The Welfare Law Center promotes systemic reform in the delivery of income support and related human services, safeguards important legal and constitutional rights of the poor, and supports civic participation and self-help efforts in low-income communities.

The Welfare Law Center is a national law and policy organization founded in 1965 in the image of the civil rights movement, where lawyers worked with affected communities to achieve major change. From the very start, the Center joined with southern civil rights lawyers in landmark welfare cases, drew partners from community-based and legislative reformers, and won ground-breaking victories in the Supreme Court, proving that the law could be a powerful instrument for improving the lives of the disenfranchised. The Center provides legal advocacy, impact litigation, policy analysis, community education, advocacy training, and national leadership on efforts to improve the reach and delivery of public benefit programs.
INCOME SECURITY IS A HUMAN RIGHT and a fundamental defense against poverty and the harmful consequences of deprivation. The Center works to promote public policies that improve the welfare of our nation's neediest individuals and families.

EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE must be upheld for the poorest among us. The Justice system provides a critical avenue for individuals to challenge violations of their rights, secure redress, and gain greater public accountability. The Center uses a variety of strategies, ranging from impact litigation to policy advocacy to community education, to obtain broad relief for those it serves.

FAIRNESS MUST BE THE HALLMARK of government administration. The Center seeks to reform public agency practices that discriminate or deny due process, and to create safeguards and monitoring systems that improve public performance and guard against future abuse.

COLLECTIVE ACTION IS A POWERFUL STRATEGY for social change. The Center works with low-income activists to build grassroots coalitions and amplify the voice of their members.

INDIVIDUALS SHOULD HAVE ACCESS to the information and skills necessary to advocate for themselves. Through outreach and education, the Center trains low-income families to protect their rights and to exercise greater control over their environment.

INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES SHOULD HAVE A VOICE in the decisions that affect their lives. The Center works with low-income leaders to ensure that their valuable perspective is brought to bear on public policy decisions.

GOVERNMENTAL DECISION-MAKING should be transparent. The Center documents, monitors, and reports on government performance and abuse in order to press for greater accountability and compliance with the law.

EVEN THE LARGEST GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACIES can be improved and made more responsive to their constituents. The Center works to redress system-wide failures and devise effective solutions that can be adopted by large public agencies.
our thoughts

Welfare. Not a comfortable word for many. Widely misinterpreted, often stereotyped, and all too often imbued with hostility, prejudice, or shame. In Middle English, it meant to fare well. Throughout the years, its central conception was aid for the common good.

Throughout history, communities have organized to help their members. Though systems of public welfare have evolved, the core mission remains. The public welfare system continues to meet an array of needs, from hunger to housing, to healthcare, to child care, to education, training and job placement opportunities.

That is at its best. At present, it is a system which is inadequate, underfunded and in disarray. Arbitrary and lawless acts abound in its administration and all too often, no voice is heard to protest.

There is a crisis in legal representation for low-income families, widespread lawlessness in the administration of anti-poverty programs, and government workers trained to turn away families in need. A democracy requires democratic institutions—law and justice, the courts and the congress, the soapbox and the streets—to repair and protect our system of aid for the common good.

For over 37 years, the Center has used innovative legal advocacy and support to activists to give voice to the most disadvantaged members of society. Over the past year, the Center has had enormous impact, gaining positive changes in the law and public policies that guarantee the well-being of all families.

I have been involved with the Center for over three decades, beginning as its faculty adviser during its formative years at Columbia University in the 1960s. I am proud to be a part of its mission, and to demonstrate that the law can be a great instrument of reform and the protection of the disadvantaged.

Paul M. Dodyk
Chair, Board of Directors
JUSTICE, FAIRNESS, OPPORTUNITY — PRIZED CORE VALUES — are being tested by dramatic changes in American welfare policy. The Welfare Law Center is addressing these challenges head on, promoting community input and effective advocacy, just governance and due process, civil rights enforcement, oversight and accountability, transparency, and poverty-reduction strategies.

Our policy advocacy has led to changes in the law that promise better options for low-income families. Our litigation has led to court orders and judgments that have improved the delivery of health and human services programs for the thousands of families we represent. Our advocacy has brought widespread attention to welfare reform’s human cost. Through legal skill and agency monitoring, the Center has been able to create a public record of welfare programs that stands in contrast to press releases issued by many public officials. Our Low Income Networking and Communications Project has put cutting-edge technology in the hands of hundreds of low-income activists. The LINC Project is now a national model for bringing ‘technology with a purpose’ to communities across the country.

The Center has grown significantly over the past few years, with new staff and ambitious new initiatives addressing issues around disability, food stamps, Medicaid, child care, and the escalating privatization of welfare program administration.

Now this work is needed more than ever. Across the country, at a time of rising unemployment and uncertainty for millions of American families, a fiscal crisis in the states is leading to drastic reductions in government programs. By working to ensure that the state fiscal woes tread softly on low-income families and that state budget fixes stay within the bounds of the law, the Welfare Law Center has continued to protect the poor from undue harm.

We could not accomplish this work without our many supporters, and I thank you.

Henry A. Freedman
Executive Director
securing the safety net

“I have been without Medicaid for three years...and have suffered both emotionally and physically.”

