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LAW

**Clinical
Programs**



Training the next generations of lawyers, promoting access to justice, and meeting the needs of vulnerable communities since 1970.

**ANNUAL
REPORT
2023**



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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.

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTORS



Christopher Northrop
Managing Co-Director



Anna Welch
Managing Co-Director

Dear Friends & Alumni,

Established in 1970, our Clinical Programs are among the oldest in the nation.

Our Clinical Programs broke new ground in 2023. In January, we launched a new Rural Practice Clinic on the University of Maine at Fort Kent's campus situated along the U.S.-Canada border. Over the course of its first year, five student attorneys from Maine Law worked at the Rural Practice Clinic and provided legal assistance to clients in over 80 cases throughout northern Maine.

In Portland, we moved out of our former buildings on Deering Avenue and Exeter Street and into our new location in the bustling Old Port. Now, for the first time in 11 years, all of Maine Law's Portland-based Clinical Programs are operating under one roof, providing us with a collaborative space for case and project work and peer-to-peer learning. The new building has also enabled us to host events and workshops with our partner organizations.

Student attorneys traveled to Mexico City with Professor Welch in October, launching the Refugee and Human Rights Center's new cross-clinic collaboration with Ibero-American University School of Law in Mexico City. Through this initiative, student attorneys have the opportunity to work with Ibero law students to provide legal counsel to individuals and families seeking asylum in Mexico and the United States.

Among Maine Law students, our Clinical Programs are in high demand. In 2023, we trained 49 student attorneys and provided free representation to low-income clients in over 511 cases and assisted over 647 more individuals through advocacy and outreach work. Through the expansion of our Clinical Programs in 2023, we are proud to share that our student attorneys are now advancing access to justice to even more vulnerable communities.

We are able to grow and maintain our work thanks to the support and generosity of charitable foundations and private donors. With nearly 55 percent of our funding coming from outside of the University of Maine System, we are so grateful to everyone who has contributed to making our work possible.

Sincerely,

Christopher Northrop
Managing Co-Director of
Maine Law's Clinical Programs

Anna Welch
Managing Co-Director of Maine Law's
Clinical Programs and Director of the
Refugee and Human Rights Center

By the Numbers

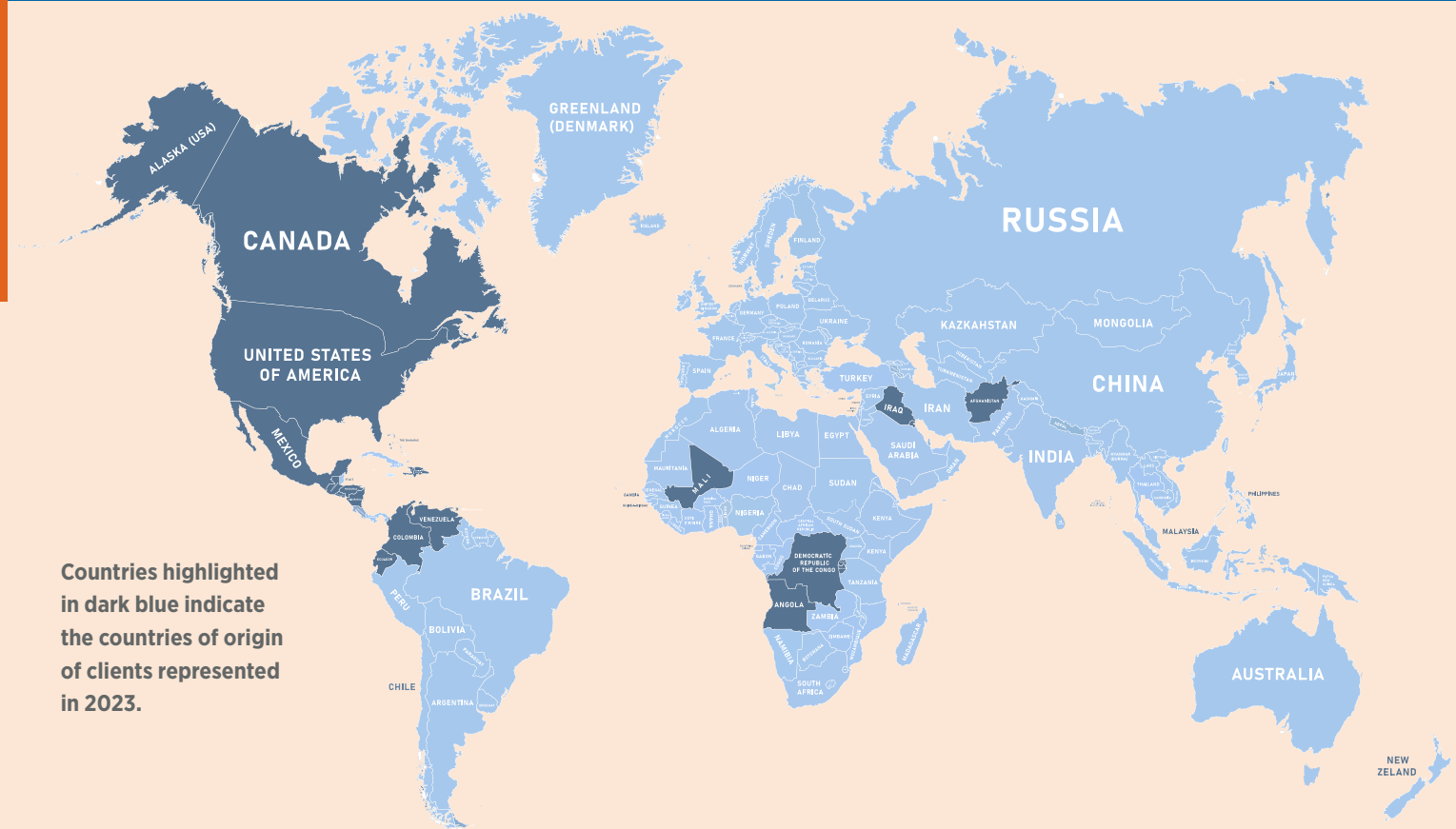
■ Our Clinical Programs represented over **448 clients in 511 cases** and assisted **over 647 additional individuals** through our community outreaches in 2023.

