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### 2022 Annual Report

University of Maine School of Law

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Training law students  
and helping the people  
of Maine since 1970





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2022

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**To donate to the Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic, please [click here](#) or contact:**

Office of Advancement and  
External Affairs  
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**Note:** The client stories represented in this report are true, but names have been changed to protect the identity and confidentiality of our clients.

**Cover photo:** At the end of 2022, Maine Law began the process of moving out of the Oakdale neighborhood of Portland and into its new building in the Old Port.

## FROM THE DIRECTORS

**T**hank you for reading the 2022 Annual Report of the University of Maine School of Law's Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic. In this report, we have included news about our Clinic's work and chosen a handful of stories to highlight from the hundreds of clients we helped over the last year. We are excited to share that our Clinic expanded its reach considerably in the last year and that many of our longtime plans came to fruition.

In December 2022, after several decades of operating out of our office at 59 Exeter Street, we undertook the momentous task of moving our Clinic into the University of Maine School of Law's new building at 300 Fore Street, right in Portland's Old Port. While we are thrilled to be in the new building, it was bittersweet to say goodbye to 59 Exeter Street, a building where, over the years, hundreds of Maine Law students had their first experiences practicing law and thousands of clients were given the representation and support they needed. However, we feel overwhelmingly fortunate to be in the newly-renovated building and in the heart of Portland's Old Port. Our student attorneys, faculty, staff, and clients are already reaping the benefits of being so close to courts, community partners, and other law offices.

Over the last year, we also laid the groundwork to open our new Rural Practice Clinic in Fort Kent. In April 2022, after months of hard work from a number of stakeholders, Governor Janet Mills signed LD 1924 into law, funding an initiative to open a legal aid clinic to meet some of the critical need for legal aid in rural areas of the state. In January 2023, we launched the Rural Practice Clinic in Fort Kent with two Maine Law student attorneys representing dozens of Aroostook County residents.

We also expanded the scope and reach of our Clinic's Youth Justice Program to better reflect the national shift in the youth justice field. Acknowledging research in adolescent development, crime trends, and justice system policy, we transitioned our program away from solely juvenile justice and toward policy and practice that includes older youth and young adults. With this change, we were also fortunate to welcome Professor Sarah Branch to our team as the Youth Justice Clinic's new director.

Lastly, we pay tribute to Professor Deirdre Smith, who was the managing director of the Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic for nearly 20 years. Over those years, Professor Smith led with vision and tenacity to expand the Clinic's work, maintain its quality, and be a constant support for faculty, staff, and student attorneys.

Due to Professor Smith's remarkable leadership, the Clinic has been able to serve approximately 500 low-income clients each year, providing an invaluable service to the community. In June 2022, Professor Smith transitioned away from directing the Clinic to focus on full-time teaching and scholarship. Fortunately, Professor Smith continues to work in the Clinic, co-teaching along with Professor Welch our Lawyering Skills for Clinical Practice seminar course, which is required of all Clinic students. We are thrilled she remains a critical member of our clinic community, and we remain so grateful for all of her years of service. As we work hard to fill Professor Smith's shoes as Managing Co-Directors of the Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic, we want to thank her for her years of steadfast leadership, public service, and dedication to training the next generation of lawyers in Maine.

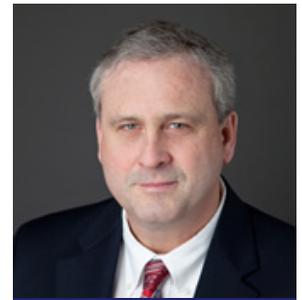
Sincerely,



**Christopher Northrop**  
Managing Co-Director of the  
Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic



**Anna Welch**  
Managing Co-Director of the Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic  
and Director of the Refugee and Human Rights Clinic



**Christopher Northrop**  
Managing Co-Director



**Anna Welch**  
Managing Co-Director



**Deirdre Smith, Professor of  
Law and former Director of  
the Cumberland Legal Aid  
Clinic for nearly 20 years**

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Established in 1970 as a program of the University of Maine School of Law, the Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic provides free legal aid to low-income individuals and families in Maine. One of the oldest clinics of its kind in the nation, the Clinic is committed to training the next generation of lawyers, promoting access to justice, and meeting the acute needs of vulnerable communities.

The Clinic's mission is two-fold: to train the next generation of lawyers by promoting access to justice while meeting the acute needs of vulnerable communities. We hope that providing free representation to low-income clients from underserved communities during law school will lead our student attorneys to graduate from Maine Law with a commitment to a just world.

All of our clients at the Clinic are represented by Maine Law students who are specially licensed to practice under the supervision of our experienced Clinic faculty. The Clinic is divided into five programs: the General Practice Clinic, Prisoner Assistance Clinic, Refugee and Human Rights Clinic, Rural Practice Clinic, and Youth Justice Clinic. In addition, our Clinic is home to the Center for Youth Policy & Law, which provides policy

support to the students and faculty working with youth and emerging adults. Student attorneys also participate in the Protection from Abuse Program, representing victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

The Clinic serves clients with legal matters pending in state, probate, and federal courts and before administrative agencies, delivering a statewide impact. Every day, the Clinic receives calls from people seeking legal help. When a student has an opening and the client qualifies for aid, the case may be accepted. A significant number of clients are referred by other organizations, such as Kids Legal, Preble Street, the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project, and the Volunteer Lawyers Project. The Clinic also receives referrals from federal, state, and probate courts.

All students who enroll in Clinic courses during the school year participate in "Lawyering Skills for Clinical Practice," a semester-long seminar designed to complement and support their clinic work. This seminar covers a range of specific topics relating to lawyering skills, including client interviewing and counseling, fact investigation, case theory, trial skills, trauma-informed lawyering, attorney wellness, and time management, among others. Throughout the semester, the students participate in role-playing exercises, small group discussions, and engage in verbal and written reflection. The students also meet in small groups with a supervising faculty member to conduct "Case Rounds," where they discuss specific challenges and questions that have arisen in their cases.