FAIR AND EQUAL ACCESS TO A SAFETY NET is an important defense against poverty and the consequences of deprivation. In spite of their awesome needs, many applicants, the vast majority of them single-mothers, are discouraged from filing an application for aid, refused translation services, or dismissed to food pantries. Discrimination, unjust treatment, and arbitrary application of law persist. Thousands are dropped from the rolls in error. The outcome has been a less secure, less accessible safety net. Fortunately, advocates at the Welfare Law Center provide a vital system of checks and balances on efforts to weaken the safety net.

Excerpt, letter to the Welfare Law Center
among our achievements

EXPOSED AND STOPPED AGENCY PRACTICES TO TURN AWAY FAMILIES IN NEED

We have pressed forward in our landmark suit, Reynolds v. Giuliani, in which a federal judge found New York City to be engaging in a systematic effort to deny and deter needy individuals from applying for aid. We won an injunction compelling the New York City welfare agency to correct its abuses and deliver aid to thousands of needy families. We continue to audit and monitor the City’s progress and help advocates address similar abuses around the country.

WON RESTORATION OF HEALTHCARE COVERAGE FOR THOUSANDS OF POOR FAMILIES

In 2002, we won a great victory—the restoration of healthcare coverage to 17,000 working poor families in Missouri. In July, Missouri suddenly ended Medicaid eligibility for thousands of working poor parents with incomes below the federal poverty line. The change left 17,000 working poor largely without health care.

For many of these families, reliant on low-wage work that rarely provides health insurance, their struggle for economic independence had led to an impossible crossroads.

Families had one opportunity for recourse: Missouri’s action was against the law.

Advocates at the Welfare Law Center traveled to Missouri and mounted a class action on behalf of these families, White v. Martin. In a matter of weeks, we won a federal court order forcing the State of Missouri to restore Medicaid coverage to these families, including our client, a working mother of two with insulin-dependent diabetes.

In New York City, the welfare agency suddenly cut thousands of families from Medicaid—in disregard of state law and federal protections. Many were not even aware that the City had closed their Medicaid case until they were denied medical care at a time of urgent and desperate need, such as in a hospital emergency room or walk-in clinic. In the 2001 settlement of Mangracina v. Turner, we won sweeping reforms that preserved and reinstated Medicaid for tens of thousands of poor people. Our advocacy also won reimbursement for the victims forced to pay out-of-pocket, from meager budgets, to cover their medical costs.
IMPROVED ACCESS TO FOOD STAMPS

Food stamps, fully-funded by the federal government, offer a means to ameliorate the economic downturn for the working poor without straining state budgets. The Welfare Law Center is working around the country to improve access to food stamps for thousands of the most desperate families and individuals.

In 2002, on a fact-finding visit to California, at the behest of local legal advocates, we investigated Sacramento County’s startlingly low rate of emergency food assistance and discovered that many applicants who were eligible to receive food stamps right away were forced to wait many weeks for aid or never received it at all.

Confronted with these findings and the possibility of legal action, the welfare agency adopted system-wide reforms to benefit all Sacramento families who may find themselves facing hunger and in need of help.

PROJECT FAIR PLAY

Through Project Fair Play, the Center uses instrumental legal representation and policy advocacy to safeguard rights and obtain sweeping reforms that restore the effectiveness, reach, and intent of public benefits programs.

Sometimes, the safety net gets tangled up by excessive rules. In New York, the state funds a food stamp program for legal immigrants, but then makes it near impossible to access by imposing various tests which have nothing to do with need. The applicant can be denied food assistance if she moved from one county to another since 1996, or traveled outside the U.S. for more than 90 days. As a result of these restrictions, 12,000 of New York’s neediest legal immigrant children, elderly, disabled persons, and domestic violence survivors go hungry.

To reform these rules, in 2002 we joined with local legal advocates and filed Teytelman v. Wing on behalf of an elderly Brooklyn couple from the Ukraine, a Guyanese mother of a six year old boy fleeing domestic violence, and other legal immigrants wrongly denied food stamps by New York State.
PROTECTED THE RIGHTS OF IMMIGRANTS

Limited English-speakers typically face significant obstacles in accessing a wide variety of critical public services, benefits, and the educational services necessary to transition from welfare to work. The federal government imposes strong language access requirements on federal programs, yet many state and local agencies have not taken the necessary steps to serve and be accessible to limited English speakers. In New York City, we are working to expand the local Human Rights Law to ensure equal access to public benefits and employment opportunities for limited English speakers, and a method of redress. In Arizona, working with local advocates, we helped convince state officials to aid limited English speakers gain greater access to public benefits. We continue to work around the country for improved access to services for immigrants and enhanced data collection requirements for better identification of disparities in service by race and ethnicity.

Together with Make the Road by Walking, a community-based organization in Bushwick, Brooklyn, and the Brennan Center for Justice, we challenged a rule barring advocates from the welfare centers—the very advocates who can provide the on-site translation that families need. We are appealing the 2002 federal court decision in Sanchez v. Turner upholding the right of the City to limit such access.

