



**LGBT Bar Association of Greater New York (LeGaL)
2015 Bar Leaders Innovation Awards Nomination
Hiring a Legal Director
Narrative Description**

What Led to Hiring a Legal Director

- Founded in 1978 and formally incorporated in 1984, LeGaL was one of the nation's first bar associations for the LGBT legal community, and remains one of the largest and most active organizations of its kind in the country. Serving the New York metropolitan area, LeGaL is dedicated to improving the administration of the law, ensuring full equality for members of the LGBT community, and promoting the expertise and advancement of LGBT legal professionals.
- In 1994, LeGaL formed a 501(c)(3) foundation as the vehicle for all of its charitable and educational programs. Among its many activities, the LeGaL Foundation publishes *Lesbian/Gay Law Notes*, the most comprehensive monthly publication summarizing legal and legislative developments affecting the LGBT community here and abroad, sponsors the Dr. M.L. "Hank" Henry, Jr. Fund for Judicial Fellowships, and runs the area's only career fair dedicated to first-year LGBT law students.
- Most notably, though, the LeGaL Foundation operates a growing network of free walk-in legal clinics throughout the greater metropolitan area. For decades, these clinics have provided a safe space for thousands of members of the LGBTQ community to seek judgment-free help with their legal problems. Clinic visitors receive direct legal counseling from trained volunteer attorneys, consisting of the identification and narrowing of legal issues, as well as referrals to appropriate community organizations for legal and social services assistance. Each visitor has a roughly 15-20 minute consultation with one of our attorneys.
- Started almost thirty years ago, our flagship clinic at Manhattan's LGBT Center, alone serves hundreds of individuals each year; a line of visitors is waiting before we arrive each week. We also staff similar clinics in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Newark.
- LeGaL formerly employed only an Executive Director and a design/communications associate to run all operations. An expansion in clinical offerings, combined with recent organizational growth, however, led the Executive Director and Board of Directors of LeGaL to conclude in late 2014 that it was now time to hire another full-time staff member, with the title of Legal Director, whose focus would be managing and improving our vital and

burgeoning clinical enterprise, refining our system of handling referrals, and coordinating our educational efforts with both our members and the local community.