■ **Forty-nine students** at Maine Law enrolled in Clinic courses in 2023.

■ Through the Summer Intern Program, the Clinic hired **12 full-time student interns**, and **three part-time fellows** at the Center for Youth Policy & Law.

■ Clinic clients came from at least **18 countries** of origin, including the **United States, Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Canada, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Iraq, Mexico, Mali, Nicaragua, Rwanda, and Venezuela.** The Clinic serves a significant number of clients with Limited English Proficiency.

2023: YEAR IN REVIEW



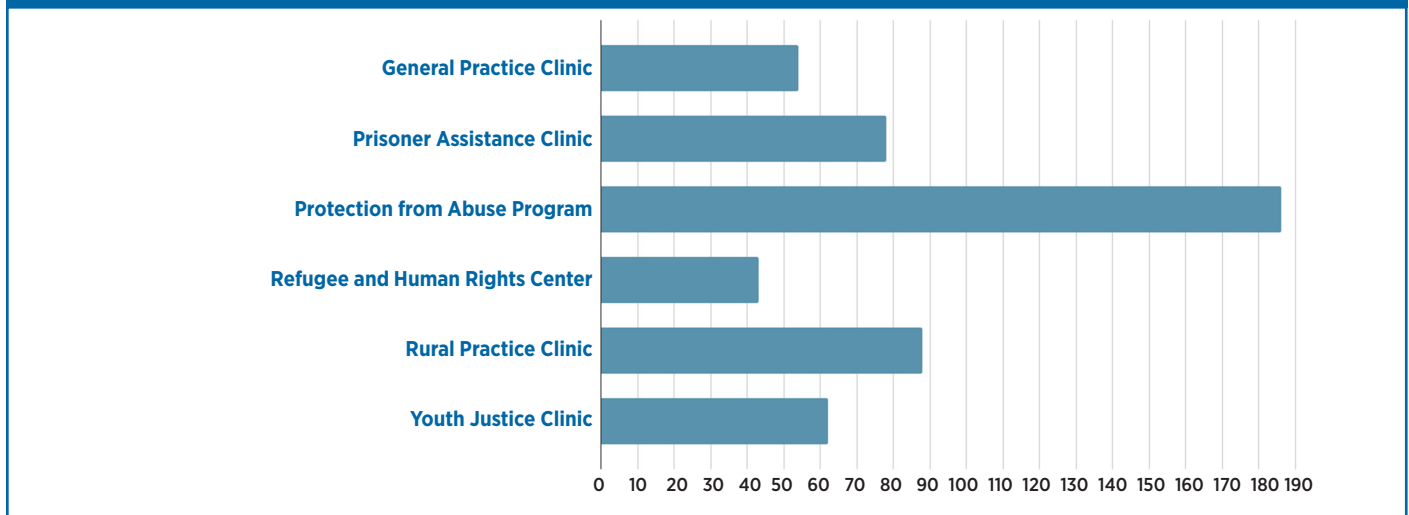
Countries highlighted in dark blue indicate the countries of origin of clients represented in 2023.

Former student attorneys from the Class of 2023 stand for a photo with Clinical faculty members on the day of their graduation from Maine Law.



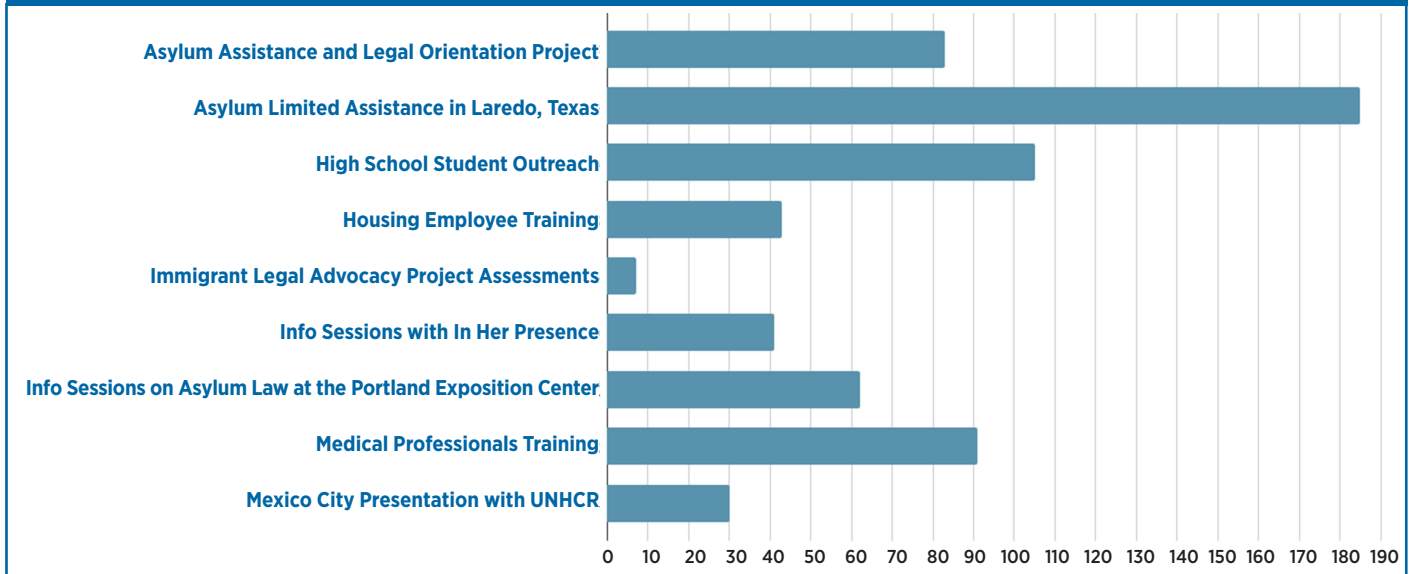
By the Numbers

Number of Active Cases in 2023



Legal services were provided to clients in 511 cases in 2023 throughout our Clinical Programs. The table above indicates the total number of active cases in 2023 by program.

