

New York Law School Announces Housing Justice Leadership Institute

First-of-Its-Kind Training Program Teaches Housing Rights Attorneys Supervision and Management Skills

*Program Meets a Critical Need Arising From New York City's Groundbreaking
"Right-to-Counsel" Legislation, Which Provides Free Lawyers to Low-Income
New Yorkers at Risk of Eviction*

New York, NY (January 15, 2019) – [New York Law School](#) (NYLS) announced the launch of the Housing Justice Leadership Institute (HJLI)—a first-of-its-kind program that teaches supervision and management skills to housing rights attorneys and meets a rapidly growing need in New York City.

The 10-day training program is made possible by generous funding from the New York State IOLA (Interest on Lawyer Account) Fund and the Robin Hood Foundation, through key collaboration with the City Bar Fund, Inc., and in cooperation with the Office of Civil Justice, New York City Human Resources Administration.

The program addresses growing demand for housing lawyers who possess management skills. In August 2017, New York City passed groundbreaking "right-to-counsel" legislation, becoming the first jurisdiction in the country that will provide free legal counsel to low-income people at risk of eviction. These services are provided by contracted legal service organizations. NYLS faculty estimate that before New York City began increasing funding for tenant representation, fewer than 100 attorneys represented low-income people in New York City eviction cases. By 2022, the estimated need will be more than 1,000 attorneys. The HJLI will address the need for skilled housing rights attorneys in New York City who possess both the requisite knowledge of housing law and the managerial skills to scale these rapidly expanding operations.

The HJLI curriculum is largely based on the work of the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law and was developed by NYLS faculty and an advisory committee of experts. It focuses on the critical skills housing rights attorneys will need to manage delivery of high-quality legal assistance on a broad scale. Topics include developing effective supervisory systems, understanding nonprofit finances, addressing structural racism, developing metrics, and more.

"Providing innovative, high-quality legal training that strengthens our city's antipoverty work is at the heart of NYLS's mission," said NYLS Dean and President **Anthony W. Crowell**. "I am grateful to Professors Andrew Scherer and Kim Hawkins for their vision and leadership of the HJLI, to the program's generous financial supporters, and to those leading our city's pioneering right-to-counsel work."

"The Housing Justice Leadership Institute will help housing rights supervisors assure that low-income tenants are provided with the high-quality legal representation they deserve," said Professor **Andrew Scherer**, Co-Director of the HJLI, Policy Director of NYLS's Impact Center for Public Interest Law, and Co-Chair of the New York City Bar Association's Civil Right to Counsel Task Force. "This first-of-its-kind program has been made possible by the extraordinary contributions of NYLS faculty, the nationally renowned Shriver Center, our talented advisory committee, our generous funders, the New York City Bar Association, the legal services providers, and other partners."

“As the agency administering New York City’s first-in-the-nation Universal Access to Counsel initiative, HRA is proud to support and applauds New York Law School and the Shriver Center for establishing this groundbreaking program,” said New York City Department of Social Services Commissioner **Steven Banks**. “The Housing Justice Leadership Institute will enable our legal services provider partners to continue expanding their high-quality legal assistance programs, and to create a group of leaders in the fight for access to justice and a fair legal system for all New Yorkers.”

“The Housing Justice Leadership Institute is critically important to support New York City’s landmark right to counsel legislation,” said **Hon. Jonathan Lippman**, former Chief Judge of New York and Chief Judge of the New York Court of Appeals. “I salute Professor Andrew Scherer, the NYLS team, and all of the partners who have made this innovative program a reality. The Institute is a great step forward in the cause of equal justice.”

“Housing court functions most fairly and efficiently when everyone at the table has high-quality legal representation, and NYLS’s Housing Justice Leadership Institute will support that goal,” said **Hon. Jean T. Schneider**, the Citywide Supervising Judge of New York City Housing Court. “This program addresses a real need in New York City at a key moment of expansion for the city’s legal service providers.”

