

# Northwest Justice Project

## Annual Report

### 2014

ACCESS WELL BEING LEGAL AID EQUITY  
FORECLOSURE DIGNITY SECURITY  
PRO BONO BARRIERS INCARCERATED FCAT  
POVERTY ATJ BOARD LOW-INCOME  
EQUAL JUSTICE MEDICAL LEGAL SERVICES  
PROTECTION NAU FARMWORKERS  
VETERANS C.L.E.A.R. RISE ACCESS PARTNERSHIP  
WA SUPREME COURT MOTHERS FPU DOMESTIC  
ADVOCACY HEALTH CARE SENIORS VIOLENCE  
CHALLENGES EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE  
RESERVATIONS PREVENTION CRISIS VOLUNTEERS





# Northwest Justice Project

Dear Supporters of Equal Justice and Alliance Colleagues –

It is my great pleasure to share with you NJP’s 2014 Annual Report, a snapshot of our work to secure justice and promote the long-term well-being of low-income communities across Washington state.

Our 2014 Annual Report highlights the critical role NJP plays in alleviating the worst effects of poverty, providing access to the justice system, and preserving human dignity. Throughout the past year, NJP’s highly dedicated staff creatively and energetically tackled statewide challenges faced by people in poverty. NJP’s work to identify and eliminate barriers to opportunity, address fundamental human needs, including family safety, health care access and economic security, and to ensure our most vulnerable neighbors are cared for, would not be possible without your steadfast individual support and collaboration – thank you.



We are especially grateful to the Washington Supreme Court and Washington State Legislature for their ongoing commitment and support for a robust publicly funded legal aid system. This past year, the Legislature also generously supported NJP’s critical acquisition of modern call center technology for CLEAR, our high demand intake, referral and brief services system, and a program-wide unified communications system. We also extend our thanks to our Congressional delegation for their ongoing support for federal funding, the Washington Office of the Attorney General, and the Legal Foundation of Washington for helping to make NJP’s work possible.

It is a privilege to share with you NJP’s impactful work alongside our Alliance for Equal Justice partners, to overcome barriers to justice for low-income people. I look forward to your continued support for NJP and to working side-by-side with you to further NJP’s vision of *Justice For All Low-Income People In Washington*.

César E. Torres  
Executive Director

## NJP’S YEAR IN NUMBERS

29,936  
PEOPLE DIRECTLY BENEFITTED FROM  
LEGAL SERVICES

13,614  
COMPLETED CASES

13,023  
CHILDREN

16,913  
ADULTS

783  
HOMEOWNERS FACING  
FORECLOSURES

1,604  
VETERANS

2,519  
SENIORS

# NJP's Mission: To secure justice through high quality legal advocacy that promotes the long-term well-being of low-income individuals, families, and communities.

## NJP Operates As A Highly Coordinated Statewide Law Firm, Including Specialized Units And Projects To Provide Comprehensive Legal Assistance And Representation To People In Poverty Across Washington.

**CLEAR:** The primary gateway for low-income people seeking legal help. NJP's toll-free hotline provides centralized client screening, legal advice, limited assistance, representation and Alliance-wide referrals, with specialized services for Seniors, Domestic Violence survivors, and video-supported American Sign Language services.

**FIELD OFFICES:** NJP's 13 regional and 4 satellite offices provide extended legal representation in the most pressing and difficult cases affecting basic human needs of low-income families and individuals. NJP offices also directly support local volunteer attorney services and are deeply engaged in outreach and legal education efforts to support local communities and the courts.

**FARMWORKER AND NATIVE AMERICAN UNITS:** Supported by dedicated federal funding, the FWU and NAU provide targeted services to historically marginalized communities facing particular legal challenges and unique barriers to accessing the justice system.

