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# WHERE HEALTH MEETS JUSTICE



A fellowship program to build health care expertise  
and leadership in the civil legal aid community

**CONVENED BY**

National Center for Medical  Legal Partnership

AT THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY



## ABOUT US

*Where Health Meets Justice* is an annual fellowship program for senior civil legal aid leaders. It is convened jointly by the National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership and the National Legal Aid and Defender Association.

### National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership



The National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership's mission is to mainstream an integrated medical-legal approach to health and health care for patients and populations by: (1) Transforming the focus of health care and legal practice from people to populations; (2) Building and informing the evidence base to support the medical-legal partnership approach; and (3) Redefining interprofessional education with an emphasis on training health care, public health and legal professionals together. It is a project of the Milken Institute School of Public Health at the George Washington University.

[www.medical-legalpartnership.org](http://www.medical-legalpartnership.org)

### National Legal Aid and Defender Association



For 100 years, the National Legal Aid & Defender Association has pioneered access to justice at the national, state and local level through the creation of our public defender system, development of nationally applicable standards for legal representation, groundbreaking legal legislation and the creation of important institutions such as the Legal Services Corporation.

[www.nlada.org](http://www.nlada.org)

## MANY THANKS

*Where Health Meets Justice* is possible thanks to generous support from the Public Welfare Foundation.

[www.publicwelfare.org](http://www.publicwelfare.org)

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# ABOUT THE FELLOWSHIP

## Preparing the Civil Legal Aid Community for Opportunities that Lie Ahead in Health Care

Legal needs related to housing, domestic violence and public benefits are inextricably linked to the health and well-being of low-income communities. People need access to safe housing, access to health insurance and enough nutritious food in order to be healthy. With the footprint and impact of health care growing, the legal aid community has substantial skills and insights to contribute to the new health care landscape, and access to civil legal services is increasingly seen as a strategy to help vulnerable Americans get and stay healthy. This provides a significant opportunity for the civil legal aid community to become partners with health care institutions who will share and invest in the civil legal aid mission.

In 2014, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued guidance permitting community health centers (CHCs) to include civil legal aid as an “enabling service” -- a non-clinical service that can improve access to care and improve health -- to meet the needs of patients. Additionally, the National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership was [awarded a National Cooperative Agreement grant from HRSA](#) to help CHCs partner with civil legal aid organizations. This tremendous opportunity along with other opportunities under health reform to partner with veteran medical centers, children’s hospitals and public hospitals require specialized knowledge, skill and leadership, but is the civil legal aid community ready?



The inaugural class of Where Health Meets Justice Fellows with faculty in May 2014.

The *Where Health Meets Justice* fellowship program was founded in 2014 to prepare senior civil legal aid leaders to frame legal services in a health care context, build strong health care alliances, use population health data effectively and meet the challenges inherent in health reform.

## Fellowship Details

Up to twenty civil legal aid Executive Directors and Deputy Directors from LSC and non-LSC agencies are selected for the 10-month fellowship each year. Fellows participate in a 2-day meeting in Washington, D.C. and in monthly webinars. Under the guidance of expert faculty, Fellows complete a final project that supports an agency strategic priority such as fundraising, partnership planning or data collection.

**For more information and to apply for the fellowship, visit:**  
[www.medical-legalpartnership.org/national-center/fellowships](http://www.medical-legalpartnership.org/national-center/fellowships)

# HOW THE CIVIL LEGAL AID COMMUNITY BENEFITS

## Reaching People Who Will Never Make It to Civil Legal Aid's Door



The Legal Services Corporation report, [“Documenting the Justice Gap in America”](#) shows that, on average, low-income Americans have two to three unmet civil legal needs; currently, civil legal aid is able to meet about 20 percent of the documented need.



There are many barriers to legal assistance, but in a recent American Bar Foundation study, [“Accessing Justice in the Contemporary USA,”](#) only 22 percent of respondents reported seeking any kind of outside help for their civil legal problems, and a significant reason why was that they did not know their problem had a legal solution.



But while individuals do not know to go to a civil legal aid office, they do go to their local hospital or community health center for help treating the health problems that derive from poor housing (asthma), lack of access to healthy food (Diabetes management) and domestic violence.

Delivering civil legal services on-site at health care institutions and partnering with health care teams allow individuals who would never have otherwise accessed legal help to receive needed services. And individuals can get needed health care and legal assistance all in one place.

**22%** of people do not seek any outside help for their civil legal problems, often because they don't know their problem has a legal solution.

Data from American Bar Foundation study

“When we partner with health care providers, we make the provision of legal services more accessible for clients. We understand clients may encounter emergencies and transportation challenges that may interfere with their ability to receive legal assistance. Being on-site is a better approach to delivering legal services.”

