

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT AUGUST 2021

CHICAGO
APPLESEED
CENTER FOR FAIR COURTS

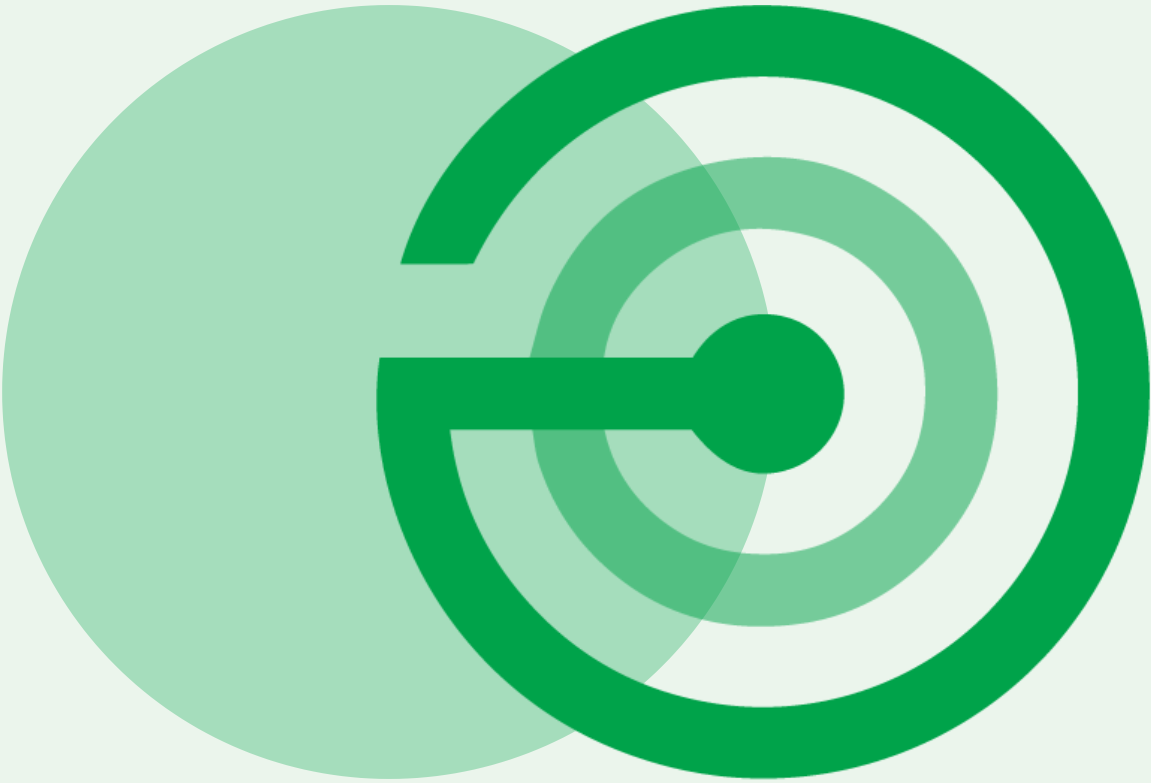


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EXECUTIVE STATEMENT

DEAR FRIENDS:

For nearly 25 years, Chicago Appleseed Center for Fair Courts has fought to make Cook County, Illinois, and Federal Courts more accessible and fair. Our focus includes reducing the harm of the criminal legal system and immigration courts; improving the family law and child support systems; and promoting accessible justice and police accountability.

We use research and advocacy to support community-led, evidence-based, anti-racist policies and practices that make our legal systems more accessible and equitable.

This year has been difficult for all of our friends, families, and communities, and has presented unprecedented challenges in our courts and government institutions -- but collaborative advocacy has still pushed forward several systemic improvements. This report highlights the impact of several of Chicago Appleseed's most notable recent accomplishments.

Our work is possible because of the community collaborations, volunteers, and organizations that support our efforts to improve lives by improving the courts.

Thank you.

SINCERELY,



MALCOLM RICH

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CHICAGO APPLESEED CENTER FOR FAIR COURTS

MISSION + VISION

WE IMPROVE LIVES BY IMPROVING THE COURTS.

MISSION

We advocate for a legal system that is equitable, accessible, and fair to all people; efficient so justice is not delayed; and effective in seeking solutions to systemic injustices.

VISION

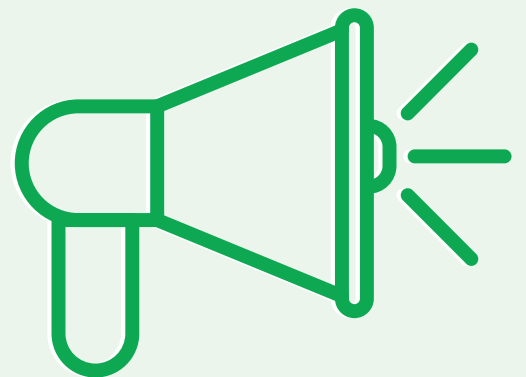
We are focused on improving court processes so that people without representation have the same opportunities to access justice as those with representation.



