California Justice Gap Study

Hellen Hong, Director, Office of Access & Inclusion
The California Justice Gap Study Components

- **Survey** of 3,885 adult Californians to understand the civil legal problems they faced and what they did to resolve them

- **Intake Census** of direct legal service providers funded by the State Bar

- **Recruitment and Retention Report on Legal Aid Organizations** and legal aid attorneys from the Legal Aid Association of California

- **Law Student Survey** on the impact of the cost of legal education and the effect on career choices and access to justice
California Justice Gap Study Key Findings

• 55% of Californian’s experienced at least one civil legal issue;
  o 13% of Californians experienced 6 or more problems

• Health, Finance, and Employment were the main legal problem types faced by Californians, regardless of income

• Fewer than 1 in 3 Californians sought legal help
  o Highlights a knowledge gap about legal issues
  o Legal aid can only fully resolving one-third of the problems presented by low-income Californians highlighting one area of the service gap

• One-third of legal aid attorneys leave organizations within 2 years

• $147,000 is the expected median law school debt for 80% of Californian ABA law students
THE JUSTICE GAP EXISTS AT ALL INCOME LEVELS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Levels for 4-Person Household</th>
<th>Percent of problems for which no or inadequate legal help was received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0–$32,188</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$32,189–$51,500</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$51,501–$77,250</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$77,251–$103,000</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$103,001–$128,750</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$128,751–$154,500</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$154,501+</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FPL = Federal Poverty Line
TOP REASONS FOR NOT SEEKING LEGAL HELP

- Unsure if it was a legal issue: 31%
- Decided to deal with problem without help: 31%
- Worried about cost: 16%
- Did not know where to look: 15%
- Afraid to pursue legal action: 14%
TYPE OF LEGAL HELP CALIFORNIANS RECEIVED FOR THEIR PROBLEMS

OFFLINE

49% Legal advice
34% Filling out documents or forms
23% Legal professional helped negotiate with other parties
14% Referral to legal information online
12% Represented by a legal professional in court

ONLINE

41% Info about procedures used to solve similar issues
36% The rights people have and what the law says
22% Information on how to get legal help
12% Looked for a lawyer
TOP PROBLEM TYPES FOR WHICH CALIFORNIANS SOUGHT AND RECEIVED LEGAL HELP

**All Californians**
- 73% Wills & Estates
- 61% Custody
- 58% Family

**Californians at or below 125% FPL**
- 54% Custody
- 50% Homeownership
- 47% Immigration

**Californians above 125% FPL**
- 77% Wills & Estates
- 67% Family
- 54% Custody
Sources of Offline Legal Help for Californians

- **49%** Paid private attorney
- **31%** Legal aid
- **12%** Social or human services organizations
- **10%** Self-help centers at court
- **10%** Volunteer attorneys
- **6%** Legal hotlines
- **3%** Disability service providers
- **3%** Notary public