# EQUAL JUSTICE WORKS TEXAS ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOUNDATION FELLOWS

1999 - 2012



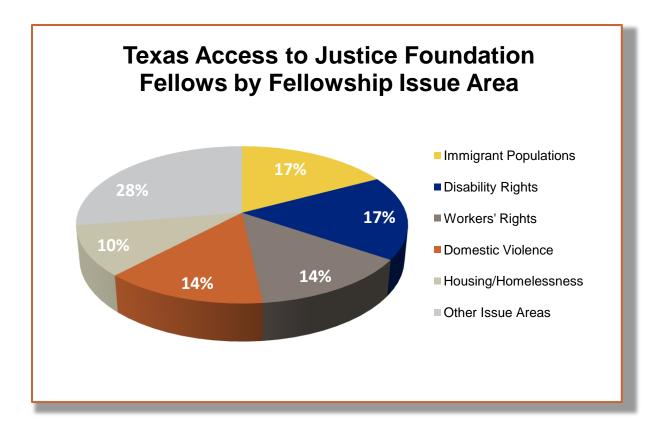


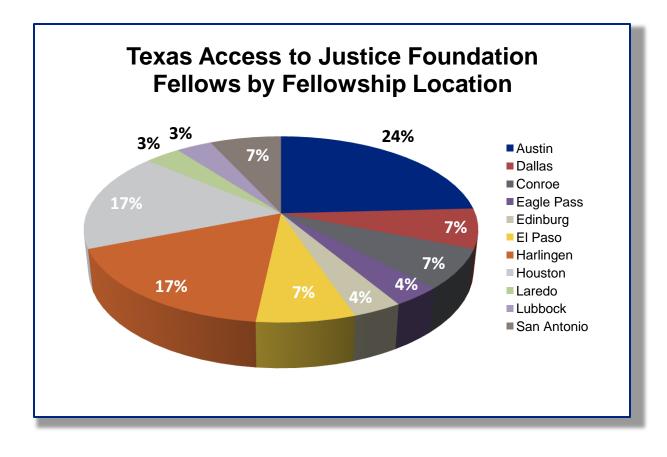
## Equal Justice Works and the Texas Access to Justice Foundation celebrate 13 years of partnership.

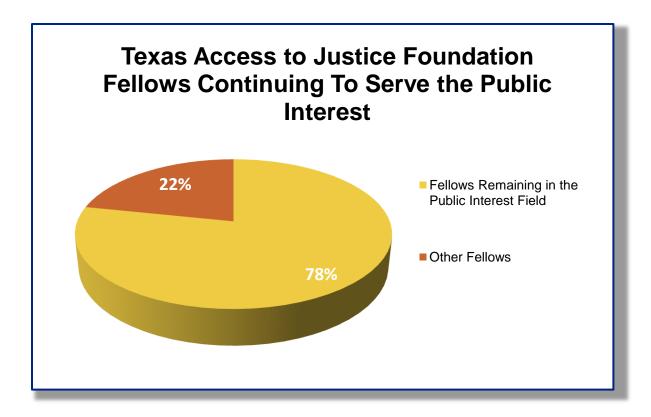
Equal Justice Works would like to thank the Texas Access to Justice Foundation for the tremendous contributions the Foundation has made to America's largest legal postgraduate fellowship program. The Texas Access to Justice Foundation is the premier supporter of Equal Justice Works Fellowships in Texas. Since 1999, the Texas Access to Justice Foundation has invested over \$2 million to fund 29 two-year fellowships. These Fellows have delivered critically needed legal services at twelve nonprofit host organizations in the state of Texas, working on ten issue areas ranging from education and disability rights to immigration and domestic violence. Among Texas Access to Justice Foundation's former fellows, over 78 percent remain in public interest today, working as nonprofit staff attorneys, for local governments, and as clinical law professors. Almost half of the former fellows remain at their fellowship host organizations today. This compendium demonstrates the impact that the Texas Access to Justice Foundation has had in launching the public interest careers of 29 young attorneys. Equal Justice Works thanks the Texas Access to Justice Foundation for this outstanding commitment to helping ensure equal access to the justice system for society's most vulnerable individuals and communities.

