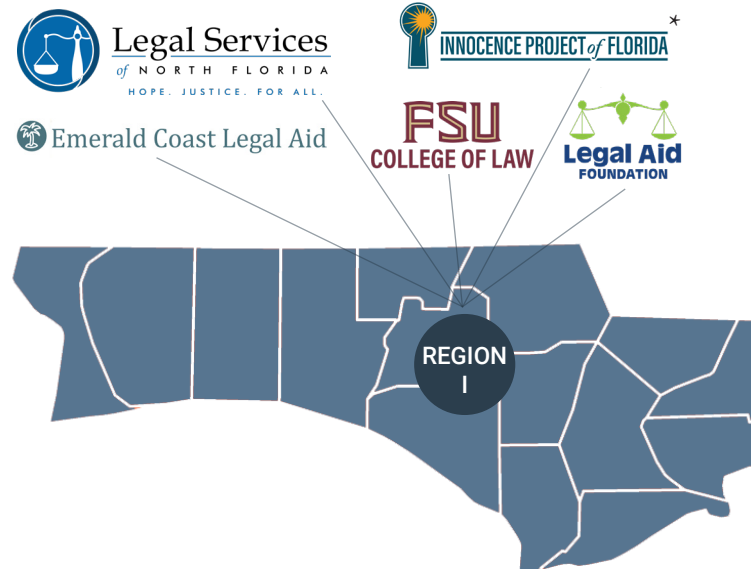


Community Legal Services staff and volunteers helped more than 390 people last year at their sealing and expungement clinics. By overcoming criminal history barriers that limit access to employment, housing, and economic opportunity, CLS helps individuals secure employment, obtain housing, and better support their families, creating a foundation for long-term stability.



Current FFLA Grantees

Americans for Immigrant Justice
Bay Area Legal Services
Brevard County Legal Aid
Catholic Legal Services
Coast to Coast Legal Aid South Florida
Community Justice Project
Community Law Program
Community Legal Services
Crossroads for Florida Kids
CABA Pro Bono Legal Services
Dade Legal Aid
Emerald Coast Legal Aid
Florida Health Justice Project
Florida Justice Institute
Florida Legal Services
Florida Rural Legal Services
Florida State University College of Law
Florida's Children First
Gulfcoast Legal Services
Heart of Florida Legal Aid Society
IDignity
Indian River Legal Aid
Innocence Project of Florida
Jacksonville Area Legal Aid
Lawyers for Children America
Lee County Legal Aid Society
Legal Aid Foundation of Tallahassee
Legal Aid of Manasota
Legal Aid Service of Broward County
Legal Aid Service of Collier County
Legal Aid Society of Orange County Bar Association
Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County
Legal Services of Greater Miami
Legal Services of North Florida
Seminole County Bar Association Legal Aid Society
Southern Legal Counsel
St. Michael's Legal Center
Three Rivers Legal Services
United Way of Indian River County



SOUTHERN LEGAL COUNSEL*



JACKSONVILLE AREA Legal Aid



IDignity*



LEGAL AID SOCIETY of the OCBA, Inc.



