

The background of the image is a scenic landscape. In the foreground, there is a rocky cliff with layered rock formations and some dry grass. A large, green pine tree stands on the left side of the cliff. In the background, a vast, green forested valley stretches out under a clear sky. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white rectangular box in the center of the image.

**ARKANSAS JUDGES AND
LAWYERS ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM
2024
ANNUAL
REPORT**

JLAP Committee

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Brandi Collins, Vice Chair

Catherine Corless, Secretary

Bill Arnold

Dean Cynthia Nance

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Jennifer Donaldson, LCSW, Executive Director

Candace McCown, LMSW, Deputy Director

A note from the JLAP Executive Director...

With gratitude, another year has passed in which Arkansas JLAP and our vast network of volunteers and providers have served the mental health needs of the legal community. As wellbeing efforts continue to garner awareness within the profession, more attorneys and judges take advantage of the vital services provided by their Judge and Lawyers Assistance Program year after year.

I am humbled to serve as the Arkansas Executive Director and appreciate the Arkansas Supreme Court and the JLAP Committee for their trust and support. I extend tremendous thanks to the Arkansas JLAP Foundation for their committed fundraising efforts which allow many of our provided mental health services to remain free or of little cost to participants.

I take this opportunity to personally thank Colin Jorgensen, current JLAP Committee Chair, whose term will end shortly into the new year. Colin's leadership, wisdom, and genuine concern for others has made him an exemplary Committee Chair. Thank you for your service and dedication to JLAP!

As we look forward to 2025, I hope through our commitment and efforts, many more legal professionals and their families will directly benefit from JLAP services, thus safeguarding the communities they willfully serve.

– Jennifer Donaldson, LCSW, AR JLAP Executive Director

From the JLAP Committee Chair

In 2024, JLAP continued to meet its core mission of providing clinical services to Arkansas judges, attorneys, and law students. JLAP received 338 contacts and served 119 individuals as clients in 2024. 54.6% of JLAP clients in 2024 were attorneys; 36.1% were law students, 5.9% were judges, 1.7% were family members, and 1.7% were bar applicants. JLAP continues to experience increased demand for mental-health services, consistent with the increased demand that has been predicted and observed across all populations over the last several years.

JLAP's annual report provides (de-identified) data regarding the clients served by JLAP in 2024. For more than half of JLAP's 2024 clients, the primary presenting issue was extreme stress/stressors. However, JLAP continues to serve clients with a wide array of primary presenting issues, including family/relational issues, mental health, educational issues, grief/loss, substance use disorder(s), trauma, and major life transitions.

We are pleased to report that JLAP served seven judges as clients in 2024, after serving eight judges in 2023 and eight judges in 2022. Only a few years ago, JLAP sometimes served no judges across entire years. The now-consistent population of judges receiving JLAP services in Arkansas is due in part to JLAP's persistent and ongoing efforts to educate judges and encourage judges to contact JLAP for free and confidential mental health assistance. JLAP is grateful for the several (and ongoing) opportunities to appear at judges' conferences and communicate directly with judges, at the invitation of the Supreme Court, the judges themselves, and the Administrative Office of the Courts. Together, to at least some degree, we have shifted the culture of the judiciary away from harmful stigma and toward mental health and well-being.

The attorney well-being program for the Arkansas bench and bar, approved by the Supreme Court in 2021, remained largely paused throughout 2024, but JLAP continued to offer well-being CLE programming in the Spring, and JLAP continues to promote attorney well-being in ways that do not involve the expenditure of funds.

In 2024, the JLAP Foundation recovered substantial funds that were stolen in 2021, and the Foundation hosted the JLAP Advocates Dinner as usual, which resulted in an excellent fiscal year for the Foundation. At the JLAP Advocates Dinner, the Foundation honored the late Judge David Laser, whose family graciously attended and accepted the Justice Robert L. Brown Community Support Award. The Foundation also honored Dean Cynthia Nance with the Arkansas JLAP Distinguished Service Award. Dean Nance is currently serving her second term on the JLAP Committee.

