

Clearinghouse REVIEW

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About This Issue

In this issue some authors answer frequently asked questions. Other authors answer questions we may not have known to ask or ones that are rarely raised. Frequently the latter may open our eyes to problems and solutions we may not otherwise find. CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW readers are fortunate to have hundreds of advocates who, over the decades of this journal's publication, have taken time and effort to share their analyses and solutions to legal problems affecting low-income families and their communities. Readers around the country can learn these best practices and implement innovative legal strategies to help their own clients.

This time of year, when the annual wave of materialism and commercialism comes rolling over our lives, is a good time to stop and thank anew those advocates who offer to share their knowledge, creative legal strategies, and practical advice in articles and advocacy stories submitted to the REVIEW. Thank you, advocates all, for your work, advice, and willingness to inform and support your colleagues who can then serve their low-income clients even better.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act is an example of a major positive development that is not without complicated questions. There are questions about cost, eligibility, implementation, and access through the new nationwide website, to mention a few. Some critics have asked about the relevance of medical-legal partnerships (MLPs) in the era of the Affordable Care Act. In the lead article experienced professionals, including legal aid attorneys (from a Legal Services Corporation-funded program), a public health professor, and senior staff members of a nonprofit health care system, describe how MLPs are transforming health care by making "legal care" a component of holistic, patient-centered care. The Medical-Legal Partnership of Southern Illinois, which just celebrated its 10th anniversary, not only resolves the various legal and medical problems of low-income people in its community but also shows intricate return-on-investment data. These data, which count the value of legal assistance received by patients as well as other factors, demonstrate how the MLP model can thrive under the Affordable Care Act.

The risks of ending up in the school-to-prison pipeline on account of truancy may not be a priority for many legal services programs, observe the authors of another article. Taking note of the disproportionate effect of truancy on low-income children and families and the systemic unfairness in truancy laws, however, the authors urge advocates to take action to keep children from ever entering the juvenile court system. Truant children may need special education, health care, mental health services, or housing or other strategies, and the authors recommend strategies for legal representation and reform to engage students meaningfully in education. Other authors discuss legal problems arising from purchasing homes by contracts for deed, the all-important decisions on restrictions of access to federal court by the Supreme Court in its most recent Term, low-income-worker organizing in the hotel industry, and the legal and medical care received by an MLP's patient in Tennessee.

In this our last printed issue we wrestle with all such questions but surely not for the last time. Tapping on the expertise of advocates nationwide, we continue to take them up in our all-digital CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW beginning with the next issue, the January–February 2014.



CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW encourages the submission of articles from legal aid field staff and others. Send articles to Ilze Sprudz Hirsh, editor and vice president of communication programs, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, 50 E. Washington St. Suite 500, Chicago, IL 60602; ilzehirsh@povertylaw.org.

The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and should not be construed as representing the opinions or policy of the organizations which employ them or of the Shriver Center.

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