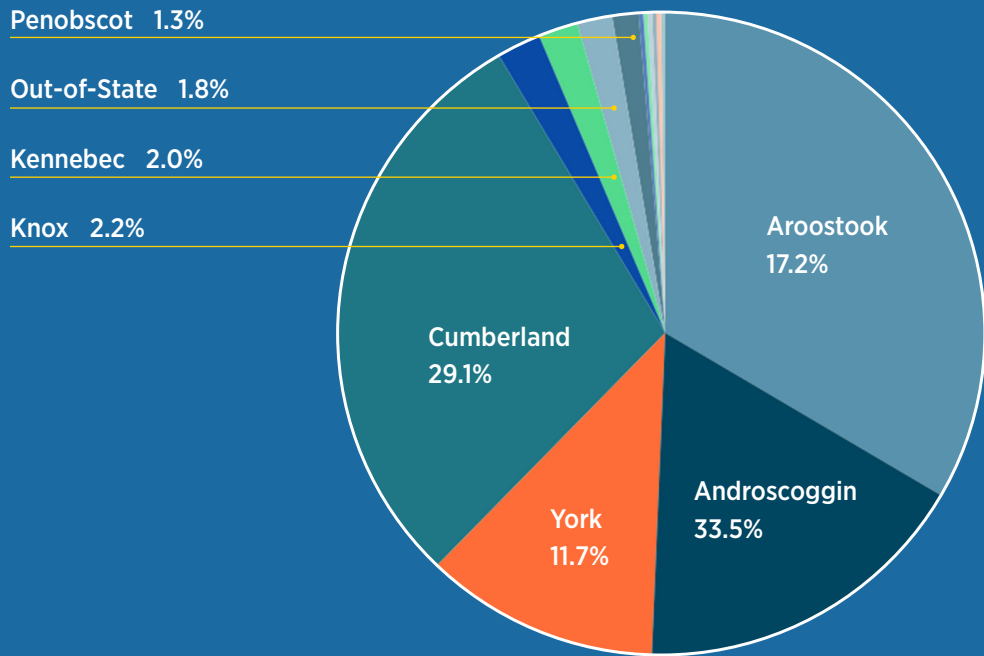
People Reached through Outreach Efforts in 2023



Trainings, brief legal assistance, and educational resources were provided to over 647 individuals through the Refugee and Human Rights Center's outreach work in 2023. The table above indicates the total number of people served through various outreach programs.

**2023: YEAR
IN REVIEW/
CONTINUED**

Geographic Range of Maine Clients



Student attorneys represented clients from throughout Maine in 2023. The above chart shows the breakdown of our clients' county of residence by percentage.

Funding

Approximately 55 percent of the funding for the Clinical Programs came from sources external to Maine Law in 2023. We received funding from 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, the Muskie Fund for Legal Services, Vera Institute of Justice, Dwight D. Opperman Foundation, and the Glickman Family.

- **Maine Civil Legal Services Fund**
- **Maine Justice Foundation**
- **Bank of America Settlement Fund**
- **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**
- **Vera Institute of Justice**
- **Dwight D. Opperman Foundation**
- **Albert B. Glickman Family Foundation**

GENERAL PRACTICE CLINIC

Directed by Professor Chris Northrop, the General Practice Clinic is a full-representation litigation clinic that serves clients facing a wide range of legal concerns, including family law, adult criminal matters, Special Immigrant Juvenile predicate orders, landlord and tenant issues, administrative appeals, adult guardianship, protection from harassment, real estate disputes, name changes, wills and trusts, and power of attorney.

Student attorneys enrolled in the General Practice Clinic frequently have opportunities to work on cases that intersect with other clinical programs, including the Youth Justice Clinic, the Refugee and Human Rights Center, the Prisoner Assistance Clinic, and the Protection from Abuse Program. In particular, representing young clients in cases concerning

Special Immigrant Juvenile predicate orders is one of the General Practice Clinic's main pillars, with student attorneys representing 15 clients with these cases in 2023. The Clinic, in close partnership with the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP) and other advocates, created the legislation that allows certain immigrant youth between the ages of 18 and 21 to obtain legal residency. Continuing to work with ILAP, the Clinic has conducted trainings with the Maine Commission on Domestic and Sexual Abuse, and in December, held a training for Maine's court-appointed interpreter roster.

In 2023, the General Practice Clinic enrolled a total of 24 students, including 6 full-time student attorneys during the summer. In total, the Clinic served clients in 54 cases throughout the year.



Fall semester student attorneys at the swearing-in ceremony at the Portland District Court to practice law under the supervision of the Clinical Programs' faculty members.

CLIENT STORY

When Alex was first represented by a student attorney, he was an unaccompanied teenager who had endured years of abuse in his father's home. Alex was born into the foster care system, and much of his childhood was dominated by his parents' custody dispute and by physical and emotional abuse. As Alex grew older, his father's abuse transitioned to verbal and emotional abuse, manipulation, and neglect. The abuse intensified after Alex came out to a guidance counselor who made a report to the Department of Health and Human Services about his father's mental and emotional abuse. The arguments and abuse that followed led Alex to flee his father's home.