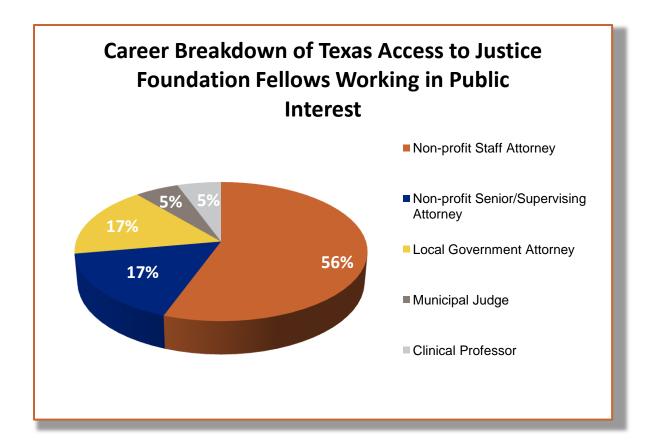












### Words of Thanks from

## Texas Access to Justice Foundation's Former Fellows...

I would like to thank the Texas Access to Justice Foundation, Equal Justice Works, and Texas RioGrande Legal Aid for their support and mentorship during my fellowship.

Jake Wedemeyer, Class of 2007, Assistant County Attorney, Val Verde County

I would like to thank the Texas Access to Justice Foundation for sponsoring my fellowship and allowing me to create the Tenants' Council of Houston. I was able to begin my career as a lawyer with the perspective of how much of a difference an attorney can make in the lives of people who would otherwise be powerless to fight the injustices they face.

**David J. Sadegh**, Class of 2006, Attorney, Alvear & Sadegh, P.C.

I will be forever grateful to the Texas Access to Justice Foundation for making it possible for me to begin my legal career at the Texas Civil Rights Project. Their support and generosity allowed us to greatly expand access to interpreters around the state.

Abigail Frank, Class of 2009, Staff Attorney, Texas Civil Rights Project

I am very grateful for the Texas Access to Justice Foundation for sponsoring my project, which continues to help provide more holistic services in the Rio Grande Valley to this day.

**Amber VanSchuyver,** Class of 2008, Staff Attorney, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid It is hard to believe that two years have gone by since the conclusion of my Equal Justice Works Fellowship! In private practice, there is almost no day that goes by that I do not use the lawyering skills I developed as part of my Fellowship at the Equal Justice Center. Since I have been in private practice, I have also had the opportunity to raise awareness of the labor and legal plight of immigrant workers, and of course remain a friend of the Equal Justice Center. Thank you again for making my Equal Justice Works Fellowship possible. It was a memorable experience, both at a personal and professional level.

Helena Venturini, Class of 2008, Associate, Watson, Caraway, Midkiff & Luningham, LLP

I would like to thank the Texas Access to Justice Foundation for funding my fellowship and for getting me started on my road through public service. I know that without the support of TAJF I would not have the wealth of knowledge and experience helping the poor that I have now. I am forever grateful to both Equal Justice Works and TAJF for allowing me to become the attorney I dreamed of when I made the decision to go to law school.

-Bernadette Segura, Class of 2005, Senior Attorney, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid

Thank you to the Texas Access to Justice Foundation for making it possible for me to pursue my dream of working to address the needs of special education students in the public school system directly following graduation from law school. It's rare for recent graduates to be able to start out in the nonprofit world at all, let alone in their field of choice and with their organization of choice. I'm eternally grateful to TAJF for providing me with that opportunity!

**Sarah Bellinger-Beebe,** Class of 2009, Staff Attorney, Disability Rights Texas



#### Ms. Ilyce Shugall

Years: 1999 - 2001

Host Organization: ProBar

City/State: Harlingen, Texas

Issue Area: Immigrant Populations

Co-Sponsor: American Immigration Lawyers' Association

**Project Description:** Provide all immigration detainees at the nation's largest Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) detention center with legal rights, information, and increased access to counsel.