Also in 2024, with assistance from Dr. Catherine Crisp and the UALR School of Social Work, and with the support of the Arkansas Supreme Court Office of Professional Programs, the University of Arkansas School of Law, and the William H. Bowen School of Law, JLAP completed a survey of all licensed judges and attorneys, and all law students in Arkansas. The purpose of the survey was to examine the mental health, well-being, and self-compassion of this population, and to use the information to improve the services that JLAP provides. Over 1,500 people responded to the survey. Dr. Crisp and JLAP Director Jennifer Donaldson have already published findings that among lawyers and judges in Arkansas, higher scores on a measure of mindful self-compassion were correlated with lower scores on measures of depression, anxiety, stress, alcohol use, and drug use. Dr. Crisp plans several additional future studies and publications arising from the data collected in this 2024 survey. The survey results and data are an excellent resource for JLAP to study and understand the population JLAP serves and improve the services JLAP provides to that population.

The JLAP Committee thanks the Arkansas Supreme Court for the Court's enduring support of JLAP, and for entrusting JLAP with its important missions concerning the mental health and well-being of judges, lawyers, and law students in Arkansas. It has been a great honor to serve as JLAP Committee chair, and I am forever grateful to the Court for the appointment. As I learned first from JLAP many years ago, I will continue to pay it forward with service to the Supreme Court and JLAP, and the Arkansas bench and bar.

– Colin Jorgensen, JLAP Committee Chair

From the AR JLAP Foundation Chair

The JLAP Foundation is pleased to report another successful year meeting the Foundation's primary goal of raising money to supplement public money appropriated for the operation of the Arkansas Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program. The Foundation's net balance as of March 31, 2025, was \$90,062.75. That amount includes an unusual source of income, \$40,632.50 recognized in early 2025 from litigation.

We otherwise experienced a modest income increase for 2024, continuing our solid receipt of donations to supplement the support of JLAP. Individual monthly contributions, lump sum donations, and a fundraising dinner in November 2024 drove our annual income. The Foundation's net income from the 2024 Advocate's Dinner was \$39,730.47. This was our second year of a re-imagined Advocate's Dinner, with increased net income of \$4,023.24 from the 2023 Advocate's Dinner. We added two items to the silent auction, and the event went even more smoothly than our first year in the new format. We look forward to building upon this new, reinvented dinner in 2025.

The Foundation grants money monthly to support JLAP. In 2024, we followed new financial protocols that required two Foundation officers to review and approve all outgoing checks, and compare those against the redacted confidential invoices we receive from the JLAP office for payment. The officers also review our unedited bank statements monthly, which are also available to the full board of trustees for review at meetings. The Foundation's monthly checks to providers averaged around \$3,500 for calendar year 2024, with a total provider expenditure for end of fiscal year 2024 (September 30, 2024), of \$46,012.

The JLAP Foundation is excited to continue supporting the good work of Arkansas JLAP for many years to come.

— *Barrett S. Moore, JLAP Foundation Board Chair*

2024 Year in Review

January

JLAP Foundation Meeting

Lawyers Helping Lawyers online weekly support groups

February

Bar Prep Session

Lawyers Helping Lawyers online weekly support groups

Judicial Pilot WRAW Group

March

Lawyers Helping Lawyers online weekly support groups

JLAP Committee Meeting

Judicial Pilot WRAW Group

April

JLAP Committee Meeting

ABA Well-being Pledge Spring Workshop

JLAP Survey Launch

JLAP Online CLE - "Stress Preparedness"

JLAP Online CLE - "Workplace Wellbeing in a Post Covid World"

JLAP Online CLE - "Informed lawyering: 5 Red Flags You Could Be Heading Toward An Addiction"

JLAP Online CLE - "Understanding the Basics of Trauma and Attachment"