“The landmark legislation providing a right to counsel in New York City Housing Court resoundingly affirmed that the stakes and consequences in civil cases can equal those in criminal cases,” said **Roger Juan Maldonado**, President of the New York City Bar Association, former Chair of the City Bar’s Task Force on Housing Court and its Housing Court Committee, and a former Housing Supervisor at South Brooklyn Legal Services. “Legal services providers can now realize the legislation’s promise, and this pioneering program will show us the way.”

“New York City’s trailblazing right-to-counsel program depends upon skilled and dedicated lawyers to keep people from being evicted and forced into homelessness,” said **Beth Goldman**, President and Attorney-in-Charge of the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG): “NYLAG applauds the launch of the Housing Justice Leadership Institute, which will help supervising attorneys gain new leadership tools and skills to ensure justice for New York City tenants facing eviction.”

“New York City’s right to counsel is a monumental step towards addressing the imbalance of power in Housing Court where thousands of unrepresented low-income tenants have fought to defend their most basic right to safe, affordable housing,” said **Rodrigo Sanchez-Camus**, Legal Director at Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, on behalf of the Legal Advocacy Project (LEAP). “LEAP’s 17 legal services agencies stand unified in support of the Housing Justice Leadership Institute training, which will contextualize this struggle for our newest supervising attorneys who are leading the implementation of right to counsel across the city.”

“Low-income tenants deserve the highest quality eviction prevention legal services, and New York Law School’s Housing Justice Leadership Institute will ensure that our supervisors and attorneys continue to strengthen their skills to get the best possible outcomes for New Yorkers,” said **Raun Rasmussen**, Executive Director of Legal Services NYC. “Legal Services NYC is incredibly proud to help develop this program and looks forward to continue working with the Institute so that tenants across the city get the critical legal help they need.”

“Housing court can be a daunting place for tenants, who may face shame, anxiety, a shortage of affordable housing, and landlord retaliation,” said **Susanna Blankley**, Coordinator of the Right to Counsel NYC Coalition. “Tenant attorneys must navigate all of these dynamics, while working to stop evictions and helping build the power of the tenant movement. We are excited that the Housing Justice Leadership Institute will train supervisors to support new attorneys as they take on this incredible job.”

“New York is still in the midst of an affordable housing crisis, and tenants deserve the best possible representation to defend against unlawful evictions, landlord harassment, and other issues,” said **Adriene Holder**, Attorney-In-Charge of the Civil Practice at The Legal Aid Society. “We’re proud to partner with the Housing Justice Leadership Institute so our housing supervising attorneys continue to hone the skills—with a social and racial justice focus—needed to deliver high-quality representation to some of New York City’s most vulnerable tenants. The HJLI will also help us ensure that the next generation of housing justice advocates are well equipped to fight on behalf of low-income tenants.”

NYLS is now collecting applications for the HJLI. Candidates should be housing supervisors in nonprofit legal service organizations in New York City that are contracting with New York City to provide services under the right-to-counsel program and who have with less than three years of supervisory experience. NYLS will select 20 participants for spring 2019. The program begins on February 28, 2019 and runs on 10 intermittent days (mostly Fridays) through June 14, 2019. All sessions will be held at NYLS’s campus in Tribeca. There will be another HJLI in fall 2019 and additional programs in 2020 and beyond. Participants who complete the HJLI will receive a certificate and CLE credit from NYLS. The application deadline is Thursday, January 24, 2019.

HJLI’s Leadership

- *Co-Directors:* Professors Andrew Scherer and Kim Hawkins, NYLS
- *Chief Consultant:* Ellen Hemley, Sargent Shriver Center for Poverty Law
- *Program Administrator:* Jarienn James ’17, Racial Justice Fellow, NYLS
- *Advisory Committee*
 - Professor Paris Baldacci, Cardozo Law School, Emeritus
 - Professor Carol Buckler, NYLS
 - Helder Coehlo, City Bar Justice Center
 - Marika Dias, Legal Services NYC
 - Jonathan Fox, New York Legal Assistance Group
 - Leah Goodridge, Mobilization for Justice
 - Amy Hammersmith, NOLSW, United Auto Workers
 - Ignacio Jaurequilorda, Center for Court Innovation
 - Doreen Odom, Legal Services NYC
 - Runa Rajagopal, Bronx Defenders
 - Kerri-Ann Wright, Legal Aid Society

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