-- Regina Daniels Thomas  
Deputy Chief Counsel, Legal Aid & Defender Association (Detroit, MI)

# FROM PARTNERSHIPS WITH HEALTH CARE

## Improving Legal Outcomes with Health Care Expertise



Many of the cases that civil legal aid attorneys and paralegals work on require medical evidence. These cases include disability benefit applications, utility shut off protection and housing vouchers. It is also needed to secure special education services and employment benefits. Sometimes this requires information from an individual’s medical record, a letter from a clinician or in-person testimony from a medical expert.

Working separately, this evidence can be difficult to obtain. But working on-site at health care institutions, and more important, pursuing a team-based approach, offers quick, regular access to health care expertise that can provide critical facts and explain health care in more compelling ways to improve case outcomes.

## Growing Service Capacity Through Upstream Innovation and “Preventive Law”

Working with health care allows civil legal aid to deploy its services in a more “preventive” way. Because of the frequency with which individuals visit their doctors and nurse practitioners and seek out health care services, health care partners are in a position to screen patients earlier before a situation becomes a crisis. This allows legal teams to respond sooner, such as acting at the first sign of a housing problem rather than waiting for an eviction notice. An earlier intervention is not just better for an individual’s health and well-being; an earlier, “lower dose” legal intervention often requires less time and legal resources and has the potential to expand service capacity.

Working with health care providers also offers a unique opportunity to work upstream to identify and collaborate on policy level changes that are informed by the joint expertise of law and medicine. The goal is that with healthier, fairer policies, there would be fewer legal needs.

“Health care providers can be better messengers for public policy issues as legislators are often more likely to listen to them. Partnering with health care can be a big advantage for legal aid’s goals.”

-- Valerie Zolezzi-Wyndham  
Managing Attorney, Community Legal Aid (Worcester, MA)

# WHAT CIVIL LEGAL AID LEADERS GAIN BY PARTICIPATING IN THE FELLOWSHIP

## Concrete Understanding of Health Care Landscape, Leadership and Funding



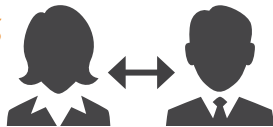
Through webinars, readings and an in-person meeting with expert faculty, Fellows gain firsthand knowledge of how health care institutions operate including staffing and financing models, which is important information for understanding where civil legal aid fits in the health care landscape and delivery model. Fellows also gain practical knowledge for building strong health care alliances, using population health data effectively and meeting challenges inherent in health reform.

## Opportunity to Work on a Local Strategic Project with Health Care Mentors



Each Fellow selects a final project, specific to their community and organization, that helps them advance a current agency priority. Fellows complete their projects with guidance from health care mentors.

## Peer-to-peer Learning on a National Level



Fellows overwhelmingly report that one of the fellowship's greatest assets is the opportunity to gather with other civil legal aid senior leaders and share their experiences, learnings and resources. The Fellowship provides a unique opportunity for leaders to share their work on single topic at the national level.

**“This fellowship is an opportunity to rally civil legal aid at a national level around a single crucial issue: health care. Conceptual discussions with other executive directors gives us the chance to think about what we have in common -- abandoning the state-by-state approach for a national one.”**

