

Legal Fellowship Sponsorship: Western Center on Law and Poverty – CA

Position: 2018 Legal Fellowship Sponsorship (for fellowship to start in fall 2019) on Children and Youth Access to Mental Health Services

Application Deadline: June 15, 2018

About Western Center on Law and Poverty

Western Center advances and enforces the rights of low-income Californians by working statewide for systemic change. We have successfully litigated landmark cases that impact the rights of millions of Californians living with little to no incomes. Western Center also advocates in the legislature and state agencies, sponsoring important legislation and preventing the passage of bills that would harm our clients.

Western Center staff work in teams - Health, Housing, and Public Benefits/Economic Justice - with each team comprised of legislative policy and attorney advocates. We attract and retain skilled and experienced attorneys and advocates committed to enforcing and expanding the rights of economically disadvantaged Californians, with race-equity an important component of our anti-poverty work. In our recruiting and hiring, we strive for a diverse and inclusive workforce across all aspects of our organization.

With offices in Los Angeles, Sacramento, and Oakland, we are California's largest legal services support center. Our attorneys provide technical assistance, legal analysis, research, co-counseling and trainings to legal services advocates, CBOs, agencies, and schools with legal analysis, research, co-counseling, and training. For more information, please visit our website: www.wclp.org.

Fellowship Project Description: Children and Youth Access to Mental Health Services

Western Center is seeking rising 3Ls, current judicial law clerks, or otherwise eligible fellowship applicants to sponsor for a fellowship. Western Center has hosted fellows funded by Skadden, Equal Justice Works, and other entities and schools; our preference is for a 2-year fellowship, but may consider a 1-year fellowship program applicant. The fellow would begin work on the project in fall of 2019.

We are looking for eligible fellowship applicants for a project on access to mental health services in California, with a particular focus on children and youth with Medi-Cal coverage (our state's Medicaid program) and those in foster care.

Children and youth up to age 21 in Medi-Cal are eligible for mental health services that are medically necessary to correct or ameliorate defects or mental illnesses or conditions. Access to such services are complicated by California's bifurcated delivery of mental health services. Those with "mild to moderate" mental health needs receive care through Medi-Cal managed care plans, and those with more serious mental health needs receive services from their county-based mental health plan. This project will assess children and youth in need of intensive care coordination and intensive home-based services, their ability to access those services, barriers to those services, and advocate for systemic change to increase access to those services. Another aspect of the project will look at school-age children and their access to mental health services at school, including services known as "educationally related mental health services" for children in special education. In 2011, California transferred responsibility for providing

educationally related mental health services from county-based mental health plans to local educational agencies, or school districts. According to a state audit of such services, there are approximately 700,000 California children with serious emotional disturbances, but only 120,000 are receiving mental health services as part of their individualized educational plan. This project will also assess and address the lack of availability of educationally related mental health services and the intersection of those services with the intensive care coordination and intensive home-based mental health services for qualifying children and youth in Medi-Cal. In doing so, we anticipate the project will address the disproportionate suspensions of students in special education, especially Black students and other students of color, a phenomenon which is exacerbated by lack of appropriate mental health services.

The fellow would work with both Western Center's Health Care and Public Benefits/Economic Justice teams.

Qualifications

- Current judicial law clerk or rising 3L with a J.D. awarded or to be awarded from an accredited U.S. law school; if not a 3L or current judicial law clerk but otherwise eligible for a law fellowship, please identify the particular fellowship program in your cover letter;
- Excellent writing and oral communication skills;
- Well-developed legal research skills;
- A demonstrated ability to work collaboratively in a team environment and in political or potentially sensitive settings;
- Ability to think creatively, be strategic, and exercise good judgment;
- Experience working in the areas of Medicaid, foster care, TANF, and/or mental health services preferred;
- Experience in a legal services program preferred, or working with underrepresented populations;
- Experience with posting on social media platforms as an advocacy tool preferred; and
- Membership in the California State Bar is required at the time of hiring or within six months of hiring.

Compensation

Depending on the source of fellowship funding secured, we will work with the successful applicant to ensure a compensation and benefits package commensurate with experience and within the scope of our office's compensation range.

To Apply

If you would like to be considered for this sponsorship, please email Stephanie Surabian, Director of Finance and Administration, at ssurabian@wclp.org, with “**Fellowship Project**” and your **Last Name** in the subject header, with the following materials as attachments:

- cover letter;
- resume;
- law school transcript;
- two writing samples (not to exceed 10 pages each); and
- a list of three references with contact information.

Western Center strives for a diverse and inclusive workforce. We are proud to be an equal opportunity employer. Western Center strongly encourages persons of color, women, LGBTQ individuals, persons with disabilities, and persons from other underrepresented groups whose background may contribute to effectively representing low-income people and underserved communities.

Applications are due by June 15 and will be considered on a rolling basis.