



Department of
Public Interest



20

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Partnership Conference

September 23, 2026 - September 24, 2026

Strength and Resilience:
Advancing Justice in Challenging Times

2026 PARTNERSHIP CONFERENCE

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2026

Task Force Meetings being held at the New York State Bar Association.

12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	Legal Services Coalition Meeting
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.	DV & Family Task Force Meeting
2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Legal Services Access Alliance Meeting
3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	DAP Meeting
4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.	Pro Bono Coordinator's Network Meeting & Reception

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2026

8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Sign In – Registration
10:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.	Opening Plenary Forging Ahead: Finding Strength and Resilience in These Challenging Times

Credit: 1.0 MCLE Credit in Skills

Program Description: Practicing in 2026 and beyond requires a unique set of skills to address the cascade of additional challenges that our clients face due to enormous cuts to public benefits, high inflation, and inhumane immigration policies. Expertise in the law only takes you so far when the systems are stacked against both us and our clients. New and experienced legal services professionals are feeling the burdens of policies and venues.

In this keynote, the presenters will discuss what makes the systems we work within so challenging and why traditional discussions of self-care fall short. Presenters will also discuss how lived experiences and intersectional identities impact our experiences of this work.

11:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.	Lunch
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12:45 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	WEDNESDAY SESSION ONE
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Immigration Track: Beyond Standby Guardianship: Delivering Effective Family Preparedness Services for Immigrant Families

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credit Skills/Areas of Practice

Program Description: In response to heightened immigration enforcement and growing uncertainty for undocumented families, this workshop equips legal services providers with practical tools to support immigrant parents in planning for potential family separation.

DAP Track DAP 1: How to Effectively Present Mental Limitations in an SSI/Social Security Disability Appeal

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credit in Areas of Professional Practice

Program Description: This Disability Advocacy Program (DAP) session will focus on building a strong residual functional capacity (RFC) assessment – a key part of the disability analysis – for claimants with common mental impairments in Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability appeals. It will cover practical strategies for identifying impairments, reviewing the record for evidence of functional limitations, and translating mental health symptoms and findings into concrete work-related restrictions under SSA's framework.

Misc. Track: Learning from the Learners: Supervising Legal Writing in a New Era

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credit in Ethics & Professionalism

Program Description: Focusing on the “new wave” of attorneys who are graduating law school with classroom exposure to AI, this training will seek to understand what incoming attorneys are learning in school and how it differs from the way seasoned professionals were taught. These attorneys and supervisors do not have the same levels of fluency and comfort with these new tools. So, the question is how do we train legal services attorneys in the process and systems necessary for excellent - and ethical - client representation and advocacy, with a particular emphasis on writing? This training aims to bridge the gap in educational experiences while emphasizing the need for new attorneys to learn the critical thinking skills that are learned through the process of practicing law.

NON-CLE Program: Partnerships & Technology for Eviction Legal Help

Break

2:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.

2:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY SESSION TWO

DAP Track DAP 2: More Than Distracted: Effective SSA Advocacy for Clients with ADHD Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credits in Areas of Professional Practice

Program Description: This session provides a practical framework for developing and presenting Social Security disability claims based on ADHD. Presenters will cover the clinical profile of ADHD (including subtypes, co-occurring conditions, and documented underdiagnosis among girls, women, and BIPOC youth) alongside the SSA standards for Listings arguments and RFC assessments. The session gives particular attention to young adult clients, who often face treatment gaps, late diagnosis, and limited work history, and closes with concrete strategies for pre-hearing briefs and ALJ hearings.

Benefits Track: Fair Hearings in Practice: Tools, Strategies, and Due Process

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credit in Areas of Professional Practice

Program Description: This program will bring together Medicaid advocates and public benefits advocates to review and discuss changes in telephonic fair hearings. It will cover current telephonic procedures at the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (“OTDA”) and the proposed “call in” changes, the division of Medicaid appeal jurisdiction between NY State of Health (“NYSOH”) and OTDA, and the structure of the NYSOH appeals system, which is new to many advocates.

AGENDA

DV & Family Track: Litigating Cases Involving Cybercrimes and Technology Abuse: A Victim Centered Approach

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credits in Skills

Program Description: In OPDV and Sanctuary for Families' Litigating Cases Involving Cybercrimes and Technology Abuse: A Victim Centered Approach to' participants will learn to:

- Interpret and apply existing laws and statutes relevant to technology-facilitated gender based violence in New York State.
- Evaluate evidentiary standards and admissibility criteria for digital evidence in court proceedings.
- Develop case-building strategies that prioritize victim safety and incorporate survivor centered, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive approaches.
- Enhance courtroom advocacy skills to effectively present technology-related evidence and arguments
- Collaborate with state and federal law enforcement agencies and providers to ensure comprehensive support for survivors throughout the legal process.

