

As mask mandates lift, Legal Aid continues serving region

As mask mandates lift, Community Legal Aid is continuing its work to meet the legal needs of low-income residents throughout central northeast Ohio.

While the nonprofit law firm's offices remain closed to visitors, clients are able to meet with advocates by scheduling appointments, and the team continues to serve clients remotely and in person in court.

Steven McGarrity, Legal Aid's executive director, said this model of continuing largely remotely won't impact the organization's ability to effectively serve its clients.

"Our team has made a tremendous effort in the last 14 months to serve our clients without disruption," said Steven McGarrity, Legal Aid's executive director. "We've been fluid and flexible in order to keep meeting our community's needs, and that isn't going to change."

McGarrity also stressed that attorneys have continued to attend court hearings without disruption since the beginning of the pandemic.

"We've been following the guidelines of each of our local courts," he said. "If they're requiring in-person hearings, we're there in the room right alongside our clients. Many have switched to virtual hearings, and we've accommodated that, as well. We're doing what we need to make sure the low-income residents in our community

have equal access to quality legal representation, in whatever form that takes.”

The organization is also continuing its work prioritizing the emergent needs coming out of the pandemic, including preventing evictions and keeping families housed, removing barriers to employment, building financial assets for individuals and families, providing debt relief, protecting victims of violence, and mitigating education disparities for children in poverty.

Legal Aid continues to update its policies and procedures in response to the changing public health landscape. Residents can learn more and see up-to-date information by visiting www.communitylegalaid.org/covid19.

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