REGION II

REGION III



HEART OF FLORIDA LEGAL AID SOCIETY



INDIAN RIVER LEGAL AID



REGION IV



UNITED WAY Indian River County



REGION V



LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF PALM BEACH COUNTY



FLORIDA HEALTH* JUSTICE PROJECT

REGION VI



Dade Legal Aid Put Something Back



REGION VII

COMMUNITY JUSTICE PROJECT



Lawyers for Children America*



* Statewide provider

2024-25 Grants Awarded

Grantee Organizations	IOTA General Distribution Award	Children's Legal Services Grant Award
Americans for Immigrant Justice	\$4,726,275	
Bay Area Legal Services	\$6,636,062	
Brevard County Legal Aid	\$2,101,241	\$80,000
Catholic Legal Services	\$3,791,005	\$146,580
Coast to Coast Legal Aid South Florida	\$1,919,924	
Community Justice Project	\$981,608	
Community Law Program	\$901,639	
Community Legal Services	\$7,609,678	
Crossroads for Florida Kids		\$25,000
CABA Pro Bono Legal Services	\$1,346,206	\$315,000
Dade Legal Aid	\$2,629,309	\$100,000
Emerald Coast Legal Aid	\$929,786	
Florida Health Justice Project	\$1,479,529	
Florida Justice Institute	\$986,353	
Florida Legal Services	\$5,535,084	\$70,000
Florida Rural Legal Services	\$1,564,527	
Florida State University College of Law		\$141,000
Florida's Children First	\$493,176	
Gulfcoast Legal Services	\$3,381,146	
Heart of Florida Legal Aid Society	\$974,578	
IDignity	\$657,568	
Innocence Project of Florida	\$986,353	
Jacksonville Area Legal Aid	\$4,831,927	
Lawyers for Children America	\$986,353	\$50,000
Lee County Legal Aid Society	\$1,218,223	
Legal Aid Foundation of Tallahassee	\$232,447	
Legal Aid of Manasota	\$1,127,049	
Legal Aid Service of Broward County	\$5,105,253	
Legal Aid Service of Collier County	\$1,461,868	
Legal Aid Society of Orange County Bar Assoc.	\$5,108,189	\$45,000
Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County	\$7,217,971	
Legal Services of Greater Miami	\$2,299,769	
Legal Services of North Florida	\$4,091,060	
Seminole County Bar Assoc. Legal Aid Society	\$1,738,959	\$50,000
Southern Legal Counsel	\$1,315,138	
St. Michael's Legal Center	\$901,639	
Three Rivers Legal Services	\$2,482,084	
TOTAL	\$89,748,976	\$1,022,580

	Pro Bono Support & Enhancement Grant Award	Improvements in the Administration of Justice Grant Award	Civil Legal Aid Summer Fellowship Grant Award
			\$9,900
	\$141,000		
			\$19,800
	\$19,000		
	\$75,000	\$125,000	\$9,900
	\$900,000		\$9,900
	\$30,000		
	\$50,000		
			\$9,900
	\$50,000		\$9,900
		\$300,000	
	\$53,425		\$9,900
	\$25,000		
	\$50,000	\$300,000	
	\$408,000		\$9,900
	\$120,000		
	\$285,000		
	\$370,000		
	\$700,000		\$9,900
	\$225,000		\$9,900
			\$9,900
			\$9,900
	\$60,000		\$9,900
	\$75,000		
	\$3,636,425	\$725,000	\$138,600

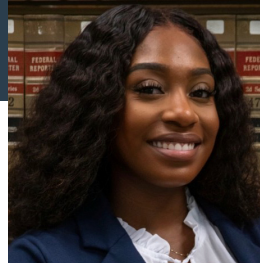
Impact: 2025 Legal Aid Summer Fellows



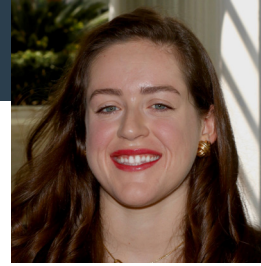
Manshaa Babbar
Nova Southeastern
University College of Law
Senior Citizen Law Project
at Coast to Coast Legal
Aid South Florida



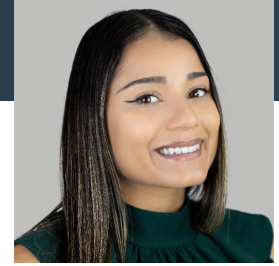
Bethany Boylan
Florida State University
College of Law
Interpersonal Violence
Victim Representation at
Legal Services of North
Florida



Shakira Bullock
Nova Southeastern
University College of Law
Community Economic
Development at Legal
Services of Greater Miami



Laney Fox
Florida State University
College of Law
Civil rights litigation at
Florida Justice Institute



Mixa Hernandez
St. Thomas University
College of Law
Children's Program at
CABA Pro Bono
Legal Services



Hira Latif
Nova Southeastern
University College of Law
Immigration law
at Americans for
Immigrant Justice



Crystal Nesbeth
Nova Southeastern
University College of Law
Pro Bono Project at
Legal Aid Society of
Palm Beach County



Christina Ocean
Emory University
School of Law
Housing, immigration
and health law at
Florida Legal Services



Zachary Rebert
Florida State University
College of Law
Economic advocacy and
health at Coast to Coast
Legal Aid South Florida

2024 Fellows Update!

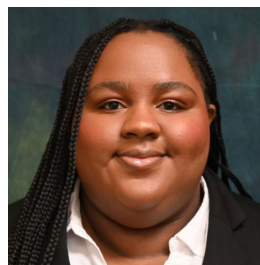
Four summer fellows from the class of 2024 are now employed as legal aid attorneys at FFLA grantee organizations.



