



**QUEENS
DEFENDERS**

**JUSTICE MATTERS
IT'S YOUR RIGHT**

FORMERLY
**Queens Law
Associates**



Dear Friends,

When I co-founded Queens Law Associates in 1996, I envisioned an organization that relentlessly pursues justice for all clients and fights for an equitable and humane criminal justice system – freeing our clients from a never-ending cycle of poverty and incarceration.

Most of our clients have been victimized by failing schools, fractured family dynamics, inadequate healthcare, gangs and gun violence, and few champions to protect their constitutional rights. I wanted to ensure we achieved the best legal outcomes for our clients while helping them develop the skills and resiliency to get out of the criminal justice system and freely pursue their aspirations and contribute positively to society.

Our new name, Queens Defenders, reflects our growth as a community services partner and provider. Our Outreach Center in Far Rockaway and new Jamaica Justice Center provides after-school and Saturday programs, mentoring, leadership development, job training, community events, social services referrals, immigration assistance, housing and tenants’ rights advocacy, and more.

Queens Defenders aims to replicate our success across the borough. We welcome your support and partnership in our mission. Justice – criminal, social, economic – matters. It’s your right.

Sincerely,

Lori Zeno, Esq.
Founder & Executive Director

QUEENS DEFENDERS FIGHTS FOR JUSTICE EVERY DAY FOR EVERY CLIENT.

- ATTORNEYS AT LAW**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Lori Zeno
- MANAGING DIRECTOR**
Hettie Powell
- DIRECTORS**
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Anthony Martone
Steven Sternberg
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Christopher Whitehair
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Anthony Licari
Eric Paykert
Brian Schatz
Pamela Simmons

Since 1996,
Queens Defenders
has served more
than 450,000
people.



**WHAT’S IN OUR NAME:
FROM QUEENS LAW ASSOCIATES
TO QUEENS DEFENDERS**

Queens Law Associates was founded in 1996 with eight attorneys and a small support staff. A quarter century later, we are truly a force for change in Queens, with nearly 200 attorneys, social workers, investigators, paralegals, and support staff devoted to the pursuit of justice.

As the scope of our services expanded and the landscape of the criminal justice system changed, we recognized the need for a name that describes our mission and spirit. In 2020 we renamed our organization. This new name – Queens Defenders – builds on years of success as an honest, reliable community partner and provider of high-quality community-based services. It reflects our borough-wide partnerships with colleagues who share our goals and reinforces our commitment to success for every client through superior free legal representation as well as prevention, education, and restorative justice programs.

**We are Queens Defenders
and we never give up.**

LEGAL SERVICES



Once assigned to a criminal case, Queens Defenders’ highly skilled attorneys conduct investigations, interview witnesses, and engage in settlement conferences with the Queens County District Attorney’s Office and the Court. And if the case is not resolved during pre-trial conferencing, we zealously defend our clients at trial. We work diligently to limit the impact of a criminal record on employment, housing, education, and public benefits.

Major Trials and Homicides

The expert attorneys in our Major Trials Division handle serious, complex, and high publicity cases. They work closely with experts, investigators, and social workers to ensure every client receives the best defense possible.

Treatment Courts

Attorneys work with defendants in Queens Treatment Court, DWI Court, Mental Health Court, Veterans Court, and the Drug Diversion and Treatment Courts. These courts employ a therapeutic approach to cases and aim to address the underlying behaviors and circumstances that contributed to their illegal actions and arrests.

Family Defense

This team handles criminal, family, and marital matters that involve domestic violence through the Queens Integrated Domestic Violence Court. One primary attorney works closely with investigators and social workers to ensure that both clients have access to the services they need.

Juvenile Defense

Attorneys represent minors ages 7 - 17 in Family Court, and in Raise the Age cases that are removed to Family Court from the Youth Part of the Supreme Court. Our staff work closely with social workers, clients, and their families to advocate for the best possible outcome, and provide support to help our young clients develop critical life skills and enhance educational and professional opportunities to build successful lives.



