

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY HEALTH JUSTICE ALLIANCE

Apply online at: <http://apps.law.georgetown.edu/clinic-application/>

Faculty	Professor Yael Cannon and Fellow Anne Cunningham
What do students do	Clinic students will engage in poverty law advocacy on behalf of low-income children and families, as part of the medical-legal partnership between Georgetown University’s Law Center and Medical Center, to improve the health and well-being of low-income children and families. Among the legal needs currently being served are those related to education, housing, family law, and public benefits, including access to health insurance. Patients at Georgetown Community Pediatrics health clinics face multi-generational, complex, civil legal needs, many of which negatively impact their health and well-being. Working in collaboration with medical students, physicians, and other healthcare providers, students will work in the community to provide direct legal representation in different areas of poverty law to health clinic patients. By partnering directly with healthcare providers, who help identify when patients have unmet legal needs, law students and faculty are implementing an upstream legal services approach that fills an important access to justice gap in D.C. and works to reduce health disparities. In addition to direct client work, students may also engage in inter-professional collaboration, community education and advocacy, and/or policy projects related to health justice. Student work will involve a range of lawyering skills, cut across diverse subject matter areas related to health and poverty, and explore commitment to, and strategies for, social justice.
Semester or year-long	One semester, either Fall or Spring
Open to	2Ls and 3Ls
Prerequisite(s)	All first year courses and (as a pre- or co-requisite) Evidence
Credits	10
Requires Student Bar Certification	Yes
How many students	10-12/semester
Conflicts	Handled on a case-by-case basis
Average time commitment	35 hours/week
Seminar hours	Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:20-3:20pm
Orientation	MANDATORY Four-day orientation before the semester begins
Information session(s)	TBD

THE HEALTH JUSTICE ALLIANCE EXPERIENCE: POVERTY LAW ADVOCACY ON BEHALF OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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 patient outcomes.

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

Clinic students undertake direct representation of low-income patients of GUMC community-based health clinics in a range of areas of poverty law to remove legal barriers to health and well-being. Law students represent children and families in cases related to education law, housing law, family law, public benefits law, including access to health insurance and healthcare, depending on law student interest and community need. Law students may represent patients at a number of Georgetown health clinic partners: the Georgetown HOYA Clinic, a health clinic serving homeless children and families in D.C., the Georgetown Community Pediatrics Kids Mobile Medical Van, which a health clinic on wheels which brings medical care directly to children in low-income communities, or the Georgetown School Health Center at Anacostia High School, a health clinic integrated into a high school serving many students living in poverty. Law students in the Health Justice Alliance law clinic are not interns; they take a leadership role as student attorneys on their cases, directly interacting with clients, agencies, courts, and others through their advocacy. These cases give students the opportunity to engage in a wide array of lawyering experiences, such as interviewing and counseling, information gathering, advocating to a decision-maker, negotiation, legal research and writing, and litigation, which may include oral and written advocacy in court or administrative hearings. The Health Justice Alliance emphasizes a client empowerment approach, and law students seek to provide their clients with tools to become more informed self-advocates in the long-term.

Because health justice can implicate several areas of law, including family, education, housing, and public benefits law, and the clinic is driven by client need, students may work on different types of cases. In Washington, D.C., health justice is a core component of racial justice, and students will have an opportunity to delve into critical health disparities issues affecting our local communities. Inter-professional education opportunities through partnerships with medical students, physicians, and other healthcare providers will allow students to engage in collaboration with professionals from other disciplines, a skill critical to the practice of law across many subject areas. For example, a parent expressed concern to her child’s pediatrician that the family was hungry the last week of every month, which can have a significant impact on the child’s ability to learn and function. A Health Justice Alliance law clinic student represented that parent in obtaining additional public benefits for the family so that the child and his family are no longer hungry. Health Justice Alliance law clinic students have also collaborated with healthcare providers to help families other ways. For example, law clinic students have helped families to file housing discrimination claims with the DC Office of Human Rights, to appeal terminations of Medicaid to obtain coverage and avoid crushing medical debt, and to obtain special education, homeless student, and bullying protection services for children.

Depending on the needs of the Health Justice Alliance, our healthcare partners, and the community we serve, during certain semesters, clinic students may also undertake projects that involve community education and advocacy, inter-professional collaboration, and/or policy work to advance health justice.

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://apps.law.georgetown.edu/clinic-application/>.

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 Zoom on a date TBD. 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 Legal 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.

Anne Cunningham, is a Clinical Teaching Fellow and Supervising Attorney in the Health Justice Alliance (HJA) Law Clinic. Prior to joining HJA, Anne worked for Children's Law Center (CLC), a DC-based civil legal services organization that works to improve and protect kids' access to safe housing, loving families, and quality education. For her first five years at CLC, Anne was a staff attorney in CLC's medical-legal partnership, called Healthy Together, working in collaboration with pediatricians and other healthcare providers on-site at Mary's Center, a federally qualified health center (FQHC). In that role, Anne specialized in litigating special education and housing conditions matters. She subsequently joined CLC's policy team and spent two years advocating with DC government agencies and the DC Council for changes to laws and policies impacting low-income DC families. In that role, Anne drafted legislation, coordinated diverse coalitions in lobbying efforts, analyzed agency budgets, and testified more than 20 times before the Council. Before joining CLC, Anne briefly represented Latinx survivors of domestic violence in U-Visa, VAWA, and asylum matters. As a law student, Anne spent a summer working with juveniles in immigration detention in Miami and worked for several organizations advocating for survivors of domestic violence.

Anne lived in Ann Arbor, Michigan for eight years, earning BAs in History and Spanish and a JD. Anne speaks fluent Spanish, is licensed to practice law in New York and DC, and is an avid ceramist and gardener in her free time.

2019-20 STUDENTS

Sabrina Bernadel
Nina Bernstein
Prashasti Bhatnagar
Chiamaka Echibiri
Parker Erickson
Ashley Hunsberger
Charlotte Kelley
Nicole Marton
Laura Reinhard
Noemi Schor
Abigail Sweeney
Julie Zuckerbrod

Joshua Adler
Nicole Carroll
Nicole Fauster
Gabrielle Field
Madeine Freeman
Lea Glen
Charnay Jones
Alexandria Kirchoff Corrie
Richa Raghute
Katherine Scandura
Calla Simeone