Dayna Rieger
Florida International
University College of Law
Family Law Unit at
Dade Legal Aid



Kayla Shen
Florida State University
College of Law
Sealing and expungement
at Legal Aid Society of the
Orange County Bar Assoc.



Aaliyah Sims
Florida A&M University
College of Law
Family law at Seminole
County Bar Association
Legal Aid Society



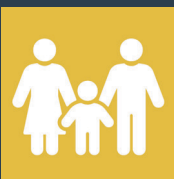
Sophia Tuszynski
Stetson University
College of Law
Domestic Violence Family
Law at Gulfcoast
Legal Services



Grace VanHooser
Florida International
University College of Law
Heirs Property
Resolution at Jacksonville
Area Legal Aid

During the summer of 2025, FFLA funded 14 Civil Legal Aid Summer Fellows. Law student fellows spend 10 weeks working at a legal aid organization. The Florida Bar Family Law Section donated \$37,500 to cover the cost of four fellows working in marital and family law.

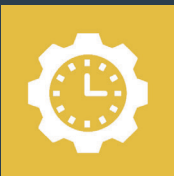
Impact: Children's Legal Services



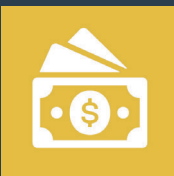
3,832 clients were served by Children's Legal Services grantees, a **10%** increase over the previous year.



Grantees obtained **\$4,663,264** for clients through judgments, fees, awards and other direct monetary benefits.



58,847 hours were expended delivering qualified legal services paid for or facilitated by grantees



Services were provided at a rate of approximately **\$17 per hour**

Custody for ill baby

After an infant with cancer had been abandoned by her father due to her illness, CABA Pro Bono Legal Services helped her young, single mother of very limited means. Sole custody was quickly obtained with a finding of neglect and abandonment by the father, allowing the baby's mother to consent to treatment.

Help for a teen boy

Florida Legal Services helped a young man with developmental disabilities who was aging out of the foster care system. Having no family support, FLS assisted him in petitioning the court to appoint a guardian advocate. The court approved the petition, and he now has a guardian advocate to coordinate his medical, mental health, and personal care services when he becomes an adult. Thanks to his legal aid lawyer, he will also be able to receive vocational rehabilitation services, targeted case management, and day-treatment during the school year.



Impact: Pro Bono Support & Enhancement

Grantees increased pro bono staff by **42%** over the grant cycle.

35% more pro bono cases were referred to private attorneys than the year before.

\$10,632,369 was obtained for clients through judgments, fees, awards and other direct monetary benefits.

Bankruptcy support in Palm Beach County

Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County partners with Furr Cohen to assist veterans with bankruptcy and with the Bankruptcy Bar Association of the Southern District of Florida to refer eligible clients each month for pro bono bankruptcy assistance. According to the United States Bankruptcy Court Southern District of Florida's website, in 2024 Chapter 7 bankruptcy filings increased by 35% over the previous year and Chapter 13 filings increased by 19% in the Southern District. Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County also works with corporations like Carrier and Office Depot to engage their authorized in-house counsel attorneys to volunteer at clinics and accept pro bono cases under the Emeritus Rule.

Rebuilding a shuttered pro bono program

With funding from FFLA, Emerald Coast Legal Aid has been able to rebuild its pro bono program, which had been devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic and funding reductions. They have been able to rehire their pro bono coordinator who had been laid off due to lack of funding. She has reconnected with former pro bono attorneys who had worked with the program for years and reached out to new attorneys to recruit them into the pro bono program. Emerald Coast Legal Aid increased the number of pro bono cases placed with private attorneys by 122% during this grant cycle.

