

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY HEALTH JUSTICE ALLIANCE

Apply online at: www.law.georgetown.edu/go/clinic-registration

Faculty	Professor Yael Cannon, Visiting Professor Marta Beresin, and Clinical Teaching Fellow Ashley Nyce
What do students do	Clinic students will engage in poverty law advocacy on behalf of low-income children and families, as part of a medical-legal partnership between Georgetown University's Law and Medical Centers to improve the health and well-being of low-income children and families. Patients at our partner health clinics face complex civil legal needs, many of which negatively impact their health and well-being. Among the legal needs currently being served are those related to housing, education, public benefits (including access to health insurance), and family law. 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 working to reduce racial and economic health disparities. Medical students partner with law clinic students through School of Medicine health justice advocacy rotations. 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 1:20-3:20 pm
Orientation	MANDATORY Four-day orientation before the semester begins
Information session(s)	Wednesday, March 31, 2021, 2:30 pm - 4:00 pm Or email healthjusticealliance@georgetown.edu to make an appointment.

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 poor health outcomes experienced by minority and underserved communities in the District of Columbia, Georgetown University launched the Health Justice Alliance (HJA) in November 2016. HJA 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 into health care teams and collaborating with medical students, student attorneys in the Law Clinic engage in poverty law advocacy to help address conditions that contribute to the health and justice challenges facing communities across D.C. Students also 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. The Health Justice Alliance is quickly being recognized as a national leader in medical-legal partnership, and our team was honored locally as “Campus Heroes” for the impact our students and partners across campus have had in underserved communities in D.C.

Case Work

The Health Justice Alliance Law Clinic is Georgetown Law’s poverty law clinic, providing law clinic students with the opportunity to engage in legal advocacy in a range of poverty law areas through an innovative medical-legal partnership model that increases low-income patients’ access to health care and justice by decreasing barriers to medical and legal services. Clinic students provide direct representation for low-income patients referred by GU Medical Center community-based health clinics in order to remove legal barriers to health and well-being. Law students represent patients in cases related to housing law, education law, family law, and public benefits law, including access to health insurance and healthcare, depending on law student interest and community need. Law students may represent patients served by a number of Georgetown health clinics, such as the Georgetown HOYA Clinic (a health clinic serving homeless children and families residing in shelter), the Georgetown Community Pediatrics Kids Mobile Medical Van (a health clinic on wheels that brings medical care directly to children in low-income communities), or the Georgetown School Health Centers at Anacostia High School and Roosevelt High School (health clinics 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, D.C. government 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, fact investigation, advocating to a decision-maker, negotiation, legal research and writing, and litigation, which may include oral and written advocacy in court or administrative hearings.

Because health justice can implicate several areas of law (including housing, education, family, and public benefits law) and the clinic is driven by client need, the types of work students engage in each semester may vary. 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 allow students to engage in inter-professional collaboration, a skill critical to the practice of law across many subject areas. For example, a parent expressed concern to her child’s pediatrician that her frequent and serious asthma attacks were exacerbated by mold, rodents, and other poor housing conditions. A Health Justice Alliance law clinic student represented that parent in litigating against the landlord to improve the housing conditions, which ultimately resulted in better health for the child. Law clinic students have helped families to file housing discrimination civil rights cases, to litigate against landlords to improve housing conditions for low-income tenants, to advocate for reasonable accommodations for tenants and shelter residents with disabilities, to appeal terminations of Medicaid to obtain coverage and avoid crushing medical debt, to advocate for increased public benefits to help families fight hunger and income insecurity and to obtain special education, homeless student, and bullying protection services for students.

Depending on the needs of the Health Justice Alliance, our healthcare partners, and the communities 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. For example, students have testified before the D.C. Council in support of legislation to address the crisis of lead poisoning in residential housing in D.C.

