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Rediscovering the Organizations We Worked to Invent—How to Build an Environment and Culture that Support Affirmative Advocacy

By Ross Dolloff

Ross Dolloff
National Training Director

Center for Legal Aid Education
89 South St. Suite 404
Boston, MA 02111
617.946.4672
rdoloff@legalaideducation.org

A growing chorus of voices in today's legal aid community is expressing grave concern about a perceived lack of aggressive affirmative advocacy directed at the structural institutions and policies that perpetuate poverty in our society. If this perception is real, and we continue to value this sort of advocacy as a core part of our mission, legal aid leaders must focus on identifying the barriers and causes within our control and strike them down—and do so sooner rather than later.

At the Center for Legal Aid Education we offer a series of advocacy skills courses for a broad spectrum of legal aid advocates. Our courses include an intensive yearlong leadership institute designed to develop a new group of diverse young emerging leaders with the skills, confidence, and peer support they need to play a powerful role in shaping our community's future. We offer a course in affirmative litigation designed to teach advocates the tools and the challenges associated with securing broad-based relief through a legal proceeding and a community lawyering course that teaches participants how constructively to engage in a multiforum, multitactic advocacy campaign that includes organizing, direct action, and communication strategies as well as litigation and the threat of litigation.

In teaching these curricula, our goal is not simply to enrich our participants academically and provide an interesting professional development experience. The primary goal is rather to influence the nature and impact of their work and practice back home. All too often, despite their enthusiastic desire to integrate the work proposed in these courses into their careers and professional plans, participants are cynical about their ability to do so in their work situations. In response, we now include in each of these courses a session in which the participants identify and seek solutions for the barriers they expect to face in their attempts to bring the learning home.

Here I summarize what we think we have learned from these sessions and similar ad hoc conversations during other training programs. These barriers are of great concern to many of our participants and are often a reason why the best and brightest come to feel that they cannot meet their personal and professional goals within the legal aid community. At the Center for Legal Aid Education we believe that overcoming these barriers not only will increase the impact of our work for our client community but also will contribute enormously to our ability to retain these emerging leaders so that they continue to hone their skills and realize their social-change goals from within our community rather than outside it. From the themes of these conversations and the barriers identified emerge some potential solutions for overcoming the barriers that these emerging young leaders urge their organizations to follow.

Keep Caseloads Reasonable and Make Time for Creative Advocacy

Advocates foremost are cynical about being given the time and the resources to do affirmative advocacy. Far too typical is for a new legal aid advocate's initial work experience to be an overwhelming single-issue caseload of individual cases (many inherited from the last person who had the same job), got sick of it, and left. The starting point for any effort to overcome the lack of creative problem-solving advocacy within our programs is to consider it unacceptable in our culture for advocates to be completely without time and resources to think creatively, and take on one or more projects that stretch their professional experience and give them an opportunity to address broader issues for multiple clients.

How is it that, despite the substantial core funding that each of our programs receives, virtually all of our resources end up devoted to single-issue, caseload-driven advocacy efforts? One theory is that our program decision makers are not good at saying no and not very skilled at determining reasonable output levels for the grants and contracts they seek. Precious core funding too often becomes nothing more than the way the program fills the gap between what the program promised and what it could reasonably deliver in dozens of balkanized projects that leave no room for programs to attack problem policies and institutions that harm their client communities more systematically.

The routine justification for this situation is that the foundation world encourages if not requires this use of core funding and expects never to support fully the cost of any effort in which it invests. Still, there are alternatives. We can focus more of our funding diversification efforts on securing funding for experimental, problem-solving advocacy rather than on caseload-focused, output-based projects.[1] Then, when our core funding is added to the mix, that core funding becomes mission driven and impact oriented. We must also devote our attention to developing meaningful ways to measure and describe the impact of affirmative advocacy such that this impact is a product that we can explain to the funding community. And when our project-based funders do not permit us to organize the work in a manner that promotes a structural response to poverty, we can simply say no.

Every advocate, from day one in legal services, needs to have a meaningful percentage of time that is not caseload programmed. This is not free time. It is the advocates' time to engage in listening to their community of interest to learn what the most pressing issues are and what opportunities there might be to address them. It means having space to consider a problem deeply and invent potential solutions and then try to put those solutions into practice. Likewise, advocates must have the opportunity to work out-

[1]Examples of this kind of grantsmanship abound already, and a useful project would be to catalog them and support efforts to replicate this grantsmanship. Funders in recent years have been attracted to efforts to organize and conduct structural advocacy for day labor workers, structural analysis and advocacy about the use of federal and state affordable housing funds, broad-based approaches to increase housing access and employment and education opportunity in communities, structural advocacy directed at improved health care access, and many other targeted efforts to deal with policy and institutional poverty drivers, particularly in the context of specific high-poverty communities and neighborhoods.

side their comfort zone on projects and advocacy efforts that stretch their skills and experience and ensure professional growth.