After September 11th, with New York City and State computer links to welfare, Medicaid, and food stamps management systems destroyed, the Center and other advocates played a crucial role in securing necessary aid for a vulnerable population. The Center worked with the advocacy community to research the law and obtain and communicate critical information from officials, agency workers, clients, and advocates. We convened meetings and conference calls, distributed emergency alerts, and exchanged updates throughout the advocacy community. We advised community-based groups how to secure assistance for their constituents. We helped agencies understand people’s experiences and the changes needed to improve service delivery. At a meeting attended by representatives of the City agency and the Governor, we and our colleagues presented a proposal to redress the wrongful termination of benefits for families who missed appointments due to 9/11-related transportation, mail service, or telephone problems. It has since become clear that we and our allies helped prevent the widespread interruption of assistance for thousands.
PRESERVED ACCESS TO CRITICAL BENEFITS AS TIME LIMITS TAKE AFFECT

As families approached time limits on welfare, advocates throughout the country sought the Center’s consultation and assistance. In New York, the state constitution guarantees a safety net for indigent persons, thus preserving assistance for children and families who exhaust the 60-month time limit on federal assistance. In New York, we worked with advocates and low-income groups to ease the transition from federally-funded welfare benefits to state-funded Safety Net Assistance. Seeking and obtaining policy and practice changes from the City, we helped preserve aid for thousands of families.

We also addressed the constitutionality of how time limits are administered in West Virginia, and the State’s highest court found that the agency’s administration of time limits denied due process. The Center is helping advocates in other states challenge time limits and the implementation of those limits in a variety of different ways, including policy advocacy.
ENSURED DUE PROCESS AND RIGHT TO A HEARING

For the thousands wrongly cut off or denied assistance, challenging the agency decision in a ‘fair hearing’ offers the only route to redress. Yet, profound unfairness has permeated the hearing process. In New York City, in thousands of cases where a State hearing officer ordered the agency to restore aid to the family, the agency dragged its heels, knowing that families would have little recourse. For the many families who did without, justice delayed had become justice denied. In 2001, in *Piron v. Wing*, the Center and our colleagues secured improvements that will ensure swift restoration of benefits, thus making fair hearings a more meaningful system of Due Process for the over 30,000 affected.

In *Meachem v. Wing*, we are also seeking improvements to a system that often provides unrepresented claimants with 4-minute cursory hearings and no fair opportunity to review evidence being used against them; to testify; to cross-examine adverse witnesses; to obtain documents or call witnesses or present their defense; or to get meaningful notice of their burden of proof. The case, brought with local advocates, challenges practices that deprive fair hearing appellants of the very basic rights secured by this office in *Goldberg v. Kelly* over 30 years ago.
Nearly 50% of single mothers who turn to the welfare system lack a high school diploma or equivalent. As advocates, we operate under the axiom that our reach must exceed our grasp. We expect hard work to translate into a livable wage. We expect that government programs designed to help should do no harm. We expect that support services offer a stepping-stone to long-term family well-being. We expect families to have a fair chance at a better life. All too often, however, that first job after welfare does not pay enough to lift a family out of poverty. Welfare leavers and their families frequently remain economically insecure and vulnerable to crisis. Employment supports—from government-sponsored healthcare, child care, nutrition services, and transportation assistance programs to access to education and training—are critical to help fragile families succeed in work. Unfortunately, far too few families get these much needed services. The Welfare Law Center has led a number of new initiatives to broaden access to these important work support programs for the indigent, unemployed, and low-wage workers.
Although the 1996 welfare reforms brought a mass infusion of dollars into workforce development services, it is unclear how successful states have been in improving employment prospects, earnings, or job retention among former recipients. New York State’s own evaluation study to track its welfare ‘leavers’ claimed that 40 percent of those who left welfare had found “continuous employment.” Yet, the definition of continuous employment included one day of work within a 13-week reporting period. One out of every four families surveyed returned to the welfare rolls two months after they left, a pattern the State study declined to disclose. In a complaint to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, a state oversight agency charged the New York study as “misleading and unreliable,” and the State as unwilling to investigate accurately the impacts of its welfare policies.

LAUNCHING A NATIONAL INITIATIVE TO EXPAND ACCESS TO CHILD CARE

The federal government offers child care subsidies to families moving from welfare-to-work and to other low income wage earners. The demand, fueled by extensive work requirements, far outstrips supply. In collaboration with the Child Care Law Center and NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, we formed a national project to increase access to child care subsidies for low-income families in Illinois, Texas, New York, California, and Alabama.

With funding primarily from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur and David and Lucile Packard Foundations, we have focused attention on front-line access to subsidies, child care-related laws and due process protections, child care for children with disabilities, gaps in service delivery and public funding, and the informal, license-exempt care many poor families rely on.
A s welfare reform has increased the numbers of low-income parents who work outside their homes, families increasingly rely on unlicensed child care providers. License-exempt care in a neighbor’s home is often the only choice for welfare-to-work families who work off-hours, nights, and weekends, or lack options for center-based care in their communities. In some cases, it means care from a trusted friend. In other cases, it means unregulated, poor quality child care that can endanger a child’s health, safety and development. It can also endanger the caregiver, force providers to forgo minimum wage or overtime, leave the caregiver in poverty, and ultimately make child care a job that does not pay.

Due to state-designed reimbursement schemes, Illinois pays little more than $9 per day for license-exempt care. Yet more than 100,000 children in Illinois are cared for by these home child care providers. Despite the state program’s heavy reliance on license-exempt care for low-income families, there has been little discussion about how Illinois can improve the well-being of children in this form of care. In Chicago, we organized a day-long ‘brainstorming’ session of state officials, policymakers, advocates, and academics to work together and create a plan for license-exempt care and improving the payments to caregivers. We issued a report on license-exempt care in Illinois, and presented our findings at the National Association for the Education of Young Children Annual Conference. Our advocacy has facilitated important collaborations and major policy change. More importantly, we are bringing those who care for Illinois’ children closer to a livable wage.