To help Alex achieve safety, security, and autonomy after experiencing homelessness and years of abuse, Alex's student attorney represented his interests numerous times in court, including a dismissal of a Protection from Abuse complaint filed by his father, advocating on his behalf through a guardianship order concerning his friend's mother, and, eventually, through an emancipation petition.

In 2023, the student attorney representing Alex, who was now an emancipated minor, petitioned the probate court to allow Alex to change his name so that his outward identity is congruent with his gender identity. This was an important step for both his independence and for his mental health. Alex's name change was granted in May 2023.

Alex's success with regard to his legal objectives is due in part to his relationship with his student attorney. Alex worked with one student attorney for all of his cases. The student attorney's familiarity with his story and the rapport they developed enabled the Clinic to represent Alex's interests expeditiously and effectively.



General Practice Clinic student attorneys gather on the last day of the spring semester. Back row, from left to right: Lyndsey Davolio '24, Allison Bernier '23, Kendi Dykema '24, Tori Collins '24, Ashley Kuntz '23, and Damian Ramsdell '23. Front row, from left to right: Haley Brazier '24, Jessie Payson '24, and Cecilia Shields-Auble '23.

“I could not imagine doing this on my own. Every student attorney and supervisor was amazing, caring, and the rock I needed at that time. This is an amazing program that helps people in need, from filing PFAs to divorce, as well as all the emotional support needed to get through a difficult and scary situation. Grateful beyond words.”

– Client, General Practice Clinic

REFUGEE AND HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER

Through the extraordinary commitment and skills of Professor Anna Welch, Maine Law launched the Refugee and Human Rights Clinic, now known as the Refugee and Human Rights Center (RHRC), in 2012. Since then, over a hundred Maine Law students have had the opportunity to learn how to best serve the legal needs of immigrant clients seeking political asylum and similar protections under federal law. The program enrolls approximately 7-9 students per semester, and, in collaboration with a number of community partners including the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP) and the ACLUs of Maine and New Hampshire, RHRC students have the opportunity to provide direct representation to clients and conduct numerous outreach events and projects. Through a number of outreach and teach-in events, the RHRC dramatically increased its impact by providing over 647 individuals with critical information and assistance concerning the asylum process.

On top of all that, student attorneys achieved major victories for some of the RHRC's long-term clients in 2023. For example, immigration judges at the Boston Immigration Court granted asylum to three asylum clients, all of whom fled persecution in their home countries well over five years ago. Student attorneys worked tirelessly on each case to ensure that the asylum claims were supported by robust evidence, ranging from personal documentation to expert witness testimony and character witness statements, and that their clients were prepared to tell their stories in court. Many happy tears were shed by all student teams as the clients celebrated the end of a years-long journey and their newfound sense of safety and security in the United States.



Sahra Hassan '24 (left) and Haley Brazier '24 (right) were the first student attorneys to participate in a cross-clinic collaboration with Ibero-American University School of Law in Mexico City.

“Not only is it important that we work as lawyers to get accurate information into asylum seekers' hands even before they make the dangerous journey to the U.S., but it's also critical for aspirational attorneys like me to understand the journeys my clients go through, at least to the best of my ability. I have a much better understanding of that process now.”

– RHRC student attorney Sahra Hassan '24

With the passage of time, our asylum clients are now becoming U.S. citizens. In April 2023, a client that RHRC has represented since 2015 finally completed her immigration journey and was naturalized to become a U.S. citizen. The client from eastern Africa first came to the United States as a late teenager after facing persecution because of her LGBTQ+ identity. Her case was one of the first asylum cases that the RHRC took on, and over several years, student attorneys worked hundreds of hours to help her develop a strong asylum case before asylum officers within U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Now settled into life in the United States, she is conducting graduate work with the hope of one day joining the medical profession.

Since 2017, dozens of RHRC student attorneys have traveled to the U.S.-Mexico border to volunteer with the Laredo Project assisting asylum seekers at the border. This year, multiple students, Professor Anna Welch, and Professor Erica Schair-Cardona traveled to Laredo, Texas and assisted well over 100 asylum seekers at the southern border.

Building off their work on the U.S.-Mexico border, in the fall of 2023, the RHRC began an international cross-clinic collaboration with Ibero-American University School of Law (IBERO) and Washington and Lee (W&L) to assist asylum seekers in Mexico en route to the U.S. border. This pilot project entailed RHRC student attorneys Sahra Hassan '24 and Haley Brazier '24 traveling to Mexico City in October and collaborating with IBERO and W&L law students to compile educational materials to distribute to refugees at shelters in Mexico. The visit to Mexico City was the first in a series of trips RHRC hopes to make. With the generous support of private donations, the RHRC will send two more

students to Mexico City in spring 2024.

In addition to the RHRC's work in Mexico City and on the U.S.-Mexico border, students from the RHRC continue to assist immigrants living in Maine by collaborating with organizational partners to conduct outreach and educational training sessions. Students presented to over 200 asylum seekers and people who work with asylum seekers in large and small-group settings. Over the summer, students held presentations on asylum law and procedures to individuals living at the Portland Exposition Building, known as the "Expo" which has been used by the city to shelter immigrants and refugees who have recently arrived in Maine.

In addition, student attorneys presented to professionals in organizations that work directly with asylum seekers through a "train the trainer" model. As part of this outreach work, RHRC formed a unique collaboration with Tufts Medical School and physicians at Maine Medical Center with the goal of increasing the numbers of medical professionals who are trained to assist asylum seekers.

