

SUPPORTING ADVOCACY

CLAE's Affirmative Litigation training, offered through a combination of web-based and in-person learning activities, provides a comprehensive introduction to the process of prosecuting a complex affirmative case in federal or state court, with sessions on discovery, complaint drafting, motion practice and emergency relief. In 2008, CLAE delivered this training three times, to over 90 legal aid attorneys from 11 states.

Since the establishment of the modern legal services movement in the 1960s, legal services lawyers have successfully preserved and expanded the rights of people who are poor through creative and aggressive advocacy in both state and federal courts. These successes were in part inspired and supported by a comprehensive network of state and national support centers that made it possible for young, relatively inexperienced advocates to acquire the skills, knowledge and, above all else, self-confidence necessary to undertake such important and far-reaching advocacy. Elimination of these support centers in the mid-90s left recent generations of legal services lawyers without this critical resource.

Recognizing the need to equip their advocates with the skills and confidence to again undertake such broad and strategic advocacy, Legal Services of Eastern Missouri (LSEM) and Illinois' Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation joined forces to sponsor CLAE's *Affirmative Litigation* for their programs' attorneys and to secure private law firm support to fund it. This partnership not only made the training possible, it also established a long-term cross-program network for the 32 attorneys who participated. "The camaraderie that developed both between and within the two programs was wonderful to see," says LSEM's Human Resources Director Elizabeth Roper.



"We were absolutely committed to getting more training for our staff so that they could do all types of cases," reports Dan Glazier, LSEM's Executive Director, "and CLAE's training really connected well with the message we wanted to get across to our advocates – that affirmative litigation is important, and it has to be done right." "It was excellent substantive training placed on top of legal services-type practice," concludes LSEM's Litigation Director Ann Lever, "the feedback from our staff was excellent."

"I'm a big believer in a 'big-tent' when it comes to effective advocacy," Glazier continues, "and we clearly saw [working with Land of Lincoln] as a win for the clients of both programs, because it's ultimately the folks we serve who will benefit the most." By pooling resources together, these two programs not only helped their staff augment their skills, but they also made strategic, affirmative advocacy a renewed focus of their work.

Glazier encourages other programs to consider creative collaboration to bring these kinds of courses to their staff, to further advance the cause of equal justice, and to "make this the priority that our clients deserve." At CLAE, we stand ready to deliver.

"I REALLY FEEL AS IF I HAVE GRADUATED TO ANOTHER LEVEL AS A LAWYER. I NOW KNOW THAT I CAN EMPLOY A WHOLE NEW SET OF ADVOCACY TECHNIQUES ON BEHALF OF MY CLIENTS."

—Kim Allen Murray,
Legal Services of Eastern Missouri