Innocent man exonerated

Billy Holton was exonerated after spending 25 years wrongfully incarcerated and 10 years wrongfully serving sex offender probation. Billy was wrongfully convicted of a 1987 Duval County robbery and sexual battery based on the victim identifying him a year after the crime, despite the victim initially stating that she did not see the perpetrator's face. The victim's son, who was present during the crime, also told police that Billy was not one of the perpetrators. Innocence Project of Florida, which received an Improvements in the Administration of Justice grant, sought and achieved DNA testing results that demonstrated Billy's innocence. The trial court overturned his conviction in 2024.



Impact: Loan Repayment Assistance Program

151 legal aid lawyers each received loans up to \$10,000 to pay down their student loan debt.

\$625,142 in LRAP loans were forgiven from the previous year.

Impact: Improvements in the Administration of Justice Program

The three 2024-25 grantees served **561** clients.

Another **11,079** people directly benefited from the legal work of the grantees.

2025 Annual Award Ceremony



Photos:

1. Friends and colleagues of Curran Distinguished Service Award recipient Lesley Mendoza. 2. The 2025 Annual Award Ceremony and Breakfast was held at The Boca Raton during The Florida Bar Annual Convention. 3. John Patterson of Shutts, sponsor of the President's Award, presents it to FFLA President-elect Ashley N. Sybesma, who accepted the posthumous award on behalf of former Florida Bar Foundation CFO Lou Ann Powell. 4. Brevard County Legal Aid Executive Director Robert Johnson spoke about the impact that increased IOTA funding has had on his organization. 5. Amanda Fernandez, president of the Cuban American Bar Association, the sponsor of the Curran Distinguished Service Award, presents it to CABA Pro Bono Legal Services Executive Director Lesley Mendoza. 6. Larri Thatcher, left, and Bethanie Barber of Legal Aid Society of the Orange County Bar Association spoke about their program's services. 7. Jorge L. Hernandez Torano, Jose A. "Pepe" Villalobos, Miguel Villalobos, and Plutarco Villalobos 8. Jose A. "Pepe" Villalobos received the Medal of Honor for a Lawyer Award from Ashley N. Sybesma, Florida Bar 2024-25 President Roland Sanchez-Medina Jr. and former Florida Bar President and Florida Lawyers Mutual Insurance Company Director Ray Abadin. Not pictured: Maria Henderson was awarded the Medal of Honor for a Non-Lawyer. 9. Friends and colleagues of CABA Pro Bono Legal Services 10. Former Florida Bar Foundation president Adele I. Stone announces Alan B. Bookman Service in Leadership Award recipient Jason J. Quintero of Carlton Fields 11. Cristine Jimenez, Pepe Villalobos 12. Yvette Melby, Patricia Requena and Michael Requena



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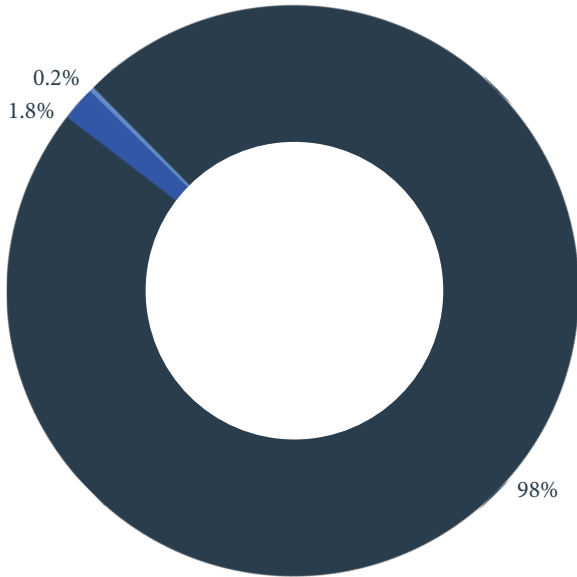
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- THE SMITH LAW FIRM

