

PsychRights

Work Plan

The work plan can be broken down into four basic segments: (1) Individual Representation, (2) Technical Assistance ("How To" Manual), (3) Coordination/Networking/Public Education, and (4) Budget Implementation.

1. Individual Representation

The Law Project, either directly through its own staff attorney or via volunteer (pro bono) attorneys, will represent individuals diagnosed with serious mental illness faced with unwarranted court ordered medication proceedings. Unsuccessful trial court cases with superior prospects for creating "good law" on appeal will be appealed. A key component to successful litigation is to have expert witnesses available to counter the experts employed by the hospitals, usually staff psychiatrists. It is the Law Project's intent to provide expert witness fees, as it can, to appropriate litigants.

2. Technical Assistance

The Law Project is developing a set of reference materials (legal and scientific) for use by litigants in their efforts to enforce their legal rights to prevent unwarranted forced medication plus other forced treatment. The legal material will primarily be sample legal pleadings, research, articles on specific topics and suggested approaches for various issues. The scientific material will include copies of papers and studies with analysis. The Law Project's Website, <http://psychrights.org/>, is the primary vehicle for the efficient dissemination of these materials. In addition, people requesting technical assistance, including advice on strategy and help in preparing legal documents can call the Law Project's personnel for such assistance.

3. Coordination/Networking/Public Education

The third element of the Work Plan is to provide coordination and networking services for litigants to connect with potential attorneys and experts in their locale as well as public education. A list or database of potential attorneys, both paid and pro bono, will be actively sought and kept. Similarly, a list of appropriate potential expert witnesses will be developed. Lastly, it is believed a public education campaign is necessary to ultimately achieve legal success because judges have the same unfounded fears and prejudices against people diagnosed with mental illness as the populace at large. The Law Project's role in this is to also provide coordination services and scientific information in this public information campaign.

4. Budget Implementation

The annual budget to put these pieces in place is almost \$300,000, with a one time capital expenditure of \$25,000 (See enclosed Budget). The elements described above will be rolled out in a prioritized manner as fiscal resources permit. Initial funding will thus go to such things as representation costs (Westlaw first and then primarily expert witness fees), educational materials and supplies. Until funding is sufficient to hire personnel, volunteer efforts are anticipated. Jim Gottstein is spending the majority of his time on the Law Project as a volunteer. Jim does not anticipate taking a fee for such services, but it is essential that the identified staff positions be filled to make this program a fully effective effort.