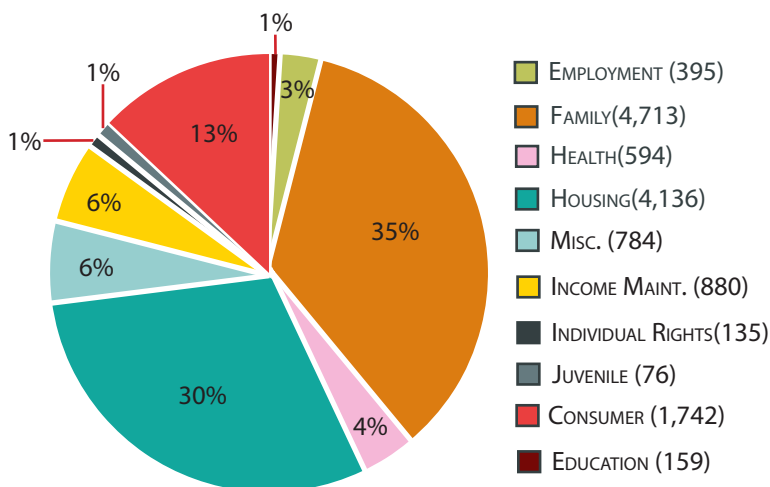
**FORECLOSURE PREVENTION UNIT & FORECLOSURE CONSEQUENCES ADVOCACY TEAM:** FPU and FCAT attorneys are the state's driving force in homeowner protection against foreclosure, avoiding displacement, preserving equity, and, when needed, in assisting homeowners reclaim their lives and possessions in the aftermath of the ongoing foreclosure crisis.

**MEDICAL LEGAL PARTNERSHIP:** This multi-year innovative continuum of care service delivery partnership with Children's Hospital, Harborview, UW Medical School, SeaMar and Valley Cities joins NJP attorneys with health care professionals to enhance outcomes through access to legal assistance.

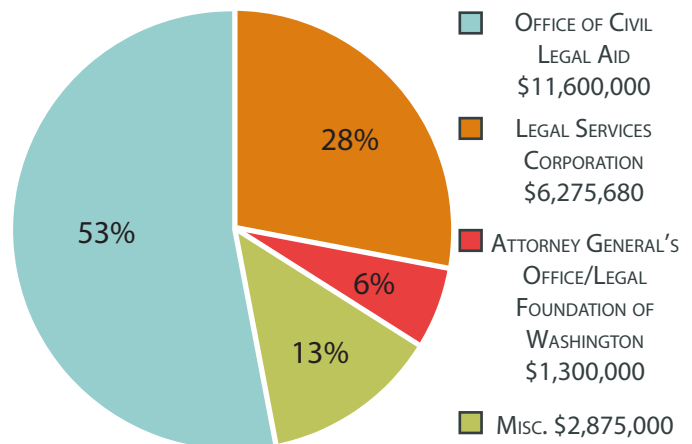
**RISE PROJECT** (Reentry Initiated through Services and Education): Focused on the civil legal needs of previously incarcerated mothers, RISE holds legal clinics at Mission Creek Corrections Center for mothers nearing release to begin preparing to address the many legal obstacles they will face. Upon release, NJP represents them in their family reunification efforts.

**VETERANS PROJECT:** Assists at-risk homeless and near homeless veterans to secure needed housing, health benefits, relicensing, improved income security, and works with Veteran Treatment Courts to assist veterans involved in the criminal justice system.

**WASHINGTONLAWHELP.ORG:** NJP promotes the effective and efficient administration of justice through an extensive online legal self-help center containing hundreds of legal resources, forms and instructions (in multiple languages), including interactive forms (document assembly), and a growing library of educational videos available on NJP's own YouTube channel.



2014 CLOSED CASES  
**13,614**



2014 FUNDING  
**\$22,050,680**

# ATTACKING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT:

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES TO WORK...