Fiscal Year 2024-25 Financial Review

HOW FUNDS WERE SPENT*

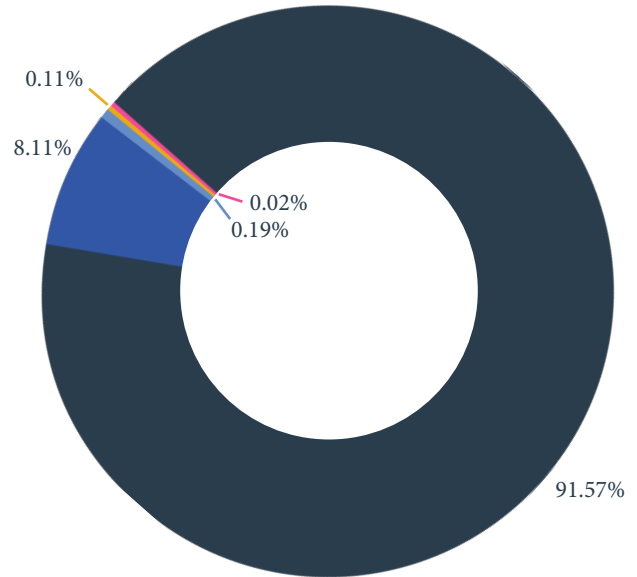


● Charitable Activities*	\$ 95,202,107
● Administration	\$ 1,717,685
● Fundraising	\$ 196,412

**IOTA collections from FY 23-24 were distributed in December 2024, during FY 2024-25.*

***IOTA collections from FY 2024-25 were distributed in December 2025.*

RECEIVED FUNDS TO BE SPENT**

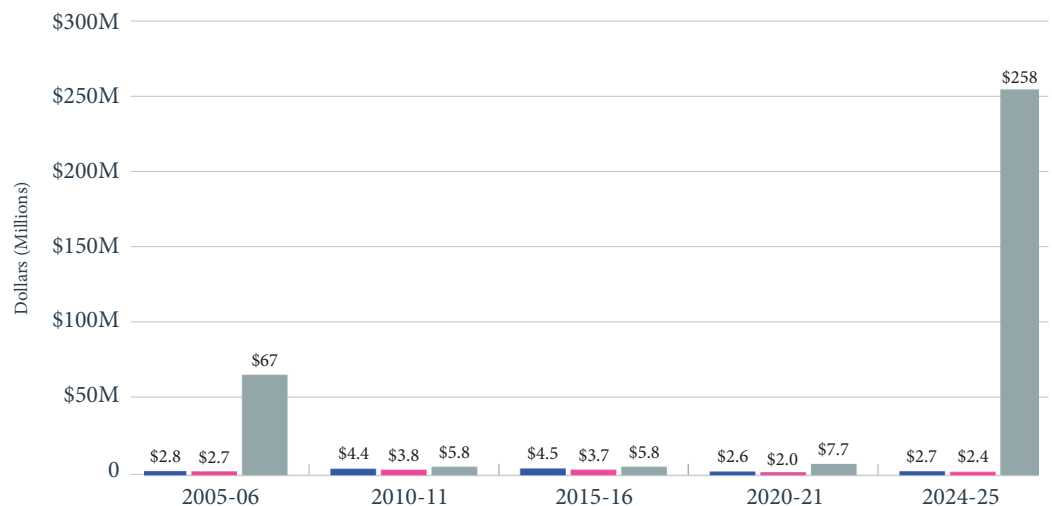


● IOTA Collections**	\$ 258,101,267
● Net Investment Income	\$ 22,857,821
● Private Contributions	\$ 537,232
● Cy Pres Awards	\$ 309,957
● Other Income	\$ 46,752
Total	\$ 281,853,029

