

**NOMINATION FORM**  
**2011 ANNUAL NCWBA PUBLIC SERVICE AND**  
**OUTSTANDING MEMBER PROGRAM AWARDS**

**Name of project and whether submission is for Public Service award or Outstanding Member Program award**

CNYWBA Domestic Violence Law Clinic, Public Service Award

**Name of sponsoring women's bar association**

Central New York Chapter of the Women's Bar Assoc. of the State of NY

**Address**

PO Box 408, Syracuse, NY 13201

**Number of members** 120

**Name and position of contact person**

Heidi White McCormick, President, Central New York Women's Bar Assoc

**Address of contact person (if different than that of sponsoring group)**

Syracuse University College of Law, 287 White Hall, Syracuse, NY 13244

**Telephone/E-mail**

(315) 443-1310 hamccorm@law.syr.edu

**The nomination materials may be e-mailed to be received no later than  
Friday, January 28, 2011:**

*Annie J. Wang, NCWBA Awards Chair*

*Wormser, Kiely, Galef & Jacobs LLP*

*E-mail: awards@ncwba.org*



## CENTRAL NEW YORK WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION

A CHAPTER OF THE WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK  
P.O. Box 408, Syracuse, NY 13201-0408

December 8, 2010

National Conference of Women's Bar Associations  
Attn: Annie J. Wang, NCWBA Awards Chair  
PO Box 82366  
Portland, OR 97282-0366

Dear Members of the Public Service Award Committee:

On behalf of the Central New York Women's Bar Association, I am proud to nominate our Domestic Violence Law Clinic for the 2011 National Conference of Women's Bar Associations' Public Service Award.

The Central New York Women's Bar Association (CNYWBA) was created in 1980 by Karen DeCrow, then President of the National Organization for Women, and other dynamic women attorneys in Syracuse, New York. The CNYWBA is a chapter of the Women's Bar Association of the State of New York and maintains a membership of approximately 120 attorneys from Syracuse, NY and its surrounding areas.

In 1995, the CNYWBA led by Therese Dancks, Esq., developed a pro bono legal clinic for victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse through collaboration with Vera House, Inc., a non-profit agency that provides shelter and advocacy services to victims of violence in Onondaga County. Since then, approximately 30 attorneys from the Central New York Women's Bar Association volunteer their time and expertise to provide brief advice and legal information to women seeking assistance at Vera House.

The law clinic is held every Monday night from 5:00-8:00 pm at the administrative offices of Vera House. Clinic appointments are made through Vera House administrative staff prior to the evening of the clinic and there are three 45-minute slots available for each clinic. Volunteer attorneys are scheduled for a weekly rotation on the clinic calendar by the CNYWBA Pro Bono Projects Director. The clinic calendar is created for six months at a time, enabling volunteers to plan for their scheduled rotation in advance.

At the clinic, volunteer attorneys provide information and referral, primarily on issues of family and matrimonial law. Volunteer attorneys provide Family Court petitions, assistance completing pro se divorce papers, and information about the legal system. On average, the clinic provides legal assistance to 50-60 victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse each year. The vast majority of victims seeking assistance from the clinic are women with children. The Pro Bono Projects Director, a CNYWBA board member, administers the clinic and organizes an annual training for new and continuing volunteer attorneys. The training provides free CLE credits on issues that relate to the legal clinic, including family law and bankruptcy. A Vera House volunteer staffs the front desk at Vera House during the legal clinic

to admit the volunteer attorney and scheduled participants into the building.

Below are suggested steps for other bar associations to create a similar clinic:

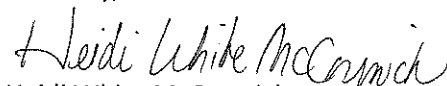
1. Develop a partnership with a local domestic violence/sexual assault agency. This agency will be able to make appropriate referrals to the clinic as well as provide training in domestic violence/sexual assault sensitivity for the volunteer attorneys.
2. Determine malpractice insurance coverage. The volunteers will need adequate malpractice coverage to feel comfortable providing assistance at the clinics. Many bar associations or volunteer lawyer projects are able to provide malpractice insurance for volunteers doing pro bono work.
3. Create forms to track clinic data on how many clinic participants access the service each week. This data will help determine the success of the clinic. You may also need a form for clinic participants to sign acknowledging that they understand that they are receiving brief information only and not obtaining the representation of the volunteer attorney.
4. Recruit and train volunteer attorneys. Offer a free CLE training program to entice attorneys to participate.
5. Establish a clinic schedule and provide the schedule to the volunteers with as much advance notice as possible. Also provide volunteers with a contact list so that they can switch with others on the schedule as needed or find a replacement if they are unable to attend on their scheduled night.
6. Advertise the availability of the clinic with the population regularly served by the non-profit partner. Ensure that all staff members of the non-profit are aware of the law clinic and how their clients will be able to access it. Provide trainings for non-profit staff if necessary.
7. On an annual basis, acknowledge the volunteers for their dedication to the pro bono project.