**WE CONDUCT
INTERDISCIPLINARY
RESEARCH TO
SUPPORT
COMMUNITY
PERSPECTIVES
WITH DATA.**



**WE EDUCATE PEOPLE
ON HOW TO ACCESS
THEIR RIGHTS IN COURT
AND TEACH LAWYERS +
LEGISLATORS, HOW TO
FIGHT FOR THESE RIGHTS
FOR THEIR CLIENTS
+ CONSTITUENTS.**



**WE ADVOCATE
FOR ANTI-RACIST
POLICIES +
PRACTICES THAT
MAKE THE LEGAL
SYSTEM LESS
HARMFUL.**

PROGRAM STRUCTURE



COLLABORATION FOR JUSTICE

Together, Chicago Appleseed Center for Courts, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and the Chicago Council of Lawyers, a bar association, make up the the Collaboration for Justice – a joint effort of the organizations to bring improvements to the legal system.



ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Our 5 Collaboration for Justice Committees, led by 10-100 volunteers, meet monthly or more to oversee our collaborative work in each program area.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Access to Justice works to identify ineffective, inefficient, and unfair court management policies and procedures in civil, criminal, and domestic violence courts.

CIVIL LIBERTIES AND POLICING

Civil Liberties & Police Accountability focuses on civil liberties issues that are both local and national in scope—including police accountability in Chicago, police collective bargaining agreements, and more.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Criminal Justice focuses on reducing harm in all areas of our criminal justice system, with the primary focus on decarceration, transformative justice, and racial equity.

FAMILY LAW AND COURTS

Family Law engages in a broad range of projects related to domestic relations courts, the child support system, and the experiences of families moving through these systems.

IMMIGRATION COURT REFORM

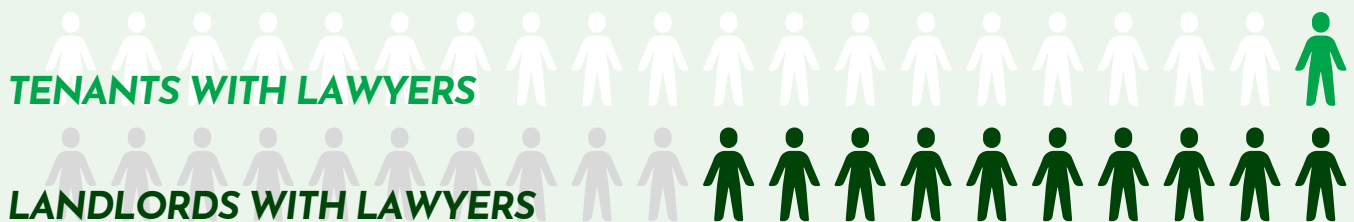
Immigration Court Reform works with the National Appleseed Network Immigration Collaborative looking into issues related to immigration bond court, electronic monitoring, and more.

IMPACT: FAIR COURTS

ENSURE ACCESS TO EVICTION APPEALS

TYPICAL EVICTIONS TAKE 2 MINUTES, AND LESS THAN 5% OF TENANTS HAVE LAWYERS BUT OVER 50% OF LANDLORDS DO.

Without a court record, unrepresented tenants essentially have no means to appeal an eviction, which impacts future housing access. **We lead a coalition that successfully advocated for court recording technology to be installed in five Cook County eviction courtrooms -- for the first time in decades -- in 2019.**



MONITORING ACCOUNTABLE PROSECUTION

PARTLY DUE TO POLICIES OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY, PEOPLE SENTENCED TO PRISON IN 2018 DROPPED BY 19% IN COOK COUNTY WHILE "VIOLENT" CRIME DECREASED IN CHICAGO BY 8%.

The only way to end the criminalization of Black, brown, and poor communities is by ensuring prosecutors prioritize restorative justice over punishment. **We have worked with The People's Lobby, Reclaim Chicago, and the Chicago Council of Lawyers to evaluate State's Attorney Kim Foxx's Administration since her election in 2016.**

PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY OF THE COURT

IN 2018, AT LEAST 600 ILLINOIS APPELLATE DEFENDER CLIENTS COULD NOT APPEAL CONVICTIONS DUE TO THE CLERK OF THE COURT REPORTEDLY LOSING OR DELAYING ACCESS TO RECORDS.