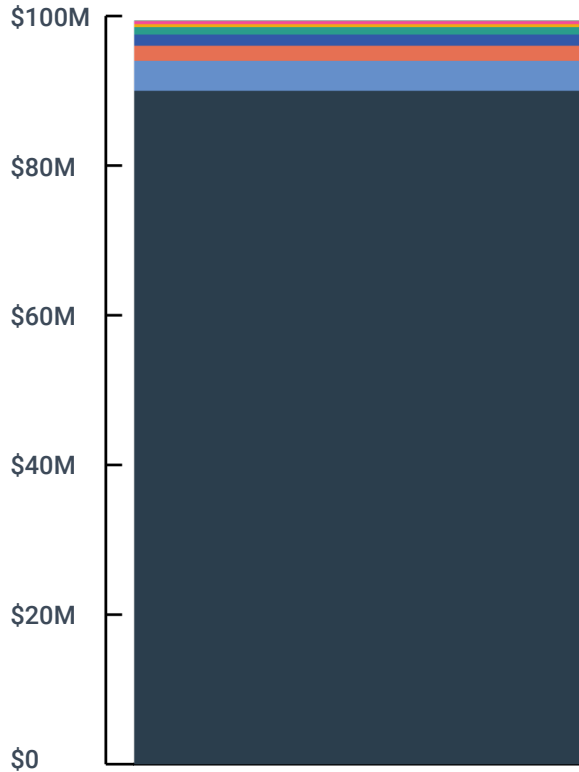
Historical Snapshot of FFLA's Operating Budget, Actual Expenses and IOTA Collections

Though IOTA collections have fluctuated drastically, FFLA has operated at an annual budget under \$4.5 million for more than 20 years. Despite a recent surge in collections and the administrative demands that accompany it, FFLA has maintained the same efficient staffing levels.

- Operating Budget
- Actual Expenses
- IOTA Collections



GRANT EXPENDITURES



● Alan B. Bookman Memorial Fund	\$	2,500
● Law School Civil Legal Clinics	\$	125,000
● Civil Legal Aid Summer Fellows	\$	138,600
● Loan Repayment Assistance Program Forgiveness	\$	623,041
● Improvements in the Administration of Justice	\$	800,000
● Children's Legal Services	\$	1,033,964
● Pro Bono Support & Enhancement	\$	3,636,426
● IOTA General Distribution*	\$	89,748,976
Total	\$	96,108,506

*FY 23-24 collections were distributed in FY 24-25.

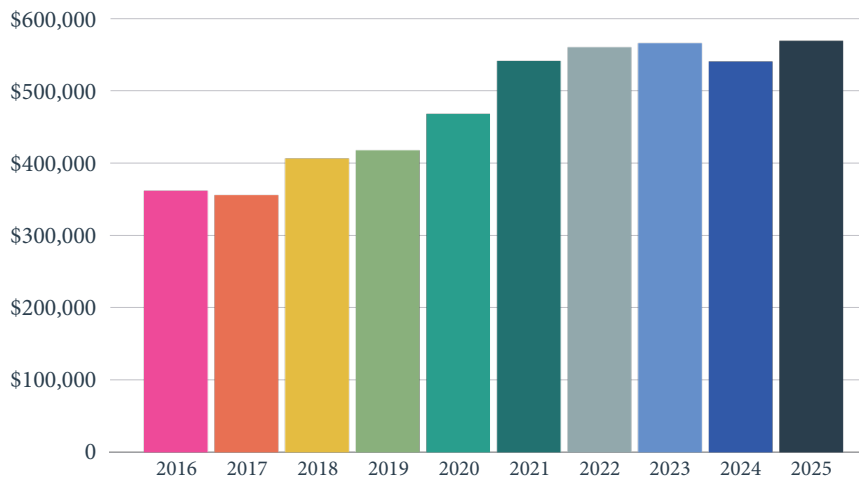
Since 1982, **90.8 cents** of every dollar FFLA received went to direct support of grantees.

FFLA has invested \$692.5 million in legal aid funding, spending \$674 million in grants and \$18 million in program-related expenses.

GIVING TRENDS

4,177 donors gave 4,707 gifts in FY 24-25. The average gift amount was \$211.

Historical Snapshot of Children's Legal Services Fundraising Campaign



FFLA raises funds for its Children's Legal Services program through a direct mail campaign and The Florida Bar Fee Statement, through which lawyers have the opportunity to donate when renewing their annual membership. Support for the program has climbed steadily for more than 10 years.

