
All sessions will be live via Zoom Webinar, recorded for later viewing, and include closed captioning.

Monday, August 31, 11:45 am - 1:00 pm

Session A *(Ethics 0.25)*

From No-code to Full-code: Which Document Automation Platform is Right for You?

Your organization is interested in starting a document assembly program - now what? This session will discuss best practices and factors to consider in launching a new program. Presenters will then give a live demonstration of how to automate the same simple form in four different document assembly platforms (Documate, HotDocs, Odyssey Guide & File, Docassemble). Come learn which tool is the best fit for your organization's needs.

*Presenters: Chanita Chantaplin-McLelland, Practice Area Mgr./Managing Attorney, Texas Legal Services Center
Michael Hofrichter, Support and Implementation Specialist, Legal Server
Dorna Moini, Founder, Documate
Aaron Varner, Staff Attorney, Texas Legal Services Center*

Session B *(Ethics 0.25)*

Guardianship Nuts & Bolts

This presentation will describe the process of representing a guardianship applicant in a guardianship of the person proceeding from assessment of the case including guardianship alternatives to obtaining letters of guardianship and advising the guardian on fiduciary responsibility. The session will address legislative changes in guardianship cases including registrations and training requirements.

*Presenters: Sam Davis, Staff Attorney, Catholic Charities
Charlotte Key, Staff Attorney, Probate Court #2, Hon. Ingrid Warren, Judge Presiding*

Session C

Children's Medicaid and CHIP-Eligibility, Policy, and Challenges to Enrollment

Access to quality healthcare through health insurance is vital to the development of a child. There are an ample amount of children who are eligible for state health programs, but are not enrolled. This presentation is designed to discuss the enrollment process of the Children's Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and how these programs provide children with access to quality health care. It will explain how Texas Health and Human Services (HHSC) determines eligibility, and how the eligibility process differs based on the health program, child's age, and household income level. Existing policy and policy changes have created challenges and roadblocks to enrollment and retention for Medicaid programs. These challenges will be discussed and actions that can be taken to increase the number of children enrolled in these health programs. Throughout the presentation lawyers, paralegals, and attendees will learn the steps they can take alongside community partners to target these children and significantly increase the enrollment rates among them.

*Presenters: Patrick Bresette, Executive Director, Childrens Defense Fund
Elizabeth Green, Staff Attorney, Lone Star Legal Aid
Arlette Tamez, Paralegal, Lone Star Legal Aid*

Monday, August 31, 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Education and Juvenile Justice Task Force Meeting

*2020 PLC - Staying safe, connecting virtually, and learning and creating change **TOGETHER** to serve low-income Texans*

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Tuesday, September 1, 11:45 am - 1:00 pm

Session A

Outreach in the Era of COVID-19

Our outreach model does not work in light of the global pandemic. We cannot present at a senior nutrition site and then do in person intakes after lunch. Although technology is a fantastic resource and tool, not everyone can use Zoom, Skype, and Teams to video chat. We will discuss DRTx's outreach shift including changes and ideas to move forward. Discussion includes: the new outreach model, collaborations with other organizations and religious entities, social media, lack of access to internet/technology, developing new resources, and potential roadblocks.

*Presenters: Kerri Carr, Senior Advocate/Outreach Manager, Disability Rights Texas
Rachel Cohen-Miller, Supervising Attorney, Disability Rights Texas*

Session B *(Ethics 0.50)*

Best Practices in Defending a Guardianship Case

Usually, guardianship cases are uncontested matters in which a family member is seeking to take care of a loved one whose disabilities impair capacity to an extent that the person cannot take care of themselves. In those cases, the court appoints an attorney ad litem to represent the interests of the proposed ward and the attorney ad litem's job may be limited to holding the applicant to the burden of proof. But in some cases, the person who is the subject of the guardianship proceeding has some degree of capacity and does not want to be under guardianship. This presentation will address the best practices of an attorney retained to represent a person who wants to oppose a guardianship including how to assess the capacity of your clients, how to address a dueling ad litem appointment and defend against a motion in limine, and strategies for defending a case at trial. The presentation will address the ethical rules that govern representing clients with diminished capacity.

*Presenters: Julie Balovich, Economic & Social Justice Group Coordinator| Guardianship Team Manager,
Texas RioGrande Legal Aid
Terry Hammond, Executive Director, Texas Guardianship Association*

Session C

Advocating for Just and Affordable Access to Water Utilities

As part of their Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations set a target that global populations be guaranteed "universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water." In Texas, achieving this goal requires active advocacy on behalf of low-income populations at the Public Utility Commission (PUC). Texas law and regulations require that the State's residents pay only "just and reasonable" rates for water access. Regulations further require that the State's renters at multi-family properties only pay what their landlords are charged by the utility. This panel will discuss the factors that inform the justness and reasonability of water rates, tools for tenants to evaluate the allocation of water costs at their multi-family property, and the avenues available to advocates in ensuring affordable water access for their clients.

