



THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

Justice in Every Borough.

LGBTQ+ Law and Policy Unit

10
YEARS

Fighting Systemic Injustice One Case at a Time

Join us in our continuing fight.

The LGBTQ+ Law and Policy Unit seeks to create, support, and sustain affirming and safer spaces, practices, and policies for LGBTQ+ clients and staff. Our staff provides trainings on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression to Legal Aid Society staff and are active in City and State legislative and policy reform efforts, coalition building, public education, and strategic litigation.

Groundbreaking training and resources

Over the past ten years, the LGBTQ+ Unit developed and implemented a groundbreaking mandatory training program and resource library to educate 2,000+ Legal Aid staff members on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression and LGBTQ+ rights under federal, state, and city law.

The LGBTQ+ Unit incorporates a racial justice framework into its trainings and resources and respectfully partners with community-based organizations that reflect the diversity of New York's LGBTQ+ community. This training program, resource library, and collaboration framework provides the foundation for the Unit's long-term goal of improving legal and societal outcomes for low-income LGBTQ+ New Yorkers.

Expanding and enforcing legal protections for LGBTQ+ people

We currently provide education and resources to community organizations on the rights of LGBTQ+ people under existing laws. With your help, we can increase our community organizing capacity to assess and respond to urgent and emerging community needs as they arise.

Upholding the rights and fighting abuse of LGBTQ+ people in the criminal law system

Similar to the school to prison pipeline, we know oppressive conditions limit opportunities for low income LGBTQ+ people and bias-based policing leads to criminal law involvement for our clients. We employ a multi-prong approach involving internal and external training, public education, advocacy, legislative work, and impact litigation to fight for more affirming treatment and safer conditions for LGBTQ+ people caught up in the criminal law system.

We sued NYPD for unconstitutionally targeting trans people under New York's loitering statute known as "Walking While Trans." We are now building upon that success by fighting for passage of the Gender Identity Respect, Dignity, and Safety Act, a law that would give people the right to be housed consistently with their gender identity while incarcerated, to choose the gender of the officer who searches them, and to access all forms of gender-affirming care and commissary items.

Youth Housing Advocacy

Legal Aid's Juvenile Rights Practice represents over 90% of youth in New York City's Family Courts. We know through the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) that LGBTQ+ youth are overrepresented in foster care (34.1% ages 13-20) with almost three quarters identifying as Black or Latinx. LGBTQ+ youth are also disproportionately represented amongst runaway and homeless youth. Recognizing this disparity, we brought the lawsuit that forced NYC to provide hundreds of beds, 24-hour drop-in centers, and other resources to homeless youth. By expanding the Unit's support for the Juvenile Rights Practice, we can have a greater impact on ensuring LGBTQ+ youth are affirmed and have better outcomes, including fewer and less restrictive placements.

With your help, we can expand protections and support for LGBTQ+ youth in foster care.

The Legal Aid Society's LGBTQ+ Law and Policy Unit is committed to addressing the most pressing issues that our LGBTQ+ clients face. Through trainings, coalition building, advocacy, legislative reform, and impact litigation, the Unit brings meaningful change to the lives of LGBTQ+ New Yorkers and tackles the systemic inequities that they face.