We have investigated child care policies and practices, documented problems and prospects for reform, created extensive training and education materials, taken recommendations to local officials, organized policy conferences in four states, enlisted a diverse array of partners, and forged alliances that will play a major role in improving child care for low-income families.

In Texas, child care administration and policymaking had been devolved to 28 different county boards. Arbitrary and standardless decisions were rampant. Legal protections were not enforced and meaningful oversight was nonexistent.

We investigated and documented the problems, created a Know Your Rights handbook tailored to Texas child care policies, and informed officials of the necessary reforms. We persuaded Texas to adopt critical standards and developed client education materials. We analyzed regulation reforms, organized advocacy training sessions, made recommendations to state agencies, and provided one-on-one assistance. Advocates in Texas took note and have become deeply involved in expanding Texas families’ access to child care.
In Illinois, our advocacy with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services led to major policy changes affecting tens of thousands of children throughout the state. Parents faced a number of difficulties obtaining licensed care for children with disabilities. Weak regulations by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services enabled providers to adopt discriminatory policies.

In an exciting turn-around, our advocacy and discussions with agency officials led the state to issue new policies to its child care networks on the care of children with disabilities. The state also adopted a new law requiring child care providers to attend training on serving children with disabilities, and invited us to provide educational materials we had developed on this issue. The Illinois Department of Human Services then included our recommendations in its formal recommendations to the new Governor-elect.

In New York, through a policy initiative, public hearings, meetings with City officials, and in the media we advocated fair distribution of state and federal child care funding. We led a major effort to address the issue of federal supplantation—bringing attention to child care appropriations diverted to non-child care needs. Across the country, public officials are using federal child care funds to replace and withdraw local dollars from child care budgets, rather than using the infusion of federal funds to increase the overall funding available for child care and serve the hundreds of thousands of children on waiting lists. In New York, our advocacy led to the restoration of $18 million in child care funds, ensuring at least 3,000 additional children will be served this year.

We prepared Lost in the Maze: A Look At New York City’s Fragmented Child Care Delivery System, a report on the need for an uninterrupted system of child care assistance in New York City. The current structure of the subsidy system leads parents to lose child care at every turn. Multiple city agencies are charged with providing child care subsidies to low-income families. Each of these agencies, although serving the same economically-eligible families, has separate bureaucracies, applications, and procedures. Parents must reapply for child care assistance from a different agency office every time their employment status changes. The renewal process often causes parents leaving welfare to lose child care services for weeks at a time, just as they are starting a new job. Our continued advocacy for a ‘seamless’ child care system will help make child care affordable, available, and stable for low-income families.
As the economy falters, with hundreds of thousands newly unemployed, the nation's Food Stamp Program offers a wholly-federally funded strategy to ameliorate the economic downturn for low-wage workers. Unfortunately, changes in the program eliminated many protections for low-income families and induced states to operate food stamps under constantly evolving policies, drop rules to inform applicants of their rights, and engage in practices that deter applications. As a result, many families eligible for food stamps are not receiving them.

Low income families are increasingly subject to arbitrary loss or denial of food stamps. Those who successfully move from welfare to work find themselves overlooked in efforts to improve food stamp delivery. Thousands more are cut off in error when they leave the welfare rolls for low-wage work.

The Center is working with local legal, policy, and grassroots advocates to press for improvements across the country. Through this project, we are removing barriers to food assistance, promoting incentives in the law that would raise uptake rates, identifying agency policies and practices that curtail the legal rights of families, and using legal tools to obtain systemic change.

We are soliciting reports from local anti-hunger advocates and reviewing cartloads of federal documents to identify the cracks in food stamp delivery. State by state, we are working for reforms to streamline access. We have begun to work with groups in California, Arizona and Utah to enforce translation obligations and other food stamp rights to ease access for families. In Arizona, our recent policy negotiations with the state led to meetings with state officials and a state commitment to assist limited English-speakers gain greater access to benefits.

But it is not enough to ease access for families who meet contorted application requirements. Unreasonable asset limits, frequent in-person re-certification appointments, non-evening hours, and time limits on the temporarily unemployed exclude many working families who should qualify but cannot. For many families, this means no help for their hardship—no matter how temporary. To address this, we are working to expand food stamp eligibility and improve the reach of this critical program to new populations.
FOOD STAMPS: AN ADVOCATE’S PERSPECTIVE
Anne Pearson

EXPANDING ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Nearly 50% of single mothers who turn to the welfare system lack a high school diploma or equivalent. With such education deficits, employment prospects are grim. Yet, current policies often curtail education or training in favor of government-assigned work programs. This compels many single mothers to drop out of higher education or promising vocational programs in order to receive benefits. Increased reliance on private welfare-to-work vendors and contract incentives has further shifted the emphasis away from education and training programs and to short-term job placement, readiness, and search programs.

In New York City, through Davila v. Turner, we won a preliminary injunction that kept the door open to education and protected welfare recipients from being forced to leave education and training programs for non-skill building work programs.

In discussions with government officials, we have sought greater use of community based skills providers and increased placement in English as a Second Language, literacy enhancement, and GED preparation programs. In coalition with low-income organizations and advocates, we pressed forward legislation in New York to expand education and training opportunities for welfare recipients.

