

## HOW PLS FULFILLS THE SUPREME COURT MANDATE

PLS was founded to address two of the major causes of the 1971 Attica riot: the lack of access that incarcerated individuals had to the courts and the almost complete absence of attorneys to present their complaints in a legal forum. The Supreme Court has since held that the states have a responsibility to provide incarcerated individuals with meaningful access to the courts. For more than 40 years, PLS has fulfilled that legal responsibility by providing desperately needed legal services to individuals incarcerated in New York State prisons.

### For more information about PLS contact:

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## WHERE WE ARE

### PLS OFFICES AND THE FACILITIES SERVED

#### ALBANY

41 State Street, Suite M112, Albany, NY 12207  
(518) 438-8046

**Prisons served:** Bedford Hills, CNYPC, Coxsackie, Downstate, Eastern, Edgecombe, Fishkill, Great Meadow, Greene, Green Haven, Hale Creek, Hudson, Lincoln, Marcy, Mid-State, Mohawk, Otisville, Queensboro, Shawangunk, Sing Sing, Sullivan, Taconic, Ulster, Wallkill, Walsh, Washington, Woodbourne.

#### BUFFALO

14 Lafayette Square, Suite 510, Buffalo, NY 14203  
(716) 854-1007

**Prisons served:** Albion, Attica, Collins, Gowanda, Groveland, Lakeview, Livingston, Orleans, Rochester, Wende, Wyoming.

#### IMMIGRATION UNIT

41 State Street, Albany, NY 12207  
(518) 694-8699

14 Lafayette Square, Suite 510, Buffalo, NY 14203  
(716) 844-8266

**Prisons served:** PLS' immigration unit provides legal representation to non-citizens incarcerated in any New York State prison who are in immigration removal proceedings.

#### ITHACA

114 Prospect Street, Ithaca, NY 14850  
(607) 273-2283

**Prisons served:** Auburn, Cape Vincent, Cayuga, Elmira, Five Points, Southport, Watertown, Willard.

#### PLATTSBURGH

24 Margaret Street, Suite 9, Plattsburgh, NY 12901  
(518) 561-3088

**Prisons served:** Adirondack, Altona, Bare Hill, Clinton, Franklin, Gouverneur, Moriah Shock, Ogdensburg, Riverview, Upstate.

#### PRO BONO PARTNERSHIP PROJECT

41 State Street, Albany, NY 12207

The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons.

## PRISONERS' LEGAL SERVICES OF NEW YORK

Protecting the  
Civil and Human  
Rights of  
Incarcerated  
New Yorkers  
Since 1976



Injustice anywhere  
is a threat to  
justice everywhere.  
-Martin Luther King, Jr.

# PRISONERS' LEGAL SERVICES OF NEW YORK

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## WHO WE ARE

The prisoners' rights movement in New York State arose from the ashes of the 1971 Attica Uprising. The Attica Uprising was the bloodiest prison confrontation in U.S. history. Among the issues that led to the Uprising was the fact that incarcerated New Yorkers had no way to air their grievances and no access to legal counsel. In response, the McKay Commission was created to investigate and report on the uprising. The McKay Commission concluded that incarcerated individuals needed a safety valve – a mechanism to air their grievances – a window to the outside – a voice.

In response, the New York State Bar Association (NYSBA) submitted a grant application to the Federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) to set up the framework for a statewide organization to provide legal services to incarcerated New Yorkers. The grant was awarded and, on March 24, 1976, Prisoners' Legal Services of New York (PLS) was incorporated.

Since 1976, PLS has provided civil legal services to indigent individuals in New York State prisons in cases where appointed counsel is not available. PLS advocates for incarcerated individuals on issues involving their conditions of confinement and helps prepare them for release and successful reintegration into their communities.

## WHAT WE DO

### Client Representation

**PLS responds to more than 10,000 requests for assistance annually.** We provide brief counsel and advice, educational memos, administrative advocacy, and representation in court.

### Client and Community Education

PLS publishes a bi-monthly newsletter, *Pro Se* which advises incarcerated individuals of changes in the law, provides practice pieces to assist them and explains technical aspects of various laws. ***Pro Se* is available free of charge to all incarcerated New Yorkers and to everyone else on the PLS website: [www.plsny.org](http://www.plsny.org).** We also have a form memo bank of roughly 100 self-help memos.

### Types of Cases Handled

PLS represents prisoners on a many issues including: **prison disciplinary hearings; medical and mental health care; sentence and jail time calculations; first amendment rights; child support, custody and visitation; excessive use of force; immigration, parole and reentry.**

### Preparing Prisoners for Re-Entry

PLS helps prepare incarcerated individuals for successful reintegration into their communities by ensuring that individuals receive programming, education, and mental health care while in prison. **PLS also produced a reentry training video which is shown to all individuals when they enter prison.** PLS provides educational materials on reintegration and reentry resources to thousands of incarcerated individuals every year.

## WHY OUR WORK IS IMPORTANT

### PLS Makes Prisons Safer

**PLS' work over the past 40 plus years has resulted in dramatic improvements within New York State prisons.** As a result of our work, incarcerated individuals are afforded due process rights at their disciplinary hearings and illegal disciplinary hearings are reversed. Our work has also resulted in significantly improved living conditions, improved medical and mental health care, the placement of cameras in maximum security prisons, the incorporation of detailed use-of-force exams into use of force reports, and improved training of correction officers.

### PLS is Vital to Public Health and Safety

Most incarcerated individuals will eventually be released from prison. PLS is vital to public health and safety because we work to ensure that those returning to their communities have minimal exposure to solitary confinement; receive the medical and mental health care they need; are able to access essential education and vocational programming; and have learned how to resolve their problems through legitimate, non-violent means.

### PLS Saves the State Money

Although PLS is a state-funded organization, it pays for itself in the money it saves the State by securing the release of individuals unlawfully confined in solitary isolation, restoring unlawfully withheld good time, and correcting jail time and sentencing errors. **In 2017, PLS saved the State over \$4.4 million dollars.**