THE HEALTH JUSTICE ALLIANCE EXPERIENCE

General health and well-being are directly influenced by social factors such as food security, housing, education, and access to health care. For people living in poverty, legal assistance can be critical to overcoming these barriers, but many low-income communities lack access to free legal services. To confront this challenge, a growing national movement endorsed by the American Bar Association, the American Medical Association, and the Association of American Medical Colleges is calling for a different care model: medical-legal partnerships (MLPs) that connect attorneys and health professionals to holistically address health disparities and improve...
Recognizing that the MLP model could help address some of the underlying causes of the poor health outcomes experienced by minority and underserved communities in the District, Georgetown University launched the Health Justice Alliance in November, 2016. This new MLP between the Law Center and the Georgetown University Medical Center (GUMC) is preparing the next generation of leaders in medicine and law to work together to improve the health and well-being of people living in poverty. By integrating directly into health care teams, students in the Law Clinic engage in poverty law advocacy help address conditions that contribute to the health and justice challenges facing communities across D.C. Students also learn and gain firsthand experience with this innovative healthcare and legal services delivery model, which offers a unique and especially effective method for reducing barriers to justice that confront people living in poverty. The Health Justice Alliance is quickly being recognized as a national leader in medical-legal partnership and was recently honored locally as “Campus Heroes” for the impact our students and partners across campus have had in underserved communities in D.C.

**Case Work**

Case Work
Seminar & Supervision

The clinic seminar and supervision meetings provide students with training and practice in many lawyering skills, assist them in reflecting on what it means to represent a client, and stimulate thinking broadly about the myriad ways to effect change within the legal system. Through seminars and intensive supervision, the Health Justice Alliance teaches students about the close ties between justice and the health and well-being of communities living in poverty, the commitment that will sustain and energize social change agents over the long haul, inter-professional collaboration and other tools available to accomplish a client's goals, and the strategies that look to long-term and transformative success and participation in a protracted struggle for justice.

Student Learning Goals & Competencies

Through seminar, supervision, reflection, individually-tailored learning, and experiences with clients, students in the Health Justice Alliance:

1. Learn how lawyers define and address problems using a wide range of strategies such as litigation, advocacy with agencies, negotiation, inter-professional education and collaboration, community education, and policy initiatives.
2. Enhance their communication skills with a variety of audiences and reinforce the understanding that the law is not necessarily the answer to every problem.
3. Establish direct relationships with clients and are responsible for providing the client with excellent, client-centered legal services using a client empowerment model.
4. Develop an ability to learn from experience, to think critically, and to act with integrity.
5. Hone their ability to make grounded judgments and to articulate the source, reasons for, and consequences of their choices.
6. Experience working with clients and communities in defining what justice means to them and the role that the law can play in advancing health and well-being.
7. Experience a model in which justice is not just an outcome, but a long-term process that encompasses victory and defeat.
8. Develop an appreciation for the complexity of working for social justice and the faith that they have the capacity to make a difference as a lawyer.
9. Develop inter-professional collaboration skills, including the abilities to understand intersections between other disciplines and the pursuit of justice, to translate law into language accessible to other disciplines, and to partner with professionals through advocacy on behalf of and with underserved individuals and populations.

TIME COMMITMENT

The Health Justice Alliance requires substantial commitment and dedication. This includes an orientation program, preparation for, and interaction with, clients, and substantial community engagement. Students will also spend time getting up to speed on the areas of law related to their individual and project work. The clinic is designed to prepare students for their lives as lawyers and to ensure that they have a wide array of problem-solving skills and an increased comfort with exercising judgment. We hope and expect that the benefit of this approach will overshadow the substantial time commitment.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The Health Justice Alliance has slots for 10-12 students per semester. The clinic application can be found online at http://www.law.georgetown.edu/go/clinic-registration.
We will have an informal open house for applicants to speak with the supervisors and current and former students. This session is designed to help applicants decide whether they would like to enroll in the Clinic and to ensure that the students who apply are fully aware of the obligations associated with participation in the Clinic. The session will be held on Wednesday, 3/27/19 from 3:30-4:30pm in McDonough 340 (the Clinic Office). Interested students are strongly encouraged to attend this session or to email Clinic Faculty to set up another time.

FACULTY

Yael Cannon, Associate Professor and Director of the Georgetown University Health Justice Alliance Law Clinic. Professor Cannon is also the Co-Director of the broader Health Justice Alliance, which aims to train the next generation of lawyers and healthcare providers to address legal issues affecting the health and well-being of people living in poverty through service, education, and research. She previously taught at the University of New Mexico (UNM) School of Law in the Community Lawyering Clinic, one of the nation’s leading academic medical-legal partnerships, in which law students collaborate with medical students and faculty to advocate on behalf of low-income children and families. She has also taught doctrinal and experiential courses outside of the clinic, including Children’s Law. Professor Cannon co-founded the UNM Center for Child and Family Justice, a partnership with the UNM Health Sciences Center, to pursue justice, racial equity, health, and well-being for vulnerable children and families. She co-chaired the New Mexico legislature’s J. Paul Taylor Early Childhood Taskforce aimed at developing a comprehensive screening and behavioral health system of care for young children to reduce childhood maltreatment and improving outcomes. She previously taught at the American University Washington College of Law in the Disability Rights Law Clinic. In practice, Professor Cannon worked as a Senior Attorney at the Children’s Law Center in Washington, D.C., where she provided legal services at a Children’s National Medical Center pediatric clinic and engaged in policy advocacy on behalf of children and families living in poverty. Professor Cannon graduated with distinction from Stanford Law School and summa cum laude from the University of Maryland with B.A. degrees in History and African American Studies. Her research focuses on the ways in which the law, in collaboration with other disciplines, can be used to improve health and justice outcomes for children and families who have experienced trauma, poverty, and disability.

Ericka Petersen, Clinical Teaching Fellow at the Health Justice Alliance Law Clinic. Prior to joining the Health Justice Alliance, Ericka was a staff attorney at Iowa Legal Aid where she represented clients in a wide variety of civil legal matters, with particular interest in housing law and issues arising in subsidized housing. Ericka also chaired Iowa Legal Aid’s Race Equity Committee, and supervised law student interns and volunteer researchers. Ericka received her J.D. at the University of California, Berkeley and earned her B.A. in German and International Studies at the University of Iowa. While at Berkeley Law she spent three semesters as a student advocate at the East Bay Community Law Center, largely focused on the rights of people experiencing homelessness, and ending the criminalization of homelessness. Ericka is the proud mother of two young children.

2018-19 STUDENTS

Anthony Albanese  Dustin Schaefer
Madelaine Cleghorn  Luke Bosso
Natalie Dobek  Silvia Bruckback
Mahad Ghani  Anna Fasano
Angela Haddon  Clinton Greub
Richard Harper  Landon Myers
Erin Lasenby  Rachel North
Danielle Liberman  Conor Younks
Afiya McLaughlin-Johnson  Margaret White
Alassandra Olsewski  Navneet Binning