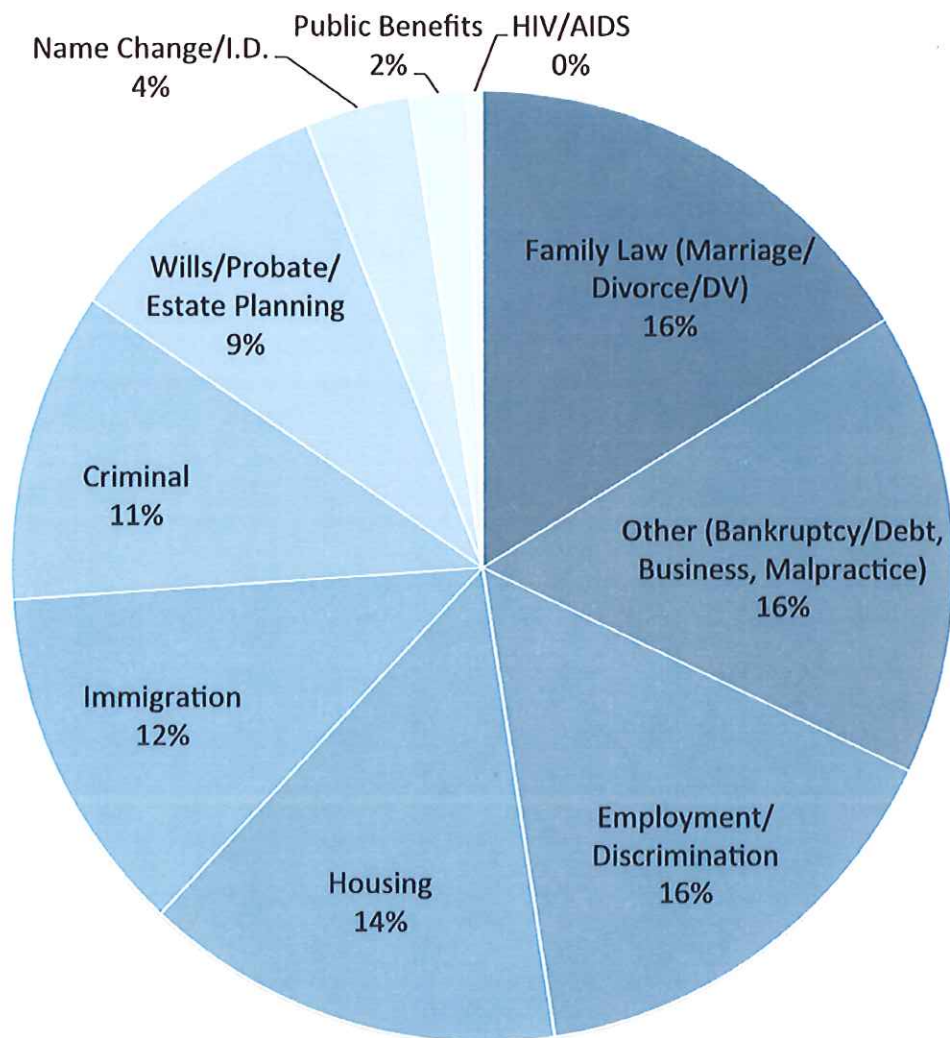
Why Now

- Research indicates that members of the LGBT community face significant and unique legal challenges due to many factors including, among others, a legacy of discrimination, continuing inequality under the law, and the lower average incomes earned by many members of the LGBT community.
- Transformational developments in the law, including changes in the recognition of our relationships and families, against a backdrop of dramatic cuts in government funding for legal services, make the need for legal counsel even greater.
- As our community celebrates federal recognition post-*Windsor* as well as a fifty-state marriage solution from the Supreme Court this year, we nonetheless must be prepared to counsel with respect to the full range of legal issues still facing our community, including for those community members whose legal concerns will not be resolved through marriage.
- To be sure, the LGBT community has a diverse array of organizations handling major impact litigation, but there are few examples of LGBT-specific organizations devoted to serving the varied civil legal needs of the LGBT community in a holistic fashion, and an insufficient coordination of the local legal resources that are available. With a designated internal point person now in place to better manage these resources, LeGaL is the perfect organization to assess the local LGBT public interest legal landscape and harness the resources of the hundreds of our LGBT attorney members in the city who would like to help other members of the community.
- Up to this point, our organization has been constrained by an inability to engage further with or directly represent a community member following an initial visit to one of our legal clinics.
- LeGaL has, however, also arrived at an exciting crossroads. The past few years have been marked by significant change and growth, which we've managed through prudent and strategic risk-taking and investment, and a shift to a professionalized staff model.

Hiring Brett Figlewski

- After an extensive search, we were thrilled to hire attorney Brett M. Figlewski as our first Legal Director, starting in February 2015.
- A graduate of Vanderbilt Law School and Middlebury College, Brett joined LeGaL after over a decade at Sanctuary for Families, New York's leading service provider and advocate for survivors of domestic violence, sex trafficking, and related forms of gender violence. As a senior staff attorney, he dedicated himself to ongoing work on behalf of some of the most marginalized and voiceless.

- Beyond litigation, he also created Sanctuary's LGBT Initiative, which helped achieve Fair Access to Family Court, landmark state legislation that finally ensured access to civil orders of protection for all victims of domestic violence. In addition to frequently volunteering at LeGaL's drop-in clinics, Brett also created a weekly legal clinic for LGBTQ youth who participate in the outreach program of St. Luke-in-the-Fields in the West Village.
- Brett's impressive and extensive public interest experience allowed him to hit the ground running with his responsibilities at LeGaL. His hiring marked a transformational moment for LeGaL and dramatically increased our capacity to assist those in the LGBT community faced with navigating a very complicated legal landscape.
- In the following pages, we include statistics of how many people Brett, in conjunction with the small army of bar association member volunteers he leads and harnesses, has assisted this past year.



