

HELPING THOSE WHO HELP OTHERS

TRANSACTIONAL ATTORNEYS
STRENGTHEN NONPROFITS THAT
PROVIDE DIRECT SERVICES TO
LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES

WINTFRED HUSKEY



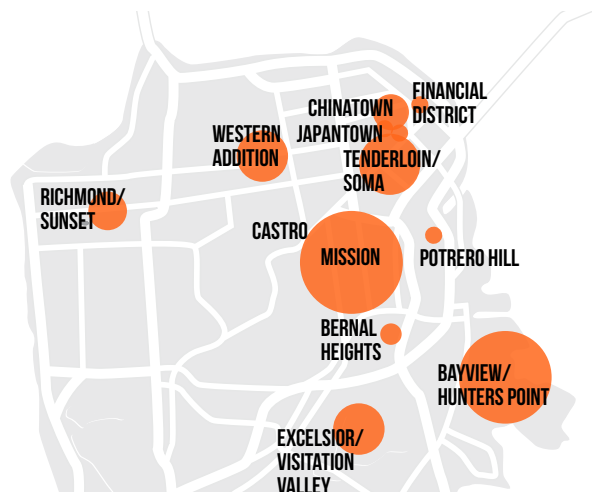
COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATION PROJECT (CORP)

A Justice & Diversity Center project

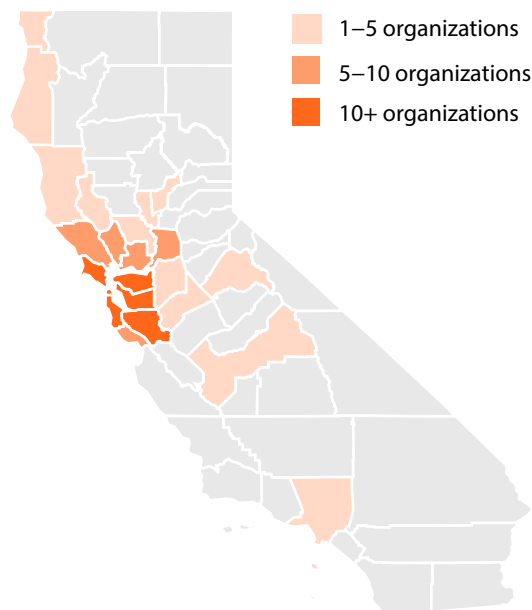
139 ORGANIZATIONS WORKED WITH CORP IN 2015–2017

80 of these organizations serve people in San Francisco.

45 of them serve people throughout the city. Others serve specific neighborhoods:



Organizations serving other counties:



TYPES OF SERVICES PROVIDED (number of organizations providing services)

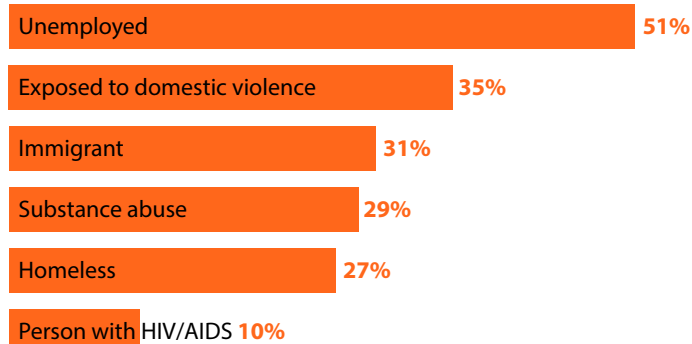
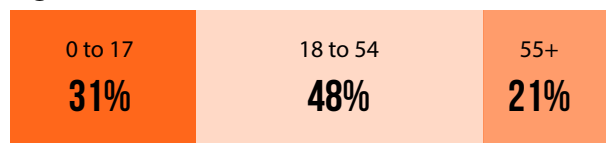
- Health services (51)
- Youth services (47)
- Child care/ family support (36)
- After school/ enrichment (35)
- Community economic development (33)
- Housing (32)
- Homelessness (32)
- Employment (32)
- Disability (17)
- Elder services (15)
- Domestic violence (15)
- Immigration (10)
- HIV/AIDS (7)

CLIENT PROFILE OF THE NEARLY 600,000 PEOPLE SERVED BY NONPROFITS PARTNERING WITH CORP

Yearly income



Age



When people hear “pro bono lawyer,” they might picture a tireless public defender representing the indigent, or perhaps an idealist taking a *David v. Goliath* civil matter. How many people would think of an attorney registering a trademark, drafting employment policies, or reviewing corporate bylaws? While John Grisham hasn’t written a bestseller about a transactional attorney fighting the good fight (yet), they’re out there.

The nonprofits CORP assists all provide direct services to low-income communities, and have limited finances that make even basic legal services cost-prohibitive. The vast majority have annual budgets under \$2 million, with 38 percent coming in under \$500,000. Yet, with tight resources, the 139 nonprofits CORP helped in a two-year period (June 2015 to June 2017) form an impressive network of services, resources, and opportunities for more than 600,000 people. Eighty percent of the people these nonprofits serve are people of color. More than 50 percent have annual incomes under \$10,000.

In fact, nonprofits that are combating the cyclical ills of discrimination and inequality face similar obstacles as the people they serve. *Causes Count*,¹ a California nonprofit survey, shows that California zip codes where more than 80 percent of residents are nonwhite have one nonprofit organization for every 2,000 people, compared to one nonprofit for every 877 people in other zip codes. Nonprofit revenue is 62 percent lower in predominantly nonwhite communities, and assets are 57 percent lower.

Just as low-income individuals are forced to make difficult prioritizations when confronted with a civil legal problem, nonprofits must also decide how to best allocate their limited funds when potential legal issues arise. CORP eases this burden, thanks to the transactional/business attorneys who volunteer their expertise. For example, since 2015, volunteer attorneys have taken on more than sixty employment matters. This makes volunteers’ “behind the scenes” work impactful not only for those who receive nonprofits’ services, but also for the employees who work there.

**CORP AND ITS VOLUNTEER
ATTORNEYS SUPPORT,
AND EVEN ENABLE, MANY
NONPROFITS’ MISSIONS**

Transactional legal work is a different act of service from feeding a hungry family, but a community food bank might not be able to help anyone if it signs a lease without reading the fine print. CORP and its volunteer attorneys support, and even enable, many nonprofits’ missions.

If you’re a transactional attorney who’d like to volunteer with CORP, please contact gchun@sfbar.org or 415-782-8980. You can also find more information at www.sfbar.org/corp.

Winfred Huskey is the CORP paralegal at the Justice & Diversity Center.

Note

1. *Causes Count: The Economic Power of California’s Nonprofit Sector*, published 2014 by the California Association of Nonprofits; <http://www.calnonprofits.org/images/downloads/causes-count-808.pdf>.