“I was charged with a major crime I did not commit. Though my lawyers successfully represented me against those false charges and the repeated violation of my 4th, 5th, and 6th Amendment rights, this experience caused me to lose my job, my career, and most importantly the safety of my family. Today, my mission is to ensure that young people, especially young black and brown men, do not experience what I went through.

As a result, Queens Defenders launched the Justice 456 Initiative in 2020 to build awareness of the Constitution’s 4th, 5th and 6th Amendment rights in communities of color across the borough. More info on this initiative can be found at queensdefenders.org/justice-456.”

– Oral “Nick” Hillary,
Education Specialist



“I was born in Africa and came to the US with my mom when I was 10 years old. When I was 16, my mother just left – one day she went out and never came back. I went into a foster care group home and joined a gang. Then I was arrested on three different felony assault and robbery charges.

The lawyer who represented me, Anthony Martone, was and still is the nicest person I have ever met. I still call him My Lawyer. He got me out of Rikers almost immediately. The day I was to be sentenced Queens Defenders employees filled the courtroom in support for me. The judge sentenced me to a conditional discharge, and I do not have a criminal record.

I started to work for Queens Defenders a few days a week while I got my GED, and I am now working at Queens Defenders fulltime as a Paralegal and I was just accepted to college. I want to be a lawyer like Mr. Martone – someone with a big heart who is committed to the best for his clients. I owe everything good in my life to Mr. Martone and Queens Defenders. They are my supporters, my friends, my family.”

– Fatu Kamara,
Former Youth Mentoring Program Participant and Current Paralegal

25,000+
Queens residents
are represented by
Queens Defenders
attorneys
each year.

LEGAL SERVICES



Felony Youth Defense

Our attorneys represent youth age 18 and younger charged with felony offenses. Whenever possible, we advocate for alternatives to incarceration and supportive programs that help youth develop their full capacity.

Immigration

We represent clients before the Immigration Court, the Board of Immigration Appeals, Federal District Court, and the Second Circuit of Appeals. Our lawyers protect and promote immigrants’ rights by defending them against deportation and advocating for asylum, green cards, and other benefits.

Social Work Services

Our licensed forensic social workers support clients’ cases by advocating in court for favorable rulings. They also connect clients to services including mental health and substance use treatment, anger management, alternatives to incarceration, vocational/educational programs, batterers’ interventions, and more.

“I learned about Queens Defenders the first time I participated in a Youth Justice Court at the Queens Library. At that time, I was hanging out with the wrong crew and I wanted to change my life, make better decisions, and get on the right path.

They gave me an opportunity to join the Young Adult Leaders Program as a Homework Helper and it has turned my life around. Participating in this program has taught me there are other ways to get through life. I am happy. I am proud of myself. I feel like something changed in me, and that I am part of something.

As a Young Adult Leader and a mentor, I show what I am about everywhere I go. Every time I have my Queens Defenders shirt on, I am dedicated, I am part of the team, I feel good because I earned it, I worked hard for it, and I got it.”

– Michael Osemwengie,
Young Adult Leader

“I enrolled in a Queens Defenders Youth Justice Court program at a local branch of the Queens Library when I was 15. YJC trains young people to take on the responsibilities of each courtroom participant – judge, jury member, defender, prosecutor. Teenagers who commit misdemeanors learn to understand the consequences of their actions through YJC hearings and redeem themselves through community service.

I was hooked on the first day! Five years later, I have just completed my second year as a pre-law student at John Jay College and I work fulltime at Queens Defenders, delivering the YJC program myself in the same library where I first learned about it.”

– Alexandra Braithwaite,
Youth Justice Court Coordinator

77 Queens Defenders felony youth cases were transferred from the Criminal to Family Court in 2019.

2,700 immigrants received legal services from Queens Defenders in 2019.

Our Social Workers supported over 525 legal services clients in 2019.

Every participant in our Youth Programs set a goal of graduating high school and enrolling in college or vocational training.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH



Youth Justice Court

As an alternative to suspension, criminal and family court appearances, and potential violations of probations, youth who commit low-level infractions can appear in our Youth Justice Court before students trained as judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and juries.