Where Is She Now? After completing her fellowship, Ms. Shugall joined Van Der Hout, Brigagliano & Nightingale, LLP, a private firm with a notable practice in immigration and nationality law in San Francisco, California where she eventually became a partner. Ms. Shugall returned to the public interest field earlier this year by accepting a position as the Immigration Supervising Attorney at Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto, California. Additionally, Ms. Shugall is an active member of the National Lawyers Guild and served on the executive board of the Bay Area Chapter from 2004 to 2007. She is currently serving as the Pro Bono Coordinator for the Northern California Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers' Association's Executive Office for Immigration Review.

#### Ms. Amy Magee

Years: 2002 - 2003

Host Organization: Texas Civil Rights Project

City/State: Austin, Texas

Issue Area: Education

**Project Description:** Engage in a statewide Title IX reform effort using education and litigation to provide communities with the foundation necessary to address youth education inequities.

Where Is She Now? Ms. Magee is currently a Senior Attorney at the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB). She joined TASB at the completion of her fellowship and was promoted to Senior Attorney in 2007. Ms. Magee's work focuses mainly on community college and special education issues. As part of her role, Ms. Magee develops and reviews community college districts' legal and local policies. She is also a frequent presenter on a number of legal topics, including the First Amendment, technology in schools, and student issues.



#### Mrs. Barbara Stalder

**Years:** 2003 – 2005

Host Organization: Lone Star Legal Aid

City/State: Houston, Texas

Issue Area: Children/Youth

**Project Description:** Create a start up children's law program providing legal services to abused and neglected children in Harris County, Texas.

Where Is She Now? After completing her fellowship, Mrs. Stalder worked for one year as an attorney for Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse providing direct legal services to victims of domestic violence. Ms. Stalder then joined the Civil Practice Clinic at University of Houston Law Center where she is currently a Professor. In 2004 Mrs. Stalder received the University of Houston Law Center Alumni Association Rising Star Award and in 2005 received the TYLA President's Award of Merit for her work on the publication "What to Expect in Family Court." Mrs. Stalder recently was selected as a member to the Burta Rhoads Rayburn Family Law Inns of Court and was appointed to the State Bar of Texas Civil Legal Services to the Poor Committee.

#### Mr. Matthew Seymour

**Years:** 2004 – 2006

Host Organization: Dallas Legal Hospice

City/State: Dallas, Texas

Issue Area: Health Care

**Project Description:** Provide civil, health-related legal representation to persons living with HIV/AIDS and terminal illness in rural North Texas.

**Where Is He Now?** After completing his fellowship, Mr. Seymour moved to the Dallas County Public Defender's Office where he currently works as an Assistant Public Defender in the Felony Division.



#### Mr. Sean Pevsner

Years: 2005 - 2007

Host Organization: Advocacy Inc.

City/State: Austin, Texas

Issue Area: Disability Rights

**Project Description:** Enable students with disabilities to obtain the proper accommodations in their educational and employment careers.

Where Is She Now? Mr. Pevsner is a quadriplegic with severe cerebral palsy who has overcome significant physical obstacles to become a disabilities rights advocate. After leaving Advocacy Inc., Mr. Pevsner continued to assist others with disabilities through his own consulting practice. As a consultant, he worked with clients affected by cerebral palsy to obtain IDEA services by representing them at schools and negotiating with opposing counsel their behalf. After successfully advocating to obtain the accommodations and resources necessary for him to prepare for and take the bar exam effectively, he gained admittance to the Texas State Bar in 2011. Since becoming licensed, Mr. Pevsner has helped to found Whitburn & Pevsner, PLLC where he has developed a vibrant special education practice and has worked on other aspects of education law, as well as guardianship and other probate proceedings.

#### Ms. Bernadette Segura

Years: 2005 - 2007

Host Organization: Texas RioGrande Legal Aid

City/State: San Antonio, Texas

**Issue Area:** Housing/Homelessness

**Project Description:** Provide legal representation, advocacy and outreach to San Antonio's homeless population.

**Where Is She Now?** After her fellowship, Ms. Segura remained with Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA). She took time away to begin her family, but has since returned to TRLA where she is currently a Senior Attorney. In addition, she is a board member at Project BRAVO.