Helpline & Clinic Inquiries by Issue

Clinic Attendees year-to-date: 374

Average per week: 9

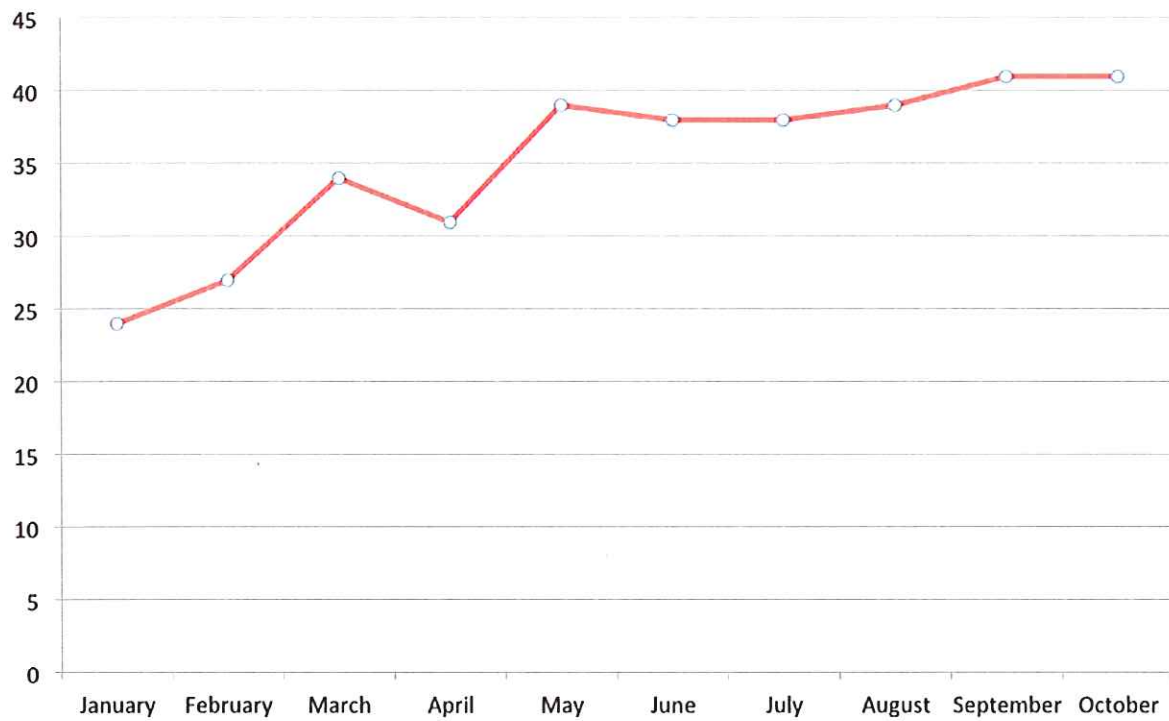
Average length of consultation: 24 min.