In June, ILAP, Catholic Charities of Maine, and the RHRC launched a new monthly pro se asylum assistance workshop series to help pro se asylum applicants properly prepare and file their asylum applications in consultation with RHRC student attorneys and immigration attorneys. This project is especially important in Maine where the number of asylum seekers seeking refuge over the last several years has outpaced our organizations' ability to provide full legal representation to those who need it. To date, this project has allowed our organizations to assist dozens of individuals get on a solid path to seeking asylum and securing work permits.

“My immigration journey ended yesterday. I had my [US citizenship] interview and was sworn in right after. I am so overjoyed. Thank you so much for supporting me 10 years ago. You and the clinic played an immense role.”

– RHRC client



RHRC student attorneys Kendi Dykema '24 (left) and Rachel Bruns '24 (right) moments after their client was granted asylum in October 2023.

RURAL PRACTICE CLINIC

In April 2022, after months of hard work from a number of stakeholders, Maine Law's effort to open a legal aid clinic in Fort Kent, Maine found funding with the help of Senate President Troy Jackson and Attorney General Aaron Frey. In January 2023, the Rural Practice Clinic (RPRC) opened its doors to student attorneys and clients.

For the first time in the history of Maine Law's Clinical Programs, students had the opportunity to work with clients from all over Aroostook County.

Far northern Maine, like most rural areas of the state, suffers from a severe shortage of legal aid resources and attorneys. The RPC was created for two reasons: to meet some of the immediate needs of Maine's rural communities and to train more future attorneys in Maine to practice rural law. The RPC aims to help meet the needs of vulnerable communities in rural Maine today while also creating a generation of future attorneys experienced in practicing rural law.

Working in Fort Kent and throughout Aroostook County exposes RPC students to a wide variety of legal proceedings and many aspects of practicing rural law. In its first year, five student attorneys at the RPC made significant progress meeting the need for legal aid in the area, representing clients in a total of 88 cases.

“I worked with a client who was getting a divorce. Her husband was treating her poorly, including acting abusive towards her. If the Rural Practice Clinic had not helped her, she likely would not have been able to afford a lawyer and would not have the security she does now or the opportunity to move forward in her life.”

– Christian Jones '24

The student attorneys at the RPC achieved several life-changing victories for their clients this year. Students represented a client in a fully contested hearing on a difficult parental rights and responsibilities complaint and ended up attaining a very favorable court decision for their client. They also participated in a contested Bureau of Motor

Vehicles OUI suspension hearing in which false testimony of a police officer was exposed, resulting in a reversal of the client's license suspension. Student attorneys achieved resolutions of three criminal cases, including dismissals and deferred dispositions for the clients. They also received a favorable resolution for a client through a mediation on a difficult de facto parentage case.

In summer 2023, retired judge David Soucy became the supervising professor of the Rural Practice Clinic, and shortly after spending his final semester of law school as a Rural Practice Clinic student attorney, Ryan Fowler '23 became the Clinic's new teaching fellow.

As the Rural Practice Clinic begins its second year, faculty and student attorneys will continue their hard work representing Aroostook County residents in criminal and civil proceedings, and they also plan to continue other types of rural practice general practice cases, such as estate planning and debt collection.



LEFT: The official ribbon cutting of the Rural Practice Clinic was held in April 2023.

BELOW: Emma Pooler '23, one of the first student attorneys to work at the Rural Practice Clinic in spring 2023, speaks at the Clinic's ribbon-cutting ceremony.

STUDENT STORY: RPC Alum Emma Pooler '23

The Rural Practice Clinic has given me the tools and the confidence to hit the ground running out of law school. I have been able to work in a close knit and collaborative environment that has allowed me to learn and grow as a young legal professional. The Rural Practice Clinic has given me the confidence to practice law, which I had not gained throughout my time in Portland. I have been able to develop a relationship with the court officers, judges, clerks, and other attorneys that has made me feel accepted and welcomed into Aroostook County's legal community.

Growing up in Fort Kent, I already knew that the Saint John Valley was a wonderful place to live. The community is warm, generous, and extremely welcoming to young people moving to the area or coming back home to northern Maine. The work life balance that I have experienced this semester was something that I never thought I could have in law school. I have been able to balance my caseload incredibly well while still enjoying all that Fort Kent has to offer.

Giving back to the community that I love and cherish so deeply has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life and I know that if other members of the Maine Law community have the opportunity to practice as a student attorney here, they will understand that Fort Kent is one of Maine's best kept secrets. There is opportunity for young lawyers to have a fulfilling life and a rewarding career in Aroostook County and I am excited to know that other Maine Law students will have the chance to experience it.



PRISONER ASSISTANCE CLINIC

Since it was launched in 2003, the Prisoner Assistance Clinic has provided a unique and essential service to people who are incarcerated in Maine: access to civil legal aid. While most of the state's other legal aid providers are limited in their ability to work within Maine's prisons and jails, student attorneys enrolled in Maine Law's Prisoner Assistance Clinic are able to meet a significant percentage of that need by providing people who are incarcerated with limited legal assistance and counsel.

While serving time, individuals frequently end up needing legal help concerning their family, consumer, and other civil legal matters, some of which arise from the circumstances of their incarceration. When student attorneys work with clients who are incarcerated, they are not only helping those particular individuals but their work also has positive impacts on their clients' family members and communities at home.

Directed by Professor Courtney Beer, up to five students enroll in the Prisoner Assistance Clinic each semester. During the summer term, any student working at the Clinic has the opportunity to work with clients at Maine Correctional Center. In 2023, 14 student attorneys had the opportunity to work within the Prisoner Assistance Clinic, providing 77 incarcerated clients with legal information, advice, counsel, and, in some cases, full representation.

Student attorneys conduct in-person meetings with their clients at Maine Correctional Center and the Southern Maine Women's Reentry Center in Windham. The Clinic also provides remote assistance to individuals incarcerated at other prisons and those serving long-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.

