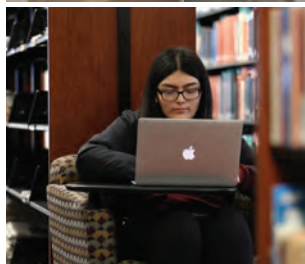




SCHOOL of LAW

The Curt and Linda Rodin Center for Social Justice

2021-2022 Annual Impact Report



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Reaffirming, Reimagining, and Reengaging

Curt and Linda Rodin’s dedication and commitment to the Center for Social Justice that bears their names—and the passion they continue to show for its work—are extraordinary. We are exceptionally grateful for their leadership and inspiration, particularly throughout the 2021-2022 academic year when the unexpected effects of the global pandemic continued to have an impact on our lives, our families, our world, and this Center.

The Curt and Linda Rodin Center for Social Justice was not quite two years old when the pandemic arrived. Yet, the growing and developing Center adapted and adjusted how it addressed the aims and needs of social justice. Our community—Loyola University Chicago School of Law students, faculty, staff, and friends—rose to the occasion to ensure continuity in social justice engagement and practice during the trying pandemic years.

As we cautiously, but with optimism, learn to live in our new reality, the Curt and Linda Rodin Center for Social Justice works—with unwavering effort, unapologetic service, and unrivaled professional ethics—to help those who are poor and in need of legal services.

The Center is reaffirming, reimagining, and reengaging the founding areas of focus for Loyola’s social justice strategy. The Center is exploring new areas for interaction, working with new partners, and creating collaborations to provide legal services for those most in need. And the Center, with intention and purpose, is seeking to make even more meaningful community impact. We are seeing the promise of deeper influence by an increasing number of law students choosing Loyola for the social justice education and engagement opportunities advanced through the Rodin Center.

Working with the Loyola community, stakeholders and partners, we continue to solidify the founding focus areas of the Curt and Linda Rodin Center for Social Justice in health, education, and life after innocence. We search diligently for innovative, cooperative, and creative ways to honor the philanthropy that has been shared with us, and the mutual objective to have community impact and to help people who are poor. Since its inception, the Curt and Linda Rodin Center for Social Justice has been a leader in this space and will continue to be so in more meaningful ways in the years ahead.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Earl N. Caldwell, II".

Earl N. Caldwell, II (LLM '00)