From left to right, student attorneys Emily Gorrivan '22, Jessica Mizzi '22, Mackenzie Deveau '22, and Ashley Jordan '22

## 2022 AT A GLANCE

### Accolades and Measures of Success

**T**his year, student attorney Camrin Rivera '22 received the Maine Law Clinical Legal Education Association Award for the high quality representation he provided his clients and his exceptional thoughtfulness and self-reflection in clinical coursework.

The Refugee and Human Rights Clinic received the Award for Excellence in a Public Interest Case or Project from the national Clinical Legal Education Association. This honor was conferred in recognition of the Refugee and Human Rights Clinic's multi-year investigation into concerning practices at the Boston Asylum Office. The report, "Lives in Limbo: How the Asylum Office Fails Asylum Seekers," was published in partnership with the ACLU of Maine, the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP), and Dr. Basileus Zeno. The award was presented in a virtual ceremony at the Association of American Law School's Conference on Clinical Legal Education.

Professor Deirdre Smith, our esteemed former managing director, was honored with the Peter DeTroy Award from the Maine

Justice Foundation in recognition of her commitment to advance justice in Maine. She was also granted the Caroline Duby Glassman Award from the Maine State Bar Association, an award given yearly to a female member of the bar for her work to reduce barriers, advance the position of women, and act as a role model for younger or less experienced women lawyers.

Our faculty members published several pieces in 2022 on pressing issues and matters related to public policy. Managing Co-Director and Professor Chris Northrop and Center for Youth Policy & Law Director Jill Ward, along with Maine Law alumni Jonathan Ruterbories and Jessica Mizzi, published an article in the Maine Law Review on Maine's juvenile justice system proposing reforms to improve outcomes for Maine's emerging adult



Professor Anna Welch and Camrin Rivera '22

population. This article was titled "What's My Age Again?: Adolescent Development and the Case for Expanding Original Juvenile Court Jurisdiction and Investing in Alternatives for Emerging Adults Involved in Maine's Justice System." Managing Co-Director and Professor Anna Welch, in collaboration with Maine Law alumna Emily Gorrivan, published in the Maine Law Review "Ethno-Nationalism and Asylum Law," an essay on systemic challenges and racism within the U.S. immigration system. Additionally, Managing Co-Director and Professor Anna Welch, in collaboration with SangYeob Kim of the ACLU of New Hampshire, published a law review article in the Harvard Human Rights Journal entitled "Non-State Actors Under 'Color of Law': Closing a Gap in Protection Under the Convention Against Torture." In conjunction with the Maine Volunteer Lawyers Project, the Clinic also published "A Guide to Kinship Care & Minor Guardianship," a resource for adults providing care for the children of relatives or family members, for the parents of children who are in the care of others, and for teens involved in minor guardianship issues.

The Clinic faculty continues to serve a vital role training other advocates around the state and across the country. Managing Co-Director and Professor Northrop presented a talk, "What is Youth? Redefining Jurisdictional



## 2022 AT A GLANCE / CONTINUED

Boundaries for Juvenile Court,” at National Juvenile Defender Summit in San Juan, Puerto Rico last fall. Managing Co-Director and Professor Anna Welch presented at the Association of American Law Schools’ 2022 Annual Meeting on “Hot Topics: Law Students and Faculty Rising to the Challenge: Responding to the Afghan Crisis.” Associate Professor Courtney Beer and Professor Anna Welch presented with legal writing faculty at Arizona State University’s virtual Legal Writing Institute on “Clinical Collaboration on Transferring Legal Writing Skills Into Practice.”

One measure of the success of the Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic is the number of student attorneys who choose careers that serve the public interest. Recent Clinic graduates have taken positions with Disability Rights Maine, the Maine Legislature, Maine Legal Services for the Elderly, Pine Tree Legal Assistance, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Department of Justice, Maine Commission on Indigent Legal Services (one of the first five Public Defenders ever hired in Maine), as well as in the state and federal courts, county prosecutors’ offices, and the Office of the Attorney General.

### Funding

In 2022, approximately fifty-four percent of the funding for the Clinic’s programs came from sources external to the Law School. We received funding from private donors as well as the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund and the Maine Justice Foundation, which provided an annual Grant of IOLTA funds, a grant from the Bank of America Settlement Fund, and the James Roux Fund, which supports our summer intern program. Other significant sources of external funding this year included the John T. Gorman Foundation, the U.S. Department of Justice, Louis and Anne Abrons Foundation, Maine Community Foundation, Campaign for Justice, and the Muskie Fund for Legal Services.

- **Maine Civil Legal Services Fund**
- **Maine Justice Foundation**
- **James Roux Fund**
- **John T. Gorman Foundation**
- **U.S. Department of Justice**
- **Louis and Anne Abrons Foundation**
- **Maine Community Foundation**
- **Campaign for Justice**
- **Muskie Fund for Legal Services**
- **Albert B. Glickman Family Foundation**

### CLAC By the Numbers

■ In 2022, the Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic represented close to **400 clients and assisted over 200 additional individuals** through our community outreaches. Clinic clients **came from at least 9 countries of origin**, including the U.S., Afghanistan, Angola, Nicaragua, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, Mali, and Rwanda. The Clinic serves a significant number of clients with Limited English Proficiency.

■ **Forty-six students at Maine Law enrolled in Clinic courses in 2022.** In addition, the Clinic hired 7 full-time student interns, one public policy Cushman Anthony fellow, and 2 part-time fellows focusing on policy work for

the summer of 2022 as part of the Summer Intern Program.