In 2023, 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 housing disputes, trusts and wills, guardianship, probate, contract claims, powers of attorney, tax issues, small claims, bankruptcy, and tort claims.

CLIENT STORY

Through her work in the Prisoner Assistance Clinic, a student attorney became aware that a recent statutory change was not being implemented in county jails to modify the amount of good time available to individuals incarcerated prior to conviction.

In 2023, the student attorney represented several clients disputing their time served calculation. One of those clients, Sam, was in his late twenties when he reached out to the Prisoner Assistance Clinic in August of 2022. He had been arrested in October of 2021 for crimes that were alleged to have occurred after October 1, 2021. He was detained for over 270 pending resolution of his case. During this time, Sam was a model resident of the jail, achieving status as a "trustee worker" while incarcerated and receiving no behavioral write-ups.

Upon accepting a plea agreement, Sam received



concurrent sentences that would have him serving two years in prison, followed by three years of probation. Sam was entitled to have his pre-conviction detention time deducted from his sentence in what is called a “day-for-day deduction.” Such a deduction was appropriately awarded for the time he was detained prior to his conviction. Sam was also entitled to receive a deduction from his sentence of any “good time” earned during his pre-conviction detention. Since Sam’s alleged crimes occurred on or after October 1, 2021, his good time should have been computed pursuant to the new statutory subsection. Had this been done, he would have been eligible for four days of good time a month. The student attorney discovered that the jail administrators, by using the outdated statutory subsection to compute his good time awards, had unintentionally cut his allowable good time in half.

A student attorney with the Prisoner Assistance Clinic took on Sam’s case and reached out to the jail

administrators, notifying them of the update to the statute and the error in Sam’s good time awards. The jail administration promptly responded with updated documentation, correcting the error in the good time and awarding him 37 days of good time. The student attorney then contacted the prison to notify the officials there of the correction. The prison officials confirmed the authenticity of the new documentation with the county jail administrator and corrected Sam’s sentence.

With persistence and the help of the Clinic, Sam was able to secure a corrected release date. This allowed him to return home to his son 19 days earlier than he would have been able to without the Clinic’s advocacy. He has since been released.

Sam was enthusiastic about the Clinic and directed others at the correctional facility to reach out to the Clinic for assistance. Sam’s cellmate ultimately became a Clinic client.

Student attorneys Rachel Bruns ‘24, Sahra Hassan ‘24, and Devin Forbush ‘24 during a trip to Maine Correctional Center to meet with their clients through the Prisoner Assistance Clinic.

PROTECTION FROM ABUSE PROGRAM

Students enrolled in all Clinical Programs participate in the Protection from Abuse (PFA) program, where they represent survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking who are seeking protection orders. Mentored and supervised by program director Professor Tina Schneider, student attorneys each spend a minimum of two days each semester covering PFA docket calls at the Lewiston District Court. The Clinic's work in this program is highly valued by the court and the parties, as PFA proceedings are often contentious and emotional. The Clinic has been doing this work in Lewiston District Court for nearly 25 years.

With the assistance of student attorneys, most cases result in agreed-upon protection orders, without the need for a trial. However, when no agreement can be reached, student attorneys represent their clients at trial, which takes place that same day. Clinic students work closely with advocates from Safe Voices and Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Services (SAPRS), two organizations that provide emergency and support services to survivors. This collaboration ensures that every client not only receives legal representation in their PFA case, but also the necessary emotional support and resources to escape violence in the long term. Every Clinic student receives training on the dynamics of domestic violence and sexual assault as well as the legal remedies available to survivors.

In 2023, the PFA Program spent 44 full days at the Lewiston District Court, representing survivors in 186 cases. Current and former student attorneys frequently express that the PFA Program was invaluable in their training as attorneys, providing them with critical experience working in a courtroom, conducting with trauma-informed lawyering, and negotiating with opposing counsel.



From left to right, student attorneys Jenn Thompson '24, Devin Forbush '24, and Professor Tina Schneider, director of the Protection from Abuse program, gather outside of the Lewiston District Court.

CLIENT STORY

Student attorneys first met Asha in Lewiston at her final Protection from Abuse hearing in 2021. Asha had been suffering abuse at the hands of her husband for a number of years. He was a U.S. citizen and Asha was not. He controlled Asha through threats, violence, denying her access to financial resources, holding her immigration documents, and hiding their son's passport. Through the Protection from Abuse Program, student attorneys helped Asha navigate court that day, but that was just the beginning of their work with her. Over the course of the next two years, student attorneys helped Asha work through numerous violations of the protection order and eventually represented her in an incredibly contentious divorce. Finally, after a very draining and difficult trial, the court granted Asha everything she asked for in the divorce action - sole parental rights and responsibilities for her son, child support, possession and control of her immigration documents, and her son's passport. Asha, with ongoing support from her student attorneys, testified with great courage. The court found her very credible and her now ex-husband abusive and unreliable.

“As a student attorney, I represented a client in the Protection from Abuse Program from start to finish. Although normally cases are resolved on PFA day, I was able to stay on the case when it was continued. I had more time to focus on my client's goals. **As a mother myself, I understood the importance to my client of retaining custody of her daughter.** I brought toys and arts supplies to our meetings and into court. This entertained my client's child during preparation and presentation of the case, and eased my client's anxiety. I was able to hone my trial advocacy skills through the Clinic's guidance. **As a result of the Clinic experience, I feel more confident in my ability to represent future clients in the courtroom.**”

- Carrie Norton '24

“[My student attorney] made me feel at ease, talked me through the process, and was able to answer all my questions. They were helpful, personable, and knowledgeable. They helped me feel safe and get through the process with support.”