Helpline Inquirers year-to-date: 510

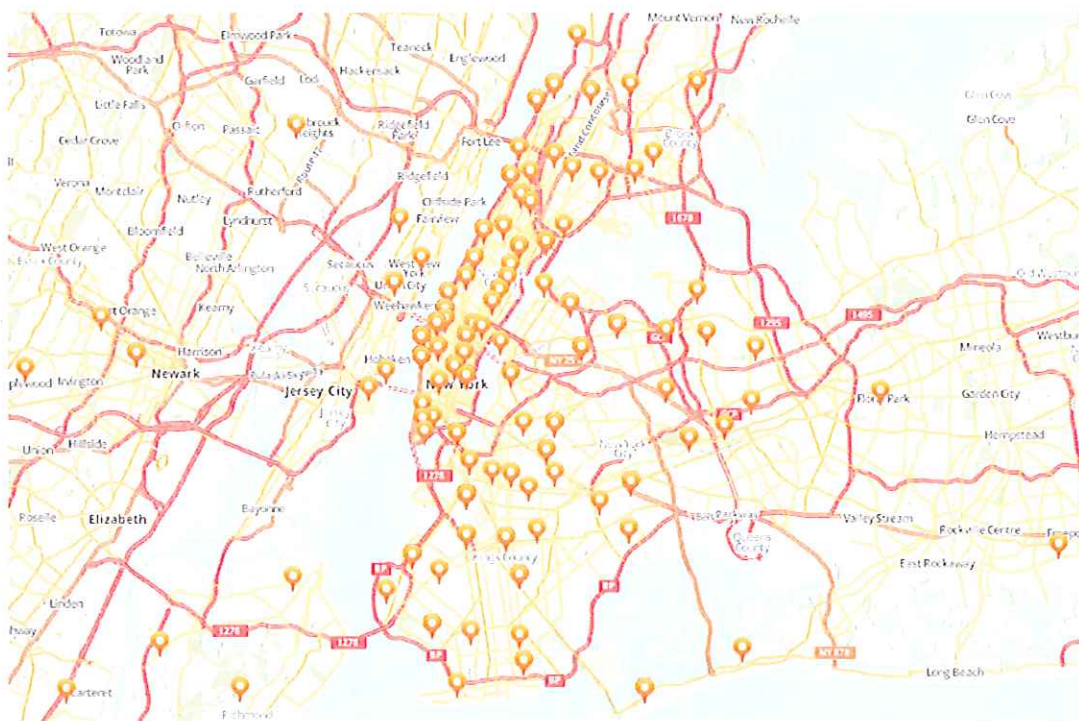
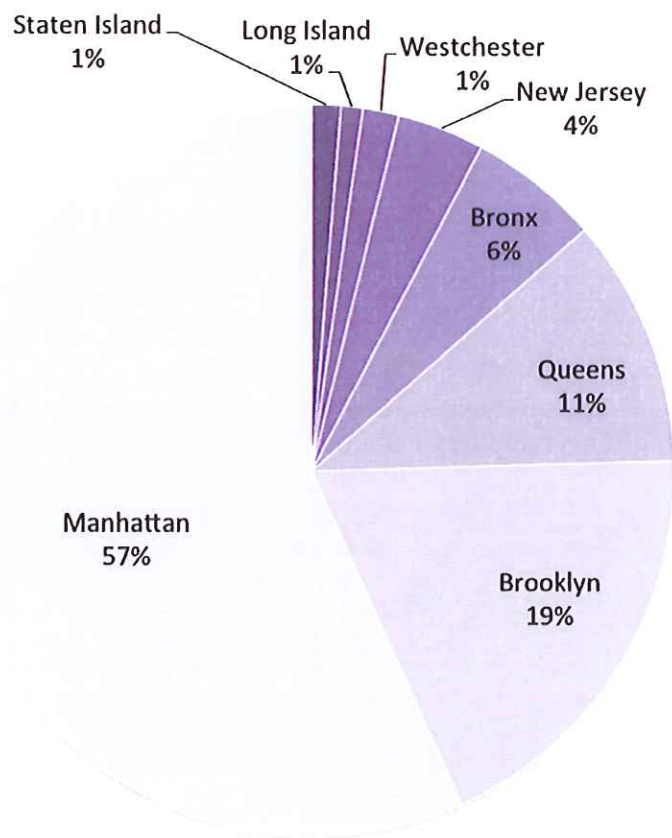
Average per week: 12.1