■ Students who participated in the Clinic last year were exposed to a range of proceedings, where they gained valuable experience and honed their oral and written advocacy and negotiation skills. **They appeared as counsel in numerous and varied proceedings**, including the following: **8** interim hearings; **6** Protection from Abuse trials; **60** Protection from Abuse agreements presented to the court; **8** arraignments, **6** juvenile proceedings; **1** Family Law final hearing; **2** mediations; **1** change of plea; **21** criminal dispositional conferences; **3** sentencing

hearings; **14** case management, status or pretrial conferences; **1** pardon hearing; **18** Humanitarian Parole applications; **12** asylum consults at the U.S./Mexico border; **2** Special Immigrant Juvenile Petitions filed; **6** Employment Authorization Documents filed; several asylum intakes and trainings that **reached over 200 individual new arrivals to Maine**; and 2 final Asylum Merits Hearings.

■ Students in the Prisoner Assistance Clinic provided legal advice and counsel to **75** clients on a wide range of civil legal issues, including, but not limited to divorce, parental rights, child support, bankruptcy, probate, tax lien foreclosures, and guardianship of a minor.

## GENERAL PRACTICE CLINIC

**T**he General Practice Clinic is a full-representation litigation clinic at Maine Law. The largest area of practice for student attorneys enrolled in the General Practice Clinic is family law, and the majority of disputes involve parental rights and responsibilities, child support, and divorce. However, the family law caseload is varied, and student attorneys have also taken on cases involving guardianship, termination of parental rights, protective custody, adoption, and de facto parentage.

Outside of family law, student attorneys have also provided legal assistance in cases involving adult criminal matters, foreclosures, landlord and tenant issues, administrative appeals, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status predicate orders, adult guardianship, protection from harassment, real estate disputes, recovery of unpaid wages, name changes, access to education, wills and trusts, power of attorney, and changing gender identity markers on official documents.

“I appreciate all the support and help I received over the past two years from half a dozen student attorneys. Each was kind, helpful, patient, and supportive. Thank you so much!”

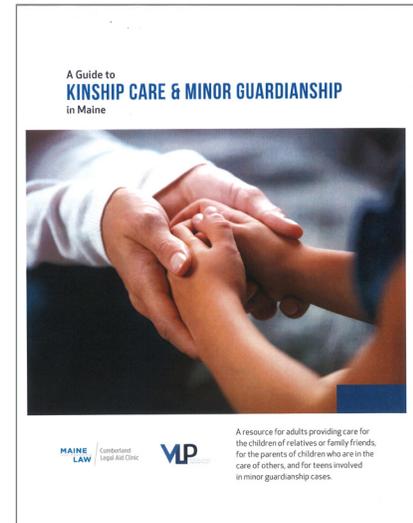
– Client, General Practice Clinic

### CLIENT STORY

Under the supervision of Professor Branch, a student attorney represented a young adult who was facing multiple criminal charges across multiple dockets. The client struggled with significant suicidal ideations which repeatedly brought her to the attention of law enforcement. Over the course of many months, the student attorney worked with community stakeholders to support the client, provide proper community-based treatment, and resolve her criminal matters on the mental health docket appropriately.



Schadrac Joseph '22 conducts a Zoom final hearing in a SIJS case



### Former Clinic Student Authors Guide to Kinship Care and Minor Guardianship

In June 2022, a former General Practice Clinic student attorney, Lisa Rosenthal '22, authored “A Guide to Kinship Care & Minor Guardianship,” with editing and content assistance from Professor Deirdre Smith and Maine Volunteer Lawyers Project Executive Director Elizabeth Stout, Esq.

The Guide provides critical information to help relative caregivers, parents, and young people involved in difficult kinship and guardianship cases have a better understanding of their options, rights, and responsibilities, leading to better outcomes for children, families, and courts. Through her work with litigants and the courts, Rosenthal saw that there was very little information available to unrepresented litigants about these proceedings, including the legal standards and procedures, as well as the implications and consequences of a court’s order appointing a non-parent as a child’s guardian. This lack of information not only affects the experience and outcome for the litigants but also places a substantial burden on the courts which do their best to assist those who are navigating these cases without the help of an attorney.

The marketing team at Pierce Atwood generously donated their time and talents to the design of this Guide, and Rosenthal received valuable feedback as she developed the Guide from Waldo County Probate Court Register Sharon Peavey, Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, and Pine Tree Legal Assistance’s Client Focused Technology Innovator Jack Haycock.

## PRISONER ASSISTANCE CLINIC

**M**any people who are incarcerated need legal help with family, consumer, and other civil legal matters, some of which arise from the circumstances of their incarceration. These court matters have an impact not only on the lives of incarcerated individuals but also on the lives of their families and communities. To help meet this need, the law school launched the Prisoner Assistance Clinic in 2003. While restrictions on assisting incarcerated individuals have prevented other legal aid clinics from engaging in this type of work, the Prisoner Assistance Clinic, funded in part by the Maine Justice Foundation, represents one way to close this gap in justice for those in Maine's prisons.

Through its Prisoner Assistance Clinic, the Clinic provides civil legal services to persons incarcerated in the Maine state prison system. This program includes a four- to six-credit course during the school year that enrolls up to five Maine Law students each semester. The program emphasizes the development of interviewing and counseling skills by delivering “unbundled” legal services (i.e., limited representation) on a wide range of issues. To meet with clients with civil legal matters, students in the program visit Maine Correctional Center and the Southern Maine Women's Re-Entry Center in Windham every week. The Prisoner Assistance Clinic also serves a small number of clients in other facilities through

“ I'm just very thankful for Cumberland Legal Aid helping me get this done so I may move forward. Thank you! ”

-Client, Prisoner Assistance Clinic

written correspondence, Zoom, and telephone calls. In 2022, this clinic provided 75 prisoners with legal information, advice, counsel, and, in some cases, full representation.