Interim Director

Curt and Linda Rodin Center for Social Justice

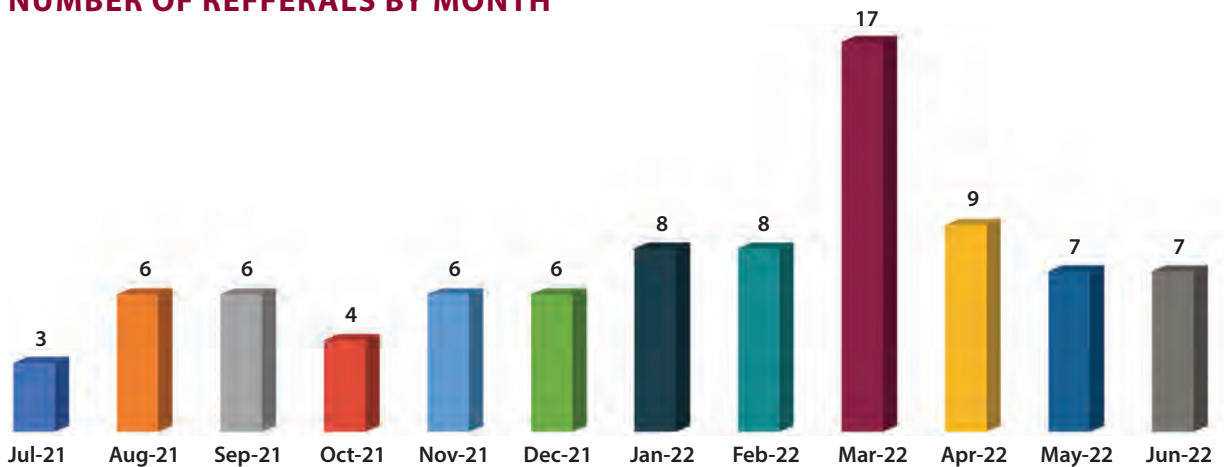


Health Justice Project Kate Mitchell, Director

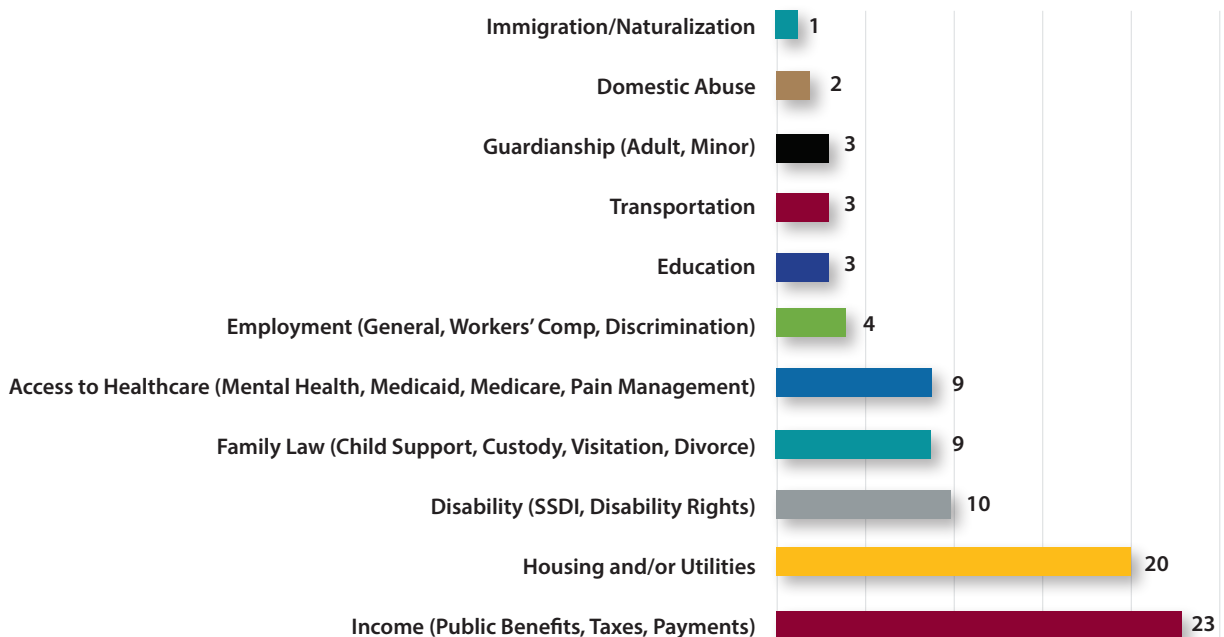
During the 2021-2022 academic year, the Health Justice Project (HJP) Clinic—a medical-legal partnership with Erie Family Health Centers, Legal Aid Chicago, Loyola Medicine, and Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine—represented more than 60 clients referred by health care partners to address the health-harming legal needs of patients in poverty through holistic civil legal services. These cases include disability benefits, Medicaid and other public benefits, guardianship, housing, education, and immigration matters.

In February 2021, the Health Justice Project launched the Maywood MLP, a new medical-legal partnership with Loyola Medicine and the Stritch School of Medicine. Since July 2021 the Maywood MLP has received 87 referrals. The referrals included cases to assist clients with accessing public benefits, such as social security disability, housing, and accessing health care resources. The client ages of the referrals ranged from 5-80.