NON-CLE Program: Growing Pro Bono Capacity: Aligning Recruitment Strategy, Outreach, and Technology

Program Description: As legal aid organizations engage volunteers across an increasing number of channels, coordinating outreach efforts, reducing duplicative work, and understanding which recruitment approaches are most effective have become growing priorities. As experienced volunteers retire, organizations are also seeking new ways to engage attorneys and law students and build sustainable volunteer pipelines. This session will explore how to effectively design opportunities that resonate with different audiences and manage recruitment across multiple channels.

Drawing on case studies from New York legal aid organizations, participants will explore how audience-targeted messaging and centralized pro bono management can support broader volunteer engagement while minimizing administrative burden. The session will include a live demonstration of Paladin and dedicated workshop time for participants to create an account and post a pro bono opportunity. Participants will learn how organizations can manage and distribute opportunities across multiple channels, including the New York Pro Bono Portal, law firm and law school networks, and their own websites. The session will also briefly address integrations with LegalServer and JusticeServer and how they can support more coordinated workflows.

3:30 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.

Break

3:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY SESSION THREE

Pro Bono Track: Community Legal Help Project and Lessons Learned from Pro Bono Management

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credit in Areas of Professional Practice

Program Description: This presentation will draw on the presenters' experience managing legal services programs staffed by pro bono attorneys to offer practical strategies for attracting, supporting, and retaining private attorney volunteers. The session will begin with a broad discussion of program structures that make pro bono participation easier and more rewarding, including the use of technology, agency administrative support, accessible clinic locations, remote participation options, and clear role expectations.

Wage & Employment Track: Home care by friends or family: the advantages and pitfalls of this Medicaid program.

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credit in Areas of Professional Practice

Program Description: This program will explore the New York State Medicaid Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (“CDPAP”), a New York State Medicaid program that allows Medicaid recipients who are eligible for home care services (“Consumers”) to choose their own caregivers (usually family or friends). We will explain the difference between this program and the traditional home care program where an agency assigns a PA.

The program will also cover Q&As on a wide range of topics from how to apply for the program, how eligibility and hours are determined, how to challenge these determinations or later terminations, and how personal assistants are paid. We will discuss the problematic transition in April 2025 from hundreds of fiscal intermediaries to one, Public Partnerships, LLC (“PPL”), and what advocates are doing to improve CDPAP.

Health Track: Hot Topics in Medicaid Advocacy and Eligibility

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credit in Areas of Professional Practice

Program Description: New York’s Medicaid program is undergoing rapid and complex transformation, with significant implications for eligibility, access to services, and advocacy strategy. For legal advocates supporting low-income New Yorkers, older adults, and people with disabilities, staying current is critical to ensuring clients can secure and maintain essential health coverage and community-based care.

This practical, advocacy-focused training will guide participants through the most recent Medicaid and Medicare developments and how they are playing out on the ground. We will begin with key policy updates, including emerging Medicaid work requirements, changes to financial eligibility rules, updates to the Nursing Home Transition & Diversion (NHTD) Waiver, evolving immigrant eligibility following HR1, and available pathways for uninsured individuals.

5:00pm – 6:00pm

Denison Ray Reception

6:00pm – 8:00pm

Denison Ray Civil Award Ceremony and Dinner

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2026

8:00 am – 9:00 am

Breakfast

9:00 am – 10:15 am

THURSDAY SESSION ONE

Housing Track: Good Cause Eviction Law

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credit in Areas of Professional Practice

Program Description: This training reviews the Good Cause Eviction Law (GCEL) passed in 2024. The law was effective in New York City immediately. Since April 2024, twenty-two other jurisdictions have opted into the law. Under the new Good Cause Eviction law, New Yorkers have the right to continue living in their homes without fear of unreasonable eviction or extreme rent increases. In many situations, tenants of market-rate housing are now covered by more expansive protections. In this training, participants will learn about the text and structure of the law, case law that has developed in last two years, and any unresolved questions about the law.

Immigration Track: Immigration Basics for Non-immigration lawyers

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credit in Areas of Professional Practice

Program Description: This panel will be geared towards non-immigration lawyers and will discuss immigration basics, recent policy changes and steps practitioners can take if a client is detained by DHS.

Consumer Bankruptcy Track: Get That House Back: Navigating Tax Foreclosure and Strategies to Protect domestic violence survivors who are facing foreclosure

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credit in Areas of Professional Practice

Program Description: When designing a tax foreclosure strategy, keep this question in focus: do our clients deserve the highest and best offers, or the worst and the least?

Our clients are vulnerable. If we stop pushing for the highest and best market values then we are a part of a system that is making them indigent - giving them the worst and least options to make their governments whole.