Lawyers Helping Lawyers online weekly support groups

Spring Stress-Less Fest @ Bowen School of Law

Spring Wellness Week @ U of A School of Law

District Judges Spring College - NWA

Judicial Pilot WRAW Group

May

Children of the Courts Conference - LR

LAP Directors Meeting in Chicago, IL

Arkansas Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers CLE - NWA

JLAP Online CLE - "Cultivating Joy"

JLAP Online CLE - "Boundary Development"

Pulaski County Bar Association - Annual Meeting Mocktail Bar

JLAP Foundation Meeting

Lawyers Helping Lawyers online weekly support groups

Judicial Pilot WRAW Group

June

Wellbeing Room Arkansas Bar Conference in Hot Springs

JLAP Committee Meeting

Lawyers Helping Lawyers online weekly support groups

JLAP On-Demand CLEs (6)

JLAP Foundation Meeting

JLAP Survey Completion

Judicial Pilot WRAW Group

July

JLAP Office Move

Lawyers Helping Lawyers online weekly support groups

Judicial Pilot WRAW Group

CLE at Camp JLAP Conference in Louisiana

August

U of A Law School Orientation

Bowen Law School Orientation

JLAP Foundation Meeting

Lawyers Helping Lawyers online weekly support groups

Judicial Pilot WRAW Group

September

JLAP Committee Meeting

AOC Benefits Fair

ABAI Conference for Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs in Colorado

JLAP CLE for DHS - "Values, Ethics, and Priorities: Know Yourself to Help Yourself"