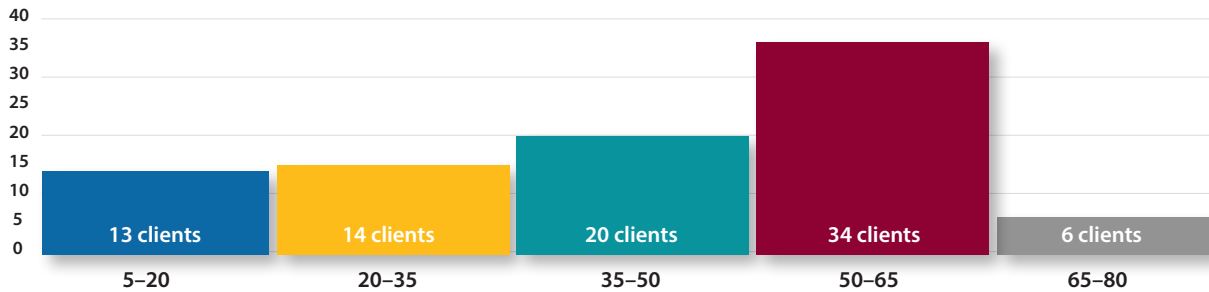
NUMBER OF REFFERALS BY MONTH



SOCIAL AND LEGAL ISSUES OF REFERRED CLIENTS



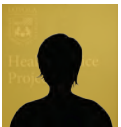
AGE RANGE OF REFERRED CLIENTS



Interdisciplinary teams of full- and part-time law, medical, public health, and social work students assisted HJP and Maywood MLP clients with obtaining supplemental social security income benefits (SSI), adult guardianship, gaining access to Medicaid and SNAP benefits, advocating for healthy housing, and assisting with immigration matters. Here are some examples of cases handled:



“Raul” was referred to the Health Justice Project by his health care provider after a gunshot wound caused significant memory impairment, such that he was unable to maintain employment. When he applied for disability benefits, the local Social Security Administration (SSA) office determined that he did not meet the disability criteria and denied him benefits. HJP students assisted Raul in re-applying and submitted additional medical documentation showing the impact of the disability on his daily functioning. Raul was then determined disabled and began receiving monthly benefits from SSA. Students also successfully advocated for an increase in the amount of monthly benefits Raul would receive moving forward.



“Rosa” was referred to the Health Justice Project by her health care provider for assistance with obtaining consent to make medical decisions on behalf of her adult daughter, “Teresa”, and her minor granddaughter, “Alina.” Due to Teresa’s intellectual disabilities, Rosa cared for both Teresa and Alina since birth. HJP students spoke with Teresa’s medical providers to understand her disabilities and their impact on her daily functioning. HJP students then prepared an adult guardianship petition on Rosa’s behalf and successfully represented her at a hearing where she was appointed Teresa’s legal guardian. HJP students then prepared a minor guardianship petition for Alina and successfully represented Rosa in a second hearing. Rosa is now equipped to make all medical and financial decisions on behalf of her family.



“Juliana” was referred to the Health Justice Project for assistance with obtaining supplemental social security income benefits as she was unsuccessful in applying for benefits herself. Juliana is an adult with a developmental disability, hearing loss, and medical conditions that limit her ability to work. She and her daughter struggled with intermittent homelessness for many years. The HJP assisted Juliana with:

- Reapplying for SSI benefits and obtained an award of ongoing monthly benefits, Juliana’s first income of her life.
- A lease agreement to increase her SSI benefits to the maximum amount. In total, the HJP assisted Juliana with obtaining \$18,634 in back SSI benefits and she continues to receive \$841 per month in ongoing benefits.
- Filing taxes so she could receive a child tax credit and stimulus check totaling \$2,900 and to appeal a reduction in her SNAP benefits to ensure ongoing benefits of \$270 per month.
- Obtaining mental health services for her child and negotiating with her landlord to allow her child to keep their emotional support cat in the unit.

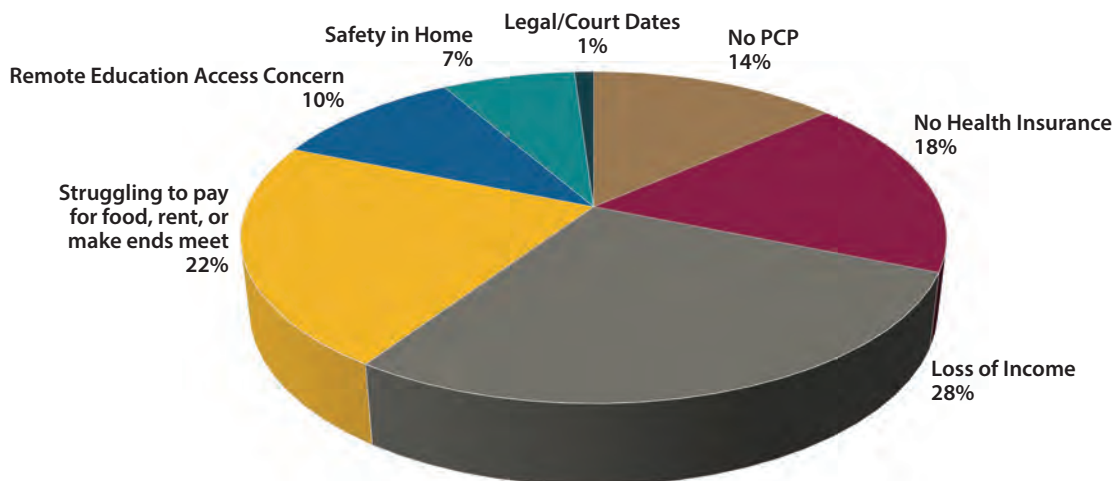


COVID testing in Maywood, Il by the COVID Equity Response Collaborative: Loyola (CERCL)

