

**NOMINATION FORM
2013 ANNUAL NCWBA PUBLIC SERVICE AND
OUTSTANDING MEMBER PROGRAM AWARDS**

Name of your organization's project:

Know Your Rights!

Please indicate whether your submission is for the Public Service Award or Outstanding Member Program Award: Public Service Award

Name of sponsoring women's bar association:

Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts (in conjunction with Women's Bar Foundation of Massachusetts)

Name of Sponsoring Organization's contact person:

Patricia Comfort

E-mail address: pcomfort@womensbar.org

Telephone No: 617.973.6666 x2218

Number of members: 1,600

Name of contact person for purposes of award notification:

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PLEASE MAKE SURE TO NOTIFY THE NCWBA OF ANY CHANGE IN YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION AFTER SUBMISSION OF YOUR AWARD APPLICATION TO ENSURE YOU RECEIVE TIMELY NOTIFICATION REGARDING WHETHER YOU HAVE BEEN SELECTED TO RECEIVE AN AWARD.

The nomination materials may be e-mailed to be received no later than Thursday, January 31, 2013: *Awards Chair Wendy Weigler, E-mail: awards@ncwba.org*

**Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts
Nomination for
NCWBA 2013 Public Service Award**

Introduction and Project Description:

The Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts (WBA) nominates its Know Your Rights! program (KYR!) which was co-sponsored with its charitable, sister organization, the Women's Bar Foundation of Massachusetts (WBF). Modeled after a similar undertaking by the South Asian Bar Association of Greater Boston, the goal of KYR! was to provide education on legal matters to leaders of local non-profit organizations that serve low-income women and their families. The non-profit leaders completed a nine-month course consisting of legal issues relating to housing, family law, employment, education, immigration and criminal law.

Founded in 1978 by a group of activist women lawyers, the WBA is one of the oldest women's bar associations in the country. Committed to the full and equal participation of women in the legal profession, the WBA works to achieve its mission through committees and task forces, and by developing and promoting a legislative agenda to address society's most critical social and legal issues. The WBA began as an all-volunteer organization, hiring its first paid staff in 1992. Today the WBA has a professional staff of three full-time-equivalent employees, boasts a vast membership (approximately 1,600) of accomplished women lawyers, judges, and law students across Massachusetts, and includes more than two dozen regional, affinity group, and substantive committees. Sought after by the press as an expert on women's legal issues, listened to in the legislative arena, and looked to for guidance in its amicus briefs, the organization has grown in its influence within the Massachusetts legal community. The WBA serves as a clearinghouse of information for its members through a weekly email ("Week in Preview"), as well as through the Women's Bar Review (a bi-monthly newsletter), and the annual *Chronicle* magazine.

The Women's Bar Foundation of Massachusetts (WBF) is the charitable sister organization of the WBA and indeed, grew out of the WBA. It was founded in 1993 to provide *pro bono* legal assistance to low-income individuals, primarily women and children. Like the WBA, the WBF started out as an all-volunteer organization. Today, the WBF has a professional staff of three full-time-equivalent employees and a volunteer attorney pool of 400. It manages five *pro bono* projects: The Family Law Project for Battered Women; The Elder Law Project; The Hampden County Housing Court Project; The Women's Lunch Place Project and The Framingham Project for Incarcerated Women.

Narrative:

The Inspiration

The project was inspired by a June, 2011 meeting of affinity bar leaders with members of the Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission. The discussion centered on finding ways for affinity bar groups to reach out to and work with their communities to improve access to justice. During that meeting, the South Asian Bar Association of Greater Boston (SABA GB) detailed its pilot KYR! which was created to educate members of the South Asian community about basic legal rights and to strengthen their professional and personal connections. Following the meeting, Access to Justice Commissioner Susan Finegan collaborated with the WBA and WBF to develop its own KYR! While

the focus of the SABA GB program was the South Asian community, the WBA/WBF program concentrated on educating the leaders of local non-profits, whose low-income clients are primarily women and children. The concept was that the basic legal knowledge gained through the nine-month course would result in the non-profit leaders being better positioned to serve their clients.