In the summer of 2022, the Maine Department of Corrections facilities re-opened to in-person visits. Prisoner Assistance Clinic students continue to provide legal assistance to incarcerated clients in all the prisons in

Maine, as well as to some individuals who have longer-term sentences in county jails. Students provide legal services through in-person meetings, video conference, telephone, and written correspondence. Since most court appearances in family law matters continue to be remote, students provide advice and counsel to their clients regarding virtual court participation. Although the Maine Correctional Center continues to be our primary source of referrals, we have also conducted affirmative outreach to the other facilities to make them aware of the Prisoner Assistance Clinic in an effort to broaden the reach of our services.

In 2022, the Prisoner Assistance Clinic assisted clients with a full range of family law questions, including divorce, annulment, adoption, child protection, delegation of parental rights, child support, minor guardianship, parentage matters, termination of parental rights, and protection from abuse. Student attorneys in the Prisoner Assistance Clinic addressed a wide variety of other civil legal issues, among them eviction; trusts and wills; adult guardianship; foreclosure; conversion of property; social security disability benefits; contract claims; powers of attorney; tax issues; small claims; bankruptcy; medical malpractice; personal injury; tort claim; tax lien; recoupment of title; and real estate.



From left to right, student attorneys Nealy Fleming '23, Catherine Borgnis '23, Ian Paleologopoulos '23, and Joshua Rozov '23 represented clients in the Prisoner Assistance Clinic in 2022.



Prisoner Assistance Clinic student attorneys stand outside of Maine Correctional Center

## CLIENT STORIES

Students in the Prisoner Assistance Clinic received a request for assistance from a resident of the Maine Correctional Center who was trying to initiate a divorce against his wife. The process and forms were overwhelming to him, as was the concept of needing to serve the divorce papers on his wife while incarcerated. Student attorneys in the Prisoner Assistance Clinic assisted the client with completing all of the court forms required to initiate a divorce, serving the opposing party, filing the papers with the court and successfully getting the court waive fees. Finally, the student attorneys prepared the client to represent himself in court. Following all of this work, the client was granted a divorce. The client commented afterward how grateful he was for the legal assistance noting “I’m just very thankful for [the Clinic] helping me get this done so I may move forward. Thank you!”

Another resident of the Maine Correctional Center requested assistance modifying two different child support orders to reflect his loss of income during incarceration. The Maine Correctional Center was still closed to volunteers when he requested assistance, forcing the student attorney to communicate through phone and mail. The COVID-19 pandemic greatly delayed the process of modifying administrative orders with DHHS. The student successfully advocated with DHHS that the judgment should be stayed as of the date of the request (not the date of the filing) because of the extensive delay due to the pandemic. This advocacy prevented several months of child support arrears totaling several thousand dollars. The client commented that the representation he received from his student attorney was “exceptional” and “went far beyond [his] expectations.”

“ [My student attorney] got me all the paper-work, explained it to me so I could fill it out, and was thorough about making sure it was done properly. She was easy to talk to and always kept me informed so I didn’t feel in the dark. ”

– Client, Prisoner Assistance Clinic

## YOUTH JUSTICE CLINIC

This year, the Juvenile Justice Clinic, which first launched in 2006, was expanded and renamed the Youth Justice Clinic to include representation for older youth and young adults. This shift aligns our Clinic's work with advanced scientific understandings of adolescent development, crime trends, and justice system policy. With this change, we were also fortunate to welcome Professor Sarah Branch to our team as the Youth Justice Clinic's new director. Professor Branch brings to the Clinic extensive experience as a defense attorney advocating for the rights of indigent clients, especially those with mental health or developmental disabilities.

In the Youth Justice Clinic, student attorneys work with at-risk youth, both in and outside the justice system. In 2022, they provided legal services to 63 clients. This number includes teens and young adults through the Clinic's Teen Center Project and children with matters in Maine Juvenile, District, or Probate Courts.

Informing the expansion of the Clinic's work to address the needs of emerging adults was the publication of an article in the summer 2022 edition of Maine's Law Review co-authored by Professor Northrop, Center Director Ward, and Maine Law grads Jonathan Ruterbories '21 and Jess Mizzi '22. Titled "What's My Age Again?: Adolescent Development and the Case for Expanding Original Juvenile Court Jurisdiction and Investing in Alternatives for Emerging Adults Involved in Maine's Justice System," the article details progress in the science of adolescent development and, based on that research, argues that emerging adults ages 18-24 more closely correlate to youth under age 18 and therefore, criminal legal responses to emerging adults should align more with the responses to youth in the juvenile justice system.

### "Street Law" at Preble Street Resource Center

After a long hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, student attorneys were able to resume working at the Preble Street Teen Center in 2022. The Center, located in Portland, provides critical services to youth who have been forced to leave their homes due to physical or sexual abuse and to young adults struggling with substance use and/or mental health conditions.

By making regular visits to the Center, student attorneys were able to provide teens and emerging adults with information and advice on a wide range of issues, including their education rights, public benefits, housing, disability benefits, immigration, name change, emancipation, changing gender identity markers on legal documents, and assistance in delinquency and criminal matters.

“As a student attorney, I represented youth clients through court proceedings that felt complicated and overwhelming to them. I worked to connect them with service providers and navigate the documentation required to meet court-ordered conditions and achieve good outcomes. I am a better advocate and attorney because of my year in the Clinic. There has been no experience more valuable in my time at Maine Law.”

— Kelsey Cromie, Student Attorney in the Youth Justice Clinic



Kelsey Cromie '23 (left) with Emily Mott '23 (right)

### STUDENT STORIES

Two student attorneys litigated a contested competency hearing in a significant juvenile delinquency matter for a 13 year old girl. During the hearing, which lasted all day, each student attorney handled an expert witness on cross-examination. The students spent months preparing for the hearing, which involved learning extensively about youth brain development, the statutes involved, and strategic question building.

