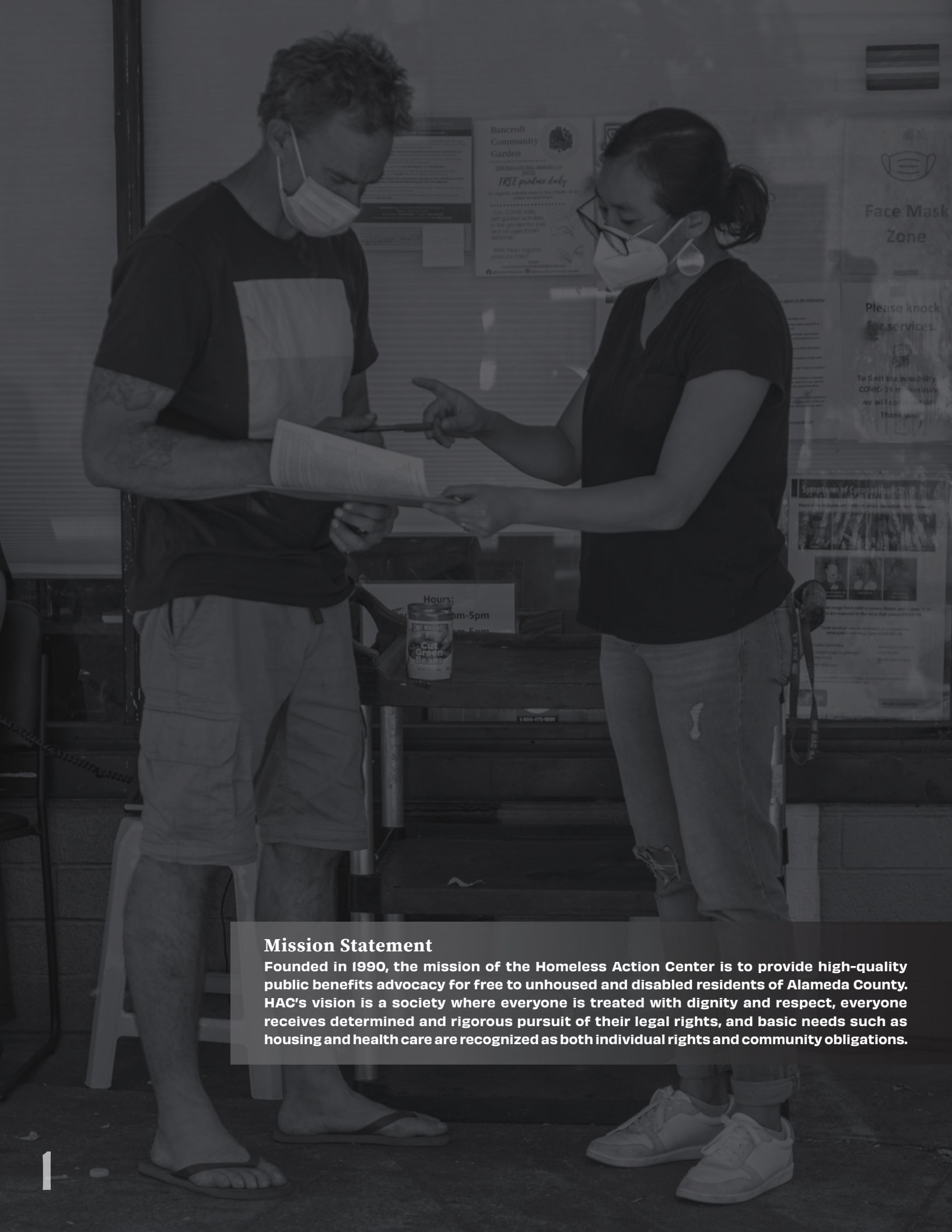




homeless
ACTION CENTER

2022 Annual Report





Mission Statement

Founded in 1990, the mission of the Homeless Action Center is to provide high-quality public benefits advocacy for free to unhoused and disabled residents of Alameda County. HAC's vision is a society where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, everyone receives determined and rigorous pursuit of their legal rights, and basic needs such as housing and health care are recognized as both individual rights and community obligations.

Dear HAC community members,

We would like to thank each of you for the support you have provided to the Homeless Action Center, particularly over the past two years. The pandemic brought many challenges and some moments of hope and beauty as folks came together to help each other get through.

