



**The Chicago Appleaseed Fund For Justice**

**The Chicago  
Appleseed Fund  
for Justice**

is an advocacy hub that leverages unique insights and best practices to make the court system more fair, accessible and efficient.

Our work matches the efforts of court staff and key stakeholders to create solutions that help to remove systemic problems in our courts for some of the most marginalized groups, such as low income minorities, immigrants and the working poor.

**We  
improve  
lives by  
improving  
the  
courts.**

Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice is a nonpartisan and independent research and advocacy organization dedicated to making the courts fairer, more efficient and effective – improving lives by improving courts. We promote social justice by identifying problems affecting vulnerable populations within our court systems, proposing effective solutions, and advocating for their implementation.

We have unique connections to the local justice system. We use these local connections to engage stakeholders – making it possible for us to more effectively develop and advocate for solutions to systemic injustices. Chicago Appleseed also is part of the Appleseed Network, an international network of 18 social justice organizations.

# A Message from the Executive

As part of the Appleseed Network, we can draw upon the expertise of and collaborate with these Appleseed justice centers, making us a more effective organization.

We also collaborate with the Chicago Council of Lawyers, as well as other legal and community organizations to expand our reach and make us a more effective organization.

We operate with paid staff and a corps of pro bono professionals who conduct national, best practices research, as well as local, on the ground research, and who work with us to develop solutions and implementation strategies. We focus in four areas: criminal justice, access to justice, immigration court reform, and family law reform. We seek to identify injustice related to our courts, and then work to stop it.

# 2017-2018 Accomplishments

- **Helped persuade** Chief Judge Evans to issue a general order that reduced the amount of money bond and reduced the jail population by 1400.
- **Helped enact** legislation to provide a waiver of court costs, fines, and fees imposed on criminal division defendants.
- **Issued** a widely read report on the first year of the Kim Foxx administration in the Office of the States Attorney.
- **Saw** the Access to Community Treatment Court, which we helped plan and implement, sponsor two more graduations, with a cost savings of over \$5 million.
- **Trained** assistant public defenders from Cook County and from throughout Illinois on how to stop the unfair imposition of court costs, fines, and fees on their clients.
- **Provided** key data on the impact of court debt to be included in an Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority report.
- **Oversaw** the implementation of the hearing officer system in Maywood and Markham, which has heard approximately 1500 cases involving unrepresented parents and divorce litigants since 2017.
- **Worked** with the Court and the AOIC to create a new triage program to a better system of adjudication for unrepresented parents and divorce litigants at the Daley Center.
- **Was invited** to join the Illinois CSAC Clean Slate Subcommittee to reform the existing program to assist low-income and formerly-incarcerated parents resolve their child support debt and engage in meaningful co-parenting for their children.
- **Chicago Appleseed's** consulting work on the independence of administrative law judges was recently recognized by the Governor's Court Reform Council in the state of Georgia.
- **Prepared** a comprehensive examination of the central panel of administrative law judges (ALJs) -- a centralized agency housing state ALJs who hear cases for administrative agencies. The goal of such a central panel is to enhance the quality, impartiality, and independence of administrative hearings.
- **Issued Op Eds** on immigration judge independence and the need for a more fair immigration bond hearing system.
- **Successfully signed** onto an amicus with the Illinois Supreme Court, saying that a government agency cannot rely on the new version of Illinois' Freedom of Information Act to deny requests that were eligible when filed.
- **Implemented** the launch of a new VoteForJudges.org website with Chicago Votes to enhance our judicial voter education efforts. Of note: VoteForJudges.org had 35,000 unique visitors for the March primary.
- **Engaged** a highly motivated leadership for the 2018 Pritzker Northwestern law school chapter.

**Perspectives from Inside Chicago Appleseed, with the assistance of pro bono professionals, works to identify barriers for unrepresented parties and inequities for everyone when accessing the courts in Cook County.**

Very few people know what to expect when they are called to court—whether for a divorce or child support matter, a criminal charge, or eviction—especially if they are unable to afford their own

attorney. Our work focuses on improving court processes for the those with and without representation.

