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Advocates for Adults with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities (“AAIDD”) Clinic Launched

Brooklyn Law School’s newest clinic, the Advocates for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (“AAIDD”) Clinic, is up and running with an inaugural class of eight students. The clinic offers students the opportunity to engage in direct representation of individuals with disabilities in a variety of civil legal matters. The AAIDD Clinic has focused on conducting outreach to underserved communities particularly immigrants, communities of color, and the LGBTQ community. Our intake line is live and students are fielding calls and referrals from other agencies.

The clinic’s current docket consists of special education cases where students over the age of 18 are receiving inappropriate education and inadequate planning for life after school. The clinic is also serving as Guardian Ad Litem in two Article 17-A cases where students will protect the interest of the alleged in-capacitated person and develop a report to aid the court in its decision making. The faculty are developing cases and providing technical assistance to non-profit organizations in the areas of public benefits, housing, and healthcare.

The clinic is working on a variety of public policy projects and developing partnerships with disability rights advocates. Director Natalie Chin gave comments at a public hearing on a proposed rule change at the Board of Corrections concerning punitive solitary confinement in New York City Jails. The comments helped push for a final rule that excluded more young people from solitary confinement and highlighted appropriate treatment of individuals with disabilities. The AAIDD Clinic is also working with not-for-profit attorneys, and other stakeholders to develop action groups and coalitions around emerging issues in the disability rights field such as prisoners’ rights, and housing and care for people with disabilities.

Meet Michael Higgins

Michael Higgins joined Brooklyn Law School in fall 2014 as a staff attorney for the AAIDD Clinic. He was most recently a staff attorney in the General Practices Unit of Legal Services of the Hudson Valley, Yonkers, N.Y, where he represented clients primarily in the areas of housing and public benefits. He also served as a staff attorney in the Disabilities Unit, where he represented individuals with disabilities in a general practice.

Previously, Professor Higgins served as a staff attorney for Mid-Penn Legal Services in Lebanon, PA., where he provided legal services to clients in housing, employment, consumer credit, domestic violence, and family law cases. As a Brooklyn Law School Graduate Fellow, he worked in the Education Unit at Legal Services NYC – Bronx, in the Education Law Unit and focused on schools’ approach to serving students with behavioral needs.

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Corporate and Real Estate Students Close \$1.66 Mil-lion Dollars in Loans for Low-Income Co-ops in Three Days

With \$1.66 million dollars obtained for three dis-tressed low income cooperatives in as many days of closings, the Corporate and Real Estate clinic wrapped up an extremely productive semester.

Six students, supervised by Prof. Debbie Bechtel, spent most of the semester drafting documents, negotiating, resolving title issues and preparing their clients for closings which enabled the co-op boards to pay off tax arrears and gain financial stability. There are 135 affordable units in the three Bronx buildings.



Two other students conducted a two-hour seminar for fifty co-op board members on December 3. In addition, two students who, earlier in the semester helped a Brooklyn co-op to raise \$63,000 in an apartment sale, completed memos for another board of directors on complex conversion issues.

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