

***An Agenda for Change: An Illinois Perspective on Creating a Better Future  
for America's Women and Girls***

The Women's Law and Policy Project of the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law is pleased to announce the publication of [\*An Agenda for Change: An Illinois Perspective on Creating a Better Future for America's Women and Girls\*](#). A product of collaborative efforts with women and girls' advocates in Illinois and inspired by our work in communities across the state, *Agenda for Change* offers specific recommendations for the federal government to improve the well-being of our nation's women and girls, their families, and their communities.

Throughout American history the federal government has played a critical role in advancing the human rights of women and girls, achieving progress in their economic security, physical and mental well-being, and reproductive health. Yet women and girls continue to bear a disproportionate share of the costs of poverty in the United States; women and girls constitute over 55 percent of both our nation's 39.8 million people who live below the poverty line and the 17.1 million who live in extreme poverty. Key to eliminating poverty in our society is investing in the well-being of women and girls.

*Agenda for Change* addresses several key areas of policy development with specific recommendations for implementation by the federal government. Quality education and skill development, gainful employment, comprehensive health care, economic security, freedom from violence, and adequate and affordable housing should be guaranteed by federal policies and programs. Policy objectives must also take into account the discrimination and disparities that some women encounter based on immigration status, geographic location, criminal record, physical or mental ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and age. Developing comprehensive antidiscrimination policies and creating a humane safety net are at the heart of all of the recommendations. Integrated approaches that bridge these areas in a way that recognizes the fundamental human rights of all individuals are critical to promoting the well-being of women and girls.

The Women's Law and Policy Project continues its own efforts for change here in Illinois. Featured on the front page of the January 10, 2010, issue of the *Chicago Tribune* is an article about one of these efforts, the Ensuring Success in School Initiative. The initiative promotes the education rights of elementary-and-secondary-school-age parents and expectant parents, and student survivors of domestic and sexual violence, with comprehensive laws and policies to keep them in school, keep them safe, and help them succeed. Wendy Pollack, director of the Women's Law and Policy Project and member of the statewide Ensuring Success in School Task Force, is a key advocate of these laws and policies and is quoted in the article. Read [the full article](#) in the *Tribune* and learn more about the Shriver Center's efforts to protect and empower young women and girls [here](#).

The insight from our shared advocacy efforts, such as the Ensuring Success in School Initiative, is the backbone of *Agenda for Change*. We hope that *Agenda for Change* will inform federal-level policy to ensure that all of our nation's women and girls are guaranteed justice, economic advancement, and a brighter future.

*For more information, contact Wendy Pollack, director, Women's Law and Policy Project, Shriver Center, at 312.368.3303 or [wendypollack@povertylaw.org](mailto:wendypollack@povertylaw.org).*

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