No part of our communities has been hit harder by COVID-19 than unhoused people. Research from the beginning of the pandemic shows that low-income people of color have suffered disproportionately throughout the pandemic. Given that more than 60% of homeless folks in the East Bay are Black and the percent of BIPOC clients at HAC is even higher, the impact on our clients has been intense.

The good news is that we have managed to keep HAC functioning and serving clients in person from nearly the beginning of the pandemic. We deftly pivoted our services to implement a new telephone helpline to keep HAC attorneys and advocates connected with clients and community members, even during the days of lockdown. We continue to operate this helpline four hours a day, four days a week. Thousands have received assistance in connecting with pandemic resources including stimulus payments, food stamp increases, vaccine and health care resources, tents, food, and benefits advocacy.

Although the pandemic forced HAC to close the front doors at our Berkeley and West Oakland offices for the health and safety of clients and workers, we continued to provide in-person assistance through "curbside advocacy," greeting people at the door for drop-in services, providing water and snacks, as well as full-service mail collection and a place to charge their phones. Thanks to the work of a small and dedicated group of hard-core HAC staff, this service has been available to unhoused community members every Monday-Thursday from 1-5pm for the past two years. As of October 2022, almost

In many key ways, the Homeless Action Center is thriving and we are thankful for the solid support we receive from so many community members – near and far – as we continue to move forward with this important work.

With sincere thanks,



Pattie Wall
Executive Director



Armen Zohrabian
Chair, HAC Board of Directors

all of HAC staff have now returned to our offices and are available to help with in-person delivery of compassionate service.

As highlighted in this report, HAC has also doubled the size of our outreach team over the past year. These staff members have helped our homeless neighbors living in tents and vehicles, at encampments and on the streets, providing snacks, blankets, sanitation supplies, new tents, and connection to legal advocacy and non-legal services through weekly outreach visits. We have also provided access to loaner phones and solar chargers for clients needing to make critical calls regarding their legal cases.

This year HAC also began managing a seven-bed acute-need safe haven in Berkeley, serving people who are on the short list for permanent supportive housing. This house, named Almost Home, on Haste Street in Berkeley opened in October and will host individual adults for 21 to 120 days as they transition into permanent housing. We will share much more on this exciting new HAC project in the coming months.

Despite many obstacles, HAC clients and staff members – and the organization as a whole – have persevered. In late 2021, HAC began engaging in an organization re-set, focused largely on offering more opportunities for advancement for staff of color into management positions. Our new senior managing attorneys have added new capacity for improved training and retention of staff. Our Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Impact developed a roadmap for our agency to adopt more equitable and inclusive practices at every level of the organization.

2022 Annual Report: Description of HAC Program Areas



The main work of the Homeless Action Center is to provide high-quality, free public benefits advocacy to homeless and disabled residents of Alameda County. We do this in a number of ways, as described below.

Drop-In Services

Each week, from Monday through Thursday, 1:00 – 5:00pm, at both our South Berkeley and West Oakland offices, HAC opens its doors to anyone who may need assistance through our Drop-In Services. Whether or not the person is a client with an active legal case, we welcome them to stop by for “curbside advocacy” with questions about legal and non-legal service issues. Each afternoon’s shift is covered by a rotating crew of HAC staff members, ready to offer assistance along with water and snacks. Between our two offices, more than 400 members of our community receive mail through HAC – a crucial service when unhoused people often have no mailing address where they can collect their monthly benefits checks, packages, letters from other social services organizations and family, and other important mail. Our Drop-In Services are a low-barrier way for HAC to provide a helping hand.

Telephone Helpline

We recognize that, for various reasons, not everyone is able to make it to the HAC offices. At the beginning of the COVID pandemic, we created a Helpline to stay in touch with people during lockdown and make sure that they could reach us for assistance. Under the same schedule as our Drop-In Services, the Telephone Helpline is available to anyone who calls with a question or legal matter from Monday through Thursday, 1:00 – 5:00pm. Our attorneys and advocates who staff the Helpline are often able to assist callers with their issues, and when the matter is outside of HAC’s area of expertise, we offer referrals to other agencies in the area.



Outreach Team

As described in more detail in this report, HAC sends staff members into the field – to unsheltered people living in vehicles, tents on the street, and encampments – so that we can provide in-person assistance even when our clients cannot come into the office or access services by telephone. Our Outreach Team brings survival supplies with them when they hit the streets, offering practical support as they assist clients with applying for benefits, accessing housing-related services, filing appeals if they are denied on initial application, and other support such as applying for identification papers by verifying a client’s homeless status and providing vouchers to obtain no-fee ID from the DMV.