- PFA client



The PFA Program frequently represents survivors with young children. In fall 2023, student attorney Carrie Norton '24 brought toys to the courthouse to keep her PFA client's young child active during a long day in court.

YOUTH JUSTICE CLINIC

The Youth Justice Clinic, formerly named the Juvenile Justice Clinic, was first launched in 2006 and provides full representation to at-risk children, teens, and emerging adults. Directed by Professor Sarah Branch, student attorneys in the Clinic seek justice for their clients facing charges and other legal challenges, often related to education and poverty law.

While representing their youth clients, student attorneys develop valuable experience working with justice-involved youth and learn best practices for conducting trauma-informed lawyering. They have the opportunity to develop skills involving ethics, investigations, pre-trial practice, negotiations, document drafting, and trials. In collaboration with the Center for Youth Policy & Law, student attorneys also have the opportunity to advocate for systemic change in areas that impact the juvenile justice system.

Youth Justice student attorneys represented clients in 62 cases in 2023. Of those, 30 clients were below the age of 18, and 6 were below the age of 14. Student attorneys achieved several resounding victories for their clients facing charges, securing many dismissals and facilitating outcomes which ensured children's cases were not brought to court.

In addition to its casework, the Youth Justice Clinic also works to inspire more attorneys and future attorneys to represent youth clients. As part of this effort, Professor Branch worked with the Students for the Sixth Amendment, a group of law students seeking to promote access to justice, and the Department of Justice to host an evening networking event and panel discussion on answering the call of criminal defense. The event was held at Maine Law in October, and a number of local practitioners from both sides of the justice

system were in attendance. Another student organization, the Maine Law Youth Justice Society, hosted a lunch and panel discussion this year and invited Professor Branch to speak.

Professor Branch was also given the honor of presenting as part of an expert panel on juvenile competency at the Gault Center's Youth Defender Leadership Summit, an annual conference that brings together youth defenders and advocates from every state, DC, and Puerto Rico to share strategies and learn from expert youth defenders. As one of expert youth defenders at the Summit, Professor Branch spoke on a panel with other defense attorneys, an appellate expert, and a forensic psychologist.



STUDENT STORY

In spring 2023, a Youth Justice Clinic student attorney had his first in-person hearing for his 11-year-old client facing a “criminal” charge. After months of preparation, the student attorney won his argument before the judge to suspend the proceedings while the client’s competency was determined. While his young client played with toys in the courtroom, the student attorney argued his case effectively, and the arraignment was not held.

Over the next several months, five additional Youth Justice Clinic student attorneys represented the young client. Ultimately, the Youth Justice Clinic achieved a dismissal - a remarkable achievement that prevented a child from going to Long Creek Correctional Center.

LEFT: After achieving a dismissal for their youth client, student attorneys Chris Guay '24 and Trey Cox '24 celebrate with donuts.

RIGHT: Youth Justice Clinic student attorneys (from left to right) J Shinay '24, Brian Tafel '24, and Jenn Thompson '24 stand outside of the Portland District Court moments after they won a dismissal for their client.



CENTER FOR YOUTH POLICY & LAW

Directed by Professor Jill Ward, the Center for Youth Policy & Law offers students the opportunity to participate in new and on-going policy projects concerning system-involved youth and alternatives to incarceration.

Established in 2017, the Center works collaboratively with the Youth Justice Clinic 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. Three fellows who worked at the Center during the summer had the opportunity to research youth justice reform legislation, study the continuum of care for justice-involved youth in Rockland, and develop tools for those working with at-risk youth.

Early in 2023, Professor Jill Ward was appointed to serve as senior policy advisor for the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). In this part-time role, Professor Ward has been providing policy guidance to the OJJDP, including developing new regulations to assist state implementation of the reauthorized federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. For Maine Law students, Professor Ward's appointment to the OJJDP

has provided them with the opportunity to get an inside view of youth policy work at the highest level.

The Center released a joint report in partnership with the University of Southern Maine's Catherine Cutler Institute and the Maine Department of Corrections in March on the statewide Regional Care Teams initiative to help keep youth out of the justice system. In August, the Center released an information brief on the roles and practice standards of youth-serving systems in Maine.

In September, the Center and the Youth Justice Clinic partnered with the Maine Commission for Indigent Legal Services (MCLIS) to host a two-day training for attorneys in Maine on juvenile defense. Experienced juvenile practitioners and experts presented on adolescent brain development, ethics, immigration, and competency. The extensive two-day program was recorded and will be viewed by attorneys who seek to be qualified to represent indigent youth in Maine. Law students in attendance were able to get a first-hand look at what is involved in juvenile defense work, while having an opportunity to learn from and network with practicing attorneys. Professor Jill Ward, Director of the Center for Youth Policy & Law and Professor Sarah Branch, Director of the Youth Justice Clinic, moderated the panels and organized it with the help of Maine Law students Elizabeth Cantey '25, Grace Eddy '25, and Allie Smith '25.



LEFT: During the summer term, (pictured from left to right) Allie Smith '25, Grace Eddy '25, and Gabriel Siwady '25 worked as policy fellows with the Center for Youth Policy & Law.

BELOW: In September, the Center for Youth Policy & Law partnered with MCILS to conduct a two-day training on juvenile defense. Pictured from left to right is the youth justice team that organized the event: Professor Sarah Branch, Grace Eddy '25, Elizabeth Cantey '25, Allie Smith '25, and Professor Jill Ward, the Director of the Center for Youth Policy & Law.

“ I had the opportunity to start working with the Center during the second semester of my first year in law school, and I continued on at the Center through the summer and into the fall. **For me, the work that is being done by student attorneys and policy fellows contextualizes the purpose and the reason why I am here at Maine Law.** Seeing that array of reasons why people, especially young people, come into contact with the justice system, is so interesting to me - **it motivated me to keep going.** Although I came to law school feeling sure that juvenile law was what I wanted to do, you can never be sure until you are doing it. Being able to do the work so early in my law school career allowed me to confirm to myself that that is absolutely what I want to do. ”

- Allie Smith '25



CLINIC STAFF



Courtney I. Beer

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.