In a different Youth Justice Clinic case, student attorneys represented and advocated for an emerging youth, both in and outside of the justice system. The young adult, who had co-occurring disorders, was experiencing homelessness and was in danger of human trafficking. The students went above and beyond in two different jurisdictions advocating on the client's behalf. Through their advocacy they won two dismissals of de minimis criminal conduct that would have served to derail our client without any substantive public safety gain.

## CENTER FOR YOUTH POLICY & LAW

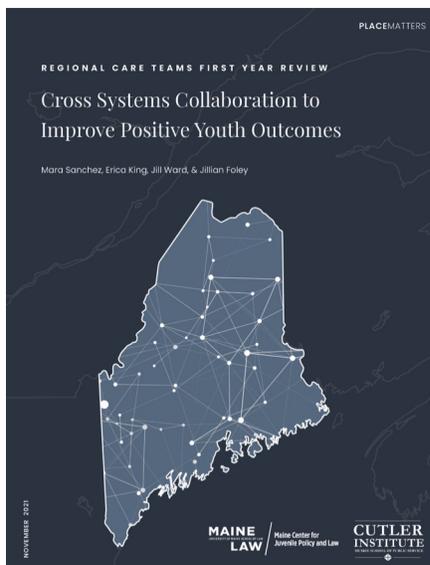
One of the unique attributes of Maine Law's Youth Justice Program is the opportunity it provides students to work on policy initiatives that are often informed by the systemic practices they encounter in representing individual youth and young adults. The Center and the Youth Justice Clinic work collaboratively to provide students with an integrated and comprehensive experience, allowing them to not only represent clients, but to also research, develop, and advocate for larger system reforms to support, and ultimately help improve outcomes for, the children and youth who encounter Maine's legal system.

■ Clinical faculty members worked with students on a number of new and on-going policy projects in 2022, including educating policy-makers and justice system practitioners on prior reforms around juvenile record confidentiality, the continuum of care for system-involved youth and alternatives to incarceration. The Clinic and Center also worked together to support the development of a variety of training resources for practitioners representing and working with system-involved youth, including materials provided to the Maine Commission on Indigent Legal Services. Summer student fellows also worked on projects around the school to prison pipeline, the use and impact of School Resources Officers in Maine schools, and the history of juvenile federal law.

■ Professor Sarah Branch and Center Director Jill Ward also worked with justice system stakeholders to begin a vertical representation pilot project in the court for youth. Through this program, the State of Maine is implementing a new process for assigning juvenile representation. This pilot, starting in Cumberland County, will be expanded to two additional jurisdictions and hopefully be statewide by the end of 2023.

■ Throughout 2022, Professor Sarah Branch advocated for issues that would improve outcomes for underserved communities, including the expansion of accessible housing, community-based services, and amendments to statutes to address gaps in legislation that impact individuals involved in the criminal justice system who have mental health challenges. In a team formed by Rep. Rachel Talbot Ross, Professor Branch worked with representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services, the medical field, advocacy groups, non-governmental organizations, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and a judge to draft

successful legislation regarding the time an individual can languish in a jail while waiting for a hospital bed.



■ The Center's partnership with the University of Southern Maine's Place Matters project and the Department of Corrections continued throughout 2022. The Center is part of the leadership team on the project and co-facilitates one of the cross-systems Regional Community Care Teams that are designed to help individual system-involved youth and their families and to inform broader system change and investment in a community-based continuum of care. The Center and USM co-authored a report, which was released at the end of 2021 and was used to inform the direction of the project and related policy conversations in 2022. A report on the second year of the project was worked on in the fall of 2022 and released in early 2023. In 2022, Jill Ward gave multiple presentations about this work before the Governor's Children's Cabinet, at the 2022 Maine Child Welfare Educators Annual Conference, and at Preble Street's statewide annual Conference on Homelessness. This work has

also garnered national attention, resulting in presentations at the 2022 Annual Conference of the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and the 2022 Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) SRAD National Training Conference.

■ The Center's Jill Ward and Managing Co-Director and Professor Chris Northrop also continued their service as gubernatorial appointments to the Maine Juvenile Justice Advisory Group (JJAG) where Jill served as Chair. The JJAG is responsible for developing and implementing the state's three-year plan for juvenile justice funding provided through the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP). As the state advisory group on juvenile justice matters, the Maine JJAG is also poised to continue to lead efforts to implement reforms coming out of the 2020 Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment in partnership with the Maine Department of Corrections, the Office of Child and Family Services, and other state and community stakeholders.

■ In 2021, the Center established a permanent Emergency Youth Assistance Fund to help with the immediate needs of clients beyond the courtroom. Thanks to the donations from Portland Rising, the area's professional ultimate frisbee team, and other contributions and grant funding, the Clinic is able to provide support on an individualized basis to clients whenever specific needs arise. In 2022, the fund helped to provide clients with grocery cards, gas cards, phones, phone cards, and metro passes to cover basic needs. In addition, the fund has been used to cover other items like apartment supplies, registration fees for support programs, and fees related to court processes. In 2022, the fund helped 17 youth and young adults.

## REFUGEE AND HUMAN RIGHTS CLINIC

In the fall of 2012, the Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic launched the Refugee and Human Rights Clinic, a program that enrolls six to eight students per semester. Student attorneys assist low-income immigrants through a broad range of cases and projects. The Refugee and Human Rights Clinic collaborates with a number of community partners, including the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP) and the ACLUs of Maine and New Hampshire, among a number of others at both the local and national levels. The course targets a critical gap in access to justice in Maine – providing direct legal representation to immigrants and refugees seeking political asylum and similar protections under federal law – while training future attorneys on how best to serve the legal needs of immigrants. In 2022, student attorneys continued to assist clients with matters involving defensive asylum, work permits, Freedom of Information Act requests, asylum derivative/family reunification, lawful permanent residence, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, and naturalization. Students also filed an amicus brief to the First Circuit Court of Appeals on behalf of U.S. immigration law professors and scholars on issues related to asylum and relief under the Convention Against Torture. Two impact litigation cases before the U.S. District Court for the District of Maine remain ongoing (with co-counsel ACLU-ME and ILAP).