By the time most households apply for food stamps, they have depleted their resources and are in desperate need of food. Many applicants for food stamps earn less than $150 per month, and have less than $100 in cash. Many of them have household expenses that exceed their limited incomes. Despite the fact that such households are eligible to receive expedited food stamps within days, they are often forced to wait at least thirty days before they receive the help they need to put food on their tables.

The fact is, they shouldn’t have to wait. Federal law requires that expedited food stamps be made available to extremely indigent applicants within 7 days. And some states require that such benefits be provided in as few as 3 days. If these laws exist, why are so many families waiting without food? After conducting a survey of 20 counties, I learned that most local welfare agencies aren’t doing an adequate job of screening applicants for eligibility for expedited food assistance. They are also falling short of their obligation to process these benefits quickly. Strict enforcement of expedited food stamp laws is crucial so that no family is forced to spend a month without food.

Anne Pearson is the Center’s Cravath, Swaine & Moore “Equal Justice Works” Fellow addressing food stamp issues across the country. After investigating Sacramento County’s food stamp practices, her advocacy led the county to agree to major reforms. It is a major win for families in Northern California.
PROTECTING LOW-INCOME WOMEN FROM SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Low-income women who have no means other than public benefits to provide immediate support for their children are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment at work-for-your-benefits programs. In 2001, the Center filed a federal court suit on behalf of a woman in New York City repeatedly harassed by a workfare supervisor.

The abuse was so flagrant that our initial complaint moved the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to begin enforcement proceedings. The EEOC required the City to implement a comprehensive set of workplace protections. The U.S. Department of Justice also filed suit in federal court to address patterns of sexual harassment in New York City’s administration of its workfare program. The lower court held that employment laws designed to protect workers from sexual harassment and discrimination do not apply to workfare workers. We are appealing in this important test case that will help to define the legal rights of persons obligated to participate in work-for-your-benefit programs.

CREATING EFFECTIVE AND COMPASSIONATE WELFARE-TO-WORK POLICIES

For many single-mothers attempting to move from welfare to work, securing child care, affording transportation, and attending to the numerous agency appointments, job search activities, and work requirements is a daily struggle. If they fail to meet a welfare agency requirement, violate a program rule, or miss an appointment, they may be met with harsh sanctions which can reduce or cut off a family’s benefits.

Welfare agencies often resort to these financial penalties as a way to prompt compliance with welfare rules. Thirty-six states operate “full-family” sanction policies that are stricter and more excessive than federal rules require and cut children off of aid as well.

By relying upon sanctions to compel compliance among vulnerable families, agencies often lose the opportunity to improve upon the very programs that they had established to promote employment and family well-being. Family disabilities, limited English-speaking skills, or confusion about program requirements can hinder compliance. Once sanctioned, these families may then lose cash assistance and other benefits, no longer have access to government-funded education and training programs, and be thrown into greater financial, health, and housing crisis.
With mounting evidence of the harmful consequences of states’ use of sanctions, many experts have called for a fresh approach that focuses on identifying and addressing parents’ barriers to success.

Arizona’s William E. Morris Institute for Justice asked the Welfare Law Center to partner in *Olea v. Clayton*, a federal class action challenge to Arizona’s sanction system. Arizona, like many states, imposes severe financial penalties on families when a parent allegedly fails to meet work requirements, with few exceptions to the rules. Thousands of families would lose half or all of their cash assistance, even though the parent may have had justifiable cause for failing to meet the agency’s demands, such as lack of transportation or child care.

The lawsuit spurred a dramatic turn-around. The State recognized that a punitive sanction system did little to bring poor families closer to economic independence. We worked closely with state officials, local advocates, and other community stakeholders to develop comprehensive policies focused on barrier elimination rather than sanctioning.

*Olea* gave the Center and fellow advocates a vehicle to influence agency practices and contribute ideas for improving public policy. We worked with the state agency to craft policies and practices that identify families’ obstacles to employment, refer those with barriers to available services, safeguard families’ rights to due process, protect families from inappropriate and arbitrary sanctions, provide families with clear information about program requirements, and implement staff training and extensive monitoring to track outcomes.

Yet, translating these reforms into effective on-the-ground practice requires more than the agency’s commitment. We continue to work in Arizona and provide the resources needed to ensure the new policies are effective and fairly applied. Our experience offers a model for other states seeking to improve their welfare-to-work policies.
breaking barriers for persons with disabilities

“There is a huge need for this project and no better place for it to be housed than the Welfare Law Center.”

Alan W. Houseman, Center for Law and Social Policy

THE NEEDS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES are largely overlooked in the welfare system. Psychiatric conditions, chronic health problems, developmental, learning, and physical disabilities today comprise a large proportion both of those remaining on the welfare rolls and those cut off aid without employment. Disabilities make it particularly difficult for many to meet program requirements, succeed in work assignments, benefit from education or training programs, negotiate the bureaucracy, obtain or retain services for which they are eligible, and advocate for themselves. Many face daunting challenges in obtaining jobs.
Welfare agencies, not fully appreciating the extent of disabilities among low-income families, often resort to financial penalties—and cut families off benefits to compel compliance with work rules. This throws many families with disabilities into dire straits, unable to find work and unable to meet welfare-to-work requirements.