At the beginning of the COVID pandemic, we created a Helpline to stay in touch with people during lockdown and make sure that they could reach us for assistance.

Direct Legal Representation

At the heart of HAC's services is our legal advocacy designed to assist homeless and disabled people receive the public benefits to which they are entitled. Through in-person visits at our offices, telephone calls, and digital means, we specialize in helping clients move from receiving General Assistance (GA) to higher quality benefits like Supplemental Security Income (SSI). GA is a county program that provides a mere \$336 per month for individuals to live on, while SSI is a federal program that provides \$1,100 monthly and automatically qualifies the client for Medi-Cal insurance, which includes Denti-Cal as well. Once we are able to help a client qualify for SSI, the three-fold increase in income often provides the stability needed to secure permanent affordable housing. Beyond SSI, we help disabled clients apply for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), CalFresh (also known as food stamps), CalWORKs for unhoused people with children, and Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI). Our focus is on helping clients secure the resources they need to live better lives.

Almost Home: Temporary Supportive Housing

HAC's newest project is Almost Home, a house on Haste Street in Berkeley managed by HAC staff that is in the final stages of renovation. Almost Home will provide up to seven of our Supplemental Security Income (SSI) legal services clients with temporary, supported, transitional housing. The goal of the project is to stabilize represented HAC clients while they endure the long waiting period for resolution of their SSI case. HAC uses other temporary housing placements to stabilize particularly vulnerable legal services clients while we work on their cases, for example placing them at Casa Maria or the YMCA in Oakland. Almost Home allows us to place some clients in-house, making it even simpler for attorneys to reach them while they work on their cases.



Taking Legal Services to the Street: **The Outreach Team**

**How do you find help when you are too sick to leave your tent?
When you can't leave your belongings for fear of them being stolen?
When you have no money for a bus pass?**

On a February night in 2022, 73% of Alameda County's homeless population of nearly 9,800 were sleeping unsheltered: in a park, on a sidewalk, on the side of the freeway, in a tent, in a car or RV. Compared to people experiencing homelessness in shelter, unsheltered homeless people are more likely to be chronically homeless, have poorer health, are more often exposed to trauma and violence, and experience worse mortality rates.

Unsheltered homeless people are also typically less connected to services. Making the trip to a service provider's office can be a barrier to accessing services due to physical and mental health disability, illness, old age, lack of financial resources, negative past experiences with service providers, or fear of leaving a friend, a dog, or their belongings unattended.

HAC's outreach team removes this barrier to service by meeting clients where they are at. The team visits multiple encampments in Oakland and Berkeley each week, providing all the services that clients would have access to when visiting HAC's drop-in centers. From the beginning of 2021 through the first 10 months of 2022, our outreach team has provided services to a total of 435 people. The team provides benefits advocacy to make sure clients are accessing the income, health care, and food assistance programs for which they are eligible. They assist clients in replacing birth certificates and state IDs necessary for accessing benefits programs.

The outreach team also provides housing case management services, moving clients into shelters and other temporary housing if that is what they want, helping them access the county's list of permanent affordable housing opportunities, and getting them "document-ready" so they can move into housing. The team brings supplies like water, snacks, and socks on outreach trips, and they can also help clients replace or obtain tents with the help of HAC's Zim Fund for Acute Client Needs. They can also help with transportation to necessary medical appointments and legal hearings.



***“By coming to meet people
where they are at, the HAC
outreach team expands access
to some of the most vulnerable
members of our community”***

**~ Heather Freinkel,
Managing Attorney &
Outreach Program Manager**





Through our outreach team, we don't wait for clients to come to us—we go to them.

Stop the Sweeps

One major challenge that unsheltered homeless people face are evictions or sweeps. Public agencies—such as Caltrans—and private companies—such as the “Downtown Ambassadors” funded by the Downtown Berkeley Property-based Business Improvement District—conduct forced removals of unsheltered people from the places they are staying. Unhoused people are compelled to leave under threat of citation, arrest, or force. Their personal property—including tents, IDs, and medications—is often stolen or destroyed and their vehicles ticketed or impounded. When sweeps happen, our clients experience physical and mental trauma, they are forced to move to less safe places, they are separated from their community, and they are more likely to become further entwined with the carceral justice system.

