



LEADERSHIP PROFILE

**Executive Director
Atlanta Legal Aid Society**

Atlanta, GA

"Helping low-income people meet basic needs, removing barriers to justice through legal assistance."

– Atlanta Legal Aid Society mission statement

The Opportunity

Poverty, access and opportunity should never stand in the way of equal justice. For almost 100 years, Atlanta Legal Aid Society (Atlanta Legal Aid) has worked to promote this idea and provide those with limited means or opportunity access to capable civil legal representation to help address a wide spectrum of issues. Through the efforts of a committed staff, board and hundreds of volunteers, Atlanta Legal Aid annually helps tens of thousands of individuals across the Greater Atlanta region navigate civil legal issues to help ensure that the legal system works for all.

The organization is at an important inflection point and is navigating both the upcoming retirement of its long-serving Executive Director and continuing its successful efforts to manage revenue and programs post-pandemic. To lead these efforts, Atlanta Legal Aid seeks a bold, committed and collaborative leader who can both imagine and deliver a vibrant future for the organization. This leader will build on the organization's reputation as a full-service provider of free-of-charge legal representation on civil matters for low-income individuals and a champion for those whose voice might ordinarily be muted due to limited resources or access.

Known for both its strong organizational culture and the excellence of its professional staff, Atlanta Legal Aid Society is a unique constellation of legal talent with a high level of passion for public service law. The new leader will inherit a strong organization and be charged with leading Atlanta Legal Aid to even greater levels of innovation, stability, reach and connection with the Greater Atlanta community.

Key priorities for the new Executive Director will include:

- Continuing the momentum & legacy of a deeply committed organization with an open and caring internal culture



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Atlanta Legal Aid Society What is Legal Aid?

- Advancing efforts to increase and diversify organizational support beyond traditional Legal Services Corporation (LSC) funding – enabling Atlanta Legal Aid to be nimble and more responsive to community needs
- Leading and successfully developing an increasingly intergenerational staff
- Thinking ahead to help Atlanta Legal Aid both see around corners and innovate in practical ways where appropriate

The Organization

Originally founded in 1924 by a single lawyer, Atlanta Legal Aid Society offers free civil legal aid for low-income people across metro Atlanta. With five county offices, five offices in Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta hospitals, two county courthouse projects, and through a variety of self-help clinics throughout these locations and countless community education programs, Legal Aid lawyers and volunteers reach tens of thousands of people annually. More than 20,000 cases are represented by a staff of 75 attorneys and a large number of volunteers every year.

The organization has been ably led since 1980 by Steve Gottlieb, who has announced his retirement at or around the end of 2022. His tenure has been marked by growth, inspired service and noteworthy accomplishments for the organization’s work.

The work of Legal Aid is broad and impactful; [core services](#) revolve around four key areas of need:

Housing – Legal Aid works across metro Atlanta and the state to help people to maintain the homes they have, to increase access to affordable housing and to improve conditions in which people live in order to help communities thrive.

Consumer needs – Legal Aid lawyers fight predatory debt collectors, unfair and illegal collection practices, and other practices that threaten clients’ economic stability.

Family - Family stability is at the heart of Legal Aid’s practice; Legal Aid lawyers and volunteers legalize family relationships, fight for custody and child support and protect victims of domestic violence, giving clients the tools to move on from often violent and tragic circumstances.

Health - Advocates help people with disabilities start new lives outside institutions, ensure that children with health and developmental issues get a proper education, finalize wills and estates for women with breast cancer, work through private and public bureaucracies to guarantee appropriate health benefits and support services and hold providers accountable for clients’ needs.

Atlanta Legal Aid also brings its core work to special populations, including those with disabilities, seniors, victims of domestic violence, people with cancer or HIV/AIDS, veterans, and caregivers. **Special projects** include the Disability Integration Project, the Senior Citizens Law Project, the Georgia Senior Legal Hotline, the Health Law Partnership, Health Law Projects, the Home Defense Program, the Kinship Care Project and a robust Pro Bono program that connects volunteers with community legal opportunities that match their skills and interests with those who can benefit from their expertise.

Through its historical casework, Legal Aid has made a lasting impact for individuals and communities in Georgia and nationwide. Examples of key cases and notable impact litigation led by the organization include:

Marielitos (1981): Beginning in 1981 and for more than 10 years, Legal Aid lawyers represented more than 1,800 Cubans to get them due process hearing rights.