New Cook County Court Clerk, Iris Martinez, has taken office and we have joined with the Civic Federation to evaluate the new administration's functioning. **Our coalition is tracking campaign promises and progress meeting legal and broader community needs.**

IMPACT: ACCESSIBLE JUSTICE

SAFEGUARDING RIGHTS TO COMMUNICATE

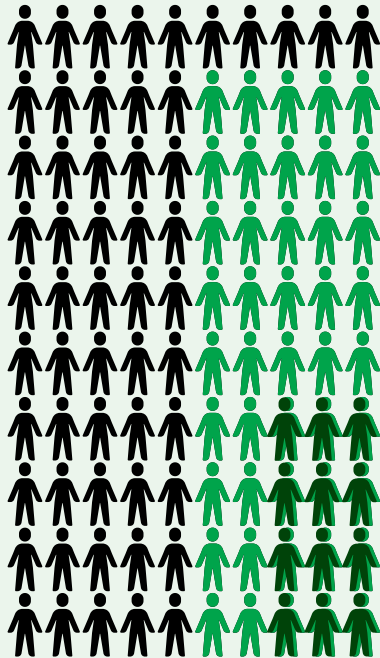
AT LEAST 33% OF THE COOK COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDER'S CLIENTS IN 2020 WERE NEVER OFFERED A PHONE CALL BY POLICE.

Before the SAFE-T Act passed in 2021, which protects rights to communication for all of Illinois, Chicago Appleseed advocated for and helped implement the Cook County Public Defender's (PD) Police Station Representation Unit (PSRU). We continue to work with the PD to promote and improve the services of the PSRU.

551,000 +
CASES IN
CHICAGO.

ABOUT 45%
COVID-19
WHERE 1/3
PEOPLE
LIVE IN
POVERTY.

74% CASES
FROM COOK
COUNTY JAIL.



PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH

OVER 74% OF COVID-19 CASES IN COOK COUNTY AREAS WHERE ONE-THIRD OR MORE RESIDENTS LIVE IN POVERTY WERE CAUSED BY PEOPLE CYCLING IN AND OUT OF THE JAIL.

Through the pandemic, we have pressured stakeholders to decarcerate and protect people in jail and prison; in December 2020, our collective advocacy pushed the Department of Public Health to prioritize incarcerated people in 'Phase 1B' of the state's vaccine distribution process.

TRACKING THE PANDEMIC COURT SHUTDOWN

OVER 2,600 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN INCARCERATED AT COOK COUNTY JAIL OR ON HOUSE ARREST FOR OVER A YEAR PRETRIAL DUE TO COVID-19.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, criminal courtrooms in Cook County were shuttered; courts have started to reopen, but the backlog that existed prior to and because of the pandemic has caused massive delays in justice. Chicago Appleseed is focused on mitigating the aftermath of the court's closure and monitoring the effects on the community through the pandemic.

IMPACT: EQUITABLE SYSTEMS

SAFETY ACCOUNTABILITY FAIRNESS + EQUITY – TODAY ACT SAFE-T ACT - IL PUBLIC ACT 101-0652

The SAFE-T Act was signed in February 2021. Chicago Appleseed has long championed many of the reforms it includes, such as protecting the right to communication and ending wealth-based driver's license suspensions; as a founding member of the Coalition to End Money Bond, we helped draft the Pretrial Fairness Act, which is the piece of the SAFE-T Act that abolishes cash bail in 2023.

**INCARCERATION,
EVEN FOR JUST A
FEW DAYS, COULD
REDUCE SOMEONE'S
ANNUAL INCOME BY
AS MUCH AS 40%.**

**5 TIMES MORE
DRIVER'S LICENSES
ARE SUSPENDED IN
MOSTLY-BLACK
NEIGHBORHOODS
THAN IN PRIMARILY
WHITE NEIGHBORHOODS.**

LICENSE TO WORK ACT IL PUBLIC ACT 101-0623

We helped organize for the License to Work Act, ending suspended licenses for the inability to pay parking tickets, and for the provisions of the SAFE-T Act that enhance it by including speed camera tickets. Together, these two policies could give relief to over 311,000 Illinois drivers.

CRIMINAL + TRAFFIC ASSESSMENTS ACT CTAA - IL PUBLIC ACT 100-987

When someone can't afford to pay a legal fee, they accrue court debt, which adds up quickly. In 2019, Chicago Appleseed led the coalition to enact the CTAA, legislation creating a criminal court fee waiver. We work to expand the CTAA end all other regressive court costs, fines, and fees in other areas of the court system.

**IN COOK COUNTY,
51% OF PEOPLE
WITH COURT DEBT
SUPPORT CHILDREN;
OVER 60% HAVE AN
INCOME OF LESS
THAN \$30,000.**

IMPACT: PUBLIC EDUCATION



CHICAGO APPLESEED, 2019

CIVICS EDUCATION + JUDICIAL ELECTIONS

MORE THAN 75% OF THE PEOPLE SENTENCED TO INCARCERATION IN COOK COUNTY JAIL ARE BLACK, BUT THE JUDICIARY IS OVER 70% WHITE.