170 Rockaway students have been trained as Youth Justice Court staff since 2010.

Youth Mentoring Program

Providing our young legal clients with opportunities to work, gain new skills, interact with caring adult mentors, and feel a sense of pride in accomplishment is the best restorative justice. Most of our young people have gone on to careers in law and other professions.



Rockaway Outreach Center

The Outreach Center serves as a safe space where young people participate in recreational activities, homework help, and college and career readiness programs. Our Young Adult Leaders learn about civic engagement and plan for their futures under the guidance of our youth program staff. We also offer social services referrals for housing, immigration, and domestic violence issues.

School-based Programs

We provide classes on career and college readiness and civil and criminal law and lead restorative justice circles to prevent suspensions and organize violence prevention assemblies. With Queens Public Library, we deliver a diversion program for youth who commit low-level offenses.

Over 5,000 people visited the Rockaway Outreach Center in its first year.



St. John's Residence for Boys

We partner with Rockaway Park's St. John's Residence for Boys to help young men residing in this Close to Home placement develop skills and confidence, learn about the justice system and how it impacts them and their community, and learn about crucial college and career readiness skills that will help them set goals and realize their full potential.

Queens Defenders expanded its Youth Justice Court program to the St. John's Residence for Boys in 2020.



Know Your Rights Workshop

These workshops focus on civil rights, immigration, domestic violence, and other critical areas where people need accurate information to protect themselves and safeguard Constitutional liberties. Additionally, our attorneys provide representation for DMV hearings, HPD hearings, tenant-landlord disputes, and related legal matters.



Domestic Violence & Empowerment (DoVE) Program

Supported by the New York City Council's DoVE Initiative and in partnership with Safe Horizon and the NYPD 101st precinct, this program provides intensive, personalized support for survivors of domestic violence and their children and facilitates connections with shelters and support services.

4,000+ youth and adults in the Rockaways are served by Queens Defenders' domestic violence program each year with prevention, awareness building, and emergency assistance services.

NEW AND FUTURE INITIATIVES

The ROCKAWAY COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTER, 2020

RCJC works with community-based organizations, police, elected officials, civic leaders, and residents to provide restorative justice-based solutions to local crime. Through this innovative approach, RCJC positively addresses the justice needs of the victim, the offender, and the community. This peer and community-led alternative ensures accountability and works collaboratively with stakeholders and local police to build relationships and trust. Through alignment with recent state criminal justice reforms, this project relieves the burden of investigation, prosecution, and incarceration on the city’s criminal justice system.



Jamaica Justice Center, 2020

Timed to open with the implementation of New York State “Raise the Age” criminal justice reforms, our Jamaica Justice Center debuted in 2020. The center offers daily programs for youth and adults, workshops and trainings, and community events and serves as a hub for Queens Defenders’ Community Outreach services.



Queens Defenders Summer Internship

This annual program offers paid summer positions for 50 local youth to give back to their communities, learn new skills, build their resumes, and make meaningful connections that can lead to future opportunities. Our interns learn what it means to work hard, to be relied upon by their peers, co-workers, and communities, and – most importantly – develop confidence in themselves and their abilities.

Queens Defenders Food Pantry

Launched in the spring of 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Queens Defenders distributed nearly 4,000 boxes of food to residents of the Rockaways hardest hit by the crisis in the initiative’s first four months of operation. We are committed to continuing this program and ensuring our borough’s most vulnerable residents and families have access to nutritious food and essential household items.



Youth Mentoring Program Expansion, 2021

Participants in our mentoring program receive academic support, on-the-job work experience, opportunities for cultural excursions and recreational activities, and the consistent support and attention of caring adults. We are committed to increasing our program enrollment over the coming year.



GET INVOLVED

 **VIEW** our video at
www.queensdefenders.org

 **SUBSCRIBE** to our newsletter at
www.queensdefenders.org/news

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-  www.facebook.com/queensdefenders
-  www.instagram.com/queensdefenders
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 **DONATE** to support our restorative justice and youth programs
www.queensdefenders.org/donate



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Corporate Office and Legal Services

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Jamaica Justice Center

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Rockaway Outreach Center

18-57 Mott Avenue
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Sat 10 am-6 pm
(718) 261-3047 x 618

Rockaway Community Justice Center

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