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[Olmstead Decision](#) (1999): Atlanta Legal Aid won *Olmstead v. L.C.*, 527 U.S. 581 in the United States Supreme Court in 1999. *Olmstead* ordered reforms of state mental institutions, envisioning the freeing of inappropriately institutionalized persons to live in the community.

[Harbour Portfolio](#) (2018): A fair housing case addressing practices targeting minority communities; Atlanta Legal Aid filed a complaint against Harbour Portfolio after the company misled people into thinking that they were buying homes when they were actually entering into lengthy rent-to-buy schemes.

The organization has a full-time staff of 150 and a 2022 annual budget of \$13 million. Revenues come from a host of sources; in 2021, examples of key funders included the Legal Services Corporation (\$4.3M), City of Atlanta and other counties, the Administrative Office of the Courts, The Georgia Bar Foundation, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council and the United Way of Greater Atlanta. Foundations, Private Bar and the Annual Campaign accounted for approximately \$2.6M. The organization is financially stable, owning its own fully-paid-for headquarters building and having a board directed endowment of around \$4.8M.

For more information about the Atlanta Legal Aid Society, go to www.atlantalegalaid.org.

The Responsibilities

The Executive Director is charged with overseeing all aspects of the organization. Day-to-day work will include a balance of relationship building, leading organizational vision and direction in tandem with the board and staff, soliciting support, and helping to grow the profile of the organization and its impact through as the chief external representative of Atlanta Legal Aid. Combining a

strong managerial skill set built on a foundation of relevant experience, an authentic desire to work collaboratively, and a passion for equity and equal justice, the new leader will bring the multiple talents required to ensure that Atlanta Legal Aid realizes its aspirations.

More specifically, the Executive Director will:

1. Be a strategic, inspiring leader who will lead Atlanta Legal Aid with an authentic passion for public service law and serving the needs of the community.

The Executive Director will be a strong leader and strategic thinker who will guide the vision of Atlanta Legal Aid and move the organization forward with quiet confidence, gravitas, and palpable passion for and alignment with the mission. With vision and humility, the Executive Director will build on the strong culture of the organization and support and develop the talents of its people. The new leader will embrace innovation and capitalize on opportunities to expand and/or recalibrate program offerings to ensure that Legal Aid is responsive to the current needs of those it serves while remaining true to its core and mission.

2. Be a strong team builder who can help provide the organizational structure, systems and environment who will allow Atlanta Legal Aid to manage complex work as a well-integrated team.

The Executive Director will help bring clarity, support and unity to a staff that spans five locations and manages a substantial caseload. The Executive Director will help continue a tradition of transparent communication, innovation, appropriate consensus building and lead in a way that encourages teamwork and inhibits silos. The Executive Director will be a proven leader capable of inspiring talent, gifted at working through others and accustomed to fostering an environment of shared vision, values, high standards and alignment around mission.



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With capability and courage, the new leader will work to broaden relationships with current and potential supporters and find ways to achieve continued program excellence and long-term sustainability.

Further, the new leader will continue a tradition of collaboration with the board of directors and build on a mature and successful model of governance.

- 3. Lead the organization's operations with strong business acumen, fundraising ability and help Atlanta Legal Aid find the optimal balance of mission impact and financial sustainability.** The Executive Director will be a capable leader who can manage a complex organization and help attract both traditional and new sources of philanthropic revenue to support organizational programs. With capability and courage, the new leader will work to broaden relationships with current and potential supporters and find ways to achieve continued program excellence and long-term sustainability. The Executive Director will work in close partnership with the executive and management teams to ensure that the organization is well-managed financially, providing a solid foundation that will enable mission and programs to thrive.
- 4. Be a proactive collaborator who leverages partnerships in service of Atlanta Legal Aid's long-term mission.** The Executive Director will work in tandem with other organizations to amplify the impact of Atlanta Legal Aid's work and further establish the organization as a vital community resource. The leader will seek opportunities to collectively address issues of inequity, access and justice, and drive greater overall impact where possible through partnership with others. Through such collaboration, the Executive Director will raise the awareness of key community issues and bring the talent, expertise and commitment of Atlanta Legal Aid forward as a central part of helping to find solutions to problems.