Affirmative advocacy would also be encouraged, and younger advocates' professional development honored, if programs selected their "priorities" by reference not to case types but to a set of goals that have an impact on clients. For example, a housing unit's work might be organized around a goal of increasing housing stability by a measurable amount for low-income families in the service area over the next five years, as represented by available census data. From this perspective, high-volume eviction defense might be a worthwhile strategy, but other more structural approaches would also help achieve the goal—whether creating more subsidized housing opportunities with for-cause eviction protections; establishing a for-cause requirement for all evictions, public or private; improving the mediation system in the court that hears evictions; or creating homeownership opportunities as a more stable housing option.

Reinvigorate the Mission to Eradicate Poverty and Offer New Advocates Freedom to Experiment

Many new advocates come to legal services understanding it to be a social justice institution. Many come to accomplish social change and with activist experience and are startled by what they find. They report a complete absence of discussion about structural poverty, its causes and potential advocacy responses. There is no forum for line staff to engage in conversations about the big picture and integrate their values and philosophies into their work—questioning not only whether we do our cases well but also whether the cases or work we do achieve any effective goal for the relevant client community.

Legal services were explicitly designed to achieve a social-change mission, not simply access to justice. Our young advocates feel we have lost sight of that. One astute learner described the advocate experience in a legal aid program as analogous to an ombudsman role. Her work, as she saw it, was limited to ensuring that the systems against which her clients rubbed up operated as designed. She was assigned responsibility to help correct individual minor errors in the systems' operation. No effort was made to analyze the fundamental workings of the system or consider whether an alternative system might be fairer, more responsive, or more appropriate.

These are some constructive approaches to culturally reinvesting in a structural attack on poverty and its drivers:

- Adopt and use the new American Bar Association (ABA) performance standards as external support for a reinvestment in a high-impact, change-oriented mission.[2]
- Engage in programwide conversations and activities to reconnect the program to a mission for change. Read and discuss vision and mission statements

[2]See American Bar Association (ABA) Standards for the Provision of Civil Legal Aid,www.ain.lsc.gov/ainboard/RFP/civillegalaidstds2006.pdf. The standards are notable for their consistent commitment, across all dimensions, to an ethic of high-impact advocacy and effective professional development of staff. Of relevance to this discussion are (1) the introductory discussion which summarizes the fundamental vision and values underlying the standards including a recognition that "in all cases, the provider needs to ground its choices about where it focuses its resources and what delivery strategies it employs on its awareness of the low-income communities' critical legal needs"; "providers should strive both to achieve clients' objectives and to accomplish lasting results that respond to the low-income communities' most compelling legal needs"; "there are often broad issues that affect large numbers of low-income persons that can most effectively be addressed through systemic legal work that seeks to create lasting results for the low-income community overall"; and "when effective resolution of individual clients' problems is circumscribed by existing laws and practices, or when existing laws and practices result in the same or similar problems for many low-income persons, a practitioner may be called upon to reach beyond the individual problem to challenge the law, policy or practice"; (2) Standard 1-2—on the governing body's responsibility to ensure community participation in decision making and awareness of and responsiveness to overarching community and client needs; (3) Standard 1-3—on the need for ongoing communication with the low income community; (4) Standard 2-1—on identifying and responding effectively to community needs (emphasizing the need to set goals for the program's work in terms of the change anticipated from it and the need for a shared sense of mission and vision within each program, focused in this way); and (5) Standard 2-6—on achieving "lasting results" for the client community ("a provider … should engage in advocacy that addresses … systemic problems").

by leaders in legal services.[3] Discuss values, vision, and mission. What are we trying to accomplish? What is the "world as it should be" that we want our work to help secure? Then decide what resource allocations are necessary to pay this vision more than lip service.

- Shift some funding diversification efforts to respond to this mission focus.
- Reinvent priority-setting processes so that they are not strictly about case types. Structure them to be about the real world problems that the program's resources will be deployed to help solve and what goals—expressed in terms of actual changes in the circumstances of clients and the client community as a whole—will be pursued.

