



### **Probono Helpdesks Project**

The provision of paralegal services at high courts and magistrate courts programme started as a pilot in Gauteng in 2022 to address the legal needs of citizens who approached courts for assistance with family disputes around access to children, abuse of the elderly and eviction by family members often requiring urgent legal intervention. In these cases, most community members opt to approach the courts with a hope of appearing before a judge to outline their issue. Due to the closure of the helpdesks, these people ended up being referred to other institutions including law clinics and public interest litigation organisations for assistance. The project was timely and has helped serve members of the public who approach the high courts in Gauteng and the magistrates' courts in the Free State.

After a successful pilot in Gauteng, the project was expanded to the Free State province as a request by the Deputy Judge President of the Province. The offering in the Free State province is premised on increasing the visibility and accessibility of CAOSA and the LPC insofar as ensuring access to justice for marginalised communities. Due to the vastness of the province, allocating delivery to one High Court was not practical and the approach was to rather utilize the spread of offices to increase access to the services at a magistrate's court level.

The model provides general paralegal support to the helpdesks and facilitates the provision of probono legal services through the LPC, to people who fall below the means test which is aligned to the Legal Aid means test for qualification. In the Free State, cases that fall outside the means test are referred to the University of the Free State Law Clinic. Below is the list of magistrate's courts as well as the respective advice offices servicing the courts in the Free State:

<b>District</b>	<b>Advice Office</b>	<b>Magistrate Courts</b>
<b>Xhariep District Municipality</b>	Sivile Advice Office	Smithfield
<b>Lejweleputswa District Municipality</b>	Phakama Youth Club	Hertzogville
	Hennenman Victim Empowerment Forum	Hennenman, Ventersburg,
<b>Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality</b>	Ficksburg Community Advice Office	Ficksburg
	N5 Resource Centre	Bethlehem and Senekal
	Thusanang Advice Centre	Phuthaditjhaba
<b>Mangaung Metropolitan</b>	Batho ba Lerato Advice Centre	Botshabelo and Thaba Nchu
<b>Fezile Dabi District Municipality</b>	Mafube Advice Centre	Frankfort
	Zamdela Advice and Resource Centre	Sasolburg



Partners to the Free State project include:

- Community Advice Offices South Africa (CAOSA)
- Legal Practice Council
- Free State Division of the High Court
- Department of Justice and Constitutional Development - Free State Regional Office
- UFS Law Clinic

*The project is proudly sponsored by the Legal Practice Council.*