



IMPACT REPORT 2025

LIFT WISCONSIN
Legal Interventions for Transforming Wisconsin

Elevating People. Expanding Justice.

OUR MISSION

LIFT's mission is to dismantle legal barriers preventing Wisconsinites from achieving economic stability. Through our commitment to improving access to justice for everyone, we strive to reform legal systems, increase personal agency, and democratize data.

OUR WORK

Dear Friends, Supporters, and Partners,

As I reflect on 2025, I am filled with gratitude for the incredible progress we've made together toward our vision: transforming and reforming legal systems, increasing personal agency, democratizing data, and dismantling legal barriers.

LIFT Wisconsin's past year is best characterized as one of expansion. We presented at two national legal conferences and received great feedback and interest. We introduced LIFT and the Legal Tune Up tool to nearly 900 individuals across the state through presentations and webinars. We launched our Legal Navigators program and have trained over 15 navigators, and more folks are signing up. Our expansion included reaching out to 50 of Wisconsin's 72 counties. Over 200 individuals were served directly with an action plan to recover their driver's license and improve family economic stability through clinics and online inquiries. We continue to reach thousands of Wisconsinites through a robust social media presence, new partnerships with community-based organizations, and are actively pursuing partners in rural areas to address the rural access to justice crisis.

“ We know that when people cannot equitably access the legal system, civic engagement erodes and democracy fails. ”

Due to the uncertain federal landscape around funding for legal aid, the strain on our economy, and the rise of AI use (especially by those who seek to represent themselves in court), we anticipate that the need for LIFT and its services will dramatically increase over the next few years. We are committed to meeting that challenge. We know that when people cannot equitably access the legal system, civic engagement erodes and democracy fails. We believe our work to bridge the access to justice crisis for Wisconsinites is crucial to addressing poverty and increasing faith in the system, but we can only do it in continued partnership with other legal service organizations, community-based organizations, and donors.

Thank you for making 2025 a year of expansion!

-Erica Nelson, Executive Director



OUR MODEL

Low-income families receive adequate legal help only 14% of the time. We're here to change that. Here's how:

PARTNERSHIP



EMBED COMMUNITY NAVIGATORS

LIFT trains community partners to act as navigators for families inadequately supported by the legal system. Navigators help identify legal issues, surface unmet legal needs, and access legal protections.

IMPACT



SUPPORT THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Resilient communities that can equitably access legal protections are better equipped to build healthy families and vibrant futures.

ACCESS



EXPAND THE LEGAL ECOSYSTEM

LIFT increases access and capacity within the legal ecosystem to address systemic barriers that prolong poverty through our Legal Tune Up tool and legal clinics.

2025 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

WELCOMING A COMMUNITY JUSTICE WORKER TO THE TEAM

In October, with the generous support of Ascendium, we participated in a statewide Community Justice Worker program that increases the capacity of and services provided by legal service organizations by training non-lawyers (aka community justice workers), on specific areas of the law, such as drivers license reinstatement or housing issues. This added capacity has resulted in significantly more individuals getting the answers and support they need.



Danitza Rodriguez Jimenez joins LIFT as our Ascendium Community Justice worker!

POLICY ADVOCACY: CONSUMER DEBT

In 2025, LIFT Wisconsin engaged in critical policy work addressing consumer debt default rates by documenting the variations across 72 different counties in answering small claims cases. This work highlighted the level of complexity and lack of uniformity across the state, creating even greater challenges for those trying to go it alone.





Community-Based Organizations



Attorneys & Civil Legal Aid Providers



Legal Navigators



Wisconsinites with Civil Legal Problems

LAUNCH OF THE LEGAL NAVIGATORS PROGRAM

This year, with the help of justice advocate Louise Trubeck, we proudly launched our Legal Navigators program. Legal Navigators trains volunteer individuals on each module of the Legal Tune Up Tool (our free, online tool that helps Wisconsinites overcome common civil legal barriers). By empowering individuals to navigate through the Legal Tune Up Tool, we reduce the burden on overworked civil legal aid attorneys, help unclog our court system, and increase civic engagement. This program is especially critical given that 75% of attorneys in Wisconsin live in three main metropolitan counties (Milwaukee, Dane, and Waukesha), leaving rural communities severely underserved.

LIFT LIBRARY INITIATIVE

Thanks to support from the ABE Foundation, we expanded access to justice through our LIFT Library Initiative, bringing legal resources and information directly into community libraries across Wisconsin. This initiative ensures that individuals seeking legal help can access materials, guidance, and referrals in trusted, accessible community spaces—particularly important for those who may not know where to turn or feel intimidated by traditional legal settings.

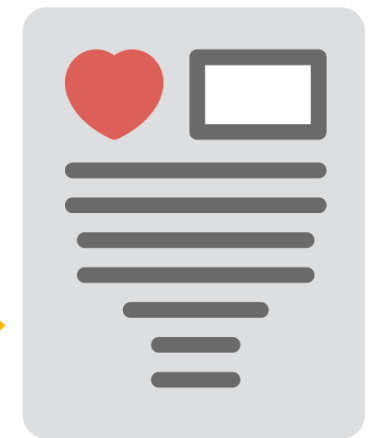


COST OF CONVICTION PARTNERSHIP

LIFT Wisconsin partnered with EXPO Wisconsin on the Cost of Conviction initiative, which addresses the myriad of fines, fees, and arrears that formerly incarcerated individuals face—barriers that leave them owing money long before they have had the opportunity to earn it. We began by asking those with lived experience and involvement with the criminal justice system to take a survey so that we can identify, share, and educate policymakers, stakeholders, and the public about many of the unseen costs that inevitably add burden to those already at a disadvantage, navigating their basic needs and achieving economic stability. In 2026, we'll be using those survey results to advocate for policy changes and educate Wisconsinites on the financial and civil legal obstacles facing those formerly incarcerated. Our goal is to increase understanding around this issue, and then together, we can work to remove these barriers, increasing the likelihood that criminal justice involvement doesn't define someone for decades to come.