Financial Institution IOTA CHAMPIONS

Achieva Credit Union	Esquire Bank	Nicolet National Bank
Amerant Bank	Evermore Bank	Northern Trust, N.A.
Amerasia Bank	Fairwinds Credit Union	Ocean Bank
American Commerce Bank	Fieldpoint Private Bank & Trust	Old Dominion National Bank
American Momentum Bank	Fifth Third Bank, Florida	One Florida Bank
Ameris Bank	FineMark National Bank & Trust	Optimum Bank
Anchor Bank	First American Bank	Origin Bank
Anthem Bank & Trust	First American Trust, FSB	Pacific National Bank
Axiom Bank	First Bank	Paradise Bank
Banco do Brasil Americas	First Bank NJ	PeoplesSouth Bank
Banesco	First Citizens Bank	Pineland Bank
Bank of America	First Colony Bank of Florida	Pinnacle Bank
Bank of Belle Glade	First Federal Bank of Florida	PNB Community Bank
Bank of Central Florida	First Foundation	PNC Bank
Bank of Hope	First Horizon Bank	Popular Bank
Bank of Pensacola	First National Bank Coastal Community	Prime Meridian Bank
Bank OZK	First National Bank of Pasco	PrimeSouth Bank
BankFlorida	First National Bank of Wauchula	Regions Bank of Florida
BankMiami	First Port City Bank	Renasant Bank
BankUnited, N.A.	First Security Bank	Republic Bank & Trust Co.
Barwick Banking Company	First Southern Bank	Sanibel Captiva Community Bank
BayFirst National Bank	First State Bank of The Florida Keys	Santander Bank
Belmont Bank & Trust	FirstBank Florida	Seacoast Bank
BMO Harris Bank, N. A.	Flagler Credit Union	Servbank, N.A.
BNY Mellon, N.A.	Flagship Bank	ServisFirst Bank
Brannen Bank	Florida Capital Bank, N.A.	SmartBank
Busey Bank	Florida Credit Union	South State Bank
Cadence Bank	FNBT.com Bank	Stearns Bank, N.A.
Capital City Bank	Grove Bank & Trust	Sunrise Bank
Capital One	Gulf Atlantic Bank	SunState Bank
Centennial Bank	Gulf Coast Bank & Trust	Sunwest Bank
Central Bank	Gulf Coast Business Bank	Surety Bank
Century Bank of Florida	Gulfside Bank	Synovus Bank
CIBC Bank USA LLC	Hancock Bank	Tallahassee National Bank
Citibank (Florida), N.A.	Huntington National Bank	TD Bank, N.A.
Citizens Bank	iTHINK Financial Credit Union	Terrabank, N.A.
Citizens Bank & Trust	INB, National Association	The Bank of Tampa
Citizens First Bank	Interamerican Bank, FSB	The First National Bank of Mount Dora
City National Bank	Interaudi Bank	Truist
City National Bank of Florida	Intercredit Bank, N.A.	Trustco Bank
Climate First Bank	International Finance Bank	TrustMark Bank
Coastal States Bank	Intracoastal Bank	U.S. Bank
Cogent Bank	Ipava State Bank	U.S. Century Bank
Colony Bank	J.P. Morgan Chase Bank, N.A.	United Bank
Comerica Bank & Trust, FSB	KeyBank	United Commonwealth Bank
Commerce Bank & Trust	Lafayette State Bank	United Community Bank
Community Bank of Mississippi	Lake Michigan Credit Union of Florida	United Fidelity Bank
Community Bank of The South	Liberty Savings Bank, FSB	United Southern Bank
ConnectOne Bank	Locality Bank	University Credit Union
Crews Bank & Trust	M & T Bank	Valley National Bank
Customers Bank	Madison County Community Bank	Vista Bank
Cypress Bank & Trust	Mainstreet Community Bank of Florida	VyStar Credit Union
DFCU Financial Bank	Marine Bank & Trust Company	Warrington Bank
DLP Bank	Meridian Bank	Waterfall Bank
Eastern National Bank	MidFlorida Credit Union	Webster Bank, N.A.
Edison National Bank	MidSouth Bank	Wells Fargo Bank
Emigrant Bank	Millennium Bank	Winter Park National Bank
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