

PLACEMENT NAME:

Empire Justice Center

1) A brief statement about your office generally (e.g., mission, jurisdiction, size, nature of practice, etc.)

Mission

To protect and strengthen the legal rights of people in New York State who are poor, disabled or disenfranchised through: systems change advocacy, training and support to other advocates and organizations, and high quality direct civil legal representation.

Our Goal | Our Long-term Vision

To be the statewide leader working to achieve social and economic justice for people in New York State who are poor, disabled or disenfranchised.

Empire Justice is a statewide, multi-issue, multi-strategy public interest law firm focused on changing the “systems” within which poor and low income families live. With a focus on poverty law, Empire Justice undertakes research and training, acts as an informational clearinghouse, and provides litigation backup to local legal services programs and community based organizations. As an advocacy organization, we engage in legislative and administrative advocacy on behalf of those impacted by poverty and discrimination. As a non-profit law firm, we provide legal assistance to those in need and undertake impact litigation in order to protect and defend the rights of disenfranchised New Yorkers.

We Teach the Law - Building Community.

Legal services attorneys and other community-based advocates are all too often overwhelmed and their agencies under-funded. They strive to meet the basic, everyday needs of their clients and often feel they do so in isolation. By providing legal training, backup support and technical assistance to these agencies, we build a sense of strength and community across the state and are building a strong core group of advocates who are better equipped to serve their clients.

We Improve the Law - Demanding Fairness.

For poor and low-income families, government policies are often at the core of their lives. Public policy determines whether they have access to food, shelter, child care, employment and health care. Government policies on minimum wage, public assistance, food stamps, child care and fair housing are critical to these families struggling to meet their most basic needs. For those living with disabilities, government policies go even further, often determining not only their access to basic necessities, but literally, their access to public places and their ability to participate fully in society. By engaging in “systems change advocacy,” we use the legislative, administrative and judicial arenas to level the playing field, to ensure that rights are protected, to literally change the systems that affect our clients and all New Yorkers.

We Practice the Law - Securing Stability.

It has been proven that access to legal assistance translates into long-term stability and benefits for low-income individuals; legal services advocates get to the root of societal problems, which leads to systemic change, which can help stabilize not just individual families, but the communities in which they live. Legal assistance can also provide a powerful impact on individuals. By providing direct legal representation our advocates are able to save a family’s home when they’re faced with foreclosure, secure critical educational supports for a child struggling from learning disabilities, and ensure quality child care so that parents can go to work knowing that their children are safe.