Lawyers Helping Lawyers online weekly support groups

Judicial Pilot WRAW Group

October

JLAP CLE for Wilson Law Group

Bowen School of Law Health Fair

JLAP Open House

Fall Judicial College - Fort Smith

U of A Law School Wellness Week

Lawyers Helping Lawyers online weekly support groups

Judicial Pilot WRAW Group

November

JourneyWell room at Stress Less Fest at Bowen School of Law

JLAP CLE for First Judicial District

District Judges Orientation

JLAP Foundation Annual Advocates Dinner in Little Rock

December

JLAP Committee Meeting

JLAP Foundation Meeting

JLAP Volunteers Roundtable

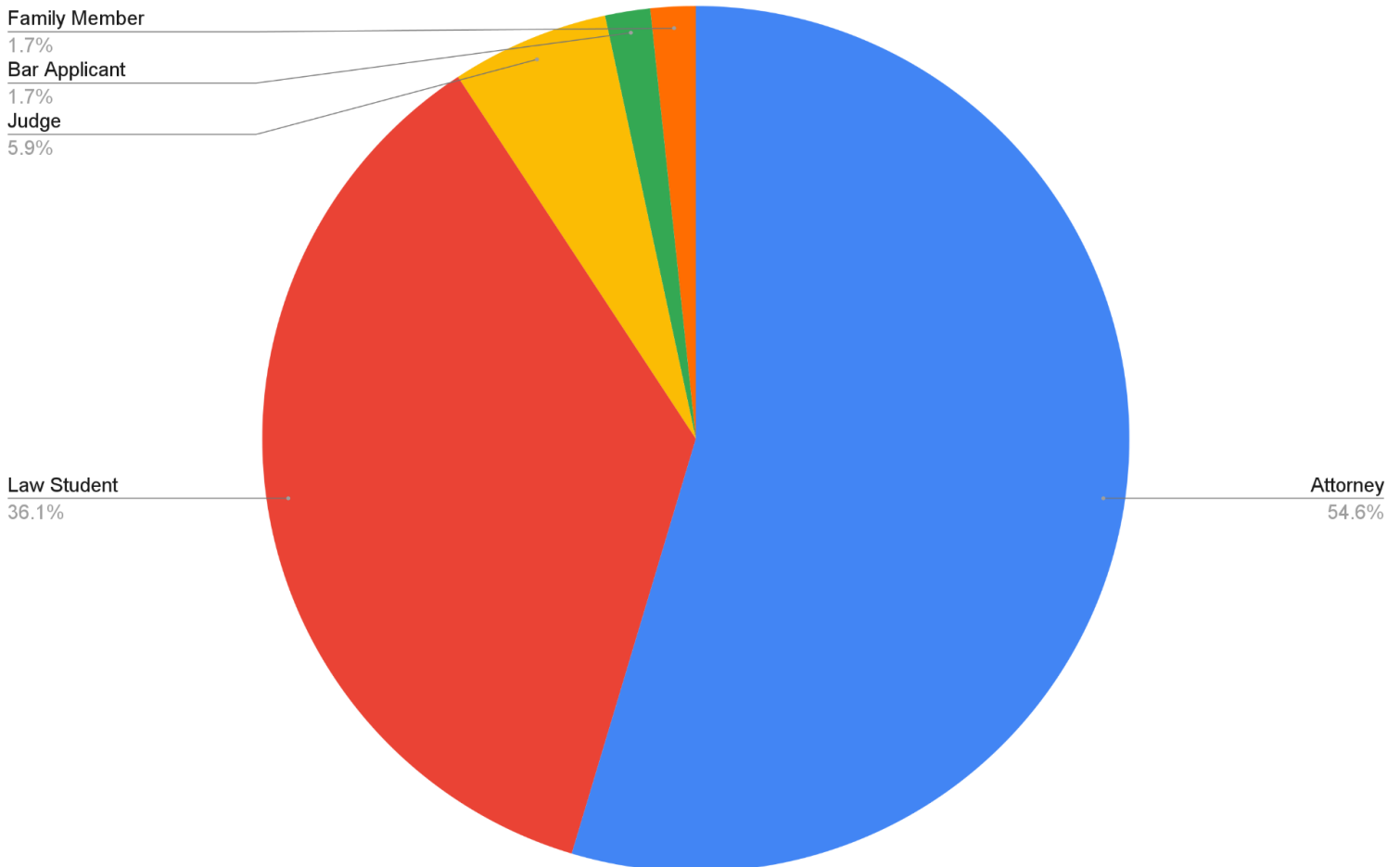
Judicial Pilot WRAW Group

2024 Data

In 2024, JLAP received 338 contacts for assistance. From those contacts, JLAP staff engaged with 119 individuals as clients and assisted 219 individuals via referral, information call, or resource connection. At the end of 2024, 61 clients remained active with JLAP.

Of the 119 clients who received JLAP assistance in 2024, the breakdown is as follows: Attorneys (65); Bar Applicants (2); Bowen Students (30); U of A Students (13); Family Members (3); Judges (7).