For others, disabilities make even obtaining aid—from navigating the complex application process to meeting the multitude of appointments—particularly onerous. An applicant who misses an appointment, even for a cause related to disability, can be automatically denied aid. One particularly pernicious result is that clients with disabilities and psychiatric conditions cannot obtain Medicaid benefits as well, and lack of access to treatment or medication may lead to further crisis of hospitalization or homelessness.

The Welfare Law Center launched a national project to address the needs of poor persons with disabilities and promote positive policies. This project—at the intersection of economic security and an emerging area of civil rights law—is advancing the agendas of both communities.

The Legal Education and Advocacy Project (LEAP) for Persons with Disabilities is using policy advocacy, legal strategies, federal enforcement tools, coalition-building, agency negotiation, and public education to ensure access to aid, healthcare, support services, and employment programs for poor persons with disabilities.

The project is gaining enormous support among legal aid programs, mental health coalitions, disability advocates, anti-poverty advocates, civil rights groups, and local policymakers. At this early stage, we have created public education materials for advocates, developed relationships with key staff at the federal civil rights enforcement agency, provided extensive technical assistance and training to advocates from some 50 organizations in 25 states, produced a series of training workshops featuring the top advocates in the field, and begun developing collaborative strategies for changing policies in states and localities.

In New York, we filed a major civil rights complaint with the federal Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights to reform discriminatory practices by the New York City welfare agency. These practices, in effect, deny public benefits, Medicaid, and employment services to persons with psychiatric disabilities. The Office for Civil Rights launched an investigation and City welfare officials met with us to discuss possible reforms.

Through presentations at national conferences, extensive consultation to advocates around the country, and on-the-ground work in a number of states, we are working to ensure that welfare policies protect and benefit families with disabilities. We are taking our policy ideas and recommendations to state officials, and gaining support from local advocates along the way.
Groundswell

1. a sudden gathering of force, as in public opinion; 2. a broad, deep undulation of the ocean, often caused by a distant storm or earthquake.

**SOCIAL CHANGE AT THE GRASSROOTS** In a democracy, it is essential that those most affected by government decisions be informed and represented. When sweeping welfare changes were enacted in 1996, the voices of poor single-mothers were absent and unheard. Yet low-income women can play a meaningful role in our democracy if they have the means to connect, speak out, and offer their insights for reshaping the public welfare system. In 1998, we created the Low Income Networking and Communications (LINC) Project (www.lincproject.org) to do just that, merging modern technology and advocacy strategies so that community-based organizations of low-income women could represent themselves and their agendas, learn new skills, and build loosely connected leaders into powerful advocacy coalitions.
The LINC Project has helped us to advance our mission by building the capacity of the Campaign to use technology to advance organizing, advocacy and leadership development...
The LINC Project has been a valuable resource for grassroots organizing and the movement for social justice.”

Deepak Bhargava
Director, National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support

Using LINC’s communication technologies as a platform and a peer network, these low-income organizations have gained a presence in the debate over critical public policies. They engage in sophisticated and multi-faceted campaigns affecting state and federal policy. They develop strategies for job creation, better access to education and training, improved child care, healthcare, and transportation, and improved living standards for low-wage workers. They now testify before Congress, sit at the table with their Senators, organize town-hall meetings, and lead regional advocacy coalitions. They secure the passage of progressive legislation. They transform the women in their communities, many of them current and former welfare recipients, with new skills, savvy, and mission. Above all, they enrich the public debate.
making a difference: access to technology

Since 1998, the Center’s LINC Project has built the technology capacity of grassroots anti-poverty groups across the country, enabling community-based organizers and low income women to gain a presence in the public debate, be informed, reach new allies, educate communities, share strategies, and participate collectively in the democratic process.

Using modern communication technology and hands-on collaboration, the LINC Project is providing low income organizers with the means—tools and strategies often available to wealthier advocacy organizations with far greater resources and far different politics. The LINC Project is enabling the poor and disenfranchised to have an impact.

Many of these groups are expert in community-based organizing, but few have the resources to take their achievements to scale. Technology is a dream for most. Yet we know that without access to the right tools, these groups would struggle to have their voices heard.

The LINC Project is critical for these emerging leaders, providing low income activists with organizational development assistance, capacity-building services, a national communications network of peers, innovative technologies, and increased opportunities for civic participation within their communities.

Our LINC Project Circuit Riders travel the country, bringing technology to the resource-poor, member-led community groups for whom it is most out of reach. The Circuit Riders provide hands-on technology development, website and database design, computer and internet access, individualized on-site training, and innovative technology applications to under-served low income communities. From Missoula to Miami, from St. Louis to San Francisco, Boston to Brooklyn, our LINC Project Circuit Riders evangelize the use of technology as an advocacy and organizing tool.

The groups use technology in very different ways, but all recognize its value to low income communities: instant access to a wealth of online information, a website to drive a public education campaign, online tracking of legislative bills, computer classes to help members develop transferable job skills, Internet workshops to attract new members, e-mail alerts to increase turn-out for events, a database to track and build member leaders, inexpensive outreach to far-flung allies, a website to disseminate self-advocacy materials and media kits online.
The LINC Project also uses a project website (www.lincproject.org) and an electronic listserv to promote organizing around economic security issues. Through these platforms, LINC has built a sense of community among low income organizers, fostering constant communication, education and collaboration among a growing network of grassroots groups.