Curriculum and Faculty

The goal of the KYR! curriculum is to provide non-profit leaders some fundamental knowledge to provide to their clients in areas of the law that are most likely to affect their clients' lives and to point those clients to legal services when appropriate.

Launched in February, 2012 with an inaugural lunch and remarks by the Honorable Ralph D. Gants, Associate Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts, the course ran through November, 2012 with no classes scheduled in June, July and August. The syllabus was as follows:

February – Navigating the Court System. Faculty: Hon. Antoinette E. M. Leoney, District Court of Massachusetts.

March – Housing Rights. Faculty: Barbara Zimbel and Stefanie Balandis, Greater Boston Legal Services.

April – Family Law. Faculty: Rachel Biscardi, Women's Bar Foundation; Naomi Mann, U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights and Manisha Bhatt, Greater Boston Legal Services.

May – Labor and Employment Rights. Faculty: Krista Pratt, Biogen Idec; Thomas Smith, Justice at Work and Lydia Edwards, Brazilian Immigrant Center.

September – Immigration. Faculty: Bee Mandell, Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo, P.C. and Heather Yountz, Law Office of Samia Chandraker.

October – Educational and Juvenile Rights. Faculty: Jeff Richards, Children's Law Center; Elizabeth Sanghavi, Sanghavi Law Office and Phil Cantanzano, U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights.

November – Criminal Law and Criminal Offender Record Information Issues. Faculty: McKenzie Webster, Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo, P.C.; Pauline Quirion, Greater Boston Legal Services and Lisa Edmonds, Cape Cod and Islands District Attorney's Office.

Participants

In this pilot program, there were 15 participants all of whom had a limited knowledge of the legal system. Participants were identified by our partner in this endeavor, One Family, Inc., a coalition of non-profit organizations committed to ending family homelessness.

The Director of Services for the Boston Center for Independent Living
The Executive Director of City Life/Vida Urbana
The Executive Director of Compass Working Capital
The Vice-President of Public Policy for Crittenton Women's Union

The Legal Advocacy Specialist for HarborCOV.org
The Director of Finance and Administration for Heading Home
The Program Manager for Heading Home
The Housing Search Director for HomeStart, Boston
The Housing Search Director for HomeStart, Cambridge
The Director of Mass Policy and Advocacy for Horizons for Homeless Children
The Director of Shelter, Stabilization & Prevention for Housing Families
The Director for One Family Scholars Program, One Family, Inc.
The Program Manager for Traveler's Aide
The Case Manager for Traveler's Aide
The Manager of Operations for the Executive Office for the Lynn Housing Authority

Logistics

Each class session was held from 12:00 to 1:30 p.m. in the Boston offices of Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo, P.C. (Mintz). The law firm generously donated its space, lunch for all of the participants and faculty, as well as several of its attorneys who were instrumental in coordinating each session. The first half hour of each session was set aside for participants to eat lunch and interact with one another with the goal of strengthening their relationships.

The faculty for each session had one hour of teaching time. Nearly all presentations were done by PowerPoint and each faculty member was encouraged to bring hard copies of material that would be useful "take aways" for the participants. Ahead of each session, the Mintz coordinators facilitated a conference call with the participating faculty.

Results

On November 27, 2012, participants in the KYR! pilot program attended a graduation held at Mintz. Speaking at the graduation, Sue Finegan, Chair of the *Pro Bono* Committee at Mintz said, "The primary goal of the Know Your Rights! program was to provide you, the participants, with the tools you need to serve your clients more effectively. Your active involvement in the program and your routinely positive feedback throughout the course both indicate that we have met that goal."

Conclusion

By all accounts (see participant comments, attached), the WBA and WBF's KYR! was highly successful. The program offered its participants legal information that would assist them in working with their low-income clients more effectively.

