

News: Call for Justice (Minnesota 2015)



Call for Justice, LLC is an innovative non-profit in Minneapolis that seeks to improve access to justice by connecting low-income people to existing legal resources, in partnership with United Way 211 and others. Through collaboration and training, Call for Justice has been able to leverage the 211 system to connect people to the right kind of legal help when they need it, as well as to expand pro bono services. In 2015 they were awarded the prestigious *Louis M. Brown Award for Legal Access* from the American Bar Association's Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services. You can read about more details [from the founder in a blog post on Richard Zorza's Access to Justice Blog \(acesstojustice.net\)](#).

"Call for Justice is marshaling the talent and capacity of our legal providers to streamline processes and solve issues....Thank you again for creating this powerful network and advocacy within the Twin Cities."

--C4J Community Collaborator

The goal of Call for Justice is to close the Justice Gap by increasing access to the civil legal system for low and moderate-income individuals and families living in Hennepin and Ramsey Counties. Underlying this goal is the idea that equal justice should be just that: equal for people regardless of their social or financial standing. It is our belief that access to the civil legal system--and the ability to communicate with a lawyer in legal situations where basic human needs are at risk--is a fundamental human right.

We do this three ways:

- First, through our Legal Liaison Program, C4J trains social service providers statewide on how to make effective referrals to the array of available legal resources on behalf of their clients. This “train the provider” model avoids duplication and leverages existing resources while maximizing impact through transfer of knowledge from providers to people in need.
- Secondly, C4J provides referrals to callers from around the state seeking legal resources. We are a statewide clearinghouse of all available legal resources of all forms, ideally positioned to provide targeted, expert referrals to an array of resources. We keep careful metrics on incoming calls, and know that, for example, of 552 calls received as of December 2016, two-thirds of calls came from within the metro area, and the legal matters most commonly asked about (family/custody and housing) mirror national data on the justice gap as reported by the Legal Services Corporation.
- Third, C4J innovates new ideas and ways of delivering legal resources, and facilitates collaborations among legal service providers and communities in need. Our key position spanning both social service and legal service sectors allows us to identify gaps and opportunities for partnership, then to catalyze effective collaborations. C4J believes in the power of connecting, communicating, and collaborating to best resolve the complex problems people face. At best, we are conveners; we bring people together to learn and connect for the best interests of low-income people seeking justice.

The Justice Gap is not simply a poor person's problem. When access to the civil legal system depends on one's financial and social standings, then everyone is at risk of being caught in the Justice Gap. Today, people who had never thought about losing their jobs or homes have done just that. The reality is that in today's economy, it's entirely possible to fall from the top to the bottom rung almost overnight. If that happens, there's a real risk of entering the Justice Gap.

In a variety of ways, Call for Justice works to eliminate the Justice Gap for low and moderate-income individuals and families. Success will require the help of the community at large, as well as collaborations and thinking-outside-the-box by legal and court professionals. Together, we can close the Justice Gap.

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