

# Clearinghouse REVIEW

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## LEGAL NEEDS OF MILITARY VETERANS, SERVICEMEMBERS, AND THEIR FAMILIES

Legal Services and Protections  
Servicemembers Civil Relief Act  
Military Service and Family Law  
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## How to Use Social Media to Enhance Your Advocacy— a Webinar on October 13

Advocates for the low-income community are using social networks to engage supporters, keep track of issues in the field, and learn about new and emerging projects and best practices. CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW will host a webinar on October 13 at 1:00 p.m., central standard time, to introduce social networking sites and describe how to use social media for poverty law advocacy. Matthew Burnett and Kate Bladow, *Building Networks Online: Connecting Today's Poverty Law Advocates and Organizations to Meet Tomorrow's Challenges*, 43 CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW 130 (July–August 2009), are the presenters. The webinar will cover how social networks work, best practices for using social media in a poverty law practice, and tools for measuring success.

## How to Integrate Asset-Building Opportunities into Advocacy on Behalf of Domestic-Violence Survivors—a Webinar on October 26

Advocates in the field of domestic violence are integrating financial education, individual development account programs, and other asset-building policies into their work in order to enable domestic-violence survivors to become self-sufficient. CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW will host a webinar on October 26 at 1:00 p.m., central standard time, to give an overview of asset building and how asset-building tools can be used to advocate on behalf of survivors of domestic violence. Organizations implementing such tools will share information with listeners. Three of the presenters (Emily McGinnis, IDA program coordinator, Redevelopment Opportunities for Women; Kelly Goodall, economic empowerment project manager, Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence; and Mary O'Doherty, economic empowerment project director, Kentucky Domestic Violence Association) were sources in Andrea Kovach, *Integrating Asset-Building Strategies into Domestic Violence Advocacy*, 43 CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW 148 (July–August 2009). Contact [andreakovach@povertylaw.org](mailto:andreakovach@povertylaw.org) for more information.

## Edward M. Kennedy

The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law's board of directors and staff are deeply saddened by the death of Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, whom they remember as an inspiration to all who

are committed to the achievement of economic and social justice. Senator Kennedy championed access to quality health care, education, and civil rights. He authored more pieces of major legislation than any other U.S. senator and recently led efforts to pass the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act ensuring equal pay for equal work for women. For comments of Shriver Center staff members, see *Shriver Brief* at [www.theshriverbrief.org](http://www.theshriverbrief.org).

## Eunice Kennedy Shriver

The Shriver Center's board and staff extend their thoughts, prayers, and sympathy on the death of Eunice Kennedy Shriver to her husband, Sargent Shriver, and their children, Robert Sargent, Maria Owings, Timothy Perry, Mark Kennedy, and Anthony Paul Kennedy and the rest of the Shriver and Kennedy clans. Mrs. Shriver worked persistently for better understanding among people by championing those with intellectual disabilities, founding the Special Olympics, partnering with Sargent Shriver in a lifetime of public service, and raising public-spirited children whose work perpetuates hers.

## Responsible Contracting: Hold Government Contractors Accountable

Initiatives to reform federal procurement have focused on accountability to ensure the appropriate use of taxpayers' dollars. However, the federal government is financing millions of poverty-wage jobs and supporting contractors with questionable employment practices. In a recent report, the National Employment Law Project (NELP) emphasizes that the employment practices of government contractors should be taken into account in federal-procurement reform.

"The Road to Responsible Contracting: Lessons from States and Cities for Ensuring that Federal Contracting Delivers Good Jobs and Quality Services" ([www.nelp.org/responsiblecontracting2009](http://www.nelp.org/responsiblecontracting2009)) argues that the federal government should utilize state and local governments' experiences in responsible contracting as a road map for reform. NELP recommends incorporating more rigorous responsibility screening of prospective bidders and giving priority to employers that offer good wages, health benefits, and sick-day leaves. NELP advises the federal government to expand and improve the national contractor database created by the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act and to strengthen monitoring to hold contractors accountable.

## GAO on Fair Lending Practices

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently conducted a study on the Fair Housing Act and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act—laws that prohibit discrimination in lending. The enforcement of the so-called fair lending laws is under the jurisdiction of three governmental bodies—the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Federal Trade Commission, and the Department of Justice—and five depository institution regulators. GAO analyzes the fair lending laws by studying data used by the public to detect violations, federal oversight of lenders, and recent cases involving enforcement challenges. GAO concludes that Congress should explore options (such as requiring larger institutions to supply additional information) to enhance the data used to detect lending violations. See *Fair Lending: Data Limitations and the Fragmented U.S. Financial Regulatory Structure Challenge Federal Oversight and Enforcement Efforts*, <http://bit.ly/fairlending>.

## Criminalizing Homelessness

Homelessness nationwide has worsened in the past two years due to the economic downturn and the foreclosure crisis. Newly evicted tenants and homeowners have fallen into homelessness, increasing the demand for local services. While most cities do not provide adequate shelter, food, and affordable housing for the homeless, some go as far as punishing homeless individuals for doing what they need to survive. Laws prohibit activities such as sitting, camping, sleeping, eating, or begging in public spaces and even penalize those working to help the homeless. The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty and the National Coalition for the Homeless detail how using the criminal justice system to criminalize homelessness is counterproductive. Their report, released in July, sets forth constructive alternatives to criminalization and has a list of the ten meanest cities in the United States. See *Homes Not Handcuffs: The Criminalization of Homelessness in U.S. Cities*, <http://bit.ly/HomesNotHandcuffs>.

## Barriers to Mental Health Treatment for Children After Katrina

GAO recently reported on children's access to mental health services in New Orleans. The psychological damage caused by Hurricane Katrina can have harmful long-term repercussions, and children living at the poverty level show an increased risk of developing mental illness as adults. GAO identifies barriers—such as the lack of available health care and providers in the area and the stigma often associated with the services—that limit access to mental health services. The health care system in the greater New Orleans areas was devastated by Katrina, exacerbating these preexisting barriers. In response, the federal government has supported various mental health agencies such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the Health Resources and Services Administration, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. GAO concludes that the federal grants, while making an impact, ultimately fall short of meeting the mental health needs of the children of New Orleans. See *Hurricane Katrina: Barriers to Mental Health Services for Children Persist in Greater New Orleans, Although Federal Grants Are Helping to Address Them*, [www.gao.gov/new.items/do9935t.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/new.items/do9935t.pdf).

## Shriver Center's 2009 Awards Dinner

The Shriver Center's 2009 Awards Dinner on October 29 will honor Barbara T. Bowman and William E. (Bill) Lowry Jr. for their lifelong commitment to social and economic justice. Bowman is the Irving B. Harris Professor of Child Development at the Erikson Institute and chief officer of early childhood education for the Chicago Public Schools. Lowry serves as special assistant to the president of the Chicago Community Trust. David Axelrod, senior advisor to President Obama, is the keynote speaker. The 2009 theme: Make It Real! For information on sponsoring the dinner or buying individual tickets, visit <http://bit.ly/AwardsDinner>.

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