#### Judge Ramey Ko

Years: 2006 - 2008

Host Organization: Texas RioGrande Legal Aid

City/State: Austin, Texas

Issue Area: Housing/Homelessness

**Project Description:** Provide legal advocacy to victims of domestic violence facing discrimination in public, subsidized, and private housing.

**Where Is He Now?** Following his fellowship, Judge Ko served as an attorney at the Texas Advocacy Project, a nonprofit organization that provides free legal services to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. He was appointed by the Austin City Council as an Associate Judge of the City of Austin Municipal Court in 2010. In addition to serving his community as a Municipal Judge, Judge Ko is currently a partner with the law firm of Jung Ko PLLC, focusing on immigration and business law. Judge Ko is an Advisory Board Member of the Texas Asian Chamber of Commerce and serves on President Obama's Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders Advisory Commission.

#### Mr. Dustin W. Rynders

**Years:** 2006 – 2008

Host Organization: Advocacy Inc.

City/State: Houston, Texas

Issue Area: Disability Rights

**Project Description:** Represent low-income students disadvantaged by "zero tolerance" discipline policies and advocate for systemic reform.

**Where Is He Now?** At the completion of his fellowship, Mr. Rynders transferred to Advocacy Inc.'s Austin office as a policy specialist providing support in the areas of special education and juvenile justice. In 2009, he returned to Advocacy Inc.'s Houston office to begin a new project providing ad litem representation to long-term foster children with disabilities living in Texas Youth Commission or State Supported Living Center institutions. In April 2012, Dustin began his current position as Supervising Attorney of the Disability Rights Texas (formerly Advocacy Inc.) Education Team. In this position, Dustin represents students and parents in special education litigation and supervises a team of advocates and attorneys.



#### Mr. David Sadegh

Years: 2006 - 2008

Host Organization: Lone Star Legal Aid

City/State: Houston, Texas

**Issue Area:** Housing/Homelessness

**Project Description:** Create a permanent tenant's rights organization for the low-income residents of the Houston, Texas area.

**Where Is He Now?** After his fellowship, Mr. Sadegh remained at Lone Star Legal Aid as a Staff Attorney. In March 2011, Mr. Sadegh founded Alvear & Sadegh PC in Humble, Texas with his wife, Ms. Elaine Alvear. He practices both landlord-tenant and consumer law.\*

#### Ms. Jessica Alas

Years: 2007 - 2009

Host Organization: Montgomery County Women's Center

City/State: Houston, Texas

Issue Area: Pro Se

**Project Description:** Provide civil legal services and assisted pro se clinics to qualifying individuals, both directly and by soliciting pro bono services from area attorneys.

**Where Is She Now?** After completing her fellowship, Ms. Alas began working at Lone Star Legal Aid. She is currently a Staff Attorney in the Houston, Texas Office.

\*This data is derived solely through internet research. The Fellow did not respond to Equal Justice Works' efforts to obtain verification of the information.



#### Ms. Jennifer Landau

Years: 2007 - 2009

Host Organization: Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services, Inc.

City/State: El Paso, Texas

**Issue Area:** Immigrant Populations

**Project Description:** Provide legal representation to immigrants placed in immigration removal proceedings before the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) at the satellite EI Paso, Texas holding facilities, with a special focus on refugees and victims of crime, torture, domestic violence, and trafficking.

**Where Is She Now?** Following her fellowship, Ms. Landau continued as an attorney with Diocesan Migrant & Refugee Services, Inc., the largest provider of free and low-cost immigration-related legal services in West Texas and New Mexico. She remains there today and specializes in the area of removal defense.\*

#### Ms. Corinna Spencer-Scheurich

Years: 2007 - 2009

Host Organization: Texas Civil Rights Project

City/State: San Juan, Texas

Issue Area: Workers' Rights

**Project Description:** Establish and coordinate a self-education and self-organization effort by lowincome, Spanish-speaking, rural colonia residents along the Texas-Mexico border for consumer rights and economic justice.

**Where Is She Now?** After her fellowship, Ms. Spencer-Scheurich remained at Texas Civil Rights Project (TCRP) and was the director of the South Texas Civil Rights Project. After nearly eight years working at TCRP, she moved to Oregon in the fall of 2012 and is working with the Northwest Workers' Justice Project. Ms. Spencer-Scheurich credits TAJF and Equal Justice Works for supporting innovative projects that reach into otherwise underserved communities in Texas and improve access to justice throughout the state.