TO PROMOTE THE LONG-TERM WELL-BEING OF INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

NJP's advocacy focus targets two significant barriers: (A) Incorrect lifetime bars to employment imposed by DSHS, which affect predominately women engaged in caretaking, health, and education work, and which result in the loss or denial of jobs, destroy careers, deny educational opportunities, and prevent hardworking individuals from earning a livelihood; (B) A driver's license suspension system for unpaid traffic fines that saddle low-income people with unmanageable debt, prevents them from working with threats of incarceration, and also impairs access to medical care and ability to meet parental obligations.

## Ending Erroneous Permanent Bars to Employment - NJP Court victories:

- Established due process rights in a state system rife with erroneous decisions
- Required administrative agencies to have an accurate basis and evidence of harm
- Ensured correct legal standard is applied so as to warrant permanent bar to employment

## Working Toward a Statewide Relicensing

### Program - NJP attorneys:

- Worked with more than 400 people to restore their driving privileges
- Convinced several district & municipal courts to change their system for handling license suspensions
- Held two relicensing summits with judges & stakeholders to discuss alternatives to current system



Marie speaks little English but has worked steadily as a caregiver for the elderly since October 2010. In October 2014 Marie was suddenly terminated from her job and prevented from working by DSHS after a routine fingerprint background check revealed an arrest in 1989. Marie had been arrested on a minor matter, but was not charged nor convicted of a crime. The FBI report on which the termination was based stated: "An individual should be presumed not guilty of any charge/arrest for which there is no final disposition stated on the record or otherwise determined." Despite the lack of a final disposition on the record, DSHS entered her name in a registry making Marie ineligible to work, depriving her of her livelihood. An NJP CLEAR attorney assisted her to present an Applicant Affidavit explaining what had happened in 1989, and pointing out that no charges had even been filed. DSHS promptly agreed to reinstate Marie. She was able to return to doing work she enjoyed. Because of NJP, Marie is employed and earning resources to support herself.

## DRIVER'S LICENSE SUSPENSION SYSTEM IN NUMBERS

**\$1,000,000+**  
ANNUAL COST OF ARRESTS & CONVICTIONS  
(EXCLUDING INCARCERATION)

**33%**  
ANNUAL MISDEMEANOR PROSECUTIONS  
ARE DRIVING WITH SUSPENDED LICENSE

**375,000**  
APPROXIMATE WASHINGTONIANS WITH  
SUSPENDED DRIVER'S LICENSE

**100,000+**  
CASES FILED PER YEAR FOR FAILURE TO  
PAY TRAFFIC FINE OR APPEAR IN COURT

**#1**  
EMPLOYMENT BARRIER FOR  
LOW-INCOME PEOPLE

**RESEARCH TELLS US THAT EFFECTIVE LEGAL REPRESENTATION IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN ... [BREAKING] THIS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CYCLE. YET, STUDIES ESTIMATE THAT LESS THAN 1 IN 5 LOW-INCOME VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EVER GET TO SEE A LAWYER.**

~ DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE COMMEMORATION – DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

The scourge of domestic violence permeates every community and every corner of society. Absent effective interventions, the direct physical and emotional injuries visited on entire families damages the social, educational and economic development of survivors and their children for a lifetime. In 2014, NJP provided legal assistance to more than 4,500 families; the majority involved domestic violence and family safety issues, including help with temporary restraining orders, restrictive (supervised) parenting plans, contempt, and final domestic violence protection orders.



Elizabeth is a young mother who found herself in a violent, brutal marriage. She suffered sexual assaults and physical abuse by her husband, including one instance when he strangled her with his bare hands. Her husband took total control of their finances and refused to let her have any money. Without her knowledge he also spent Elizabeth's inheritance. The situation was so bad that Elizabeth's mother had to bring Elizabeth food which she hid from her husband. Elizabeth was finally able to overcome her fear and seek help. NJP represented her to secure temporary protection orders and took the case to trial. After hearing the evidence at trial, the court ordered supervised visitation, mental health counseling and parenting classes for the husband; extended the Domestic Violence Protection Orders until their child's eighteenth birthday; and ordered the husband to repay Elizabeth much of the inherited money that he spent.

