

Exemplary Community Integration Initiatives - Reports from the Field **Featuring: *The Parents with Psychiatric Disabilities Legal Advocacy Project***

The Parents with Psychiatric Disabilities Legal Advocacy Project (PPDLAP) in New York State advocates for parents facing challenges to their parental rights due to psychiatric disability. This statewide project is funded through the New York State Commission on Quality of Care and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (CQCAPD). The Urban Justice Center Mental Health Project (UJC) serves the project's downstate region that includes New York City, Long Island, and Westchester County. Legal Services of Central New York (LSCNY) serves the upstate region that includes the remaining 54 counties.

Parents with psychiatric disabilities are particularly vulnerable to loss of custody of their children and termination of their parental rights. The project was created to improve legal advocacy and, in turn, promote positive outcomes for families affected by psychiatric disabilities. PPDLAP mainly provides information and referral, education and training, advocacy support, and resources to parents and their attorneys, and other stakeholders including children's attorneys, community advocates, and the courts.

Through legal research, networking and community outreach, the project seeks to assess the scope of the issue and generate a clearinghouse of resources and information. In so doing, PPDLAP works to identify and address social and legal barriers particular to parents with psychiatric disabilities, and provide tools to remove or to overcome these barriers.

The project has also developed an education initiative to address the discriminatory language in New York's Social Services Law that allows for termination of parental rights on the basis of psychiatric or developmental disability.

For more information about The Parents with Psychiatric Disabilities Legal Advocacy Project (PPDLA) at Legal Services of Central New York, Inc. (LSCNY) and the Urban Justice Center Mental Health Project please contact: Christine Waters or Elaine Amory, Staff Attorneys, 472 S. Salina St., Suite 300, Syracuse, NY 13202; Telephone: 315-703-6500; Statewide toll-free: 866-475-9967; Fax: 315-475-2706; TTY (for speech/hearing impaired): 315-475-3120 or 866-475-3120 and Charlyne Brumskine Peay, Staff Attorney, Urban Justice Center Mental Health Project, 123 Williams Street, 16th Floor, New York, NY 10038; Telephone: 646-602-5673, Fax: 212-533-4598; Website: www.urbanjustice.org.