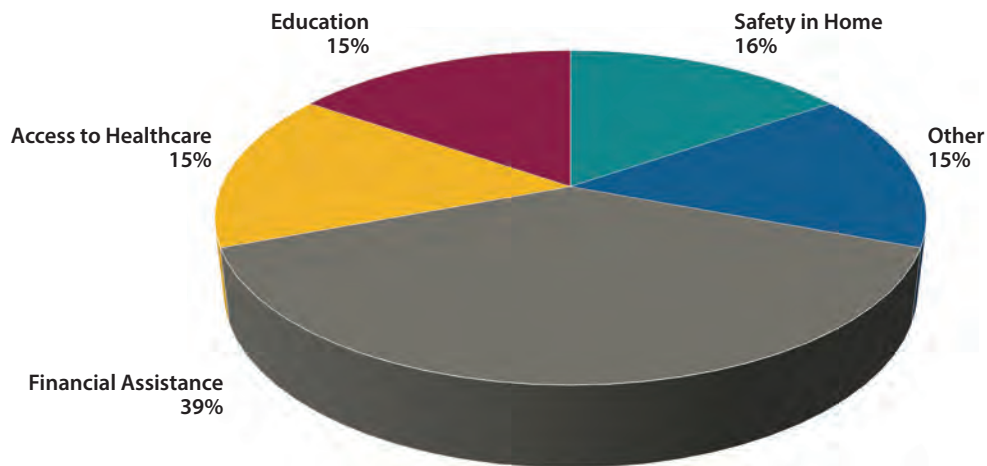
The HJP continued its collaboration with students and faculty from Loyola’s Stritch School of Medicine, Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing, and the Parkinson School of Health Sciences and Public Health on the COVID Equity Response Collaborative: Loyola (CERCL). During the 2021-2022 academic year, the collaborative provided free COVID-19 testing, began to offer COVID-19 vaccines and referrals to vaccine providers, education about COVID safety and the vaccine, and other social and legal supports to communities of color in the near western suburbs of Chicago hit hard by COVID-19. CERCL volunteers screened and tested 162 community members for social and legal issues in Maywood, Illinois.

The majority of screened participants experienced a loss of income (28%), struggled to pay for food, rent or make ends meet (22%), and lacked health insurance (18%). Thirty-one percent of screened participants requested follow-up from the HJP. Seventeen percent of those who requested follow-up received primarily financial assistance resources and resources related to safety at home. The Health Justice Project updated and created community resource sheets related to transportation, education, housing and utilities, healthcare, legal services, employment, and public safety for patients in Maywood and the Proviso township area. The resource sheets were sent to clients and distributed at vaccination events and community health fairs. They are currently published on the CERCL website (<https://cercl.org>).

LEGAL & SOCIAL NEEDS IDENTIFIED VIA I-HELP QUESTIONNAIRE



TYPES OF RESOURCES PROVIDED TO CLIENTS WHO REQUESTED FOLLOW UP



The Health Justice Project helped CERCL organize 10 vaccination events where 209 people were vaccinated, and hosted two online community conversations sponsored by CERCL and Village Free Press on child tax credit and in-person education during COVID-19. Those community conversations garnered over 1,100 views.

HJP also collaborated with CERCL to create a Community Engagement Fellowship, aimed at creating healthy communities in the western suburbs of Cook County. Nine fellows participated in the program during the summer of 2022 during which HJP faculty helped mentor fellows and led discussions groups and presentations.



Rodin Fellow Montana Birringer (far left) during an activity for the homeless population near the Loyola University Chicago School of Law.