10:15 am – 10:30 am

Break

10:30 am – 11:45 am

THURSDAY SESSION TWO

DEI Track: Greener Where You Water It: Data-Driven Strategies to Combat White Supremacy Legal Services Organizations – Trying to swap with DV & Family Litigating Cases involving Cybercrime

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credits in Diversity, Inclusion, and Elimination Bias

Program Description: White supremacy is deeply embedded in all our systems, including civil legal services, and all organizations bear responsibility for proactively addressing it. In this interactive session, we will present benchmark data from several nonprofit legal services organizations that pursued anti-racism initiatives between 2020–2024. Participants will explore common challenges, pitfalls, and successes across the sector and receive concrete recommendations for improving their own organizational “green thumb” for racial equity work. Participants will receive copies of the benchmark report, worksheets and handouts to guide creation of actionable racial equity plans, and an introduction to the 6 D’s of organizational anti-racism leadership as a framework to strengthen the racial equity efforts within their own organizations and across the entire sector.

Health Track: Work Requirements in SNAP and Medicaid: Federal Changes, New York Impact, Advocacy Tools

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credit in Areas of Professional Practice

Program Description: H.R. 1 (Federal Public Law 119-21) makes unprecedented changes to Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), creating a federal work requirement in Medicaid for the first time and vastly expanding SNAP work requirements. These requirements threaten millions of New Yorkers with loss of access to basic health care and nutrition. This training will discuss the implications of H.R. 1's changes in work rules and explore with participants how they can assist their clients and the broader community to maintain these critical benefits. The program will describe the expanded work requirements for SNAP and the new "community engagement requirements" for Medicaid. We will provide participants with clear tools to determine who is subject to the requirements and who is exempt, and how individuals subject to the requirements can comply. The program will also anticipate problems and barriers in the implementation of work requirements and how they can be addressed.

Misc. Track: Artificial Intelligence & Public Interest Law: Do The Risks Outweigh The Reward?

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credits in Ethics & Professionalism/Cybersecurity, Privacy & Data Protection

Program Description: NYS civil legal service providers are increasingly using Artificial intelligence ("AI") tools, often informally, unevenly, and without clear guidance. While these tools promise efficiency, they also introduce significant legal, ethical, and governance risks that can undermine attorney-client privilege, create discoverable material, compromise accuracy, and expose organizations to consent-related issues.

This program examines four consequential risks of AI use in legal services: (1) erosion of attorney-client privilege through third-party platforms and data retention; (2) creation of discoverable material, including prompts, drafts, and digital exhaust; (3) accuracy and reliability risks, such as "hallucinated" or misapplied legal precedent; and (4) ethical and legal risks related to AI-assisted notetaking, recording, and transcription without clear disclosure or consent.

CAPITAL ROOM Non-CLE Program: Erie County Landlord-Tenant HUB Court. Experiences with centralized county wide eviction proceedings

Lunch

THURSDAY SESSION THREE

Education Track: Civil Rights and Special Education Enforcement in Schools in Light of Federal Uncertainties

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credits in Areas of Professional Practice

Program Description: In the wake of changes in civil rights and special education enforcement at the federal level, families and students in New York State are facing many uncertainties. This program will discuss the federal changes and offer solutions at the state level to help practitioners effectively advocate for clients facing civil rights and/or special education issues in school.

11:45am – 1:00 pm

1:00 pm – 2:15 pm

AGENDA

LGBTQ Track: Inclusive Advocacy: Excelling in LGBTQ+ Legal Representation and Working with LGBTQ+ Survivors

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credits in Diversity, Inclusion & Elimination of Bias

Program Description: This interactive program equips legal practitioners with the tools needed to provide culturally competent, inclusive, and effective representation to LGBTQ+ clients, and specifically to LGBTQ+ clients who are survivors of violence. The presentation is structured to provide a holistic perspective and will ground practitioners in why a trauma-informed, LGBTQ+ competent approach is essential to effective representation. Designed for attorneys of all experience levels, this session offers both foundational knowledge and practical strategies that can be immediately applied in legal practice.

Pro Bono Track: New Energy for Justice: Partnerships Between Legal Service Organizations and Law Schools to Meet New York's Legal Needs

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credit in Areas of Professional Practice

Program Description: New York communities face significant unmet legal needs across areas such as housing, immigration, consumer debt, family law, and access to public benefits. Simultaneously, law students seeking public interest experience and client skill development opportunities represent a tremendous resource in strengthening the state's pro bono and public interest ecosystem. This session brings together New York law schools and legal service organizations to explore how partnerships can expand capacity, respond to community needs, and help prepare future lawyers for service. Panelists will highlight innovative short- and long-term models, demystify how academic structures and pro bono requirements operate in practice, and discuss what students look for in a placement, fostering an important conversation about collaboration, sustainability, and access to justice using law student placements as a mechanism for expanded responses to New Yorker's unmet legal needs.