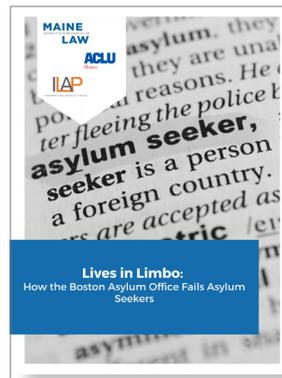


Student attorneys Aisha Simon '23 and Andrés Kenney '23 at an outreach event.

### Lives in Limbo Report

The Refugee and Human Rights Clinic received the Award for Excellence in a Public Interest Case or Project from the national Clinical Legal Education Association. This honor was conferred in recognition of the clinic's multi-year-long investigation into concerning practices of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service's (USCIS) Boston Asylum Office (BAO). The report, *Lives in Limbo: How the Boston Asylum Office Fails Asylum Seekers*, was published in partnership with the ACLU of Maine, the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP), and Dr. Basileus Zeno. The award was presented in a virtual ceremony at the Association of American Law School's Conference on Clinical Legal Education.

*Lives in Limbo* examines why the asylum approval rate at the Boston Asylum Office is the second lowest in the country, just fifteen percent compared to the national average of twenty-eight percent. Maine Law students, under the leadership of Managing Co-Director Anna Welch and Outreach and Advocacy Attorney Erica Schair-Cardona, investigated and exposed systemic problems confounding the application process for asylum seekers at the Boston Asylum Office. These issues include but are not limited to, a pervasive culture of distrust of asylum seekers, pressure on asylum officers to write decisions that correspond to their supervisors' viewpoints, unrealistic workloads and timelines, a high level of burnout and compassion fatigue, and shortcuts that violate asylum seekers' right to due process.



### Asylum Outreach

In 2022, a significant number of immigrants who recently arrived in Maine were living in local hotels and shelters (many coming to Maine from the southern border of the United States). Advocates from various non-profits and city governments working with these new arrivals requested legal workshops on the basics of U.S. asylum law, ICE check-ins, navigating the immigration court system, and how to file for asylum without an attorney (in light of the fact that the vast majority of asylum seekers in Maine do not have access to an attorney). In response to the needs of this population, as well as the ongoing spread of misinformation about the asylum process and the unauthorized practice of immigration law by some community members, in the summer and fall of 2022 seven student attorneys presented to over 185 asylum seekers and case workers on issues related to asylum. Thanks to the strong and ongoing collaborations with community liaisons, including Maine Immigrants Rights Coalition, Catholic Charities, the Intercultural Community Center, Hope Acts, the YMCA, Portland Adult Education, and the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project, these student attorneys presented at Howard Johnson's, the Intercultural Community Center, the YMCA of Greater Portland, the Saco Comfort Inn, and Portland Adult Education. Through this outreach work, Refugee and Human Rights Clinic students provided critical and accurate legal information to some of Maine's most vulnerable residents.



From left to right, Outreach and Advocacy Attorney Erica Schair-Cardona, Teddy Simpson '23, RHRC client, Andrés Kenney '23, and Professor Anna Welch

## CLIENT STORY

Ten years after Erin fled to Maine as a teenager, she was granted asylum in the United States in November 2022 thanks to her strength and resilience, as well as the tireless work of many student attorneys who spent hundreds of hours working on her case. Erin arrived in Portland with her teenage brother, after they were forced to leave their family and country behind as a result of violent attacks they suffered at the hands of her home country's government. Without speaking English and without the guidance of an attorney, Erin and her brother applied for asylum on their own. Many years later, Erin was interviewed at the Boston Asylum Office and, like so many others, her case was referred to Immigration Court. Scared, confused, and defeated, she knew that she needed an attorney to represent her in court, but she could not afford to hire an attorney as she was a full-time student who was also working full-time to support herself. The Clinic was fortunate to have space in our docket at the time and she became a client in 2019.

Years went by as Erin waited for the immigration court to process her case and meanwhile she graduated from college, began a master's program, and continued working and volunteering in her community. But she was not able to live her life with any real security because her legal status was in limbo, and she was continually afraid of being forced to return to a country where she would face death at the hands of her government or people who worked for the government. After waiting for over four years for her day in court, in September 2022 student attorneys filed a motion with the court asking the court to expedite the scheduling of Erin's final asylum hearing. The motion was granted and in a mere seven weeks student attorneys prepared a supplemental filing and worked with Erin, as well as expert and lay witnesses, to get ready for trial. In the weeks leading up to her hearing, her student attorneys worked tirelessly to prepare and were the lead attorneys arguing her case before the Boston Immigration Court. After a relatively brief hearing, it became clear the immigration judge was convinced that Erin's asylum claim was meritorious, both because of Erin's clear and unwavering testimony, but also because of the students' preparation and the extensive evidence submitted to the court in the supplemental filing. In fact, the judge remarked at the conclusion of Erin's hearing that "all Respondents should have this level of quality representation."

After ten years of living with the fear that comes with legal insecurity, Erin finally enjoys the protection of our asylum system and has legally become a "Mainer," a label she wears proudly, thanks to the commitment and preparation of her student attorneys.

“I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone at the Clinic. Words are not enough but I am so grateful for your constant support. I can't imagine if I would have survived this process without your help. Thank you for listening, for guiding me, for being patient and also for knowing when to give me a break.”