\*This data is derived solely through internet research. The Fellow did not respond to Equal Justice Works' efforts to obtain verification of the information.



#### Mr. Jake Wedemeyer

Years: 2007 - 2009

Host Organization: Texas RioGrande Legal Aid

City/State: Eagle Pass, Texas

Issue Area: Workers' Rights

**Project Description:** Protect eligible Texas workers and temporary foreign workers in the H-2A, H-2B and proposed H-2C guest worker visa programs from employer abuse of the visa process and employment relationship.

**Where Is He Now?** After his fellowship, Mr. Wedemeyer became Assistant County Attorney for Val Verde County in Del Rio, Texas where he remains today.

#### Ms. Colleen Wisdom Elbe

Years: 2008 - 2010

Host Organization: Advocacy Inc.

City/State: Lubbock, Texas

Issue Area: Disability Rights

**Project Description:** Provide legal representation, advocacy, and training to children with unmet special education needs and their families who are involved in the Lubbock County Juvenile Court or probation departments.

**Where Is She Now?** After her fellowship, Ms. Elbe remained at Advocacy Inc. (now Disability Rights Texas) where she continues to practice special education law and civil rights law. Ms. Elbe represents students with disabilities who are denied appropriate special education services or that are illegally restrained, secluded, or disciplined as interventions to manifestations of their disability. Additionally, a small part of her practice involves working with inmates at the county jail level to ensure appropriate access to mental health services.



#### Ms. Helena Venturini (née Coronado-Slazar)

**Years:** 2008 – 2010

Host Organization: Equal Justice Center

City/State: Austin, Texas

Issue Area: Workers' Rights

**Project Description:** Open new access to the justice system in Texas for the working poor by providing them with innovative legal representation to fully collect unpaid wages that they have earned but have been denied.

**Where Is She Now?** Having finished her fellowship, Ms. Venturini is currently employed with Watson, Caraway, Midkiff & Luningham, LLP where she is an associate focusing on civil litigation.

#### Ms. Amber VanSchuyver

Years: 2008 - 2010

Host Organization: Texas RioGrande Legal Aid

City/State: Edinburg, Texas

Issue Area: Domestic Violence

**Project Description:** Enhance economic self-sufficiency for survivors of domestic violence through community education, litigation, and job creation by establishing a worker-owned women's cooperative.

**Where Is She Now?** After her fellowship, Ms. VanSchuyver remained with Texas RioGrande Legal Aid in the Edinburg Office where she is still working to prevent domestic violence.



#### Ms. Sarah Bellinger-Beebe

Years: 2009 - 2011

Host Organization: Advocacy Inc.

City/State: Houston, Texas

Issue Area: Disability Rights

**Project Description:** Create a Special Education Clinic composed of private attorneys who will meet regularly with parents of children in need of special education services to educate them about the substance of special education law, practical advocacy tips, and methods of resolving disputes under IDEA.

Where Is She Now? Following her fellowship, Ms. Beebe remained with Disability Rights Texas where she continues to advocate for disability rights. Ms. Beebe provides direct representation to students with disabilities in need of legal services in Houston, TX and the surrounding areas. Ms. Beebe provides outreach as well as educational presentations and training to parents, lawyers, advocates and all other interested parties on the topic of special education law. She also works on systemic litigation and projects that affect students with disabilities across the State of Texas.

#### Ms. Jessica Cassidy

Years: 2009 - 2011

Host Organization: Texas Legal Services Center

City/State: Austin, Texas

Issue Area: Domestic Violence

**Project Description:** Enhance economic self-sufficiency for survivors of domestic violence with children through child support enforcement, credit reparation, and economic empowerment education.

**Where Is She Now?** Ms. Cassidy remained at the Texas Legal Services Center as a Staff Attorney following her fellowship. Her focus is primarily on consumer, health, and family law.