*Presenters: Gabriela Garcia, Project Coordinator, BASTA Austin
Amy Johnson, Attorney, Law Office of Amy R. Johnson
Jennifer Richards, Staff Attorney, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid*

All sessions will be live via Zoom Webinar, recorded for later viewing, and include closed captioning.

Wednesday, September 2, 11:45 am - 1:00 pm

Session A

When Disaster Strikes: Workplace Issues and Protections

During disasters low-wage workers are often asked to compromise their safety to benefit their employers, and often fired when they refuse. This session will discuss common workplace issues that low-wage workers face in disasters, and what legal remedies are available to them. We will present case studies including workers fired for complying with mandatory evacuation orders in advance of a hurricane and workers fired for complying with a government issued stay-at-home order during a pandemic, and engage the audience in discussions about what claims affected workers have and what advocates like us can do for them.

*Presenters: Dave Mauch, Attorney, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid
Colleen Mulholland, Attorney, Equal Justice Center*

Session B *(Ethics 0.50)*

Guardianship Restorations and Modifications: the Judges' Perspective

When an individual loses his or her rights under guardianship, are they gone forever? Texas statutes provides a process for individuals to have their rights restored, but how do they work? This session will look at restoration of rights cases from the perspective of the court. The panelists – two statutory probate court judges – will address questions such as how inquiries regarding restoration of rights are handled by the courts, what evidence the courts consider in evaluating restoration cases, and how the law on restoration impacts the way that the courts approach guardianship cases.

*Presenters: Hon. Brooke Allen, Judge, Tarrant County Probate Court
Julie Balovich, Economic & Social Justice Group Coordinator| Guardianship Team Manager,
Texas RioGrande Legal Aid
Hon. Veronica Vasquez, Judge, Bexar County Probate Court 2*

Session C *(Ethics 0.25)*

The Golden Ticket: Successfully Moving Clients Out of a Mold Infested Environment

The number of housing authority properties with mold is on the rise. This session presents a step-by-step guide to putting together a case to get a client moved from a mold infested property that is negatively impacting the health of residents. We will take a tour of current case law, discuss the need for expert witnesses, and look at successful sample language. Discussion of funding these cases in light of the current economic climate and discuss other likely issues that will arise, as the client is able to move from the environment, including the need for accommodations in the process of finding a place to live and moving.

*Presenters: Rachel Cohen-Miller, Supervising Attorney, Disability Rights Texas
John Hasley, Deputy Director of Litigation, Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas
Wonny Lervisit, Attorney, Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas
Evelyn Mayo, Advocate, Disability Rights Texas*

Wednesday, September 2, 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Family Law Task Force Meeting

All sessions will be live via Zoom Webinar, recorded for later viewing, and include closed captioning.

Thursday, September 3, 11:45 am - 1:00 pm

Session A-C: Keynote address

Reimagining Possible: Centering Immigrants in Collaborative, Holistic Legal Services

In this keynote presentation, Kate will discuss the origins and evolution of the Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative, HILSC, a holistic and broad based collaborative legal services organization that has worked to improve legal and social services accessibility for immigrants. She will discuss ways to make legal services accessible to more immigrants by expanding our thinking beyond the funding restrictions placed on LSCs. You will leave this session with practical ideas about how to move your organization towards a more opportunity-based framework created by working collaboratively. Session will include Q&A.

Presenter: Kate Vickery, Former Executive Director, Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative

Thursday, September 3, 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Immigration Law Task Force Meeting

Friday, September 4, 11:45 am - 1:00 pm

Session A

COOP Planning: Best Practices and Lessons Learned

We all went remote in March. For most of us, a better Continuation of Operations Plan (COOP) would have been ideal. We'll talk about what should go into your organization's COOP planning, what went into our planning pre-Covid-19, and what lessons we've learned in the aftermath of implementing our plans. With presenters from organizations ranging from 8 to 150, we saw different issues and needs as a result.

Presenters: Tomas Aguilar, Living Hope Wheelchair Association

Katy Atkiss, Disaster Resiliency Manager, Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative

Michael Hofrichter, Support and Implementation Specialist, LegalServer

Carlton Whitmore, IT Manager, Disability Rights Texas

Session B (Ethics 1.00)

Representing Clients with Diminished Capacity

The attorney client relationship assumes the capacity of the client. What is an attorney to do when a client presents with evidence of cognitive disability or decline? This session will explore ethical guidelines and practical tools for assessing capacity and representing clients with intellectual and cognitive disabilities, and will identify resources available to the practitioner.

