PROJECT SUMMARY

Assessing and Improving the DC Name Change Process for Transgender Immigrants

Fall 2015

The Client: Whitman-Walker Health (WWH) is a community health center in Washington, DC, specializing in LGBT and HIV care. Through its targeted work with the transgender community, WWH quickly recognized the importance of name changes to the health and wellbeing of transgender individuals and started the first Name and Gender Change Clinic in the metropolitan Washington, DC area.

The Problem: Through the Name and Gender Change Clinic, WWH became aware of barriers in the name change process that unduly discourage many transgender immigrants from seeking and obtaining a name change in DC Superior Court. Correct and accurate identification that matches a transgender individual’s true gender identity and/or expression is a matter of extreme importance. In addition to an array of practical difficulties, like entering buildings that require identification or routine interactions with the police, having inaccurate or incorrect identification presents safety concerns.

The Outcome: CJP student attorneys met with a range of institutional and individual stakeholders, took part in multiple observations and discussions at DC Superior Court, and spoke with transgender individuals about their experiences changing their name in DC. The team identified the relevant committee at DC Superior Court to amend the name change process, helped WWH gain the opportunity to speak to judges and members of the committee at a Court training and prepare for the training, and connected WWH with important Court personnel who can influence the committee to improve the name change process for transgender immigrants.

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