Our advocacy makes the courts more fair and therefore, more effective. We operate with paid staff and a pro bono corps of professionals who conduct both national and local research, in an effort to develop proposed solutions that reach our objectives. Working diligently together, we devise strategies for implementing these solutions.

**How Do We Break Through?**

Chicago Appleseed is nonpartisan and leverages our unique connections to the local justice system to promote social justice and government effectiveness.

As part of the Appleseed Network, an international network of 18 social justice organizations, we draw upon the expertise and work in collaboration with partners who have demonstrated records of success providing aid to vulnerable populations.

# Areas of Focus

**Access to Justice**

We are committed to identifying unfair, ineffective, and inefficient court management policies and procedures, recommending improvements, and advocating for their implementation.

**Criminal Justice**

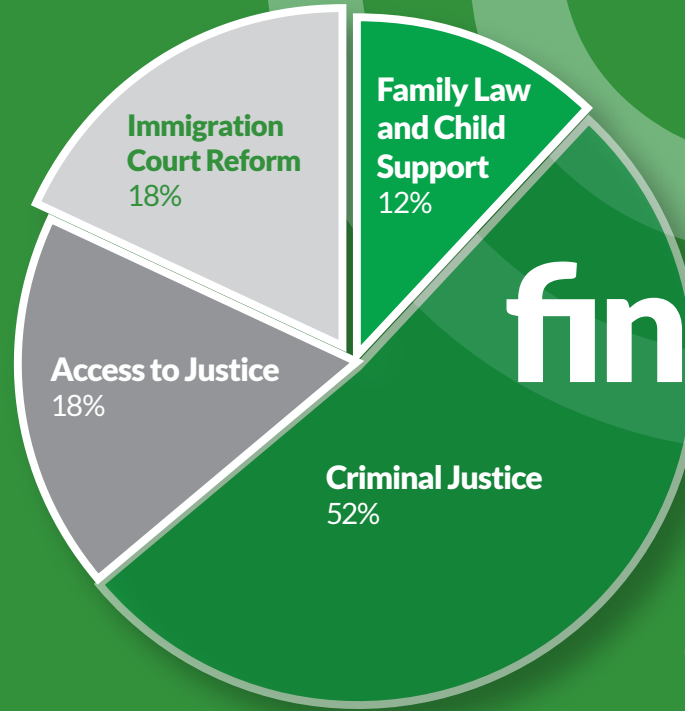
We encourage safe and cost-effective alternatives to incarceration by partnering with government agencies and community organizations.

**Family Law and Courts**

We advocate for women, children and low-income parents through reform of the domestic relations and domestic violence courts.

**Immigration Court Reform**

Through multiple cooperative efforts with our national affiliate, Appleseed, and pro bono lawyers, we engage in projects to improve the federal immigration courts and policy.



# finances

In 2017, more than 80% of our expenses went to support projects to make the courts more fair, accessible, and efficient.

# Support

## **With your donation, we will continue to push for:**

- Help stop the imposition of unfair court debt on indigent defendants and the unfair imposition of money bond.
- Help expand litigant-centered courts using administrative hearing officers who help that meet the needs of unrepresented parents and children
- Preservation of appellate (and other) rights in eviction courts through court recording
- Monitor court compliance with the general order regarding public defender appointment
- Other initiatives to improve the quality of justice for all communities in Cook County.

## **Please use our online form to donate to the Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice.**

You can also send a donation to us at 750 North Lake Shore Drive, 4th Floor, Chicago, Illinois 60611. We encourage you to join our Presidents' Circle and become a sustaining member of Chicago Appleseed.



750 N. Lake Shore Dr., Fourth Floor | Chicago, IL 60611 | 312-988-6565 | [chicagoappleseed.org](http://chicagoappleseed.org)

The Fund for Justice is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization. Our Federal tax exempt employer identification number is 23-7059214.