The WBA and WBF have decided to offer another KYR! beginning in September, 2013. The plan is to record all of the sessions and make them available via WebEx or an alternate type of technology that will allow participants to attend from their own computers. The organizations are in the final stage of putting together a KYR! "blue print" so that women's bar associations across the country can replicate the program in order to improve access to justice for low income women and their children.

Examples of Participant Comments on WBA/WBF's Know Your Rights! Program

“Thanks so much for this great program. You provided a great service!”

“It was great and very informative, and the subject matter was terrific.”

“The speakers were very knowledgeable and practical, easy to understand, and avoided jargon.”

“Great training, very helpful information. Appreciated client examples, it brought the presentation to a new level and was easy to understand.”



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Know Your Rights! Pilot Program Launches

BOSTON, MA – On February 28, 2012, a "Know Your Rights!" pilot program was launched by the Women's Bar Association and Women's Bar Foundation of Massachusetts in conjunction with One Family, Inc. (a nonprofit that is dedicated to ending family homelessness), and with support from the law firm of Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo, P.C. The goal of the program is to provide education on legal matters to leaders of local non-profit organizations that serve low-income women and their families.

This program will consist of monthly classes on legal issues relating to housing, family law, employment, education, immigration and Criminal Offender Record Information. The non-profit participants include the Boston Center for Independent Living; City Life/Vida Urbana; Compass Working Capital; Crittenton Women's Union; HarborCOV; Heading Home; HomeStart; Horizons for Homeless Children; Housing Families; One Family, Inc.; Project Hope; Traveler's Aide; and the Lynn Housing Authority. The initiative aims to bring together organizations to share knowledge and strengthen connections, both professionally and personally, and provide an open forum for discussion. The series was modeled after a similar undertaking by the South Asian Bar Association.

WBA President Nancy Cremins remarked, "The WBA and WBF are honored by the opportunity to work with One Family in providing knowledge and resources to some of the most vulnerable people in our society – the very people who most need the protection of the legal system. We are grateful to Mintz, Levin for sharing our commitment to increasing access to justice and for its generous support of the program."

At the kickoff celebration, Supreme Judicial Court Associate Justice Ralph D. Gants, the Co-Chair of the Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission spoke to the group about the importance of sharing legal information with members of our community most in need of counsel. After the festivities, the participants got down to work at their first session, "Navigating the Court System," taught by Hon. Antoinette E. M. Leoney, District Court of Massachusetts.

If you have any questions, please contact the Executive Director of the WBA and WBF, Pattye Comfort at pcomfort@womensbar.org, the President of the Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts, Nancy Cremins at nancy.cremins@gesmer.com or the Director of Public Relations at Mintz Levin, Gina Addis at gaddis@mintz.com.



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Know Your Rights! Participants Graduate

BOSTON, MA – On November 27, 2012, participants in a “Know Your Rights!” pilot program attended a graduation ceremony at the law firm of Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo, P.C. marking their successful completion of the nine-month course. The program was launched in February 2012 by the Women's Bar Association and Women's Bar Foundation of Massachusetts in conjunction with One Family, Inc. (a nonprofit that is dedicated to ending family homelessness), and with support from Mintz Levin. The goal of the program was to provide education on legal matters to leaders of local non-profit organizations that serve low-income women and their families.

Modeled after a similar undertaking by the South Asian Bar Association of Greater Boston, the Know Your Rights! program consisted of monthly classes on legal issues relating to housing, family law, employment, education, immigration and criminal law. The initiative aimed to bring together organizations to share knowledge and strengthen connections, both professionally and personally, and provide an open forum for discussion.

Speaking at the graduation ceremony, Sue Finegan, a member of the Know Your Rights! planning team and Chair of the Pro Bono Committee at Mintz Levin, stated that “The primary goal of Know Your Rights! Program was to provide you, the participants, with the tools you need to serve your clients more effectively. Your active involvement in the program and your routinely positive feedback throughout the course both indicate that we have met that goal.”

If you have any questions, please contact the Executive Director of the WBA and WBF, Pattye Comfort at pcomfort@womensbar.org or the Director of Public Relations at Mintz Levin, Gina Addis at gaddis@mintz.com.