These problems cause ripple effects for outreach clients. After a sweep, we often lose touch with clients, as we don't know where they have moved. Dealing with emotional distress or pressing logistical issues, such as figuring out how to recover or replace stolen or destroyed property or finding a safe place to sleep, may result in clients having less time or attention to stay connected to their attorneys. Their claims process or their housing search may be needlessly delayed.

Growing HAC's Reach

What used to be an ad-hoc team made up of a managing attorney and any HAC staff who had interest and spare time to sign up for outreach for the week has now expanded to a team of six—a managing attorney, a benefits outreach attorney, two outreach advocates, and two housing case managers! Through our outreach team, we don't wait for clients to come to us—we go to them.





Building Community: **Shining the Spotlight on** **HAC's West Oakland Office**

HAC is thrilled to focus attention on our newly renovated office building in West Oakland! The building was purchased and renovated with a goal of meeting the growing demand for services. Since 2015, the number of people experiencing homelessness living in Alameda County has more than doubled. Recognizing the growing demand for services, HAC purchased and renovated a warehouse office building in West Oakland.

Though renovations on the building were completed in March 2020, the space remained mostly closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Now that HAC is transitioning back to the office, staff and clients are finally able to fully enjoy the new facility. Designed by world-renowned architecture firm Gensler, the building is more accessible to our West Oakland client community, houses two-thirds of our attorneys and advocates, and features a private medical consultation room where HAC-contracted medical doctors and psychologists can meet with clients.

Though the pandemic made us get creative about making services accessible to clients through digital and telephone methods, we have also learned the importance of face-to-face meetings for building the trust needed to work together on multi-year legal cases. With our return to the office, we are now able to offer clients this accessible, reliable, and safe place where they can drop in to seek assistance without judgment.



Tribute to Gabi Sevilla

Those of us who work at the Homeless Action Center are deeply saddened to share with you the passing of Gabriela Ines Sevilla.

Gabi worked as a law intern at HAC during Summer 2018 and made a huge, positive impact on the lives of both clients and staff members. She died at the age of 29 on October 10, 2022.



At the time of her passing, Gabi was working at the National Homelessness Law Center in Washington, DC. Following is a portion of the tribute that NHLC published in Gabi's memory:

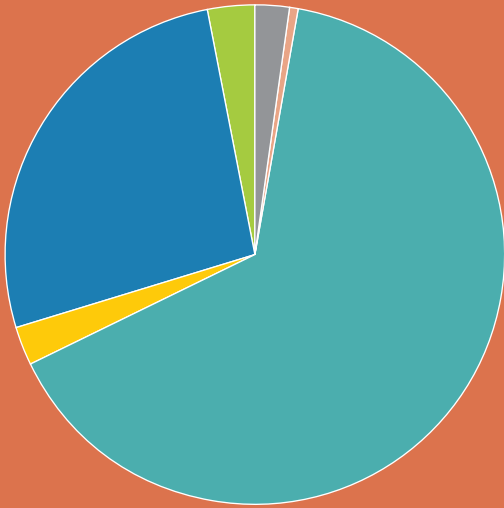
"Born and raised in Newark, New Jersey, Gabi was a vigorous advocate for ending homelessness. In her own words "[she leveraged] her lived experience with homelessness and housing insecurity to fuel her passion to build a future where we truly have housing for all." She was particularly adept at making genuine connections with people. Her gifted approach was evident in the number of advocates across the country whom she brought together to begin work on legislation to advance access to higher education for unhoused youth and better coordination of housing and services for unhoused youth and young adults. She was passionate about preventing the criminalization of unhoused youth and was working to reform curfew and truancy laws.

"Gabi launched her legal career as a 2019-2021 Equal Justice Works Fellow. Her fellowship, hosted by the Homeless Persons Representation Project (HPRP), was designed to create a medical-legal partnership between HPRP and Health Care for the Homeless to assist unhoused people who have physical or mental disabilities obtain public benefits. Called the DREAM (Disability Representation Education Advocacy Medical-legal) Partnership, her fellowship was inspired by her work with the Homeless Action Center in Oakland and Berkeley, CA."