NJP attorneys are engaged in efforts to combat domestic violence and eliminate barriers to unrepresented survivors seeking court protection for themselves and their children. NJP's work to assist domestic violence survivors is supported by state and federal funding, the City of Seattle, and the U.S. Justice Department Office of Violence Against Women, which funds our Integrated Rural Legal Assistance Project in Central Washington, and our partnerships with CONSEJO and the King County Sexual Assault Resource Center. In 2014, NJP attorneys also:

FACILITATED A TRAINING FOR JUDICIAL OFFICERS ON ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES)

WORKED TO ENSURE LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT LITIGANTS ARE PROVIDED COURT INTERPRETERS AT NO COST

PRIORITIZED IMPLEMENTATION OF HB 1840 - WHICH PROHIBITS D.V. RESPONDENTS FROM POSSESSING FIREARMS

LEAD EXTENSIVE WORK TO DEVELOP PLAIN LANGUAGE FAMILY FORMS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE ATJ BOARD & THE AOC

WORKED TO IMPLEMENT GR 34 (FEE WAIVERS) TO AVOID EX PARTE CLERK FEES, DISTRICT COURT FEES, PARENTING CLASS FEES, AND GUARDIANS AD LITEM FEES

HELD CROSS CULTURAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGAL CLINICS ACROSS THE STATE

PRESENTED NUMEROUS INTENSIVE D.V. TRAININGS FOR COMMUNITY AND LAY ADVOCATES

PARTICIPATED IN FOUR APPEALS TO ADDRESS SYSTEMIC BARRIERS TO ENFORCEMENT OF LEGAL PROTECTIONS FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

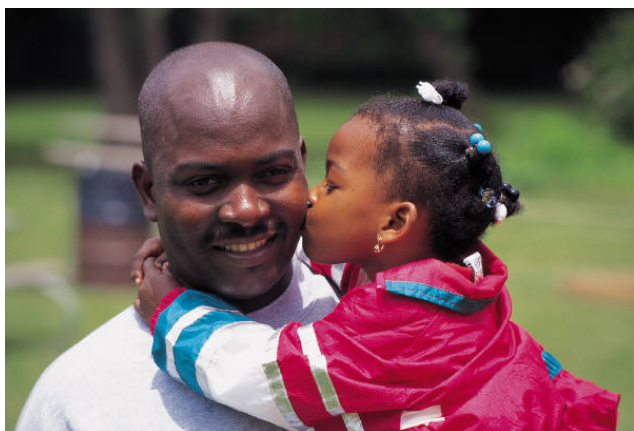
# UNMET LEGAL NEEDS ARE A MAJOR REASON THAT SOME VETERANS BECOME AND REMAIN HOMELESS.

~ Secretary Eric K. Shinseki, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans disproportionately experience homelessness, criminal justice involvement, and suicide. Four of the top ten unmet needs identified by homeless veterans involve legal assistance: eviction and foreclosure prevention, child support, outstanding warrants/fines, and restoring drivers's licenses. Legal aid is essential to addressing the complex social and health needs of veterans, and requires specialized, culturally informed outreach and advocacy. Since the launch of the Veterans Project in 2009, veterans provided legal assistance and representation annually by NJP has doubled, from 816 to 1,604.

## 2014 Highlights of NJP's Veterans Project:

- Veterans' cases led to reform of driver's license restoration practices in several municipal courts
- Established critical referral networks with VA Hospitals, HUD-VASH, and the State VA's Building 9
- Served on King County Public Defense Advisory Board on veterans' criminal justice issues
- Nationally recognized manual *Representing Washington Veterans: Basic Civil Legal and Cultural Concepts* transitioned to website platform - [www.RepWaVets.org](http://www.RepWaVets.org)