-Asylum client, Refugee and Human Rights Clinic

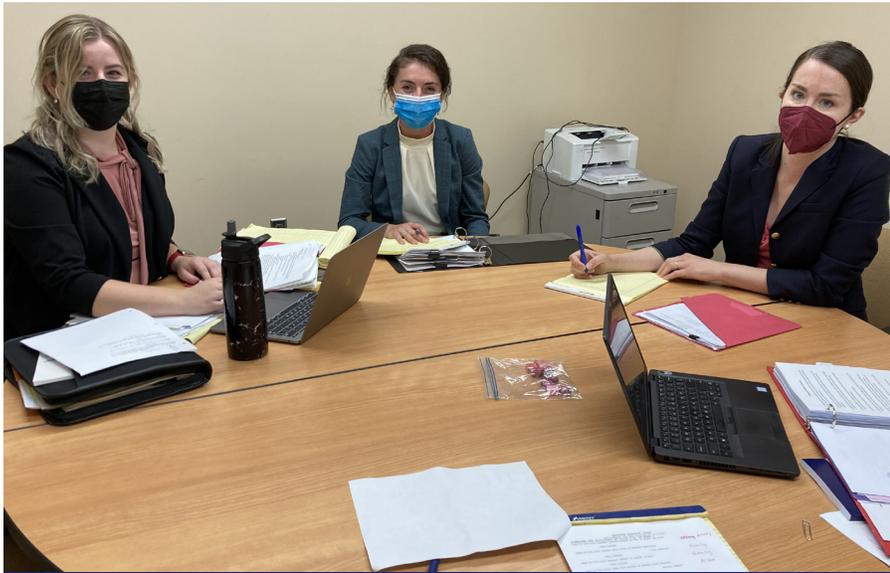
“Thank you for such a wonderful semester in the RHRC. Your leadership, mentorship, warmth, organization, passion, and compassion (I truly could go on) are what led me to the Clinic.”

-Former student attorney, Refugee and Human Rights Clinic

## PROTECTION FROM ABUSE PROGRAM

**S**tudents enrolled in all Clinic courses also participate in the Protection from Abuse Program, where they represent survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Student attorneys attend two days of the Protection from Abuse (PFA) docket calls in Lewiston District Court. The Clinic's work in this program is highly valued by the courts, as PFA proceedings are often contentious and emotional.

With the assistance of counsel, most cases are settled without a trial. In 2022, the Clinic represented survivors in 198 PFA cases. Clinic student attorneys work closely with court advocates from Safe Voices and Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Services, two nonprofit organizations. This collaboration ensures that every client not only receives legal representation in their protection order case, but also the necessary support and resources to escape violence in the long term. Furthermore, every Clinic student receives training on the dynamics of domestic violence and sexual assault as well as the legal remedies available to survivors. The Clinic also participates in a broader partnership, supported in part by a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Violence Against Women, that uses a specific referral protocol to increase the legal and support services provided to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking in Androscoggin, Oxford, and Franklin Counties, with a particular emphasis on outreach to immigrants and survivors of sexual assault.



From left to right, Emily Mott '23, Aisha Simon '23, and Ashley Kuntz '23

“ Having never been in this kind of situation before, it was reassuring to have the student attorney there with me. She listened and prepared me for each possible step. She was a lifesaver! ”

– Client, Protection from Abuse Program

### CLIENT STORY

#### Natalie and Roger

Natalie originally sought a protection from abuse order against her partner, Roger, after a disagreement escalated to the point where Roger punched her, threw her to the ground, strangled her both with his hands and with a cord, and repeatedly threatened to kill her. When that order was set to expire, Natalie moved for an extension.

The original court date was canceled due to inclement weather, and Natalie did not get word of the new court date. As a result, her motion to extend was dismissed when she did not show up. Students participating in the Protection from Abuse Program filed a motion asking that the motion to extend be put back on the court's docket, because Natalie's failure to appear was through no fault of her own. The court granted the motion.

A student attorney represented Natalie at the PFA hearing on the motion to extend. Natalie's testimony about the underlying abuse was compelling. Roger's defense counsel argued that, because there had been no new abuse when the protection order was in place, the order should not be extended. The student attorney argued that case law established that no new abuse was required, and the court agreed. Natalie received another two years of protection.

Natalie described her student attorney as “well prepared, well spoken, and very confident.” She said that she would recommend the Clinic to anyone who needed legal help, because the student attorneys are “very hard working individuals who care.”

## CLINIC STAFFING



**Courtney I. Beer**



**Sarah Branch**



**Sara Cressey**



**Christopher M. Northrop**

Associate Clinical Professor **Courtney I. Beer** was hired in 2020 to direct the Prisoner Assistance Clinic. She also supervises students in the General Practice Clinic. Prior to joining Maine Law faculty, Professor Beer was a litigator at Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Maine's largest civil legal aid organization and the Director of Kids Legal, a statewide education law project within Pine Tree Legal Assistance that focuses on the rights of minors. Professor Beer wrote a manual and developed a training on legal issues related to school discipline as part of an initiative to create a pro bono panel of attorneys and advocates throughout Maine. In 2022, she presented at several trainings with local and national audiences and wrote a chapter of the MCILS basic training manual for juvenile defense attorneys. In 2022, she also joined the Board of Directors of the Maine Child Welfare Services Ombudsman.

Visiting Clinical Professor **Sarah Branch** was hired in 2022 to direct our Youth Justice Clinic. Professor Branch came to the law school after years of working in the criminal justice system and with youth accused of crimes. Professor Branch clerked in trial courts, served as a prosecutor, and represented individuals accused of crimes. In each capacity, she has vigorously advocated for the impartial delivery of equitable justice. For over the past five years Professor Branch regularly participates with the "Languishing Committee" in Cumberland County which helped form

the first mental health court in Maine and addresses individuals with mental illness languishing in the jail. Professor Branch is a member of the Maine Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, where she currently serves as Secretary of the Board. Prior to serving on the board, in 2018, she received that organization's "Unsung Hero Award" which is presented annually to the Maine criminal defense lawyer who best exemplifies the highest level of commitment, passion, and the tireless pursuit of justice in the representation of indigent defendants.