In the words of Alan Dunnigan, HAC's Intern Program Manager, "Gabi truly exemplified the spirit and mission of HAC and advocated relentlessly for our clients. She loved being on outreach and helping as many people as possible. She organized a night of baking with the other summer interns and brought all the food to a shelter. Gabi really loved being at HAC and we could never give her enough things to do – she wanted to do it all! After she won her first SSI hearing case during her fellowship in DC, she was so happy and immediately texted to tell us about it, saying she couldn't have done it without HAC and the excellent intern program. While we may have taught her the SSI mechanics, she brought the infinite heart, spirit, and compassion that is invaluable and really makes all the difference."

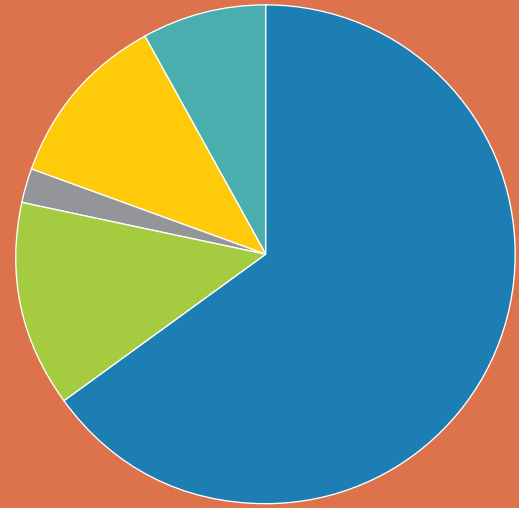
NHLC concluded their tribute with these thoughts, shared by everyone at HAC: "Gabi was a "shooting star," accomplishing more in her short life than many do in decades. With a dimpled smile, her positive energy was infectious. It was an honor to learn from her and to be in her presence. We will miss her deeply and our hearts go out to her family and all of her loved ones."

Statement of Activities: for the Year Ending June 30, 2022*



Revenue

Donations	\$234,514
Grants	\$31,186
County Contract	\$6,109,133
Local – City Funding	\$245,009
State Funding	\$2,514,378
Fees & Miscellaneous Income	\$272,248
Total Revenue	\$9,406,468



Expenses

Salaries & Wages	\$5,589,448
Benefits & Payroll Taxes	\$1,163,128
Contract Service Expenses	\$188,651
Program Contractors	\$993,064
Non-personnel Expenses	\$667,785
Total Expenses	\$8,602,076
Net Operating	\$804,392

* Unaudited financials. Audited financial statements are available upon request.

Government Funders

Alameda County
Social Services Agency

Alameda County
Behavioral Health Care Services

California Access
to Justice Commission

City of Berkeley

City of Oakland

Medi-Cal Administrative Activity (MAA)

The State Bar of California

Other Institutional Funders

(partial list)

Mervyn L. Brenner Foundation

California ChangeLawyers

Don & Brigid Cheadle Philanthropy Fund

CTBC Bank Corp. (USA)

Richard and Sandra Gilbert Family Fund
at the East Bay Community Foundation

Legal Services Funders Network

Carmen J. Moore Charitable Trust

UC Berkeley Chancellor's
Community Partnership Fund



HAC Staff

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Sheryl Lauer

Appellate Attorney

David Waggoner

Benefits Outreach Attorney

Joseph Baskin

Outreach Advocates

Ian Cordova Morales

Kai Gault

Advocates

Dave Bay

Elliot Gavnaugh

Alli Fam

Olivia Lipson

Jordan Mickle-

Niemoeller

Jen Neuber

Becca Pate

Abby Riley

María José

Ospina Salcedo

Sefa Santos-Powell

Lan Tran

Housing Case Managers

Chandra Andrews

Terry Kalahar

Safe Haven Director

Ashley Davis

Resident Manager

Brad Merrill

Intern Program Manager

Alan Dunnigan

Legal Fellow

Robert Feldman

Facilities Manager

Devan Bleye

Administrative Office Manager

Zena A. Sherman

Administrative Assistant

Marie Ary

Receptionists

Terry Bankston

Stefani Echeverria-

Fenn

Intake Coordinator

Chantha (Tina) Sar

Intake Clerk

Ashley Ragus

Systems Manager

April Davis

IT Manager

Tom McPartlon

IT Support Engineer

Nate Carroll-Browne

HR Director

Classy Britton

HR Manager

Brian Kennedy

Chief Financial Officer

Emily McPartlon

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Social Impact Director

Nyla Moujaes

Development Director

Jonathon Marley

Deputy Development Director

Stephanie Maurer

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2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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