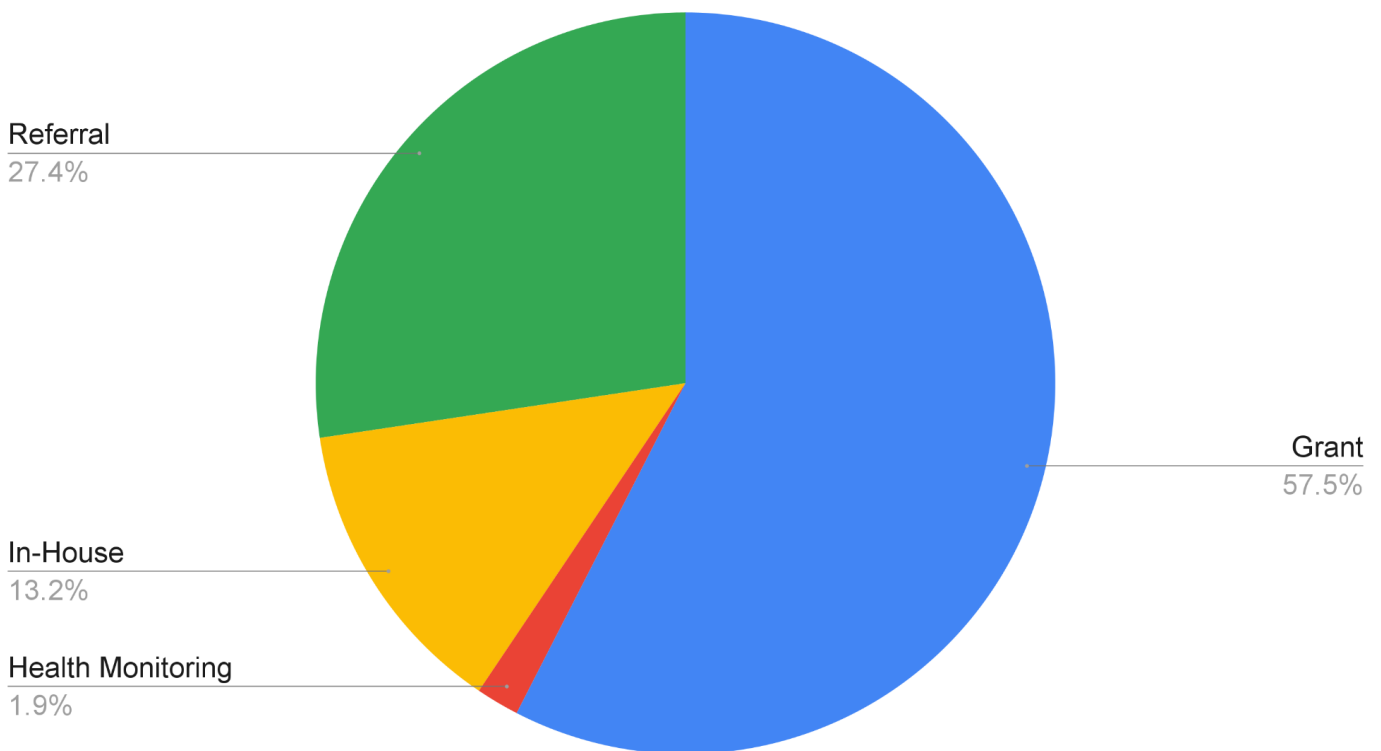
Client Type



Of the 119 clients served, JLAP provided 70 clients with grants this year to help with their mental health needs, at various levels of care. JLAP staff also provided in house outpatient therapy and/or monitoring services to 16 clients on an ongoing basis (including health monitoring) and provided an out of network referral for 7 individuals who are not represented by the following chart. At the end of 2024, JLAP contracted with over 50 mental health providers throughout the state to provide mental health services to our legal community.

JLAP offers in-house monitoring for clients who have found themselves in difficult situations with their mental health and have experienced substance/alcohol misuse. Monitoring clients can be voluntary (for additional accountability on their sobriety journey) or mandatory (through employers, Office of Professional Conduct [OPC], and Judicial Discipline and Disability Commission [JDDC]). In 2024, JLAP had 2 clients who were monitored within our office, both of which were voluntary clients.