Supervising Attorney and Lecturer **Sara Cressey** joined the Refugee and Human Rights Clinic in May of 2022. After graduating from law school, Sara spent two years clerking, first for Chief Judge Jon D. Levy at the United States District Court for the District of Maine and then for Judge Kermit V. Lipez at the First Circuit Court of Appeals. Prior to joining the Clinic, Sara practiced in the litigation group at Drummond Woodsum, where she represented individuals, schools, and businesses in a wide range of litigation matters. In the Refugee and Human Rights Clinic, Sara supervises the work of student attorneys in the Clinic in their representation of low-income immigrants and in their broader advocacy and outreach work, serves as an advisor to students who are interested in immigration law and human rights, and teaches classes related to the Clinic's work. When needed, she also engages

in direct representation work for clients in removal defense proceedings. Sara is an active member of the Asylum Working Group, the First Circuit Immigration Working Group, and the Northern New England Immigration Practitioners Group.

The Clinic hired Managing Co-Director and Professor **Christopher M. Northrop** in 2006. Professor Northrop, a nationally-recognized advocate for the rights of youth, founded the Juvenile Justice Clinic. This past year he oversaw the design and launch of our Youth Justice Clinic. In 2021, Chris was appointed by Governor Mills to the Maine Juvenile Justice Advisory Group, and serves as co-chair of their Racial and Ethnic Disparity Committee. Chris is also a member of the Maine Justice Action Group's Executive and Legislative committees.

Adjunct Professor **Erica Schair-Cardona** joined the Refugee and Human Rights Clinic as an instructor in 2018 and in 2022 she became Refugee and Human Rights Clinic's Outreach and Advocacy Attorney. She supervises student attorneys in their work with clients as well as on numerous outreach projects. She and student attorneys collaborate with various local nonprofits in their outreach work to help to address the myriad of needs of immigrants in the community. Erica is an active member of the Asylum Working Group and coordinates the Immigrant Youth Working Group, initially convened by the Clinic in 2015. When not

## CLINIC STAFFING



**Erica Schair-Cardona**



**Tina Schneider**



**Toby Jandreau**



**Jill Ward**



**Anna Welch**

working at the Clinic, Erica is involved in statewide philanthropy as a board member of the Hudson Foundation and REVERB, a national nonprofit that has been greening the music industry since 2004.

Adjunct Clinical Professor **Tina Schneider** joined the Clinic faculty in 2006 and oversees the Protection from Abuse Program. When she is not supervising students in the Clinic, Professor Schneider practices law as a nationally recognized federal criminal defense appellate attorney, representing clients in various federal circuit courts. She formerly served on the Court of Appeals for the First Circuit's Criminal Justice Act Panel Admissions Committee.

Nationally recognized juvenile justice reform expert **Jill Ward** continued her role leading the work of the Maine Center for Youth Policy & Law in partnership with the Youth Justice Clinic. She also continues in the role of adjunct professor, teaching a course in Juvenile Law and a practicum on policy change and social justice reform. She continues to lead important reform work through her facilitation of the Center's practitioner work group, participation in the state's Juvenile Justice Advisory Group, and as a member of the leadership team of the Maine Child Welfare Action Network.

Managing Co-Director and Professor **Anna Welch** joined the Clinic's faculty in 2012 to design, launch, and supervise the Refugee and

Human Rights Clinic. Her initial appointments were as Libra Visiting Professor and then Associate Clinical Professor; in 2016, she was promoted to Clinical Professor. Professor Welch co-teaches with Professor Smith the Lawyering Skills for Clinical Practice course required of all Clinic students, and she advises law students who are interested in pursuing careers in the field. Professor Welch is an active member of the Asylum Working Group, the American Immigration Lawyers Association, the Northern New England Immigration Practitioners Group, and the First Circuit Immigration Working Group. Professor Welch, along with Professor Erica Schair-Cardona, coordinates a coalition of advocates and providers in Maine (the Immigrant Youth Working Group) that meets to address the needs of Maine's immigrant youth. Professor Welch speaks frequently at statewide and national conferences about immigration.

Visiting Professor **Toby Jandreau** joined the Clinic team when he was brought on to help set up the Rural Practice Clinic on the campus of the University of Maine at Fort Kent in June 2022, before the launch of the Clinic's first semester in January 2023, when he became the supervising professor for students enrolled in the Rural Practice Clinic. Jandreau, a Maine Law alumnus and Fort Kent native, brings over a decade of experience in criminal, civil, family, and estate planning to the Rural Practice Clinic. He hopes the Rural Practice Clinic will begin

to address the immediate need for lawyers in northern Maine while also introducing new lawyers to the benefits of working within rural communities throughout the state.

The Clinic has a committed, hardworking, and indispensable staff. **Karen Murphy** serves as our Finance and Client Technology Manager.

**Jessica Lovitz** served as our Clinic Coordinator and played a key role in our client intake process and Prisoner Assistance Clinic. **Nancy Peterlin** continues her role as Administrative Assistant to the Refugee and Human Rights Clinic. **Jacqueline Merrill** was hired in late 2022 and provides marketing, public relations, and other valuable support to several Clinic programs. **Sharon Picard** was hired in late 2022 to assist the opening and provide support to the Rural Practice Clinic in Fort Kent. Several students (both work-study employees and volunteers) also serve as valuable members of the team. Our staff and volunteers are responsible for another important component of the Clinic's public service mission, which is to assist the more than a thousand callers seeking legal help from the Clinic each year. Due to our limited resources, we are able to help only a small number of these callers, but for the others, our staffers help them identify and connect with other potential resources in the area.

The Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic's mission is two-fold: to train the next generation of lawyers by promoting access to justice while meeting the acute needs of vulnerable communities.

