

Developing An Employment Practice in a Legal Services Program
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Targeting types of cases

- ★ Addressing employment barriers that keep people out of jobs (criminal records, child abuse or neglect records, disabilities; disparate impact based on race).
- ★ Assisting workers who need medical leaves of absence or who are fired because of illness (particularly using the Family and Medical Leave Act, the single most underrated tool of legal services advocates).
- ★ Remediating cases of worker exploitation (wage claims, misclassification of workers as independent contractors, immigrant workers' problems).
- ★ Helping workers and their dependents obtain employment-related benefits (employer-provided disability benefits, pensions for workers and their survivors, unemployment compensation).
- ★ Removing threats to workers' right to continue working in their profession (occupational license challenges and alleged patient abuse cases).

Developing an employment law clientele

- ★ Ask clients who present other issues about their employment problems (especially welfare, housing, bankruptcy).
- ★ Look for cases in your unemployment compensation practice.
- ★ Distribute client education materials.
- ★ Train client groups, social service agencies, and others about the employment rights of low income people.
- ★ Look for group clients interested in employment issues.
- ★ Talk with other legal services programs doing employment work (get on NELP's employment rights e-group).

Integrating employment law into the other work of the program

- ★ Involve casehandlers who practice in related areas (welfare being the most obvious, but we have seen consumer and family lawyers have an affinity for employment law).
- ★ Look for areas of unit overlap (welfare advocacy, EITC).
- ★ Give your staff some education on low income employment law issues.
- ★ Encourage your intake staff to identify employment issues.