*Presenters: Julie Balovich, Economic & Social Justice Group Coordinator| Guardianship Team Manager,
Texas RioGrande Legal Aid*

Bruce Bower, Deputy Director, Texas Legal Services Center

All sessions will be live via Zoom Webinar, recorded for later viewing, and include closed captioning.

Friday, September 4, 11:45 am - 1:00 pm

Session C

Public Benefits and "Public Charge"

The rapid-fire pace of updates to immigration and public benefits law have left many immigrant clients and practitioners wondering exactly how the benefits a client receives might impact their immigration case. This presentation will provide practitioners with tools to understand USCIS and DOS policy. The presentation will review the updates and changes to USCIS and DOS's interpretation of "public charge," including benefits added to the list of benefits USCIS and DOS consider in a "public charge" evaluation and other facts in a client's case immigration officials consider when evaluating the totality of the client's circumstances. The presentation will also discuss exactly what case and application types are and are not affected by the law, including issues raised by COVID-19.

*Presenters: Caitlin Fish, Staff Attorney, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid
Renee Trevino, Public Benefits Group Coordinator | State & Federal Public Benefits Team Manager,
Texas RioGrande Legal Aid*

Friday, September 4, 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Employment Law Task Force Meeting

Tuesday, September 8, 11:45 am - 1:00 pm

Session A

Legal Issues Arising Out of the COVID-19 Public Health Crisis

A wide array of legal needs have been generated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis resulting from the implementation of extensive protective measures. This session will provide an overview of the legal needs identified by a collaborative of state legal aid providers and the timeline over which issues have, and are expected to, emerge. The session will also address the impact on especially vulnerable populations, and strategies implemented by legal aid advocates.

*Presenters: Sean Jackson, Supervising Attorney, Disability Rights Texas
Shrushti Kothari, Project Manager, Nat'l Disaster Resources and Content Dept., Lone Star Legal Aid
Brittanny Perrigue, Disaster Benefits Team Manager, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid
Maddie Sloan, Director, Disaster Recovery and Fair Housing Project, Texas Appleseed*

All sessions will be live via Zoom Webinar, recorded for later viewing, and include closed captioning.

Tuesday, September 8, 11:45 am - 1:00 pm

Session B
Bringing a Client Back from Guardianship

While guardianships are important tools, we also see guardianships that should have never been approved, or that have outlived their relevance. The Bill of Rights for Wards contemplates both the undoing of a guardianship because a ward has reached the "eventual goal of self-sufficiency" and the right of a ward to retain counsel in challenging a guardianship. What are the legal mechanisms for upholding these rights of wards? What other services might help a client live outside of guardianship? This session will address two techniques for undoing guardianships: statutory bills of review and restorations. Panelists will also discuss the holistic services legal aid staffers can provide to help clients succeed in guardianship alternatives, and their own first-hand experience in bringing clients back from guardianship.

*Presenters: Hannah Cramer, Attorney, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid
Paul Eisenhauer, Mental Health Peer Specialist, Mental Health Program, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid
Hannah Samson, Attorney, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid*

Session C
Property Tax Relief for Low-Income Homeowners in Vulnerable Communities

This session will cover diverse strategies for helping low-income homeowners in Texas remain in their homes in the face of property tax bills they can't afford. We will focus on the unique barriers that their property owners face in accessing homestead exemptions; how these barriers impact seniors, persons with disabilities, and communities of color; and new state legislation (SB 1943) that is supposed to address these barriers but is not being implemented properly in many areas around the state. Participants will be equipped with key actions they can take—from innovative community outreach programs to advocacy with taxing entities—to help vulnerable homeowners gain access to the homestead exemption and save their homes from property tax foreclosure.

*Presenters: Alma Gonzales, Attorney, Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas
Melinda Lopez, Staff Attorney, Lone Star Legal Aid
Lizbeth Parra Davila, Housing Justice Fellow, UT Entrepreneurship & Community Development Clinic
Heather Way, Clinical Professor, The University of Texas School of Law*

Wednesday, September 9, 11:45 am - 1:00 pm

Session A
Obstacles and Opportunities in Long-Term Disaster Recovery

This presentation will lay out strategies for assisting survivors through the lengthy recovery process following disasters as well as discuss impact litigation that may arise. Attendees will also learn how a full and complete recovery is impossible without environmental justice.