#### Ms. Abigail Frank

Years: 2009 - 2011

Host Organization: Texas Civil Rights Project

City/State: Austin, Texas

Issue Area: Civil Rights

**Project Description:** Use education and litigation to give victims of domestic violence adequate language interpretation services so that they have meaningful access to courts and other essential services.

**Where Is She Now?** Ms. Frank remained with Texas Civil Rights Project (TCRP) as a staff attorney following the completion of her fellowship. Ms. Frank continues her work at TCRP to improve language access in a variety of settings including courts, hospitals, and jails.

#### Ms. Patricia Freshwater

**Years:** 2009 – 2011

Host Organization: Catholic Charities of Dallas

City/State: Dallas, Texas

**Issue Area:** Immigrant Populations

Co-Sponsor: Baker & McKenzie

**Project Description:** Establish a sustainable program of on-going legal representation and advocacy for the increasing numbers of immigrants in Texas who are targeted for ICE enforcement.

**Where Is She Now?** Following her fellowship, Ms. Freshwater opened Schwamkrug, Freshwater & Lopez PLLC, a private immigration law practice where she remains as a partner. Her practice is focused on immigration benefit services and representation of immigrants in court.\*

\*This data is derived solely through internet research. The Fellow did not respond to Equal Justice Works' efforts to obtain verification of the information.



#### Ms. Kristin Connor

Years: 2010 - 2012

Host Organization: Diocesan Migrant & Refugee Services

City/State: El Paso, Texas

**Issue Area:** Immigrant Populations

Co-Sponsor: Greenberg Traurig LLP

**Project Description:** Provide abandoned, abused, and neglected immigrant youth in West Texas and southern New Mexico a path to citizenship through legal advocacy, community outreach, and organizational capacity building.

**Where Is She Now?** Currently Ms. Connor is working with the Federal Public Defenders office in El Paso, Texas as a Research and Writing Specialist. She continues to work on her former fellowship project on a pro bono basis.

#### Ms. Celina Moreno

**Years:** 2010 – 2012

Host Organization: Texas RioGrande Legal Aid

City/State: San Antonio, Texas

Issue Area: Education

**Project Description:** Obstruct the school-to-prison pipeline in San Antonio and nearby areas by informing families of their rights, collaborating with schools, fostering policy reform, and offering direct representation.

**Where Is She Now?** Ms. Moreno remained at Texas RioGrande Legal Aid following the completion of her fellowship. She will continue working on school-to-prison pipeline issues, as well as education and juvenile justice cases more broadly.



#### Mr. Andrés Durá

**Years:** 2010 – 2012

Host Organization: The Equal Justice Center

City/State: Austin, Texas

Issue Area: Workers' Rights

**Project Description:** Provide innovative legal representation to open new access to the justice system in the San Antonio area for working poor people who labor in construction jobs and are denied the wages they have earned.

**Where Is He Now?** Following the completion of his fellowship, Mr. Durá founded a solo practice law firm in Austin, TX called The Law Offices of Andrés Durá, where he works with foreign entities looking to do business in Texas in order to solve their legal needs. A large focus of his work is developing strategic business plans and economic development models and consulting on the business effects of immigration matters.



## Texas Access to Justice Foundation's commitment continues to this day with the Foundation's current Equal Justice Works Fellows

Ms. Adriana Rodriguez

Years: 2011 - 2013

Host Organization: Texas RioGrande Legal Aid

City/State: Laredo, Texas

Issue Area: Immigrant Populations

**Project Description:** Provide legal representation and access to services for undocumented, Southwest Texans who are victims of intimate partner violence and who suffer from mental illness and substance abuse.

**From the Fellow:** "When I heard the Texas Access to Justice Foundation had agreed to support a project to increase access to legal services for undocumented survivors of domestic violence in Laredo, I was delighted. Just a year into the project, I am tremendously grateful for the chance to serve a vulnerable population in a geographically isolated part of South Texas. These survivors are amazing women who have much to contribute to their families and community. I feel very lucky to be a part of their path to independence. Thank you so very much."

#### Ms. Michelle Smith

Years: 2011 - 2013

Host Organization: Texas Civil Rights Project

City/State: Austin, Texas

Issue Area: Civil Rights

**Project Description:** End the Accidental Death Penalty for those confined in Texas jails, prisons, and detention centers through education, implementation, and advocacy.