5. Be the external face of Atlanta Legal Aid and its most public champion. The Executive Director will be the internal and external face of Atlanta Legal Aid and its most public advocate. The new leader will be gifted at connecting with members of the business, civic, philanthropic, education and cultural communities and with all generations of current and prospective supporters. The new leader will enthusiastically share the impact of the work and the uniqueness of the organization's programs, culture and people and find ways to engage the community in expanding the scope of work of Atlanta Legal Aid to respond to emerging needs where and when appropriate.

The Candidate

The candidate is a compelling leader with significant knowledge, passion, and demonstrated success in contexts relevant to leading Atlanta Legal Aid. Ideally, the leader will have a proven track record of leadership, working with nonprofit boards, fundraising, cultivating relationships and program management in an organization of similar complexity. Personal characteristics include integrity, the ability to think proactively and anticipate emerging trends, charisma, high emotional intelligence, and outstanding interpersonal and communication skills. The Executive Director will have an established history of supporting a talented team and a demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. Additionally, having successfully led organizational initiatives and cultivated the funding necessary for these initiatives to become a reality would be a strong experiential asset.

Potential assets and attributes being sought in the new Executive Director include:

- Practical experience and credentialing in the law



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Potential assets and attributes being sought in the new Executive Director include demonstrated passion for and success in public service law or pro bono work.

- An authentic persona that inspires trust, invites collaboration and engenders an environment of teamwork
- Strong management and business acumen
- Demonstrated passion for and success in public service law or pro bono work
- A strong knowledge of the problems and needs of the communities that Legal Aid serves
- Demonstrated compassion for individuals and authentic engagement and connection with clients
- A commitment to public interests and strategic partnerships with other nonprofits - particularly the many different bar associations in the region
- A strong desire to fully engage in the day-to-day work of Legal Aid
- An understanding of the importance of social impact litigation and how it can drive change
- Cultural competence with diversity, equity and inclusion
- Experience and success with cultivating and growing a financially strong organization
- The courage to lead and implement change and make key organizational decisions with confidence
- Comfort and experience with both traditional and emerging fundraising strategies
- Gravitas and the ability to serve as Legal Aid's most public champion
- Experience building productive and successful partnerships
- Demonstrated experience as a natural consensus builder who seeks input and can admit when they are wrong

- A commitment to professional development and the growth and development of staff
- A successful track record of using technology to drive innovation and impact

The Relationships

The Executive Director will report to the Legal Aid's Board of Directors, supervise an executive team of four, oversee a management team of thirteen in tandem with the executive team and be responsible for a staff of one hundred and fifty. Key relationships are outlined below:

Reports to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atlanta Legal Aid Society Board of Directors
Direct Reports:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy Director • Director of Advocacy • Director of Recruitment and Retention • General Counsel
Other key relationships include:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Legal Aid staff • Peers in the public interest legal space (Georgia Appleseed, Georgia Legal Services Program, Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers, etc.) • Key leaders throughout the field of public interest law • Business leaders and public officials • The Atlanta Bar Association, Georgia Bar Association and other important bar associations in the region • Leaders in the pro bono legal community

The Location

The Atlanta Legal Aid Society's headquarters is in Downtown Atlanta. It is a key component of Atlanta's nonprofit organizational landscape that includes the Woodruff Arts Center (composed of the award-winning High Museum of Art, Alliance Theatre, and Atlanta Symphony), Atlanta Botanical Gardens, The Georgia Aquarium, The United Way of Greater Atlanta and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.

With over 6 million residents, Atlanta is the country's 9th largest metropolitan area. It is the commercial and cultural center of Georgia and the Southeastern United States. Some of the world's largest companies are headquartered in the city, including the Coca-Cola Company, UPS, Delta Airlines, and Home Depot. Atlanta is also the entertainment industry capital of the South hosting major record labels and movie production companies including Tyler Perry and Pinewood studios. It features a thriving spiritual community, award-winning restaurants and chefs, and recreation and entertainment offerings of every kind rivaling those of any city in North America.



For more information, please visit www.atlanta.net.

For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect, please email

ALAED@BoardWalkConsulting.com

or call **Michelle Hall** or
John Sparrow at 404-262-7392.