The good news is that there seems to be no major conflict about these values. Few expect their leaders to disagree with the proposition that addressing root causes of poverty should be an element of a program's mission. Rather most feel that senior leaders have just lost sight of this goal in the hurly-burly of fund-raising and program management. Still, a less flattering element of senior leader culture does interfere. Consistently advocates report being stifled by leaders whose knee-jerk reaction to ideas from young advocates is reactionary, defensive, and ultimately self-righteous. Here are some typical reactions:

- "Oh, that's not really a new idea. We tried that once and it didn't work."
- "We had that conversation before you got here. Your side lost."
- "There's someone else here with more experience. They'll take care of that."
- "I've been doing this a long time. Just trust me. I know better."

What is the solution? Old-line leaders must be willing to engage in self-reflection, confront the reality of their conduct and change it—or step aside. They must share power. Invite and welcome initiative and criticism. Consciously create advocacy leadership opportunities. Use elders as mentors, not as default leaders of every advocacy project. We should rate our leaders, primarily according to how many new leaders their leadership produces.

When young advocates talk with elders who came up in the legal services movement in its early days, those elders wax nostalgic about the relative freedom they had to invent their own practices and, in some cases, their programs. How then, the young advocates ask, can these same leaders have so lost perspective on the need for new emerging leaders to have some of the same freedom and to engage in this same experimentation? How can former innovators and rebels have become so calcified in their management of others? We have developed an extremely conservative culture in the truest sense of the word—a culture that is resistant to change, mired in traditional prescriptions for virtually everything, and cautious to a fault. We must view these inclinations as a fundamental evil to guard against and overcome.[4]

Another troubling element of program culture that new attorneys observe is a near complete lack of connection to the communities in which their offices are located. They report that their programs know little of what lies beneath in their communities and serve only those clients with the wherewithal to find their way to the door. This approach means that only a small slice of the client community ever interacts with the program. And that group is fundamentally unrepresenta-

[3]See, e.g., Edward V. Sparer, *The New Legal Aid as an Instrument of Social Change*, 1965 University of Illinois Law Forum 57; Edgar S. Cahn & Jean C. Cahn, *The War on Poverty: A Civilian Perspective*, 73 Yale Law Journal 1316 (1964); Gary Bellow, *Turning Solutions into Problems: The Legal Aid Experience*, 34 NLADA Briefcase (Aug. 1977); Florence Wagman Roisman, Aggressive Advocacy, Keynote Speech at the National Legal Aid and Defender Association Substantive Law Conference (2002).

[4]One of our learners proposes this thought exercise. As a senior legal services leader, consider your younger incarnation and imagine working for yourself. How would you feel about the mature you as a boss? How would you feel about your organization? Another younger learner suggested a profound basis for humility. He said, hey, if the senior leaders had solved the problems of poverty or their organizations had made a measurable improvement in the conditions of poverty over the last thirty years, maybe they'd be right to suggest that they had the answers. But, given that nothing of the sort has happened, is it too much to ask that we have our turn and have the opportunity to craft our own strategies?

tive. The new attorneys see that many of the messages in the community about our programs describe what the programs do not do—a type of information that we often communicate quite aggressively. We do little if anything to communicate our availability to partner in social-change efforts. As a result, many of the core structural barriers to economic opportunity are never presented as needs to our programs because those potential clients who face these barriers and suffer from them never appear, and those in the community who are working to overcome them do not see their local legal aid organization as a partner and resourcer. When these clients do appear, our intake systems are so balkanized that we rarely delve below the presented problems with the intent to discover their root causes. From these observations, the proposed solutions are probably self evident:

- Learn everything possible about our communities.[5] Consider mapping your communities to learn where different client groups are found and where your actual clients come from.[6] Map where the good schools and jobs are, how transportation systems work, and use this information to get clients connected to available opportunities. Find the most isolated immigrant and linguistic minority communities and visit them and build relationships.
- Engage in explicit community listening efforts. Apart from the normal episodic survey-driven legal aid approach to priority setting, hold focus groups and house meetings to converse openly about the most pressing issues in the community and what you might be able to do about them. Ask staff to attend community meetings regularly and serve on boards and committees. Make clear that this is work time, and have explicit flextime policies. Regularly initiate one-to-one meetings with interesting community leaders with whom you might have mutual interests.
- Devote a part of your organization's time to serving as counsel to community-based groups with an antipoverty mission; do whatever they want you to do regardless of how it comports with your traditional "priorities."[7]
- Review intake policies and procedures to encourage some open-ended inquiry to seek underlying causes for the presented crisis that gets a client through the door.
- Make a concerted effort to attract staff who share ethnic and linguistic backgrounds with the core communities that you serve.
- Let all staff and particularly younger advocates be equal participants in all these activities.