LOOKING AHEAD:

In 2026, thanks to our partnership with the Center for Patient Partnerships at UW-Madison, we'll be launching a new module on the Legal Tune Up tool that allows anyone in Wisconsin to create, for free, a Power of Attorney for healthcare through a guided step-by-step process. Our goal is to increase the number of people who are better prepared in the event of a health emergency – saving them stress and court involvement.



Power of Attorney for Health Care is coming soon!

We will also share the results of the UW Institute on Poverty's evaluation of LIFT and the Legal Tune Up Tool, continue to advocate for a more efficient and transparent court system that better serves low-income and self-represented individuals, and bring attention to the need for more investment in civil legal aid. And we will continue our work to expand the legal navigators program, deepen library partnerships, increase our clinic presence in Milwaukee and continue to work closely with community-based partner organizations to mitigate the harm that comes as a consequence of unresolved civil legal issues.

WHO WE SERVED IN 2025



12,184
first time users accessed our services



787
attendees participated in LIFT presentations



181
individuals received direct assistance

THROUGH THE LEGAL TUNE UP TOOL

Folks using the Legal Tune Up tool were able to address a variety of their civil legal problems for free, without an attorney. The tool identified and assisted with:



329 eviction cases



944 child support orders



474 driver's license records



736 small claims cases



LIFT Wisconsin partners with Legal Action of Wisconsin to provide services at a variety of clinics, assisting in legal issues like driver's licenses, evictions, and more.

OUR IMPACT

We are proud of the work that our small but mighty team accomplished over the past year. In 2023 we were able to directly serve over 200 individuals in our in-person clinics spanning four WI counties: Dane, Jefferson, Racine and Milwaukee. Additionally, nearly 8,500 individuals utilized our Legal Tune Up tool. Of those Legal Tune Up users 58% identified as BIPOC, 70% received a public benefit, and nearly 90% were considered low-income. Thousands have done a legal check up, hundreds have utilized the child support modification tool, filed for eviction record removal, addressed driver's license suspensions and sought to remove a criminal record or request their criminal background. We are bridging the gap in justice.

OUR INVITATION

We are in a strong position to build upon our momentum. We invite you to invest in us and get involved in our very important work. We are now actively seeking sponsors, collaborators, and partners to help us expand our reach and advance our cause across the state of Wisconsin. Please reach out to Erica Nelson at erica@liftwisconsin.org to learn more.

We hope you join us.



You can [donate here!](#)



We are bridging the gap in justice.

IN THE NEWS

Justice Determinants of Wellbeing, Principle In Action: LIFT Wisconsin

"This innovation is another example of shifting power away from lawyers who know how to navigate the state's information labyrinth and changing public policies to help people have the information they need, when they need it, and in a format they can use to resolve civil legal issues."

2/25



Empowering Individuals with Legal Tune Up

"LIFT Wisconsin is an organization dedicated to empowering communities through technology driven assistance that dismantles the legal barriers that keep Wisconsinites from achieving economic stability."

4/7/25



LIFT Uses its Legal Tune Up Tool and Mobile Clinics to Empower Wisconsinites

"LIFT Wisconsin provides efficient, innovative technology-driven assistance that dismantles the legal barriers preventing Wisconsinites from achieving economic stability. Through our commitment to improving access to justice for everyone, we transform and reform legal systems, increase personal agency, and democratize data."

8/12/25



Legal Tune Up disrupts a 'revolving door' of legal issues

"The tool helps people file their own legal paperwork regarding issues like 'child support modification, driver's license reinstatement, eviction record removal and criminal record removal[.]'"

10/20/25



CONFERENCES

In 2025, LIFT gave over 60 presentations. We presented to Wisconsinites and folks all over the country! Here are our highlights for the year:

60+ presentations given

NATIONAL



LSC's Innovations in Technology Conference in Phoenix - 1/25



EJC conference in San Francisco - 5/27

WISCONSIN



WLA Fall Conference - 5/25



YWCA's Racial Justice Summit with Judicare - 1/25



WEBINARS

Giving Your Community the Access to Justice it Deserves: Introducing the LIFT Library Program

Access to Justice Workshop with LIFT Wisconsin



OUR PARTNERS

LIFT is committed to gaining the trust of all community members. We build that trust by partnering with and working alongside organizations embedded in BIPOC communities as well as offering free clinics across the state to meet our most underserved populations where they are. LegalTuneUp.org is available in both English and Spanish.



OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS



➤ Two silver medals from the 2022 Anthem Awards for Innovation and Responsible Technology - Partnership or Collaboration



➤ Wisconsin Startups to watch in 2020



➤ 2019 Alliance for the American Dream Winner



➤ 2023 InnovAction National Award Finalist



We're disrupting and mitigating the compounding economic harm that comes to those who cannot afford to seek legal advice to address a problem that threatens their livelihood. A suspended license can prevent having transportation to go to work, an eviction record can prevent a family from securing safe and stable housing, an arrest record can prevent landing employment, and child support orders can become difficult to pay. We have the tools to democratize data, transform archaic administrative and court systems, and prevent the structural discrimination that leads to economic instability.

We need your help to do it.



GET IN TOUCH

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