

TALS History

Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services (TALS)

An Overview and Timeline

In 1977, the TALS was created with a twofold mission:

- To support and coordinate the activities of civil legal service providers in Tennessee, and
- To spearhead statewide efforts to further access to justice for low-income Tennesseans.

Since its formation, TALS has consistently provided services to the access to justice community such as training, communication vehicles, state and federal advocacy for legal services, analysis and information about public policy that impacts low income Tennesseans. Additionally, TALS has joined in numerous partnerships to implement strategies to change conditions that adversely affect individuals with low-income on timely access to the justice. These efforts have included:

- Administering statewide legal assistance programs for specific groups of clients. These have included: children in state custody, the elderly, Families First recipients who may qualify for Social Security Disability benefits, TennCare recipients, and others.
- Creating new programs for providing free legal advice and information to low-income Tennesseans through technology (phone, email, and web),

- Creating state-level funding for providers of civil legal services to low-income and elderly Tennesseans,
- Creating a mechanism for cy pres awards to be held in trust to benefit legal aid providers,
- Convening all the representatives of the civil access to justice community for state planning and coordination purposes
- Conducting the Statewide Comprehensive Legal Needs Survey for 2003, Tennessee's most extensive legal needs analysis,
- Assisting to create and managing Tennessee Disaster Legal Services program with FEMA, the Tennessee Bar Association and the ABA Young Lawyers Division,
- Creating and maintaining three statewide websites which assist legal aid advocates, clients, and the general public with legal and social service needs,
- Supporting the ongoing efforts of the Tennessee Supreme Court's Access to Justice Commission, and
- Providing education about policies, such as tenant's rights and consumer protection, which particularly affect vulnerable Tennesseans.

Currently, TALS spearheads several projects that both meet the changing needs of low-income Tennesseans through innovative programming and were included in the Tennessee Supreme Court's Access to Justice Commission's key recommendations for 2010. Examples of TALS program include:

- [Online TN Justice](#) - a joint project of the TALS and the Tennessee Bar Association (TBA) made possible through support from Baker Donelson and Dell, Inc.;
- 1-844-HELP4TN - a project of TALS made possible through support from International Paper, the Tennessee Supreme Court Access to Justice

Commission, the Tennessee Commission on Continuing Legal Education and Specialization and AT&T;

- [HELP4TN](#) (Formerly LIFT) - a joint project of TALS, West Tennessee Legal Services and the National Association of Social Workers - Tennessee Chapter made possible through a Legal Services Corporation Technology Innovation Grant.

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