Dispel Unreasonable Fears About LSC Restrictions

A constant refrain as we work as trainers with legal aid staff and discuss affirmative advocacy goes: "What has this got to do with me? I work for an LSC-funded program." For new advocates, often Legal Services Corporation (LSC) funding restrictions seem to have been translated into a message that anything other than a discrete legal response to an individual client's noncontroversial legal problem is suspect and probably forbidden and that anything affirmative in nature is strictly off-limits.

Participants from LSC-funded programs desperately want explicit guidance about what LSC funds really do and do not restrict, and they want this offered from the perspective of promoting the maximum choice available. In the courses that are offered at the Center for Legal Aid Education and that implicate these myths about LSC restrictions we have

[5]See, e.g., *Learning About Your Community*, in Poverty Law Manual for the New Lawyer 13 (2002) (published by the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law) and in this issue.

[6]Useful introductory information about this approach to community understanding can be found on the Kirwan Institute's website, http://kirwan.gripserver3.com/research/gismapping.php.

[7]See 37 Clearinghouse Review (July–Aug. 2003) (special issue on "Economic Development Strategies for Individuals and Communities").

now added to each of these training programs (affirmative litigation; community lawyering and affirmative advocacy; and policy advocacy) a regular component that both explains realistically the reach of the LSC restrictions and suggests approaches to doing the work the course involves without implicating any LSC rules. Similar efforts should be undertaken in every LSC program as a part of new advocate orientation and periodically thereafter.[8] Another source of inspiration for doing powerful affirmative impact work with LSC funds is found in the LSC performance criteria which communicate powerfully not only the right but also the obligation to maximize the impact of LSC-funded work and engage effectively with the community to help solve community problems in partnership with other activists and advocacy activities.[9]

While a careful assessment of LSC rules confirms that affirmative advocacy is both consistent with LSC's expectations and possible with LSC funds, in some situations LSC restrictions, in particular the ones against class actions and representation of immigrants, pose real and substantial impediments. LSC-funded programs must anticipate these situations and develop strategies for managing them in advance. In some instances, this means no more than that the LSC program have a partnership with a non-LSC twin that can pick up the case when the need for LSC-restricted activities becomes apparent. Where these sorts of arrangements are not available, every LSC program should reach out to private bar partners and locate resources that can be brought to bear. Nationally organized resources, as well as large firms enthusiastic about such partnerships and actively seeking them, can be tapped for this purpose.[10]

Train and Supervise Senior and Junior Advocates for Move into Affirmative Advocacy

A deterrent for many of our course participants is a sense that their organizations do not have the expertise to support their own efforts to move into affirmative practice. A common refrain during affirmative litigation training is that all of the advocates in the program, including the supervisors, need to attend this training.[11] In many parts of the country a regularized, laddered approach to skills training that extends beyond the most basic skills (and, in rare cases, trial skills) is completely lacking. Supervisors often neither have the advocacy expertise to serve as role models nor have the skills to supervise even within the limitations of their own experience and expertise. Here are some proposals for programs:

- Budget significant resources for staff training (as a baseline, when LSC provided a robust national training system that many of us view as a model for what we should be striving to recreate today, LSC spent about 5 percent of its resources doing so).
- Investigate available training opportunities, make this information widely available to staff, develop professional development plans that include training needs for every staff member, and secure the training identified in staff development plans. This should apply as much to senior staff as to junior staff, and no one should ever be considered "beyond training."

[8]Good resources for these purposes are available, particularly from the Center for Law and Social Policy. See, e.g., Allan W. Houseman & Linda E. Perle, Center for Law and Social Policy, What Can and Cannot Be Done: Representation of Clients by LSC-Funded Programs, (2001), www.clasp.org/publications/whatcancannot2001.pdf.

[9]See Legal Services Corporation, Performance Criteria (2006), www.lsc.gov/pdfs/LSCPerformanceCriteria.pdf. In general the criteria offer much the same best-practice aspirations as the ABA standards including the need to engage with the client community outside the office to determine the most pressing needs; the expectation that programs will engage in strategic efforts to address broad-based problems through systemic advocacy; and the need to deploy resources in such a way as to maximize the impact of the program's work on the low-income community as a whole.

