

SUMMER 2026



SENIOR LEGAL SERVICES
of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties

SENIOR LEGAL SERVICES NEWSLETTER

www.seniorlegal.org | (831) 426-8824 | 317 Soquel Ave, Santa Cruz, CA 95062



An Advocate on Your Side Fighting a Medicare Denial

Sandra came to Senior Legal Services after suffering a stroke and an unexpected \$5,000 ambulance bill that Medicare refused to pay.

"I can't get over how wonderful it is to have people on your side and advocating for you."

At 87 and living on a fixed income, that bill was well beyond her means. After being treated for her stroke, she was transported from the hospital to a rehabilitation facility in an ambulance. To her shock, that ride was deemed unnecessary and denied by Medicare, despite Sandra being unable to walk or drive.

Harshna McDaniel, a Senior Legal Services attorney, stepped in to get Medicare to pay Sandra's claim. After

three denied appeals over 11 months, we brought the issue to court. "We prevailed with a fully favorable decision," Harshna said. Sandra did not have to pay a cent.

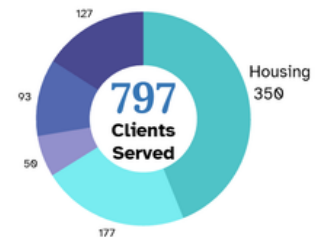
Sandra told Senior Legal Services, ***"I don't know what I would have done without Senior Legal and especially without Harshna."***

Access to Justice Prevents Senior Homelessness

Santa Cruz and San Benito counties have the number one and number three fastest growing senior populations in California. Hundreds of vulnerable seniors in danger of becoming homeless walk through our doors.

We help seniors understand their housing rights as well as their responsibilities as tenants. When faced with the destabilizing prospect of eviction, our intervention either helps avoid eviction through a mutually agreeable solution or secures a "soft landing" for a senior in crisis.

Senior Legal Services has provided public comment on policy



issues around senior housing, calling on California to provide sufficient funding for legal programs, and urging the City of Santa Cruz to prioritize funding used for housing cases.

"Legal assistance ensures the rights of seniors are protected."

- Rebecca Steckler
Executive Director

Upcoming Planning for the Future Legal Clinics: RSVP at SeniorLegal.org

On-site assistance and information on Advance Healthcare Directives, simple wills, and Powers of Attorney for ages 60+ residing in Santa Cruz and San Benito counties

July 28, 10:00AM-11:30AM

Community Foundation Epicenter
440 San Benito St, Hollister

September 29, 10:00AM-11:30AM

Watsonville Senior Center
114 E 5th St, Watsonville

October 13, 10:00AM-11:30AM

Boulder Creek Branch Library
13390 W Park Ave, Boulder Creek



Staff Spotlight: Ella Goldman

Ella is a Legal Advocate at Senior Legal Services. She works in our Housing, Disability, Advocacy Program which supports homeless individuals in applying for Social Security disability benefits.

“Legal help can mean the difference between a simple power of attorney one day and an extremely complicated conservatorship down the line.”

Ella began at Senior Legal Services as an intern in 2023. After a year, she was promoted to Legal Advocate and has been in this position for 2 years,

helping hundreds of clients. In August Ella will be attending UC Irvine School of Law and plans to continue working in public interest law.

When asked why she prefers working at Senior Legal Services to a corporate law firm, Ella said: “I love working at a nonprofit—because you’re helping people that can’t find help otherwise.” She wanted to “give back to the community and support those who were of lower income,” which is what Senior Legal Services does for underrepresented residents aged 60 and over.

Seniors often come to Senior Legal Services with issues like eviction, elder abuse, and consumer debt. Ella speaks to many elderly clients who have been targets of scams and financial abuse.

Legal FAQ

Q: What if I’m not sure if I need an attorney?

A: Call Senior Legal Services and together we can decide if you need legal support.

However, not all people who need help with legal issues actively seek it. Ella urged seniors in Santa Cruz and San Benito counties to seek help as soon as they need it.

“A lot of seniors don’t realize that they need representation. They may put themselves and their needs aside, but they really could use legal help in a lot of cases regarding housing, consumer rights, benefits, or abuse,” Ella said. “Everyone deserves the same legal representation, regardless of their age or income.”



Make a Gift of Hope

Together, we can improve our community with justice for seniors. Donations allow us to provide free legal services to the next senior who needs our help.



Learn more and donate at
seniorlegal.org/get-involved/donate-now

Thank you!