Education Advocacy

Miranda B. Johnson, Director, Education Law and Policy Institute

TOTAL OF 76 CASES

■ One occurrence (six cases)

Student referred for free representation by an immigration attorney to create a pathway to citizenship

Temporary Restraining Order granted in federal court to force school district to pay for appropriate residential placement for a student with disability

Prevented school from further excluding student due to false residency claim

Secured a dedicated nurse for a student with a seizure disorder to allow him to travel to school safely. The school district's refusal to provide a nurse left him home without educational services for almost one year.

Successful complaint to reinstate bus services to a student

Assisted on a case that ultimately led to a \$45,000 settlement for a school district's neglect of a nonverbal student

■ Two occurrences (eight cases)

Students saved from being fined for school-based behaviors

Cases where district staff were found to have physically harmed a student

Gender Support Plans created

Prevented students with disabilities from being expelled and secured therapeutic schools

■ Three occurrences (three cases)

Settlements for compensatory education funds of over \$40,000 to mitigate the harms caused by a school's educational neglect of students with disabilities

■ Six occurrences (six cases)

Office for Civil Rights complaints filed for bias-based harassment or bullying

■ Ten occurrences (twenty cases)

Students diagnosed with dyslexia

Safety plans and social emotional support put in place to stop bullying

■ Sixteen occurrences (sixteen cases)

More appropriate school placements secured for students with disabilities

■ Seventeen occurrences (seventeen cases)

Expulsions prevented

CLIENTS SERVED:

2020-2021 Direct representation: **25** students and their parents in federal court, school-based meetings, disciplinary hearings, administrative hearings, negotiations, and mediations

Limited advocacy: **22** students/parents in various types of cases

2021-2022 Direct representation: **45** students and their parents in federal court, administrative hearings, disciplinary proceedings, and school-based meetings

Brief advice or limited advocacy: **29** families



Rodin Center Collaborations

Rodin Center collaborations is another form of social justice engagement within and outside the School of Law. These collaborations allow the Center to help more people in need, have more community impact, and expand the social justice contributions with other Loyola University Chicago School of Law students, which deepens the footprint and leadership of the Center.

Equip for Equality

During the 2021-2022 academic year, the Rodin Center partnered with Equip for Equality, a nonprofit that works to advance the human and civil rights of children and adults with disabilities in Illinois. Equip for Equality needed help with various Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) cases. Nine Loyola University Chicago School of Law students interviewed 36 inmates to gather background information and other pertinent facts surrounding each individual's case and to determine services that were not being provided by IDOC. Law school students provided research in special education and high school education issues, among other areas, for over 100 inmates. Equip for Equality settled the case with IDOC and reported that "their clients are very pleased."



Equip for Equality Supervisors for the IDOC Project

SUFEO

SUFEO (Stand up for Every One) is a student-run organization that provides information to help schools and parents with bullying complaints, safety concerns, and other school-based issues. To give more comprehensive resource information, the Education Law team, which supervises SUFEO, and the Rodin Center collaborated to create a referral directory that provided names of attorneys and free resources for legal matters concerning education, health, housing, family and immigration, to be used by students who work on the Loyola University Chicago helpline.



Rodin Center law school student volunteers

"My experience as a Rodin Center volunteer at Equip for Equality (EFE) had a meaningful impact on my law school experience—it shaped the trajectory of my post-law school plans. Being involved in EFE's Education Justice Project allowed me to merge two of my main areas of interest in law into one experience where I was able to work towards reforming the incarceration system and advocate for youths' educational rights. After law school, I hope to continue working in an area around the intersection between youth and the incarceration system. I love most how inclusive the Rodin Center is to all law students; the Rodin Center strives to accommodate everyone who is interested in social justice with respect to the individual's capacity, time, workload, and area of interest." — Lia Raves, Class of 2023

Current Rodin Fellows

The current Rodin Fellows, **Vanessa Aceves, Montana Birringer, and Gavin Martin**, have diverse interests in social justice work and differing aspirations for the work they plan to pursue upon graduation. Their summer internships, funded by the Rodin Fellowships, provided them with exceptional opportunities to contribute legal services to help others, impact communities, and to experience the work and roles they are working toward as legal professionals.

Vanessa was a member of the Constance Baker Motley Trial Team, participant in the Castillo Scholars Mentorship and the Constitutional Law Colloquium. Her summer internship was at Equip for Equality, where she helped to develop Know-Your-Rights outreach trainings in Spanish for families of children in need of assistive communication devices, and helped families throughout Illinois improve education services for their children with disabilities.