Seminar & Supervision

The clinic seminar and supervision meetings provide students with intensive training and practice in many lawyering skills, assist them in reflecting on what it means to represent a client, and stimulate thinking broadly about connections between their cases and the history of structural racism in D.C. and the U.S., as well as the myriad ways to affect 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 strategies for long-term and transformative 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 provide excellent, client-centered legal advocacy that increases the clients' knowledge of their legal rights and related systems and support the clients' self-advocacy skills.
4. Learn to identify barriers to health and well-being as created by social determinants and draw connections between their cases and health, justice, and racial disparities.
5. Develop an ability to reflect introspectively and thereby learn from experience, think critically, and act with integrity.
6. Hone their ability to make grounded judgments and articulate the source, reasons for, and consequences of their choices.
7. Experience working with clients and communities to support what justice means to them and use the law to advance health and well-being.
8. Experience a model in which justice is not just an outcome but a long-term process that encompasses victory and defeat.
9. 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.
10. Develop inter-professional collaboration skills, including the abilities to understand intersections between other disciplines and the pursuit of justice, translate law into language accessible to other disciplines, and 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 prior to the first week of the semester, preparation for and interaction with clients, as well as substantial community engagement. Students will also spend time getting up to speed on the areas of law related to their casework. Students are expected to dedicate *on average* 35 hours per week to their clinic work, but as with any dynamic law practice, the hours may be more or less in a given week. The clinic is designed to prepare students for their lives as lawyers and 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. Interested students are strongly encouraged to attend this session or to email Clinic Faculty to set up another time to talk.

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.

Marta Beresin is a Visiting Professor of Law in Georgetown Law Center's Health Justice Alliance Law Clinic. Throughout her legal career, Professor Beresin has worked at the intersection of child welfare and family homelessness. At the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless, Professor Beresin represented homeless families in shelter, housing, disability rights, and public benefits cases and advocated locally for budget and policy initiatives to serve her clients' interests, such as affordable housing and a more robust TANF program. She also trained and supervised pro bono attorneys and engaged in community education, outreach, and organizing shelter residents to assist their efforts to create a more just, respectful, and supportive homeless services

continuum of care in Washington, D.C. Early in her career, Professor Beresin represented children in child abuse and neglect cases and parents experiencing homelessness in family law matters. Most recently, she served as the Legal and Policy Director for Break the Cycle; a national non-profit focused on teen dating violence, where she created a partnership with two DC school-based health centers to screen and refer high school students in need of protection orders and related legal matters. Professor Beresin has testified before the DC Council and Congress and provided commentary related to family homelessness on Pacifica Radio, NPR Morning Edition, and other news outlets. She has spoken at national conferences and Symposiums and written about the devastating impact of the separation of children from their families due to housing insecurity and homelessness. Professor Beresin received her J.D. with honors from George Washington University Law School and a B.A. in Political Science from Penn State University.

Ashley Nyce is a Clinical Teaching Fellow and Supervising Attorney in the Health Justice Alliance (HJA) Law Clinic. Prior to joining HJA, Ashley was a coordinating attorney in the Special Education Unit (SEU) at the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG), where she worked with families and healthcare providers to advocate for appropriate educational services on behalf of students with disabilities attending traditional public and charter schools in New York City. While at NYLAG, Ashley was a mentor attorney for the Disability and Civil Rights Clinic at Brooklyn Law School, supporting clinic students engaged in special education advocacy on behalf of adolescents and young adults. Ashley also served as a Guardian ad Litem at the Children’s Law Center (CLC), where she provided comprehensive representation for children in D.C.’s abuse and neglect system and carried a limited number of special education cases with CLC’s Healthy Together Program. Prior to law school, Ashley taught third grade at a public charter school in Detroit, Michigan. Ashley received her J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School, her M.A. in Education from the University of Michigan Graduate School of Education, and her B.A. from the University of California, Los Angeles.

2020-21 STUDENTS

Carmen Abella
Anna Burke
Christine Danielson
Gabriel Dowdell
Maya Earl
Ashley Ifeadike
Ryan Kelley
Katherine Kleinot
Sloan Renfro
Sarah Shanoudy
Aviantica Rhea Shinde
Christina Swiatowy

Julia Casciotti
Rachel Gold
Tamar Hoffman
Shamila Kara
Elizabeth LaPaugh
Anna Nagler
Rujuta Nandgaonkar
Patrick O’neil
Jessica Rivero
Alexander Rougheau
Hanna Shapiro