LINC tackles one of the most difficult challenges—bringing technology to neighborhood organizations in low-income communities that serve residents with limited experience with technology. Working in collaboration with these groups, LINC is able to promote a very important lesson: to narrow the Digital Divide, we must create opportunities for disenfranchised populations to use technology and computer literacy not solely to compete in the job market but to participate in civic and community life.

Kate Kahan

WHEN WORKING FOR EQUALITY AND ECONOMIC LIBERATION (WEEL), a Montana based organization working on poverty issues in Montana, the West and nationally, first started working with the Low Income Networking Communications Project, we were a lost cause. As the executive director, I understood we needed to better utilize technology to carry out our groundbreaking work on reauthorization of the welfare reform bill. I could not, for the life of me, see how that could happen. Two plus years later, with lots of support and advice from LINC, WEEL is as technology savvy as we could have imagined. The advances in our uses of technology to further our organizing work in our communities has had great results. For example, WEEL has created innovative policy, maintained our dedication to keeping those most affected by policy involved in the political process and organized numerous reports and community actions addressing poverty in Montana recently. As a statewide organization it is imperative to have multiple methods of communication and information sharing to get the job done. WEEL also houses the Western Regional Welfare Activists’ Network, a coalition of poverty rights groups from the west. LINC has been a vital force in helping us further our work across state lines, an essential component of post welfare reform organizing. WRWAN has emerged as a strong voice of expertise in the national arena with regards to welfare. Our growth into national players has been facilitated by our applications of technology. LINC has been an enormous contributor to WRWAN’s work on welfare reform throughout our regional and national work. We make a great team.

Kate Kahan is the Director of WEEL, as well as a Board Member of the Welfare Law Center. In 2002, Kate Kahan testified before a Congressional hearing about the needs of women in poverty.
organizing power: turning out change

Since its inception two years ago, the National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support has partnered with the LINC Project to both develop its communication and technology strategy for the federal welfare reauthorization debates and improve the technology capacity of its member groups to enable collective action. The LINC Project created and maintained the Campaign’s website and developed its key communication infrastructure. Using LINC-developed capacities, NCJIS and other LINC Project partners from across the country were able to work together to shift debate over the federal child tax credit to focus on a refundable credit that reaches low-income families and then achieved victory when Congress enacted a partially refundable credit. We continue to work closely with NCJIS to use technology in a manner that sustains and enhances the involvement of distant members in the coalition.

One of those members is Community Voices Heard, a Harlem-based organization led by women transitioning from welfare. LINC custom-tailored a database for CVH that categorized members for the first time, targeted outreach, identified potential leaders by tracking participation and, in the end, helped create a blueprint for organizing. Using the LINC database, and a lot of dedicated organizing, CVH simultaneously flew out 65 members to Crawford, Texas to protest the President’s economic policies and brought together 120 low-wage workers to demonstrate for an extension of unemployment insurance at the New York State Governor’s office. For the October 2002 action in Crawford, CVH targeted recruitment efforts to members who had participated in three or more actions in the past, relying on the database to identify those with the dedication to promise turnout for a protest 2,000 miles away. A few days later, CVH mobilized 120 protesters in New York, using the database to orchestrate thousands of phone calls, mailings, and repeated contact. By helping groups to respond quickly and collectively to issues they care about and increase turnout for events, LINC enhances the political muscle of grassroots groups.

LINC now reaches hundreds of groups across the country. Our work with the National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support and the Western Regional Welfare Activists’ Network has made LINC a focal point in fashioning the communication and technology strategy for coalitions addressing the TANF-reauthorization debates. More significantly, LINC is proving to be an invaluable tool in policy development and coalition building around crucial state and local decisions, as it provides grassroots groups with the same access to information as more institutional policy organizations and well-heeled interest groups.

By building websites and communication networks, the LINC Project enables low-income women to represent themselves and their agendas. Through presentations to policy groups and intermediary organizations, the LINC Project informs a larger public that low-income women are working to change the system themselves. By working with local, regional, and national coalitions, the LINC Project is developing broad communication and infrastructure strategies that will promote the credibility and ensure the survival of a national economic justice network.
Evidence suggests that racial and ethnic minority families are not receiving the services to which they are entitled.

UNCHARTED TERRAIN: WELFARE PRIVATIZATION

Privatization is emerging as one of the most significant consequences of welfare devolution. The emphasis on work requirements spurred states to contract out work programs and job-related services. This shift to privatization has led to new models for employment and work-engagement services. Some states have gone further and privatized core components of welfare programs—placing key decisions in the hands of private agencies. Over the past few years, these changes have raised profound implications for community input and effective advocacy, just governance and due process, civil rights enforcement, oversight and accountability, transparency, and the future of poverty-reduction strategies.
Now, in many ways, private entities have unprecedented reach in policymaking, in negotiating the contract terms and public enforcement to which they are subject, and in making decisions about who receives what services. This shift is weakening long-standing advocacy channels, rights, and relationships.

Historically, community groups and advocates were able to negotiate with government agencies about needed policy improvements. In a privatized setting there is often no mechanism for advocate and low-income voices. Valuable input to improve services is lost.

Transparency is also diminished. State and local administrative procedure laws and sunshine laws do not apply to the contracting process or private contractors, thus insulating policy choices from public view. Legal safeguards and oversight mechanisms are largely absent. In some cases, contractors have enormous decision-making authority, and the absence of safeguards has led to widespread perceptions of unfairness.