JLAP Client Services

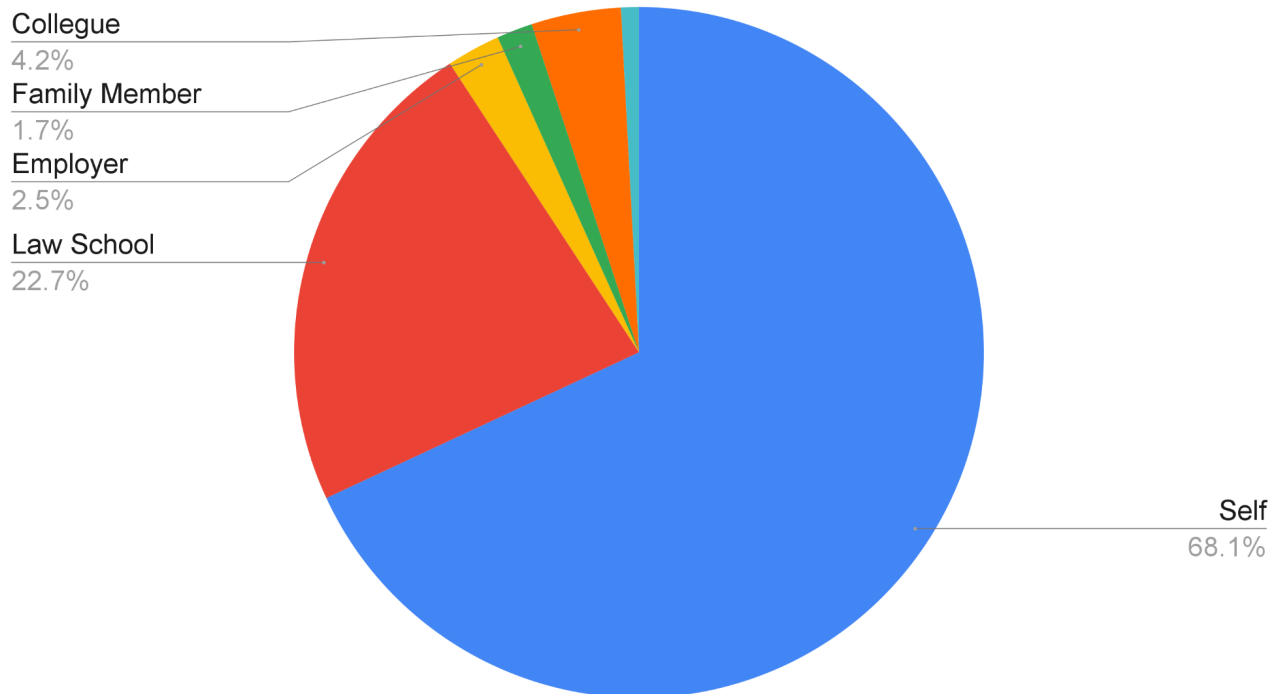


JLAP received more digital interactions this year than through any other avenue of contact, with 48% of our clients initially reaching out through our confidential email.

JLAP used community outreach efforts to increase awareness of services through CLEs, social