[10]See, e.g., www.tlpj.org, the website of Public Justice, a network of more than 3,500 private attorneys and firms available to cocounsel or pursue a wide range of impact advocacy projects.

[11]Increasingly, to their great credit, some programs have begun explicating their recognition of this reality and sending mixed teams of senior and junior advocates to the affirmative litigation training to work together to build the program's affirmative advocacy capacity.

- Expect senior staff to extend their own practices and build their own skills constantly.
- Expect experienced staff to serve in faculty and mentor roles and give them access to training to learn these skills.
- Expect senior staff embarking on significant advocacy efforts to involve younger staff as cocounsel either from their own program or across programs in a region.
- Join together with funders on a statewide and regional basis to create a training infrastructure that supports a diverse laddered curriculum of experiential skills courses including at a minimum basic lawyering skills, case planning and discovery, trial skills, affirmative litigation, community lawyering and alternative advocacy (planning and development of broad-based advocacy campaigns such as policy advocacy, media advocacy, organizing and direct action, and litigation), negotiation skills, and client-community engagement. Include robust substantive law training opportunities such as focused expert training for practitioners in substantive areas and more basic cross-training for advocates in areas of practice that are not their personal areas of expertise. Training for program leadership on facilitative management practices and supervision skills, and leadership training for emerging young leaders, should also be part of the package.
- Be willing and prepared to arrange case coverage on a regular basis to permit staff, both as trainers and learners, to attend training sessions without interruption or conflict. Covering for peers for this purpose should be a regular expectation for all staff.

Develop Adequate Resources and Partnerships for Related Costs

From the more senior members of our training teams we hear a final caution and suggestion. Affirmative advocacy, and particularly affirmative litigation of the sort most available and most valuable in the legal aid environment these days, takes real resource commitments. In an increasingly conservative legal environment, important cases within our grasp are no longer low-hanging fruit—cases about policy differences and conflicts between statutes and regulations that can be handled through summary judgment arguments. Rather we find our opportunities increasingly in pattern-and-practice cases in which huge amounts of evidence and data must be obtained via layered discovery and mined for content, dueling experts are the order of the day, and lengthy trials are a real likelihood when an affirmative lawsuit is initiated.

Many programs in legal services have not made this transition smoothly and are ill-equipped to undertake the kind of affirmative litigation that the times require. Few programs have significant litigation budgets or are prepared to cover the costs associated with an expert-heavy effort. Programs lack document and information management technologies and systems to collect, manage, and interpret the volumes of information that are necessary. Leadership of the programs has little experience with this sort of advocacy and is ill-prepared to shepherd it.

Training responds to parts of this dilemma but cannot resolve it completely. Programs need to recognize that the costs of aggressive affirmative advocacy are both substantial and necessary, and programs must budget accordingly. Beyond that, a fundamental solution to many aspects of this problem can be found in partnerships with the private bar. Many of the best examples of affirmative litigation in legal services today represent partnerships between legal aid programs and large law firms in the same region.[12] These firms make their living and reputation by managing complex litigation and have the resources to finance it. They already have and use the technology necessary to index and organize volumes of paper, convert information to digital form for easier processing, and mine

[12]See, e.g., John Bouman et al., *Litigation to Improve Access to Health Care for Children: Lessons from* Memisovski v. Maram, 41 Clearinghouse Review 15 (May–June 2007).

the results. They have litigation expertise that can serve to mentor the legal services staff and increase the program's own capacity to undertake these sorts of matters in the future. This kind of partnership is often what the highest levels of the private bar are seeking in their relationships with legal services programs. As part of its private bar initiatives, every program should sit down with the major firms available to it and see what they are willing to offer in terms of affirmative litigation partnerships.

Some legal services programs have independently developed the sophistication to undertake this sort of litigation without outside assistance, and if we make it a priority, there is no reason why as a community we cannot develop that capacity more generally. In a national legal aid community organized for impact, our "needed partner" might just as easily be our own litigation and substantive law support entities, adequately funded and broadly supported by our programs to play this role, or by collective investments in technology and expert staffing that could be deployed anywhere in the country as necessary. One great failure in legal services is that we have allowed political enemies to savage our support systems and in doing so cripple our capacity for large-scale advocacy. We have always had the capacity to tithe to overcome this effort, but we have rarely had the vision to make the hard choice to use a portion of our local resources to fill this national void. Part of the path to increased impact is to increase our support significantly for a strong national support infrastructure through annualized tithes from all of our programs. A serious discussion of what that infrastructure should include, and how we should financially support it, is long overdue.