*Presenters: Hannah Dyal, Staff Attorney, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid
Ana Laurel, Equal Justice Works Fellow-Disaster Recovery Legal Corps., Texas RioGrande Legal Aid
Chase Porter, Attorney, Lone Star Legal Aid*

All sessions will be live via Zoom Webinar, recorded for later viewing, and include closed captioning.

Wednesday, September 9, 11:45 am - 1:00 pm

Session B

How will the CARES Act Affect my Bankruptcy Practice?

This session will review the CARES Act and the amendments made to the bankruptcy code. We will explore how the ACT affects your client's bankruptcy. We will also look at how bankruptcy can help your client mitigate financial struggles suffered as a result of COVID-19.

*Presenters: Sapna Aiyer, Assistant Directing Attorney – Urban Legal Services, Lone Star Legal Aid
John J. Grieger, Jr., Managing Attorney, Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas
Victor Hunt, Staff Attorney, Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas*

Session C

Learned Helplessness in Eviction Cases

The vast majority of Texas tenants facing eviction are being evicted for nonpayment of rent. Because there are almost no substantive defenses to nonpayment of rent under Texas law, those of us who represent tenants have come to feel that attorney representation in those cases is futile, as the attorney will almost inevitably lose in court and the tenant will almost certainly lose their home. This session will challenge this idea—that the point of attorney representation is to “win”—and identify ways in which we as attorneys can make meaningful differences in tenants' cases even if there is no defense under the law.

*Presenter: Leesa Everitt, Houston Volunteer Lawyers
Eric Kwartler, Public Interest Attorney, South Texas College of Law Houston*

Wednesday, September 9, 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Housing and Consumer Law Task Force Meeting

Thursday, September 10, 11:45 am - 1:00 pm

Session A *(Ethics 1.00)*

The New Normal: How Lessons Learned from Responding to Natural Disasters, the COVID-19 Pandemic, and Other Crises Can Help Us Prepare for the Future

Texas legal aid providers and advocates have gained a wealth of experience in responding to federally declared disasters. That has informed efforts to better prepare our organizations and our communities for future natural disasters. We have also drawn upon that experience to respond to other types of emergencies, including man-made disasters (such as the mass shooting in El Paso and environmental incidents) and the COVID-19 pandemic. This session will compare and contrast the challenges associated with these different types of events; outline the common elements of a rapid-response plan that legal aid organizations can use for future emergencies; outline obligations that government entities have to prepare for varied types of emergencies; and provide insights about what new challenges we may face in the future.

*Presenters: Sapna Aiyer, Assistant Directing Attorney – Urban Legal Services, Lone Star Legal Aid
Stephanie Duke, Attorney, Disability Rights Texas
Tracy Figueroa, Attorney - Disaster Assistance Group Coordinator, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid
Madison Sloan, Director, Disaster Recovery and Fair Housing Project, Texas Appleseed*

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Thursday, September 10, 11:45 am - 1:00 pm

Session B *(Ethics 1.25)*

Ethical Issues faced by Legal Aid Attorneys

The session is offered by Tonya Harlan and Paul Homburg who are part of senior management at the Chief Disciplinary Counsel's Office. They will address common issues legal aid attorneys face including: Conflict of interest issues between a public defender case where the victim comes to legal aid for a protective order; the new advertising rules and if legal aid violates them when they do outreach; confidentiality while using videoconferencing or cloud computing; and amendment to the Rule on competency and learning new technology (e.g. Legal Server, Zoom, FB video).

Moderator: Pablo Almaguer, Attorney, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid

*Presenters: Tonya Harlan, Deputy Counsel for Litigation, Chief Disciplinary Counsel Office, State Bar of Texas
Paul Homburg, Regional Counsel for San Antonio, Chief Disciplinary Counsel Office, SBOT*

Session C

Section 8 Voucher Terminations – Litigation Hurdles under 42 U.S.C. Section 1983

This session will focus on litigating section 8 voucher terminations under 42 U.S.C. 1983, with an emphasis on recent developments and best practices to avoid dismissal and keep the case alive for another day.

Presenter: Fred Fuchs, Attorney/Housing Group Coordinator, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid

Friday, September 11, 11:45 am - 1:00 pm

Session A *(Ethics 0.25)*

The Pandemic is Over (Kind Of): What Every Lawyer Should Know about Client Health as Part of Daily Practice

Legal aid has always sought to improve the well-being of communities through increased access to justice. The same link is evident in the first-line response to COVID-19, as practically every system sought to evolve law and policy to improve health and access to health care. In this session, we will discuss population health terms of art and resources that, even in the absence of a pandemic, every lawyer should know and use in practice, including when population-focused legal assistance counts as a case. We will provide examples of legal advocacy that has a measurable impact on the health of individuals and families. Finally, we will explore how considering client health can affect the attorney-client relationship and quality of representation.