The partnership that CNYWBA has forged with Vera House over the last fifteen years has enabled both organizations to enhance their services – Vera House is able to offer their clients access to lawyers to discuss their urgent legal questions and the CNYWBA is able to offer its membership an opportunity to engage in meaningful public service to the community.

Enclosed, I have provided a letter of support from Randi K. Bregman, the Director of Vera House, Inc. In addition, the Women's Bar Association of the State of New York has chosen to support our nomination for this award. A letter of support from the WBASNY President, Deborah Weisman-Estis, is also enclosed.

It is with great pride that I nominate our Domestic Violence law clinic for the Public Service Award and I believe that you will find our program to be a worthy candidate for this award. Please contact me at [hamccorm@law.syr.edu](mailto:hamccorm@law.syr.edu) if you require further information on this nomination.

Sincerely,



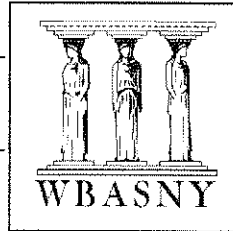
Heidi White McCormick

President

Central New York Women's Bar Association

Enc: Support letters (2)

**Women's Bar**



**Association**

OF THE STATE

OF NEW YORK

**PRESIDENT**

Deborah Weisman Estis

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Linda A. Chiaverini

December 9, 2010

National Conference of Women's Bar Associations

Attn: Annie J. Wang, NCWBA Awards Chair

PO Box 82366

Portland, OR 97282-0366

Re: CNYWBA Domestic Violence Law Clinic Nomination for Public Service Award

Dear Members of the Public Service Award Committee:

On behalf of the Women's Bar Association of the State of New York (WBASNY), I am honored to support the nomination of the Central New York Women's Bar Association's Domestic Violence Law Clinic for the NCWBA Public Service Award.

WBASNY is the largest statewide bar association dedicated to promoting the advancement of women in the legal profession and the status of all women in society. WBASNY is comprised of more than 3,800 members from eighteen chapters across New York State. The Central New York Women's Bar Association (CNYWBA) is a chapter of our organization.

The CNYWBA Domestic Violence Law Clinic is an excellent example of women's bar members working together to promote the status of women in their community. In the fifteen years that this clinic has been serving the Central New York community over 700 domestic violence victims, primarily women, have been provided legal information and assistance. The dedicated work of the clinic volunteers is inspiring to our profession and deserving of recognition.

It is with great enthusiasm that WBASNY supports the nomination of the CNYWBA Domestic Violence for the NCWBA Public Service Award and I believe that you will find their program to be an excellent candidate for this award. Please contact me at info@wbasny.org if you would like further information on this nomination or the Women's Bar Association of the State of New York.

Very truly yours,

Deborah Weisman-Estis

President, WBASNY



October 28, 2010

National Conference of Women's Bar Associations  
PO Box 82366  
Portland, OR 97282-0366

Re: CNYWBA Domestic Violence Law Clinic Nomination for Public Service Award

Dear Members of the Public Service Award Committee:


On behalf of Vera House, Inc., a non-profit agency providing comprehensive domestic and sexual violence services, I am honored to support the nomination of the Central New York Women's Bar Association's Domestic Violence Law Clinic for the NCWBA Public Service Award.

In 1995, the CNYWBA led by Therese Dancks, Esq., developed a pro bono legal clinic for victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse through collaboration with our agency. Since then, approximately 30 attorneys from the Central New York Women's Bar Association volunteer their time and expertise to provide brief advice and legal information to individuals seeking assistance at Vera House.

Volunteer attorneys are scheduled for a weekly rotation on the clinic calendar by the CNYWBA Pro Bono Projects Director. On average, the clinic provides legal assistance to 50-60 victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse each year.

I have personally witnessed the tremendous impact that the CNYWBA's volunteer program has on the individuals who receive information and referral. Many times a person comes to the clinic with a lot of misinformation and inaccurate messages from an abusive partner about their legal rights. It is not unusual for victims and survivors to go into an appointment with the attorney looking overwhelmed and afraid, and emerge with a smile on their face and a newfound confidence, simply from the compassionate, informative services of the CNYWBA volunteer.

It is with great enthusiasm that I support the nomination of the CNYWBA Domestic Violence for the Public Service Award. Please contact me at rbregman@verahouse.org or (315) 425-0818 if you would like additional information. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
  
Randi K. Bregman  
Executive Director

dedicated to  
ending domestic  
& sexual violence

6181 Thompson Road / Suite 100 •  
Syracuse, NY 13206 •  
phone: 315-425-0818 •  
fax: 315-425-8942 •  
www.verahouse.org •

**24-Hour Crisis & Support Hotlines**

#315-468-3260 (Domestic Violence)

#315-422-7273 (Sexual Assault)

**Administrative & Program Office**

Advocacy Program

Coalition

Community/Youth Education

ECHO

New Directions

Volunteer Program

Youth Counseling Services

#315-425-0818

**Emergency Shelter**

#315-468-3260

**Alternatives Program**

#315-425-0901

**TTY Crisis Line**

#315-484-7263 (business hours)

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