**From the Fellow:** "On behalf of myself, the Texas Civil Rights Project, my clients, and the hundreds of thousands inmates across Texas: thank you, Texas Access to Justice Foundation. I am truly grateful and appreciative of the support the Texas Access to Justice Foundation has given me so that I may complete my Equal Justice Works project. Without you, I wouldn't have been able to respond to hundreds of inmate letters last year, or ensure that inmates get the healthcare and basic needs they deserve."



#### Ms. Meghan Kempf

Years: 2012 - 2014

Host Organization: Family Violence Prevention Services, Inc.

City/State: San Antonio, Texas

Issue Area: Domestic Violence

**Project Description:** Provide legal advocacy to victims of domestic violence to address the inadequate enforcement of civil family law court orders in San Antonio, Texas through litigation services and a community education program.

**From the Fellow:** "I would like to thank the Texas Access to Justice Foundation for sponsoring my Equal Justice Works fellowship with Family Violence Prevention Services, Inc. (FVPS). The sponsorship of the Texas Access to Justice Foundation provides me with the opportunity not only to deter violations of court orders regarding domestic violence, but also to enable victims and their families to attain stability and safety. I am very excited about the opportunity to build on FVPS's history of providing comprehensive rehabilitative services to victims of domestic violence in San Antonio."

#### Ms. Sarah Loeffler

Years: 2012 - 2014

Host Organization: Montgomery County Women's Center

City/State: Conroe, Texas

**Issue Area:** Domestic Violence

Co-Sponsor: The John M. O'Quinn Foundation

**Project Description:** Provide permanent legal solutions to victims of domestic violence in Montgomery County, Texas through direct representation, public education, and community involvement.

**From the Fellow:** "I want to thank the Texas Access to Justice Foundation and the John M. O'Quinn Foundation for making it possible for me to pursue my passion. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to address the lack of legal services for low-income persons as well as to address the multiple legal challenges facing victims of domestic violence. Through your support and belief in me, I am educating the community on legal issues facing victims of domestic violence and helping to further opportunities for much-needed free legal services for victims. Thank you so much for your generosity, for understanding the importance of providing legal assistance to those who have nowhere else to turn, and for giving me the opportunity to be a voice and advocate for those in need."



#### Ms. Christine Nishimura

Years: 2012 – 2014 Host Organization: Disability Rights Texas City/State: Austin, Texas Issue Area: Disability Rights Co-Sponsor: Greenberg Traurig LLP

**Project Description:** Provide legal advocacy and teacher and attorney training to ensure minority special education students at risk of the juvenile justice system receive academically and culturally appropriate literacy programs and other necessary special education services.

**From the Fellow:** "When I decided to leave teaching and go to law school, my main goal was to find a job where I could focus on both individual student success and systematic change of the American education system. I can say proudly that I have achieved my goal and I could not have done it without the Texas Access to Justice Foundation and Greenberg Traurig. Most recent law graduates do not have the opportunity to develop and implement their dream job right out of law school, but that is exactly what I get to do. As a staff attorney with Disability Rights Texas, I work directly with students, teachers, and school districts to provide minority special education students with a better education. TAJF has really made what seemed like the impossible come true. It is an honor to be chosen by TAJF as an Equal Justice Works Fellow. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for giving me the opportunity to pursue my dream!"

#### Ms. Keegan Warren-Clem

Years: 2012 - 2014

Host Organization: Texas Legal Services Center

City/State: Austin, Texas

Issue Area: Health Care

**Project Description:** Create a medical-legal partnership (MLP) in the underserved community of Dove Springs in Austin, Texas to assist patient-clients with legal issues causing or exacerbating their medical conditions.

**From the Fellow:** "I am very grateful to Texas Access to Justice Foundation for providing me with the opportunity to found the Austin Medical-Legal Partnership, through which I work to address socio-legal issues causing or exacerbating health problems. I wake up excited every morning about my "dream job"—about the chance to learn something new and help someone in need. Words cannot express my gratitude to TAJF for making my Equal Justice Works Fellowship possible, so I will keep it simple: Thank you."