Presenters: Kassandra Gonzalez, Equal Justice Works Fellow, Texas Legal Services Center

Wesley Hartman, Staff Attorney, Texas Legal Services Center

Daphne McGee, Staff Attorney, Texas Legal Services Center

Keegan Warren-Clem, Managing Attorney, Texas Legal Services Center

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Friday, September 11, 11:45 am - 1:00 pm

Session B *(Ethics 0.25)*

Making Mediation Work for Family Violence and Sexual Assault Survivors

The family code allows a survivor to object to mediation on that basis, but courts are still ordering it in many jurisdictions. As advocates for our survivor clients, we need to find a way to turn this potentially traumatizing experience into a tool that will benefit our clients. This session will cover provisions within the family code and others that address mediation as it pertains to survivors. We will also cover practice strategies for using mediation to benefit survivors, drawing on concepts from victim-offender mediation models and other innovative frameworks for dealing with conflict and confrontations.

*Presenters: Brittany Hightower, Staff Attorney, Lone Star Legal Aid
Brandy Howard, Staff Attorney, Lone Star Legal Aid*

Session C

Policy Changes in Representing UACs

Kids in Need of Defense (KIND) is a national non-profit organization dedicated to serving unaccompanied children in the immigration system. KIND staff will be conducting a detailed training on the legal representation of unaccompanied children in removal proceedings who may qualify for immigration relief. Come learn more about the journey these children go through to get to the United States, the process of appearing before Immigration Court removal proceedings and seeking legal relief, how the legal landscape has changed in recent years, the current obstacles these children face in light of recent policy changes, and providing valuable pro bono legal representation to child clients. The training will go over who the children are and why they migrate to the United States. The training will explain immigration removal proceedings, policy updates, and the different reliefs the child client may claim. And the training will discuss the practical and ethical considerations that arise from working with children.

*Presenters: Florence Chamberlin, Staff Attorney, Kids in Need of Defense
Stephanie Galy, Staff Attorney, Kids in Need of Defense
Chloe Walker, Senior Staff Attorney, ABA Children's Immigration Law Academy*

Monday, September 14, 11:45 am - 1:00 pm

Session A

What Every Poverty Law Practitioner Should Know About Bankruptcy

The session is geared to practitioners that do not practice bankruptcy. They will be introduced to what a bankruptcy can and can not do for their clients. When a case should or should not be referred to a bankruptcy attorney. What alternatives should be considered and offered. How bankruptcy can help reinstate utilities or prevent their termination. Return wages or public benefits garnished or seized from a bank account. How a suspended driver's license may be reinstated. How attorneys fees could be awarded. Also, how bankruptcy can stop foreclosures and discharge debts, like benefit over payments. The intent of the session is to expand the skill set of the practitioner to enable them to better spot issues so that they can provide clients a broader range of options to address their concerns.

Presenter: Victor Hunt, Staff Attorney, Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas

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Monday, September 14, 11:45 am - 1:00 pm

Session B

Inform, Educate, and Empower: Using the Legal Clinic Model for Guardianship Alternatives

This session will cover the nuts and bolts of creating a guardianship alternatives legal clinic- The legal clinic model will allow organizations to provide assessment and support in assisting adults with disabilities and their families as well as families of children with disabilities nearing adulthood in primarily low-income communities. We will cover strategies that we have employed to create successful clinics in the past, existing guardianship alternatives that can be implemented in a clinic setting, identifying community partners to work with, engaging target populations through outreach, challenges in working with this population in a clinic setting, identifying and vetting potential participants, managing and communicating expectations, staffing the clinic and day of needs. We will also be looking into challenging stereotypes about this community (individuals with disabilities and developmental challenges) and the laws that require assessment of guardianship alternatives.

Presenters: Leslie Alvarez, Equal Justice Works Fellow, Disability Rights Texas

Gabriel Sanchez, Policy Analyst/Outreach Coordinator/Educator, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid

Session C

COLLECTION QUICKSAND: How to Rescue Your Client from Receivership or Garnishment

This session will explore the QUICK use of receiverships and garnishments in collection cases and provide you with strategies in state and federal court to defeat these creditor weapons and rescue your clients from the SAND.

Presenters: Amy Allen, Staff Attorney, Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas

Paige Hoyt, Supervising Attorney, Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas

Dominic Ribaud, Staff Attorney, Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas

Monday, September 14, 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Public Benefits and Health Law Taskforce Meeting