An Army combat medic who served two tours in Iraq, Mike was referred to NJP's Veterans Project by the Thurston County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC). He returned from the war with serious physical and psychological injuries, only to find his young family had fallen apart. He was left to care for his young daughter on his own. Because of his combat injuries and his need to take time off medical treatment he could not maintain steady work. He became homeless and asked his estranged wife to care for their daughter. He soon learned she was doing a poor job of caring for the child and denied him visits. NJP assisted Mike by preparing the paperwork needed to regain custody of his daughter, and a parenting plan that included restrictions on the mother. With NJP's support, Mike is now diligently working with the VA on treatment for his combat injuries, has a new job, is happily residing with his daughter in a new home.

## VETERANS PROJECT IN NUMBERS

**60**  
LEGAL CLINICS – INCLUDING 12 AT  
STAFFORD CREEK CORRECTIONS CENTER

**885**  
ADDITIONAL VETERANS  
CONTACTED IN OUTREACH  
EVENTS

**20**  
STAND DOWNS

**607,000**  
WASHINGTON ADULTS ARE VETERANS

**12%**  
NJP'S 2014 CASES  
INVOLVED VETERANS

**88**  
OTHER OUTREACH EVENTS TO  
VETERANS, SERVICE PROVIDERS &  
VOLUNTEER ATTORNEYS

# PURSUING JUSTICE FOR VULNERABLE AND MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS

Vulnerable, marginalized persons and persons with disabilities suffer disproportionately from social, economic, and bureaucratic systems that perpetuate poverty. People in poverty face multiple barriers due to physical disabilities, mental illness, trauma/PTSD, limited English proficiency, cultural and ethnic background, and illiteracy. NJP prioritizes services to low-income persons who face unique barriers to accessing the justice system and engages with isolated and marginalized populations to identify and overcome systems that fail to address fundamental human needs.



Helen has lived at a Skagit County mobile home senior park for many years. Last year the landlord sent a 5 day pay or vacate notice stating she had failed to pay rent for 4 months. Helen was referred to NJP for assistance. NJP's investigation revealed she has been suffering from growing memory problems and also that her income had been drastically reduced earlier in 2014. The Social Security Administration had terminated Helen's retirement benefits from her former spouse. The loss of income and her memory problems had put her in a terrible predicament. NJP researched social security regulations on divorced spouse pension offsets and determined Helen was legally entitled to most of the benefits SSA cut off. With these benefits, Helen could afford to remain in her long-time home. An NJP attorney formally requested that SSA reconsider the benefit termination. Upon review, SSA promptly restored her benefits and also paid \$2,700 for wrongfully suspended back benefits. NJP then negotiated with the landlord, secured additional rental assistance to save her tenancy, and also worked with Helen's family as to the memory issues so they could assist her in the future.

NJP focuses on identifying and addressing barriers faced by the elderly, persons with disabilities, farmworkers, Native Americans, limited English speaking persons and others in crisis to overcome barriers and access the justice system by:

IRLAP: MULTI-PROGRAM OUTREACH & REPRESENTATION TO LEP SURVIVORS IN CENTRAL WASHINGTON

TARGETED FORECLOSURE OUTREACH TO IMMIGRANT LEP COMMUNITIES WITH MINORITY BAR ASSOCIATIONS

STATEWIDE FARMWORKER OUTREACH TO MIGRANT LABOR CAMPS AND ON-RESERVATION LEGAL CLINICS

TRANSLATED HUNDREDS OF WASHINGTONLAWHELP.ORG RESOURCES INTO MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

NJP-YOUTUBE LEGAL EDUCATION VIDEOS TRANSLATED INTO SPANISH AND A.S.L.