2:15 pm – 2:30 pm

Break

2:30 pm – 3:45 pm

THURSDAY SESSION FOUR

DEI Track: Building Inclusive Workspaces

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credits in Diversity, Inclusion, and Elimination of Bias

Program Description: The legal profession is seeing more openly transgender, non-binary, Two Spirit, and gender-expansive professionals than ever before. In today's political climate, which often frames gender diversity as "ideology extremism," organizations need concrete strategies to ensure these employees can thrive. This interactive session shares the top 20 practices that civil legal services organizations can implement to competently and confidently welcome, respect, affirm, and celebrate employees of all gender identities and expressions. Participants will leave equipped to assess their organization's current readiness, identify gaps, and take practical steps toward a safer, more inclusive workplace.

DV & Family Track: ABC's of QDRO's

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credits in Skills

Program Description: Our presentation, “ABC’s of QDROs”, will provide a nuts-and-bolts training for divorce practitioners who have not handled QDROs before. The training will explain the different types of retirement plans and retirement systems, as well as providing a step-by-step walk-through of how to approach a QDRO. The main takeaway is that the divorce settlement and QDRO go hand-in-hand, in order to protect important rights. The training will include a live drafting demonstration using online tools. Participants will receive model stipulation paragraphs and model QDROs for different types of plans.

Benefits Track: Non-Citizen Eligibility for SNAP, Medicaid; Public Charge and Related Concerns

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credits in Areas of Professional Practice

Program Description: This session provides training on immigrant access to public benefits, giving practitioners up-to-date guidance on eligibility rules for Cash Assistance, SNAP, and Medicaid, including changes that have been made are expected pursuant to H.R.1, as well as practical instruction on the anticipated new Department of Homeland Security public charge rule and its implications. Participants will leave with an understanding of how immigration status affects eligibility, resources for tracking ongoing rule changes, and clarity on which benefits may be considered in public charge determinations so they can help clients make informed choices while reducing the chilling effect caused by recent policy shifts.

3:45 pm – 4:00 pm

Break

4:00 pm – 5:15 pm

THURSDAY SESSION FIVE

Consumer Bankruptcy Track: New York Foreclosure Process and Divorce Intersections: Common Issues and Mitigation

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credit in Areas of Professional Practice

Program Description: This program explores the practical and procedural intersection of New York judicial mortgage foreclosure and matrimonial practice when the marital residence is in or near default. Using common case scenarios, presenters will walk through the foreclosure timeline and key statutory requirements (including RPAPL pre-foreclosure notices and CPLR 3408 settlement conferences) and then connect those issues to equitable distribution under DRL § 236(B), pendente lite motion practice, and settlement drafting. Attendees will leave with strategies to protect equity, minimize avoidable default/credit harm, and coordinate parallel proceedings to achieve durable outcomes for clients.

Housing Track: Litigating Source of Income Discrimination Cases

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credit in Skills

Program Description: This training provides a practical overview of litigating Source of Income (SOI) discrimination cases under local, New York City, New York State, and applicable federal law. Participants will examine the legal framework governing SOI discrimination, including available enforcement mechanisms through administrative agencies and the courts, as well as the remedies available to clients.

The program will focus on identifying and investigating SOI discrimination claims, developing evidence, and effectively collaborating with testers and fair housing organizations to strengthen cases. Presenters will also discuss strategic considerations in selecting the appropriate forum for enforcement and pursuing litigation.

Emphasizing practical advocacy, the training will highlight strategies for obtaining immediate injunctive relief, including temporary restraining orders and preliminary injunctions to prevent voucher loss, unlawful housing denials, and evictions. Through a case study and interactive discussion, participants will gain practical tools to effectively represent clients facing Source of Income discrimination and protect their access to stable housing.

Wage & Employment Track: Leveraging Generative AI in the Delivery of Legal Services: Practical Lessons from Reclamo AI in the Field of Workers' Rights

Credit: 1.5 MCLE Credit

Wage theft is a national epidemic, costing workers an estimated \$50 billion annually and disproportionately affecting low-wage workers, immigrants, women, and communities of color. This workshop will examine key trends in wage theft and explore how Reclamo AI—developed by Justicia Lab in partnership with the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)—leverages expert-driven legal knowledge and generative artificial intelligence to help workers prevent, assess and document workplace violations in New York State. Participants will learn how this mobile-first, multilingual digital assistant helps New York workers understand their workplace rights, assess whether harmful practices may be unlawful, and connect with trusted sources of assistance, offering an innovative and impactful model for expanding access to timely and accurate legal education. Presenters will discuss why and how Reclamo AI was developed, results to date, and practical insights for other access-to-justice technology initiatives seeking to responsibly leverage generative AI.

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