Let Our Young Advocates Seek Their Own Strategies, Tactics, and Solutions

A striking example of the generational disconnect at the heart of this discussion surfaced just as I was writing my first draft of this article. During a session on the importance of quality training to our community at the National Legal Aid and Defender Association annual conference, one of the audience members, and one of the legal aid leaders I respect the most, offered reservations about a focus on training. This leader feared that this would reinforce what he saw as a tendency of our younger advocates to avoid risks—to be unwilling to attempt something they were not completely comfortable with or felt "untrained" to perform. What made this observation striking was that, just earlier that morning, I had read the first draft of the leadership fellows' piece that appears in this Clearinghouse Review issue as a companion article. In the fellows' draft, one core observation was of the unwillingness of senior management to *permit* them to take risks and undertake complex advocacy because someone else was always more senior and thereby, the reasoning goes, more prepared. What they ask for in their article is freedom to try and permission to fail—exactly the opposite of the senior manager's perspective of what the younger generation wants and how the younger generation acts.[13]

A dramatic gulf is exposed here—a profound failure of communication and understanding. In bridging this gulf may lay the heart of the solution. Senior leaders need to take our younger emerging leaders at their word. They want freedom to stretch, take risks, and take on increasingly complex and high-stakes endeavors. Assume that they are not afraid to do so and that they are not unreasonably afraid of failure. Give them the benefit of the doubt and let them prove otherwise.

These younger advocates would suggest that our culture is no longer tolerant of failure and risk taking. Managers do not want newer advocates to take risks that might have any possibility of "embarrassing" the program and reduce its standing in the eyes of the courts and the profession as a whole—exactly the kinds of chances that the same leaders are so proud to have taken when they

[13]Fellows of the Center for Legal Aid Education Leadership Institute, *Emerging Legal Aid Leadership: The Fellows' Manifesto*, in this issue.

were young advocates. Too often today these former risk takers do not want young advocates' aggressiveness or blunt criticism of the court system to interfere with their standing among the political, cultural, and legal elites in their region. This harks back to the ombudsman role. We have too completely transformed ourselves from critics and opponents of a broken social welfare and judicial system to members of the fraternity, afraid to harm our standing in the club.

We must challenge this transformation among ourselves. We should do everything in our power to ensure that our advocates are well trained and well managed to succeed at the tasks they take on, and here I have suggested action steps to achieve those goals. But we must accept risk, value advocacy that will make the establishment uncomfortable with us, let our young advocates seek their own strategies, tactics, and solutions and build a culture and environment that support these efforts.

Let us remember that poverty is not an unfortunate accident. Nor is it a reflection of its victims' own actions or capacities. It is a status and affliction that grow directly out of governmental policy and corporate strategy and is an intended consequence of those policies and strategies. The justice system, for its part, is deeply flawed and fundamentally complicit in much of the structural disadvantage that the poor experience. Just as we are counsel of last resort for the low-income family locked out of its apartment by the landlord, so, too, we are the primary legal resource that can strike at these policies and institutional barriers for the low- income community as a whole. As new advocates enter our community fresh from law school and often from fascinating political journeys of their own, they join us often because they see our potential primacy in attacking the root causes of poverty, and they want nothing more than to participate in that effort in a meaningful manner. We owe it to them and to our clients to give them that opportunity not as a burden but as an expectation and, by doing so, to raise our organizations and our legacy.

Join the Clearinghouse Review Online Discussion on Affirmative Advocacy and Leadership Development

Clearinghouse Review wishes to continue this conversation about the future of affirmative advocacy and leadership development. We invite you to participate in a national online discussion on these topics with advocates from around the country. Ross Dolloff and the Leadership Institute fellows of the Center for Legal Aid Education will moderate.

The discussion group convenes on April 21, 2008, but do register earlier. Here's how: (1) Go to http://groups.google.com/group/clearinghousereview_affirmativeadvocacy. (2) If you have a Google account, click "Sign in to Google Groups." (3) If you do not have a Google account, click "Sign in and apply for membership." Note: You do not have to sign up for a Google e-mail account to participate. You may use any e-mail address. You need only create a password and choose a nickname (which may be your real name). (4) Await confirmation of the approval of your membership. (5) Start participating.

Invite your colleagues and friends to join as well—the articles and discussion group are open to everyone, not just subscribers. For more information, e-mail martinstainthorp@povertylaw.org.

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