Total Inquiries year-to-date: 884

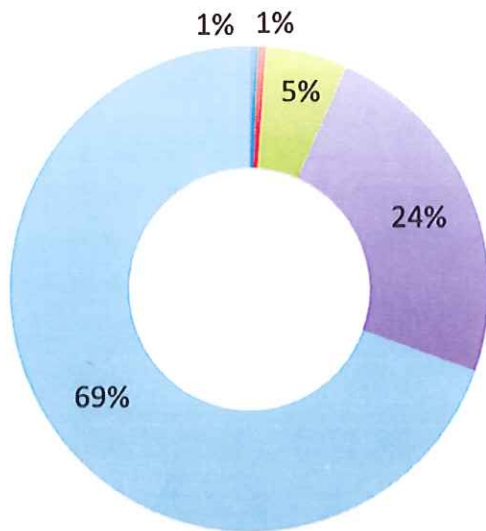
Projected year-end total: 1094



Number of Clinic Attendees per month in 2015

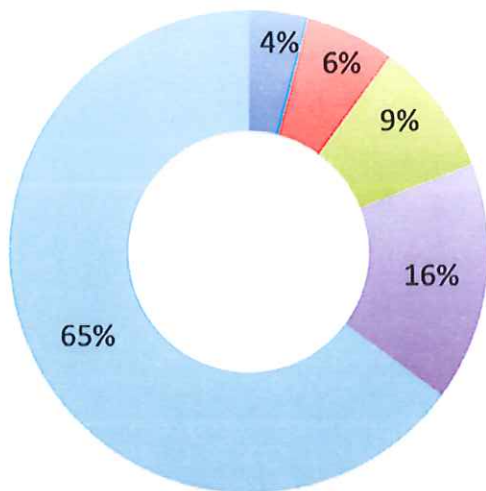


Manhattan Clinic Attendees by borough/residence



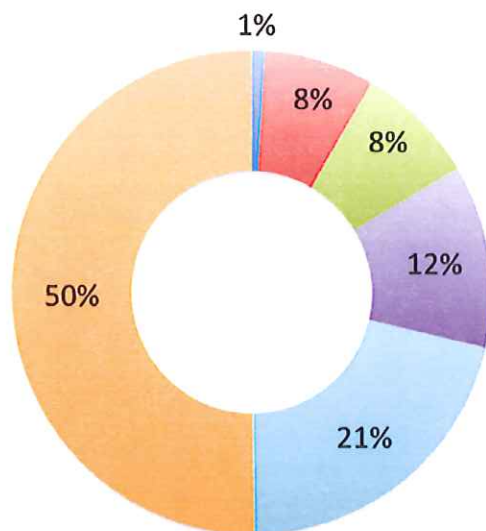
- Intersex
- Other
- Transgender
- Female
- Male

Clinic Attendees sex/gender



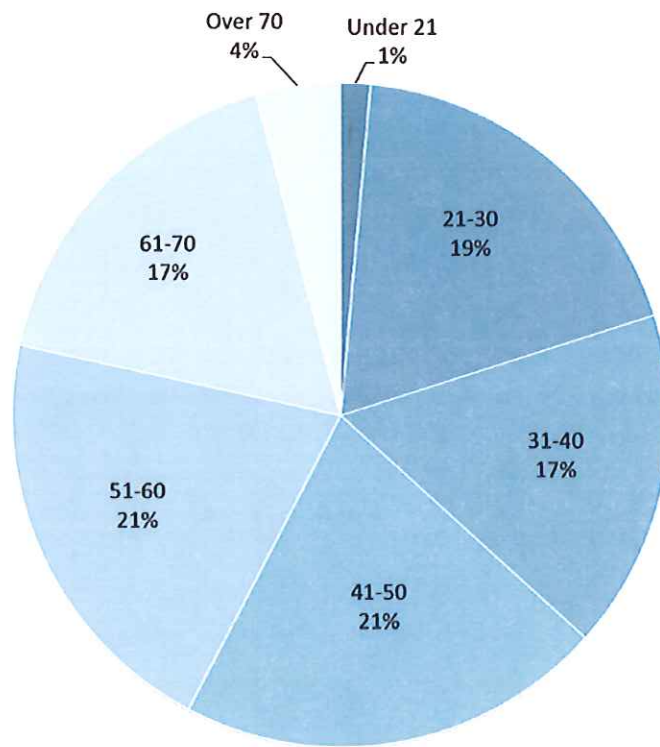
- Straight
- Other
- Bisexual
- Lesbian
- Gay

Clinic Attendees sexual orientation

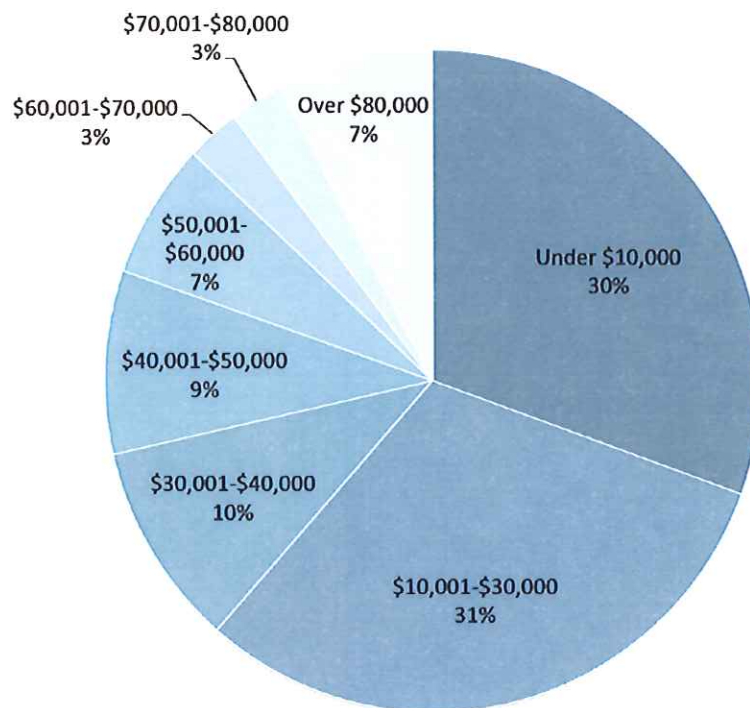


- Middle Eastern
- Asian
- Other
- African-American
- Latino
- White

Clinic Attendees race/ethnicity



Clinic Attendees age range



Clinic Attendees annual income