We are working with advocates and organizers to develop innovative ideas for reform and to strengthen legal protections, public scrutiny, government oversight and accountability, advocacy channels, and opportunities for democratic participation.

RACIAL AND ETHNIC EQUITY

Although welfare administration has long been linked to entrenched stereotypes and prejudices, the enormous discretion now given to states and localities creates new opportunities for disparate treatment on the basis of race or ethnicity.

Harsher sanction, time-limit, and family-cap policies exist in states where minorities are concentrated. Racial and ethnic minority families more often fail to receive essential services to which they are entitled, are unduly subject to harsher sanctions, and are disproportionately steered from education and training programs or into substandard job placement services, according to anecdotal evidence. Racial and ethnic discrimination by prospective employers appears to play a role in the higher rate of whites exiting the rolls for employment.

To address these issues, the Welfare Law Center contributed significantly to a positive TANF reauthorization bill, the Racial Equity and Fair Treatment bill. We have negotiated with state officials to obtain monitoring procedures that assure that new policies and safeguards are having a positive impact regardless of race.

We are now working to equip policy advocates, community groups, and other stakeholders with the tools to identify discriminatory practices and gain equitable treatment.
# Financials / 2001

## Assets and Liabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Assets</td>
<td>936,155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture, etc.</td>
<td>68,621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,004,776</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liabilities</td>
<td>121,898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Assets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating Fund</td>
<td>280,378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stabilization Fund</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporarily Restricted</td>
<td>302,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,004,776</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Support and Revenue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contracts and Grants</td>
<td>1,161,568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>208,618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned Income</td>
<td>52,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Events</td>
<td>24,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donated Property and Services</td>
<td>16,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Support and Revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,483,325</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salaries and Wages</td>
<td>837,273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Benefits</td>
<td>155,244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space and Occupancy</td>
<td>107,649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Non-Personnel Expenses</td>
<td>164,299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payments to Collaborating Organizations</td>
<td>174,548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,439,013</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Full report may be obtained by request from:

State of New York
Office of the Attorney General
Charities Bureau
120 Broadway
New York, NY 10271
board of directors

Paul M. Dodyk (Board Chair)
Cravath, Swaine & Moore
New York, New York

M. Bernard Aidinoff*
Sullivan & Cromwell
New York, New York

Penelope E. Andrews
CUNY School of Law
New York, New York

Gail Aska
Community Voices Heard
New York, New York

Paul J. Bschorr
Dewey Ballantine LLP
New York, New York

Martha F. Davis (Secretary)
Northeastern School of Law
Boston, Massachusetts

Matthew Diller
Fordham Law School
New York, New York

Steven M. Edwards (Treasurer)
Hogan & Hartson, LLP
New York, New York

Jeffrey E. Glen
Anderson Kill & Olick
New York, New York

John DeWitt Gregory (Vice-Chair)
Hofstra University School of Law
Hempstead, New York

David Gruenstein
Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz
New York, New York

Henry B. Gutman
Simpson Thacher & Bartlett
New York, New York

John H. Hall
Debevoise & Plimpton
New York, New York

Kate Kahan
WEEL
Missoula, Montana

Stephen L. Kass
Carter, Ledyard & Milburn
New York, New York

Daniel F. Kolb
Davis Polk & Wardwell
New York, New York

Jennifer L. Kroman
Green, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton
New York, New York

Mary A. Lovings
Texas Welfare Reform Organization
Houston, Texas

Inez Mitchell
Monroe County Clients Council
Rochester, New York

Shirley Smith Peoples (Vice-Chair)
Chico Clients Council
Columbus, Ohio

Bruce Rabb
Kramer, Levin, Naftalis & Frankel, LLP
New York, New York

Jill Shinn
Northeast Missouri Clients Council for Human Needs
Kahoka, Missouri

Bianca Vela
Houston Texas

Stanley S. Weithorn
Roberts & Holland LLP
New York, New York

Margo Westley
J.E.U.J. for Women
Salt Lake City, Utah

* Term of office concluded September 2002

staff list

Henry A. Freedman
Executive Director

LEGAL AND POLICY STAFF

Barbara Coccodrilli Carlson
Senior Policy Analyst

Marc Cohan
Director of Litigation

Melanie Cuevas**
Debevoise & Plimpton Equal Justice Works Fellow

Cary LaCheen
Senior Attorney

Mary R. Mannix
Program Director

Anne Pearson
Cravath, Swaine & Moore Equal Justice Works Fellow

Rebecca L. Scharf
Senior Attorney

Elizabeth Watson**
Skadden Fellow

DEVELOPMENT

Amy Rachelle Shefrin
Development Director

LINC PROJECT

Arif Mamdani
Circuit Rider

Dirk Slater
Senior Circuit Rider

ADMINISTRATION

Susanne Evarts
Secretary

Peter Kendall
Computer Systems Administrator

Kay Khan
Office Manager

Michelle Peeples
Secretary

pro-bono counsel

DAVIS POLK & WARDWELL
Davila v. Hammons
Laura Lopez
Cathy Lifeso
Scott Klugman
William Wurtz

DEWEY BALLANTINE
Moore v. Perales
Piron v. Wing

WHITE & CASE
Sanchez v. Turner
Thomas McGanney
David Hille

BEETEM LAW OFFICES, P.C.
White v. Martin
Jon E. Beetem
Outreach /v. reach further than; n. 1. the extent or length of reaching out; 2. an organization’s involvement with or influence in the community