

# CBA Launches New Pro Bono Program: Lawyers in the LGBTQ+ Center

By EMILY A. GIANQUINTO

**T**he CBA's roster of pro bono opportunities grew this year with the addition of "Lawyers in the LGBTQ+ Center." Once a month, volunteer lawyers meet for 20 to 30 minute sessions over a three-hour period with members of the LGBTQ+ community to provide advice and counsel on legal issues. While the program currently operates in one location in Norwalk, its organizers hope to expand to other cities across the state and to offer expanded time slots for the meetings, perhaps by introducing virtual meeting options.

The program came out of discussions between Jenna Cutler, co-chair of our LGBT Section, and Rachel Simon, executive director of Triangle Community Center (TCC) in Norwalk. TCC provides programming and resources that nurture growth and connection within the LGBTQ+ community throughout the state. While TCC's Care Coordination

its members with legal assistance in a friendly environment.

The clinic, which is held on the third Thursday of each month from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., got up and running quickly. Cutler and Simon met to discuss the program late last fall, after the election; the LGBT Section's proposal was approved

judgment. While not every issue was within the volunteers' knowledge base, every client received guidance on their next steps or was connected to a queer friendly practitioner in the relevant practice area.

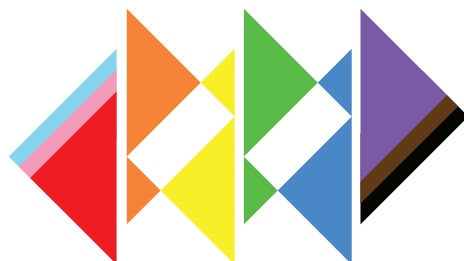
If this all sounds familiar, it's because the clinic is modeled after the CBA's Law-

yers in Libraries program, which has expanded to 10 libraries across the state. Cutler said she hopes to have the same success with this program: "Ideally, I'd like to have

a clinic in at least Norwalk, New Haven, and Hartford. We're starting out slower for now to see the response and get a foundation built."

"For the legal community, what's nice is that these are short time slots, especially once we get set up to do some of them by Zoom, so it's not a big time commitment," Cutler said. "Also, the malpractice insurance is through the CBA, so volunteers know they're covered."

Clients for the clinic are currently secured through TCC's network and word of mouth. "The challenge for now in terms of growth is that our program is really engrained in the legal community versus the broader queer community," Cutler said. "We're working on promoting this outside of the bar association, to more community groups and locations." The LGBT Section worked with CBA



## Triangle Community Center CT

by the CBA in early February, and the first session was held in February. While walk-ins are welcome, advance signups, handled by TCC, guarantee clients spots in the three-hour sessions. Six people signed up for that first session, seeking advice on issues concerning immigration, second-parent adoption, employment and housing discrimination, and designating healthcare proxies from two volunteer attorneys. Seven people

signed up for the March session, seeking counsel on similar issues as well as end of life planning and information about who to collect on a small claims

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team currently facilitates name and gender marker changes and supports clients through navigating many systems, it was looking to more directly connect

staff to create a flyer promoting the program, and Cutler also recently wrote an article about the first clinic in *The Hartford Times*.

Members can get involved in several ways:

- **Volunteer to staff a clinic in Norwalk.** If you're interested but can't make the trip to Norwalk, please let them know anyway, so they can build a roster of volunteers for future geographic expansion or Zoom consult sessions.
- **Volunteer to accept referrals on specific legal issues.** Cutler said immigration is a particular need, and TCC has some limited funding available to assist its members in paying some minimal fees for consultations with immigration lawyers given the current demand for their services.
- **Identify queer-friendly community spaces or organizations** in other areas of the state that might be willing to host a monthly clinic session.
- **Promote the program in your communities.**

Any help members can offer is valuable. "While this clinic might seem narrow in that it only pertains to one community, the issues are so vast and they change so frequently, especially with the current administration's actions, that the work is really cutting edge," Cutler

said. "And even a short consult like this has a big impact for these clients, because it's in a safe space with friendly advisors."

If you're interested in getting involved in this new program, please email Jenna Cutler at [JCutler@barclaydamon.com](mailto:JCutler@barclaydamon.com) or reach out to CBA Access to Justice Director Jenn Shukla. ■



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**LAWYERS** in the  
**LGBTQ CENTER**

3rd Thursdays from 3-6pm  
650 West Ave, Norwalk CT

**A monthly program offering free volunteer legal services in 20-30 minute appointment slots for LGBTQ+ folks seeking legal counseling support.**

**Walk-ins welcome but RSVPs encouraged to guarantee your spot.**