For over a decade, we have educated hundreds-of-thousands of voters on judicial election and selection processes with our website, VoteForJudges.org. In 2020, that work paid off when judicial ballots were cast in historic numbers. **We have now partnered with Chicago Votes Action Fund on a community court-watching program to demystify the process, while also holding judges accountable to the community; volunteers have completed over 450 observations to date.**



CHICAGO APPLESEED, 2017

COMMUNITY TRAININGS

OUR STAFF PARTICIPATE IN DOZENS OF TEACH-INS AND EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS MONTHLY.

We have developed a variety of resources that help bring transparency to legal and civil rights issues for the community as they navigate the opaque court systems of Cook County and Illinois. **Since 2019, we have organized at least 15 forums, presentations, or continuing education courses on topics such as police accountability, judicial selection, child support, and more, with a total of over 1,000 registrants.**



CHICAGO APPLESEED, 2019

SUPPORT

GIVING BREAKDOWN

INDIVIDUAL + FAMILY DONORS

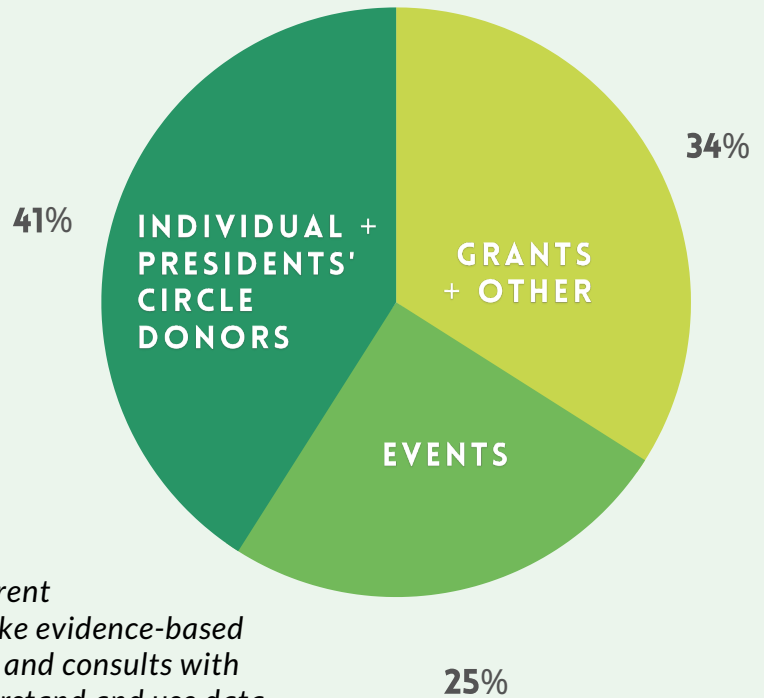
We have over 200 community supporters who regularly contribute to our fight for fair and effective courts, and over 60 Presidents' Circle members who sustain us with annual or monthly contributions.

EVENT SPONSORSHIPS + GIVING

We host annual events to celebrate our accomplishments and the work of our pro bono partners; almost 50 different law firms, sponsors, and other supporters gave through our virtual events in 2020 and 2021.

GRANTS + OTHER SUPPORT

Chicago Appleseed partners with several different foundations and research organizations to make evidence-based recommendations to improve the legal system and consults with other local nonprofits to help effectively understand and use data.



CHICAGO APPLESEED, 2019

SUPPORT OUR WORK

Chicago Appleseed's accomplishments are only possible because of our sustaining supporters.

Donate to Chicago Appleseed at ChicagoAppleseed.org/Donate.

Presidents' Circle Donors are champions of Chicago Appleseed's Collaboration for Justice with the Chicago Council of Lawyers, contributing on a recurring basis.

Join the Presidents' Circle of Donors at ChicagoAppleseed.org/About-Us/Presidents-Circle.

GET INVOLVED

JOIN A COMMITTEE

The work of Chicago Appleseed Center for Fair Courts falls under one of our five programs areas - Access to Justice, Civil Liberties & Police Accountability, Criminal Justice, Family Law, and Immigration Courts.

These groups of volunteers meet monthly to cumulatively provide thousands-of-hours of pro bono research and advocacy work for our collaborative initiatives.

VOLUNTEER

Over many decades, we have built unique and trustworthy connections to community activists, academics, and justice system actors who assist our work.

We operate with the help of a pro bono corps of professionals (both lawyers and not) who conduct national and local research in an effort to develop solutions that reach community objectives.

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AND LEARN ABOUT
TEAM PRO BONO AND
INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEER
OPPORTUNITIES, GO TO:
[CHICAGOAPPLESEED.ORG/GET-INVOLVED.](https://chicagoappleseed.org/get-involved)**





CHICAGO

APPLESEED

CENTER FOR FAIR COURTS

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