R.I.S.E. PROJECT HOLDS PRISON CLINICS FOR INCARCERATED MOTHERS NEARING RELEASE

ESTABLISHED VIDEO SUPPORTED AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE (A.S.L.) HOTLINE CAPACITY

SECURED HUMAN TRAFFICKING OUTREACH AND EDUCATION GRANT

# NORTHWEST JUSTICE PROJECT

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS - 2015

Monica Langfeldt, President  
David Keenan, Vice President  
Vicente Omar Barraza, Treasurer  
Carolyn Estrada, Secretary  
Rima Alaily  
Diana Bob

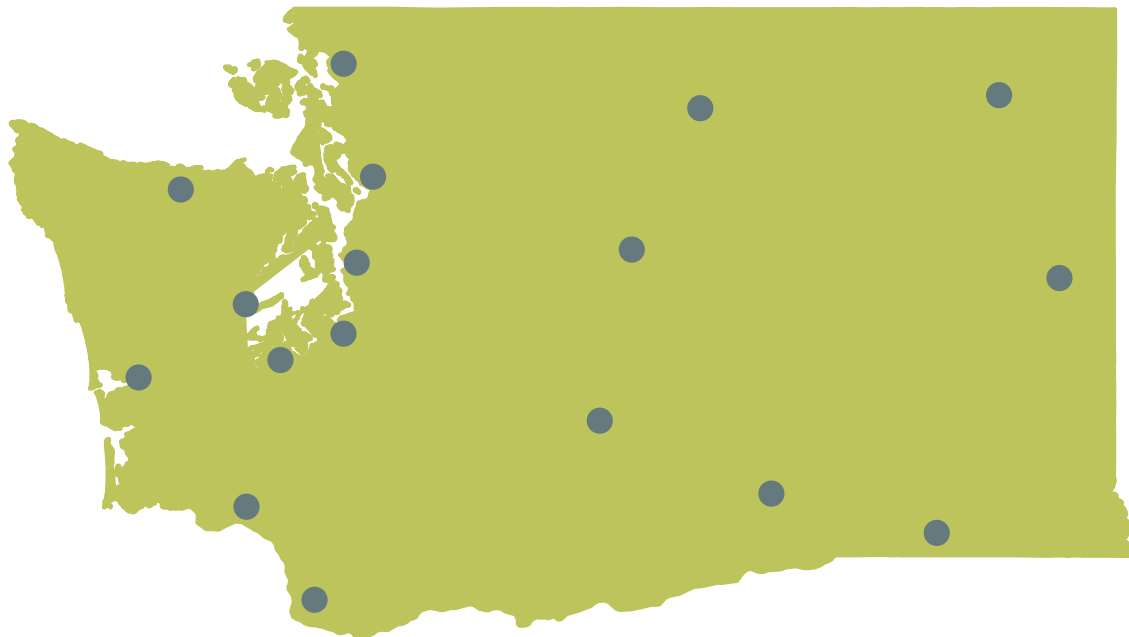
Richard J. Harrison  
Abeda Jafar  
Maggie Kennedy  
A'Lesha Kinder  
Richard Kuhling  
Andrea Poplawski

John C. Roberts  
Russell Speidel  
John S. Tracy  
Joanne Whitehead  
Eben-Ezer Yanez  
Claude Pearson, President  
Emeritus

**CLEAR 1-888-201-1014 In King County, call 2-1-1.**

**Foreclosure Prevention Unit 1-800-606-4819**

**Visit us on the web at [www.washingtonlawhelp.org](http://www.washingtonlawhelp.org) or [www.nwjustice.org](http://www.nwjustice.org)**



ABERDEEN | BELLINGHAM | BREMERTON | COLVILLE | EVERETT  
LONGVIEW | OMAK | OLYMPIA | PASCO | PORT ANGELES | SEATTLE | SPOKANE | TACOMA  
VANCOUVER | WALLA WALLA | WENATCHEE | YAKIMA

[WWW.NWJUSTICE.ORG](http://WWW.NWJUSTICE.ORG) | [WWW.WASHINGTONLAWHELP.ORG](http://WWW.WASHINGTONLAWHELP.ORG) | [WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/NWJUSTICEPROJECT](http://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/NWJUSTICEPROJECT)