**-- Ed Marks,  
Executive Director,  
New Mexico  
Legal Aid, Inc.**

# 2014 FELLOWSHIP PROJECTS

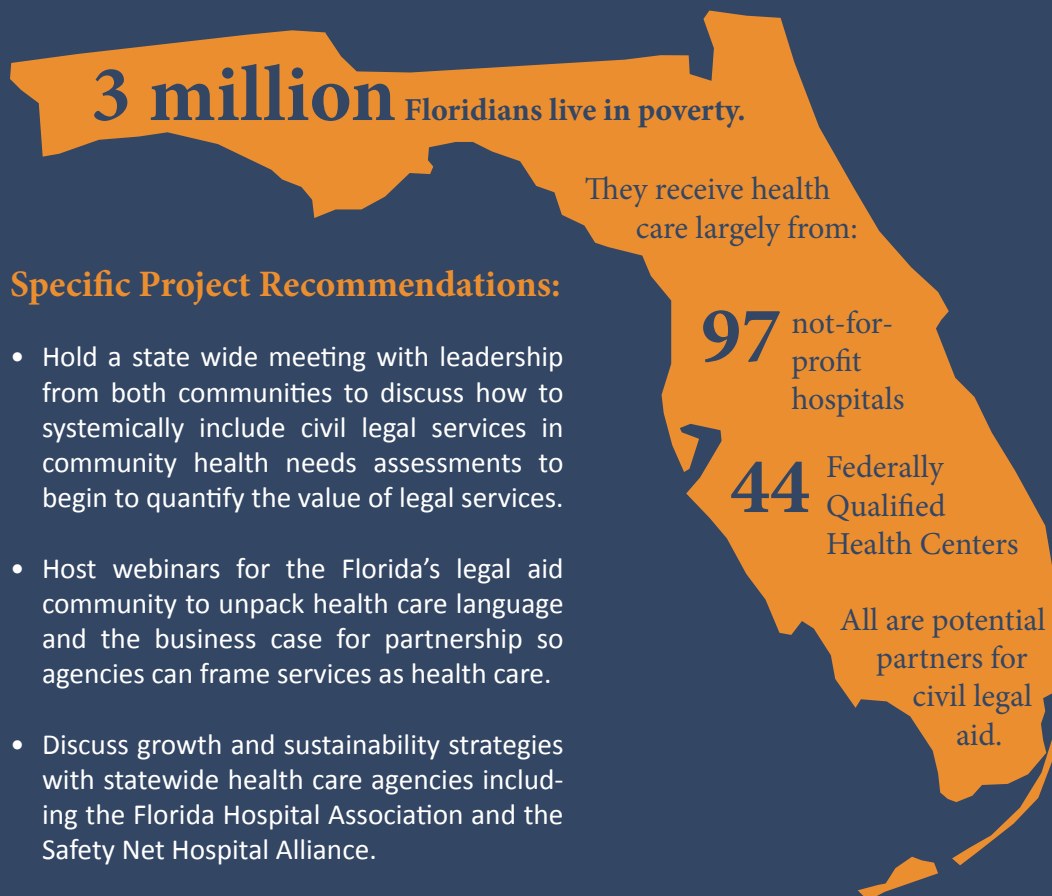
## Exploring a Range of Agency Priorities

With assistance from health care mentors, Fellows conducted needs assessments, wrote funding proposals, began developing metrics to measure legal interventions within health care priorities, and aligned messaging with health care language.

## Project Feature: Assessing the Landscape in Florida

Fellow Anne Swerlick of Florida Legal Services set out to investigate the state landscape of health care and civil legal services, conduct site visits with current medical-legal partnerships and figure out where opportunities for sustainability and growth exist.

She found that partnerships were most successful when they were on-site, with integrated trainings and service delivery, and where there were strong internal health care champions. But she also found a lack of coordination and communication between medical-legal partnerships in the state and significant gaps in the civil legal aid and health care communities' understanding of how each other worked -- both of which inhibited progress and funding.



# 2014 WHERE HEALTH MEETS JUSTICE FELLOWS

**Jonathan Asher**

Executive Director  
Colorado Legal Services

**Carol Ashley**

Vice President of Advocacy  
Sargent Shriver Nat'l Center on Poverty Law

**Jeffrey Been**

Executive Director  
Legal Aid Society, Louisville, Kentucky

**Daniel Bruner**

Director of Legal Services  
Whitman-Walker Health

**Caroline Chapman**

Director, Public Benefits Practice Group  
Legal Assistance Fndn of Metropolitan Chicago

**Regina Daniels Thomas**

Deputy Chief Counsel Broad Based Advocacy  
Legal Aid and Defender Association, Inc.

**Beth Engels**

Managing Attorney  
Community Legal Services Yavapai County

**M. Nalani Fujimori Kaina**

Executive Director  
Legal Aid Society of Hawaii

**Dennis Groenenboom**

Executive Director  
Iowa Legal Aid

**George Hausen, Jr.**

Executive Director  
Legal Aid of North Carolina

**Charles Hey-Maestre**

Executive Director  
Puerto Rico Legal Services Inc.

**Yvonne Mariajimez**

Deputy Director  
Neighborhood Legal Services of LA County

**Ed Marks**

Executive Director  
New Mexico Legal Aid Inc.

**Margaret Middleton**

Executive Director and Co-Founder  
Connecticut Veterans Legal Center

**Adam Mueller**

Staff Attorney/ILS Director of MLP Initiatives  
Indiana Legal Services

**Nikole Nelson**

Executive Director  
Alaska Legal Services Corporation

**Beth Orlansky**

Advocacy Director  
Mississippi Center for Justice

**David Pantos**

Executive Director  
Legal Aid of Nebraska

**Alison Paul**

Executive Director  
Montana Legal Services Association

**Anne Rubin**

Managing Attorney  
Ohio State Legal Services Association

**Rodolfo Sanchez**

Deputy Director  
Texas RioGrande Legal Aid

**Anne Swerlick**

Deputy Director of Advocacy  
Florida Legal Services

**Rhodia Thomas**

Executive Director  
MidPenn Legal Services

**Valerie Zolezzi-Wyndham**

Managing Attorney  
Community Legal Aid Inc.

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