Montana is a first-generation law student, student representative on Faculty Appointments, Clinics and Public Interest Committees; and a regional champion on the Appellate Advocacy Moot Court Team. Her summer internship was at the Center for Disability and Elder Law.

Gavin was a voting member of the Law School Dean's Advisory Council, a Pugh-Kaufman Scholar and a member of the Constance Baker Motley Trial Team. Their summer internship was at the Cook County Office of the Public Defender where they represented parents who were unable to afford legal services with their cases.

In addition, the Rodin Fellows worked on individual social justice projects, which included supporting the homeless populations living around the law school, supporting individuals with disabilities, and preparing to submit an Amicus Brief for an Illinois court case impacting social justice.



Vanessa Aceves



Montana Birringer



Gavin Martin





Impact of Four Former Rodin Fellows

Imami Hollie (JD '20) is an assistant state public defender in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Brianna Hill (JD '20) is a Cook County public guardian.

Andy Froelich (JD '21) is responsible for expanding the Moran Center's Education Advocacy Program into the Rogers Park neighborhood.

MariaCarolina Gomez (JD '22) is in the Federal Defender Program in Puerto Rico.

FELLOWS' SPOTLIGHT



Maggie Pfeiffer (JD '22) was introduced to medical-legal partnerships (MLP) through the Health Justice Project Clinic and deepened her engagement as a Rodin Fellow. Maggie is a nurse and "...loved the idea of continuing to be a part of the healthcare team in my new role as a lawyer."

Upon graduating from Loyola, Maggie began serving as a staff attorney in the Tarrant County Medical-Legal Partnership in Fort Worth, Texas. The Tarrant County MLP is a collaboration between Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas and My Health My Resources (MHMR) of Tarrant County, a community-based mental health organization.

MHMR provides expansive mental health services in Tarrant County, ranging from children and family services, veteran services, and homeless services.

Maggie represents patients of MHMR in a variety of civil legal issues, including public benefits/Social Security disability, housing needs, guardianships, estate planning, and expungements/nondisclosures.

Faculty

KATE MITCHELL

Kate Mitchell joined the Health Justice Project in August 2017 after more than 16 years practicing and teaching in the areas of poverty law, children's rights, and health law. Professor Mitchell has extensive experience representing children and families in poverty in access to health care and public benefits matters, special education matters, housing and family law, juvenile delinquency and prison condition cases, and other general civil law matters. She has also been involved in local, state, and national policy work in the areas of access to healthcare, education, and juvenile justice.

MIRANDA B. JOHNSON

Miranda Johnson is a clinical professor of law and the director of the Education Law and Policy Institute. She teaches courses in education law and child and family law. She oversees the supervision of law students in the representation of parents and students in school discipline, bullying, special education cases, and other education law matters. She has presented at national conferences and training programs in Illinois on prevention-oriented approaches to reduce the use of exclusionary school discipline practices.

Faculty Social Justice Engagement

STACEY E. PLATT AND BRUCE A. BOYER

Each semester, Professor Bruce Boyer and Professor Stacey Platt supervise 16-18 students in the Civitas ChildLaw Clinic which provides legal services to youth. The ChildLaw Clinic currently represents approximately 100 children, primarily in court proceedings conducted in the child protection and domestic relations divisions of the Circuit Court of Cook County, and Juvenile Detention Center cases. The Clinic provides the opportunity for students to provide legal services to youth in need, learn about the challenges of working with child clients, and to gain hands-on experience in advocating for young clients in court.

MARY J. BIRD (JD '87)

Recruited by Professor Mary Bird, 15 Loyola Law students worked with the Chicago Lawyers Committee for Better Housing (LCBH). Several law students helped tenants navigate LCBH's Rentervention program, a free online resource that addresses evictions, utility shutoffs, security deposit issues, and housing conditions.

Other students and Professor Bird were trained on Illinois' time-limited legislation that allowed tenants to seal eviction records under certain conditions. Without evictions on their record, individuals were better able to access housing opportunities and enter new leases. Loyola student volunteers included members of the Black Law Students Association, the Latinx Law Students Association, the Public Interest Law Society, and the National Lawyers Guild.

CURT AND LINDA RODIN
CENTER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE





The Curt and Linda Rodin Center for Social Justice
at Loyola University Chicago School of Law

LUC.edu/law/RodinCenter