

An example of a strong systems change response:

Systemic advocacy and community education continues to be core tenets of our mission that powers our daily work. Building upon the systemic advocacy work we've discussed with the Foundation for Health Equity previously, we have continued to make great strides in several areas including guardianship, tenant and homeownership rights, elder abuse and victim services. These systems are grounded in the local, state, and national governments, legal systems and courts, and societal structures affecting long-term health outcomes of older people and their communities.

We continue to be deeply involved in systemic advocacy and expanded services in the area of guardianship, addressing the most basic of fundamental rights – the right to autonomy and self. This past year, we helped plan and lead PA's first Supreme Court Summit on Justice in Guardianship to gather with other leaders and experts to discuss less restrictive alternatives to guardianship, best practices, and the needs in this area of law.

Last year, we shared our work both through direct legal services and advocacy in response to the guardianship crisis in the nation and our Commonwealth. At that time, PA was one of a handful of states without a right to counsel in guardianship. However, that changed with Act 61 of 2023 that was signed into law by Governor Shapiro in December. This transformative bipartisan legislation is the result of years of advocacy by XXX's leadership with our partners (PA Courts' Advisory Council on Elder Justice in the Courts, Disability Rights Pennsylvania, etc). This new law will establish Right to Counsel in guardianship and other key guardianship reforms will ensure individuals do not face guardianship without due process, representation, and the opportunity to be present and heard. This is absolutely critical to ensure those facing guardianship will not unjustly or unreasonably lose their autonomy and be able to make serious decisions regarding their health, wellbeing, living situation, etc. For those under guardianship, this new law will ensure that guardians are properly trained to ensure that they adequately serve the people they are appointed to act as guardian and not abuse or take advantage of them. As PA begins the rulemaking process around this new legislation, we have already begun promoting a legal aid model free of legal fees, transforming a system rife with exploitation and replacing it with a system based on due process, transparency, equity and fairness.

We continue our work with the Philadelphia Eviction Prevention Project on low-income Tenants' Right to Counsel, which was expanded with an additional zip code this past fall. This past year, we also testified before Philadelphia City Council to report about the critical issue of illegal lockouts. These lockouts disproportionately affect tenants of color, and acutely affect older tenants who sometimes are locked out without enough time or resources to get their lifesaving medical equipment and medications. This was directly

related to nationally-reported Philadelphia Landlord Tenant Officer related shooting of Angel Davis, a black woman, who was shot in the head by a private armed deputy trying to lock her out. XXX leaders have been meeting and communicating with State legislators, Philadelphia courts' personnel, and City Councilmembers to advocate for sweeping changes to the LTO system. In fact, this past week new legislation to regulate this office was introduced to Council by Kendra Brooks after months of discussions with our Tenant Rights' leaders and PEPP partners.

Our work in preventing and addressing elder abuse in all its forms – physical, emotional, sexual and financial – expanded in dramatic ways. We are one of the largest elder victim service providers in Pennsylvania and in the nation, addressing the devastating and deadly impact of abuse, family violence and financial exploitation on older people and the trauma which makes victims 3x more likely to die prematurely. We are the largest VOCA (Victim's of Crime Act) funded organization in PA, and currently working with Philadelphia's Office of the Victim Advocate, other Philadelphia victim services agencies funded with VOCA funds, and Pennsylvania's Commission on Crime and Delinquency to advocate and educate state and national lawmakers about the importance of victim services in response to funding cuts/limitations for VOCA activities.