media campaigns, and word of mouth by volunteers and former clients.

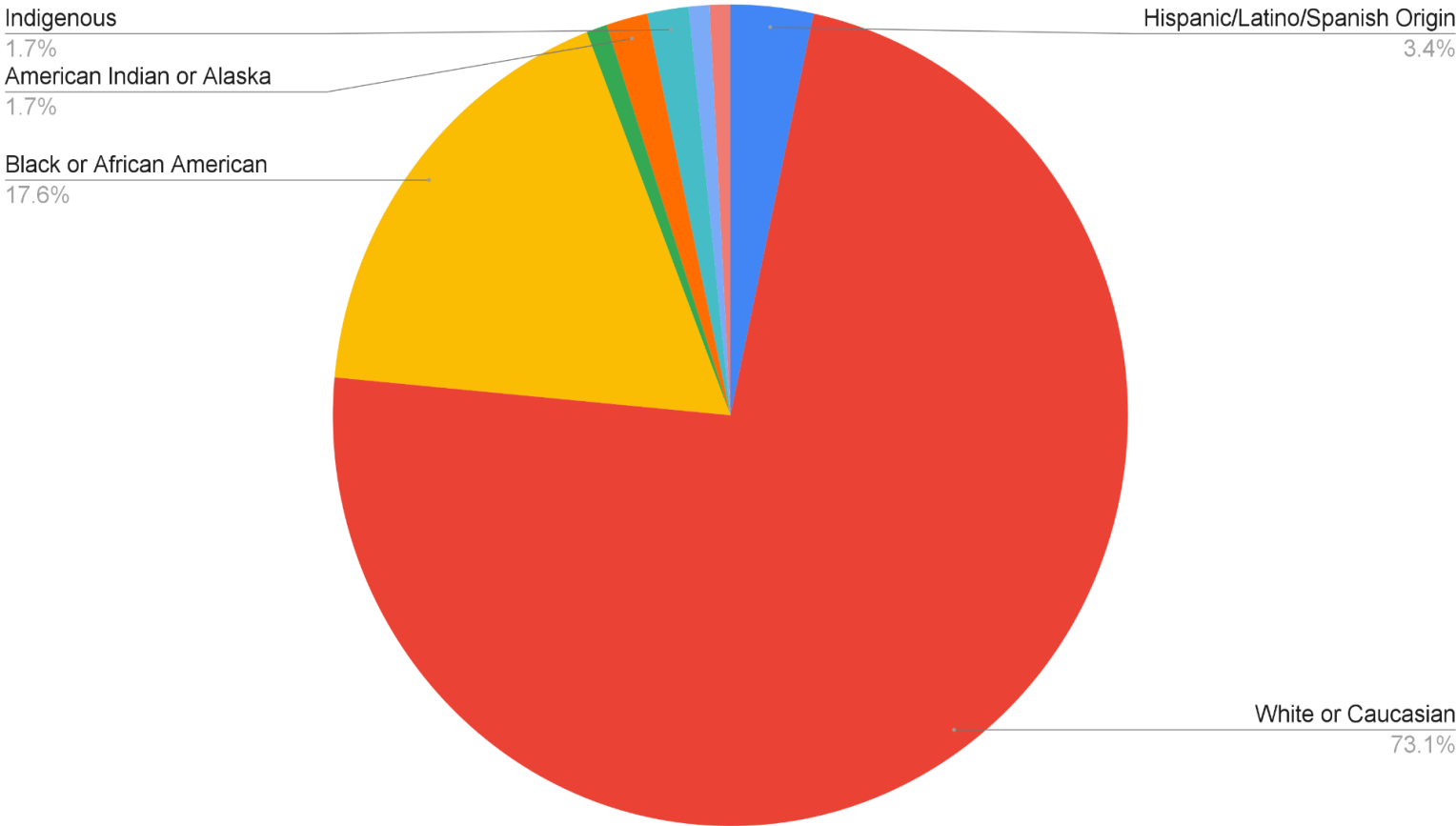
The primary referral method to JLAP continues to be self referral; however, there was a significant increase of referrals from other sources including employers, law schools, and colleagues compared to previous years.

