

Memorandum of Understanding

Between
Gonzaga University School of Law
And
Washington State Office of Civil and Legal Aid
And
Washington State Office of Public Defense

This Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") sets forth the agreement between Gonzaga University School of Law ("Gonzaga Law"), the Washington State Office of Civil Legal Aid ("OCLA"), and the Washington State Office of Public Defense ("OPD") to develop academic programming on child and parent rights and justice, referred to as the Children and Parent Rights and Justice Initiative ("CRJI").

The Parties

Gonzaga Law is an ABA-accredited law school in Spokane, Washington whose mission is to provide excellent legal education informed by its humanistic, Jesuit, and Catholic traditions and values. As a Jesuit institution, Gonzaga Law is committed to diversity and strives to produce lawyers who are compassionate counselors serving the public good.

OCLA is an independent judicial branch agency responsible for administering and overseeing state funds for providing civil legal aid services to low-income Washingtonians. OCLA maintains a strong commitment to race equity and justice and strives to serve the needs of indigent persons in their access to civil justice. Its core values include equity and inclusion, leadership, transparency and accountability, and change and innovation.

OPD is an independent agency of the judicial branch that implements legal guarantees to counsel by providing indigent defense services throughout Washington State. Its mission is to uphold the rights of all people facing the loss of liberty or family by providing statewide leadership, administration, and support to the multidisciplinary public defense profession. Its values include justice, service, equity, and excellence.

Background

The parties to this MOU recognize the need for trained and qualified lawyers to work in the area of child and parent rights and justice, representing not only children and parents in dependency hearings but also working across other areas of law affecting the rights of children and parents, including but not limited to criminal, immigration, and family law. Children and parents have a right to their families. Children have a right to safety. Attorneys for both need to understand each others' roles either through education, or by practicing the representation of both.

As needs across the state – and nation – continue to grow, the parties recognize the challenges in recruiting, training, and retaining qualified lawyers competent to represent children and parents in dependency, termination, and related cases. The parties also recognize the imperative to develop a pipeline for the recruitment, training, and placement into practice of new attorneys

dedicated to providing trauma- and equity-informed representation of children and parents in these cases.

Purpose

The shortage of qualified lawyers, along with the commitment to serve our community and each party's mission, has led to this MOU for developing the CRJI at Gonzaga Law. The parties intend to work together to identify, develop, and place well-prepared law graduates, who support and are committed to diversity, into child welfare system practice to provide meaningful, equity-informed, and effective representation for children and parents upon graduation and passage of the bar. The parties will explore a concentration program for JD students, Continuing Legal Education ("CLE") opportunities for licensed attorneys, and post-graduate certificate offerings for JD holders looking to transition into child rights work. The parties also intend to explore clinical and/or experiential programs that focus on child and parent rights.

Project Goals and Timeline

CRJI will proceed in three phases: (1) launching a CRJI Concentration for JD students; (2) offering CRJI programming for JD holders, including CLE programming and a CRJI post-graduate Certificate, and (3) Clinical and/or Externship programs housed at Gonzaga Law furthering CRJI objectives.

The first phase is to establish a concentration in child and parent rights for JD students. This phase will include developing a sequence of coursework that covers the doctrinal, practical, and interpersonal skills necessary to work in child and parent rights upon graduation. In particular, the concentration will not only cover substantive knowledge, but also equity-, justice-, and trauma-responsive lawyering, including understanding child safety and the harm of separating families. It will also include experiential learning components for law students interested in careers serving the needs of children and families. This first phase will begin in Fall 2023 with developing a framework and initial proposal for the CRJI Concentration, with the goal of May 2026 as the date the first cohort of JD students will graduate with the CRJI Concentration.

The second phase seeks to develop programming for JD holders wishing to gain additional knowledge relevant to child and parent rights. This phase will include CLE events ideal for both practitioners working in child and parent rights and law students who are CRJI Concentration candidates. The goal for launching CLE programming is Fall 2024. Additionally, the second phase will explore a post-graduate certificate for JD holders wishing to gain the foundation for working in child and parent rights, with a goal of Fall 2027 for launching a post-graduate Certificate program.

The third phase will result in developing clinical and externship programming devoted to child and parent rights. This phase will include establishing and funding a Child and Parent Rights Clinic focusing on child and parent rights work and an externship program that targets agencies and private practitioners doing work in child and parent rights. Exploration of clinical and externship opportunities will begin in Spring 2024, with the goal of establishing a standing clinic and/or externship track for child and parent rights in Fall 2027.

Mutual Commitments Among the Parties

Gonzaga Law intends to offer and administer the CRJI Concentration, including staffing courses in the JD program and providing overall programmatic support. It also intends to host and facilitate CLE programs and a CRJI post-graduate Certificate. Lastly, Gonzaga Law intends to staff and host a standing clinic and/or externship track for child and parent rights as feasible.

OCLA and OPD intend to provide experiential learning opportunities, complementary substantive legal training, guidance on funding opportunities, and other support for the development and progressive evolution of all three CRJI phases. In particular, OCLA and OPD will collaborate with Gonzaga Law on identifying the core competencies and objectives of CRJI; finding qualified adjunct faculty, CLE speakers, and externship partners; promoting job placement and mentoring opportunities for students; and promoting and growing the program as needs evolve.

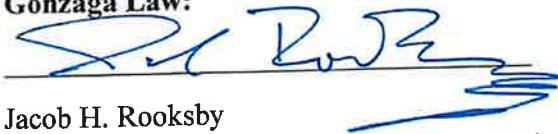
Amendment

Gonzaga Law, OCLA, and OPD will revisit and, if necessary, update this MOU annually in the first three years, in Fall 2024, Fall 2025, and Fall 2026. After the first three years, each party can request an amendment as needed.

Signatures

By signing below, each Party acknowledges that this MOU is a non-binding statement of the Parties' intent and understanding for future collaboration. Additionally, each Party agrees to act in good faith and to do what is reasonably within its power to give effect to the spirit of this MOU.

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Michele Young

From: Tracy Sims
Sent: Thursday, November 2, 2023 8:15 AM
To: Michele Young
Subject: MOU
Attachments: 2267_001.pdf

This is a MOU between Gonzaga School of Law, OCLA and OPD stating that these agencies will work together to develop academic programming on child and parent rights and justice. No money or binding commitments are mentioned. Does this need to be in JCTS or anything?

Tracy