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. Professor Branch serves on Cumberland County's "Languishing Committee" which helped form the first mental health dockets in



Sarah Branch

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 the Vice President 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.

Professor **Sara Cressey** joined the Refugee and Human Rights Center 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 Center, Sara supervises the work of student attorneys in the clinic in their representation of low-income



Sara Cressey

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.

Ryan Fowler '23 joined the Rural Practice Clinic in 2023 as Teaching Fellow after spending his final semester at Maine Law working as a student in the Clinic's inaugural semester in Fort Kent. Prior to law school, Ryan served in the Army for six years and the USCG for fourteen years where he worked with multiple nations helping them bolster their maritime response, counter terrorism, and counter smuggling capabilities. Ryan has also served as the Chair of a small Maine town Select Board and participates with various other volunteer organizations.



Ryan Fowler



Jacqueline Merrill

Jacqueline Merrill was hired in 2022 and provides administrative, communications, and marketing support for the Clinical Programs. Her previous roles included legislative aide and communications director in the Maine State Legislature, electoral field director, community organizer, and English language instructor at the University of Khartoum in Sudan and Bard College’s English Summer Language Intensive.

Karen Murphy joined the Clinical Programs in 2006 and serves as the Finance and Client Technology Manager. She first joined Maine Law in 2004 in the Advancement Office before moving to the Clinic. Prior to joining the Law School, she spent 5 years as a Quality Coach for LL Bean, 10 years at The Maine Credit Union League managing the card services division in Maine and Connecticut and 7 years working in a variety of positions for Cport Credit Union (formerly the Government Employees Credit Union). She received her B.S., summa cum laude, in Health Science with a minor in Holistic Health from the University of Southern Maine. She is a Reiki Master and certified in Therapeutic Touch Level I and II.



Karen Murphy

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, and then oversaw the design and launch of the Youth Justice Clinic in 2022. 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.

Tiffani Ortiz joined the team in June 2023 and provides administrative and communications support to the Clinical Programs. She has an immense passion for community building through advocacy and dialogue. Before working at Maine Law, she was the Communications and Engagement Fellow at the ACLU of Maine. Tiffani has a Bachelor of Arts in International Development and Social Change with a Concentration in Peace Studies from Clark University. As an undergraduate, she was awarded the Joe Di Rivera Peace Prize for her commitment to conflict resolution and



Christopher M. Northrop



Tiffani Ortiz

transformation through her studies and community involvement.

Professor **Erica Schair-Cardona** joined the Refugee and Human Rights Center as an instructor in 2018. In 2022, she became Refugee and Human Rights Center’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 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.



Erica Schair-Cardona

CLINIC STAFF/ CONTINUED



Tina Schneider

Professor **Tina Schneider** joined the Clinic faculty in 2006 and oversees the Protection from Abuse Project. 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.

David Soucy became supervising professor at the Rural Practice Clinic in summer 2023. A retired lawyer and judge, he is a native of Fort Kent and practiced law in private general practice in Fort Kent for about half of his 42-year career. He served in the public sector for the other half - as a Workers' Compensation Commissioner in the 1980s, as the Director of the Bureau of Parks and Lands in the Department of Conservation in the mid-2000s, and as a Maine District Court Judge from 2010 to his retirement in 2021. He currently serves on several local and statewide boards and commissions, including the Maine Commission for Indigent Legal Services and the local school board.



David Soucy

Nationally recognized juvenile justice reform expert **Jill Ward** continued her role directing the work of the Maine Center for Youth Policy & Law in partnership with the Youth Justice Clinic. In 2023, she was appointed by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to serve as senior policy advisor on the development of regulations to assist state implementation of the reauthorized federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. She also continues in the role of professor, teaching a course in Juvenile Law and a practicum on policy change and social justice reform. She continues to lead important state-level 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.



Jill Ward



Anna Welch

Managing Co-Director and Professor **Anna Welch** joined the Clinic's faculty in 2012 to design, launch, and supervise the Refugee and Human Rights Center. Her initial appointments were as Libra Visiting Professor and then Associate Professor; in 2016, she was promoted to Professor. Professor Welch co-teaches 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 American Association of Law Schools, 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.



ABOVE: Student attorneys from the fall semester, joined virtually by the team at the Rural Practice Clinic, gather for a photo on their last day of class.



LEFT: Fall semester student attorneys Carrie Norton '24, Trey Cox '24, and Dhivya Singaram '24 gather after spending a day together in the Lewiston District Court with the Protection from Abuse Program.



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COVER PHOTOS: from the top clockwise:

1: Prisoner Assistance Clinic student attorneys Joshua Rozov '23, Ian Paleologopoulos '23, and Nealy Fleming '23 standing outside of Maine Correctional Center in Windham.

2: Fall 2023 student attorneys Eman Haj Alkhdaire '24 (left) and Leah Wihetlin '24 (right) outside of the Biddeford District Court.

3: Portland-based student attorneys from the 2023 summer term stand in front of the Maine Law's new home in the Maine Center in the Old Port. Front row, from left to right: Jessie Payson '24, Jenn Thompson '24, Rachel Bruns '24, Chris Guay '24. Back row, from left to right: Haley Brazier '24, Sahra Hassan '24, Kendi Dykema '24, and Devin Forbush '24.

4: The summer team at the Rural Practice Clinic takes a break to canoe the Allagash. From left to right: student attorney Lyndsey Davolio '24, Professor Dave Soucy, and student attorney Christian Jones '24.

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