Referral Source



In 2024, clients receiving services continued to increase and diversify, with our White/Caucasian population decreasing from 83.6% in 2022 and 78.5% in 2023 to 73.1% in 2024. In 2024, JLAP clients self-identified as 17.6% African American, 3.4% Hispanic/Latino, and 5.9% Asian, Native American, Indigenous, & Bi/Multiracial client base. The majority of clients served remains primarily Caucasian (73.1%). JLAP recognizes the need to continue to increase community outreach to under-represented communities in efforts to raise awareness of JLAP services and resources based on research and recommendations from the ABA.

Client Race/Ethnicity

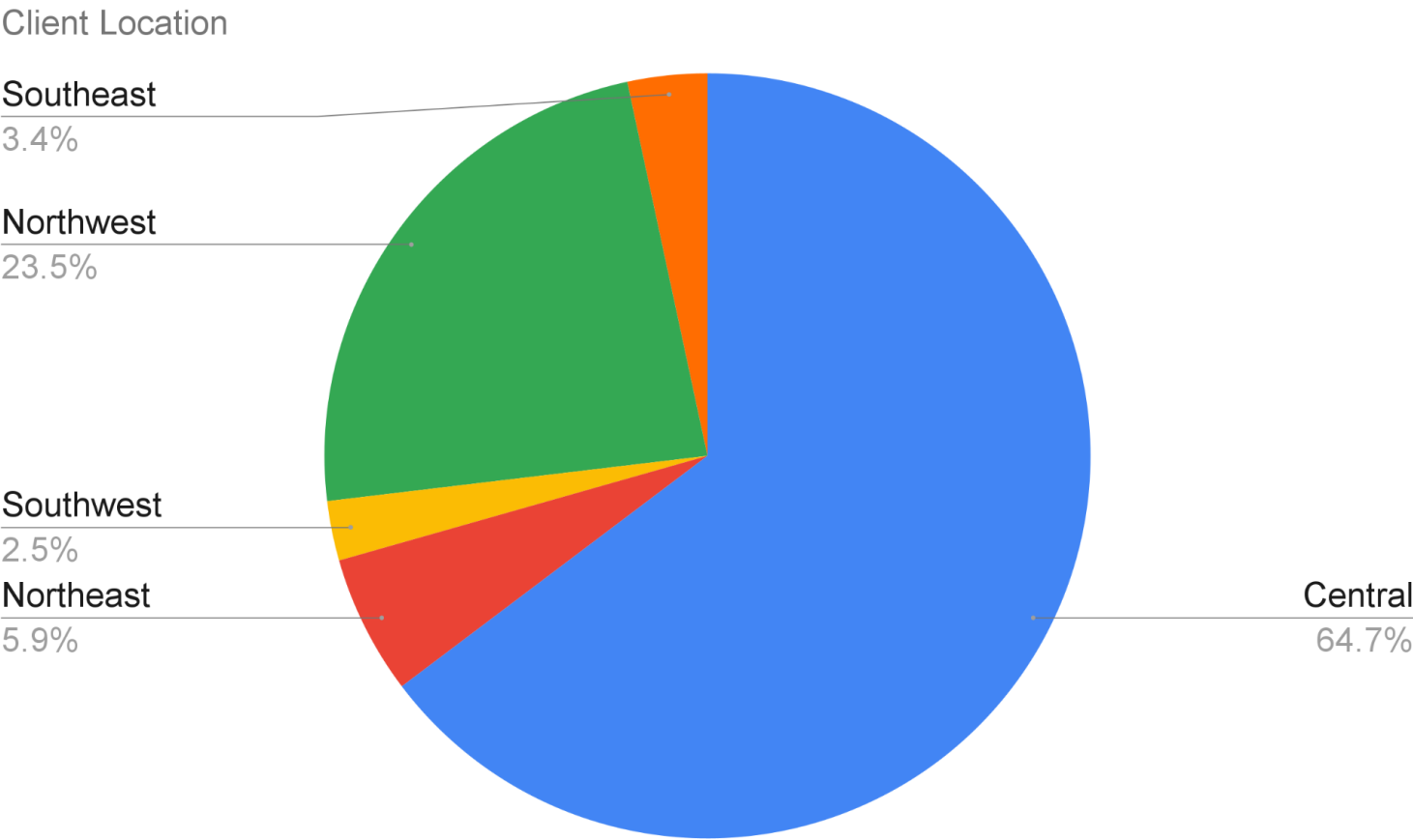


JLAP served more female clients than male clients in 2024
(Male 45.4%; Female 54.6%). JLAP recognizes a need for more gender inclusivity in
community outreach efforts.

Client Gender



JLAP offers services statewide, yet a large concentration of services are provided in Central and Northwest Arkansas. With increased community outreach and telehealth services continuing to be a preferred source for many, JLAP hopes to see an increase in service awareness and utilization throughout all areas of the state.



The table below represents the primary, self-reported issue of the individual requesting JLAP services. An overwhelming majority of individuals reaching out to JLAP in 2024 self-reported extreme stress/stressors as the primary reason for reaching out. The remaining primary presenting issues were mental health symptoms/disorder, family/relational issues, educational issues, and substance misuse.

In addition to extreme stress/stressors, in 2024, there were numerous secondary issues reported by JLAP clients - 31% reported mental health symptoms/disorder, 27.7% of clients reported family/relational issues, 16% reported grief/loss, 15.1% reported occupational issues, 14.3% of the clients reported trauma, and an additional 2.5% reported substance/alcohol misuse, which JLAP staff feels important to note is almost always under self-reported upon further exploration of the topic.

This year, client symptoms appeared to be increased per their self-reports compared to previous years in JLAP's data collection, with almost all clients reporting numerous reasons/issues for seeking assistance. While noting this increase, JLAP also received several requests for crisis intervention as well as residential treatment placement assistance relating to substance and/or alcohol use.

Primary Presenting Issue

