



The Legal Aid Society
EMPLOYMENT LAW CENTER



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Alhambra High School's Moor Field Opens After Landmark Title IX Case Settlement A Field of Dreams Comes True for Female Athletes

(ALHAMBRA, CA) – The fight is over, and now the games can begin. Today, the plaintiffs in a landmark class action lawsuit celebrated their victory at the official opening of Moor Field, site of the new softball facilities at Alhambra High School. They joined the high school's girls' varsity softball team on one of the two new fields built as part of the settlement of the case, which enforced Title IX, the 1972 law mandating equality in athletic opportunities, facilities, and coaching for both male and female students. While there are rampant Title IX violations at the elementary and high school level, few are ever reported or corrected. The young women, who battled the separate but unequal facilities for girls in their school district for years, see the case's successful settlement as their legacy to future student-athletes at Moor Field.

"These new softball diamonds are more than just places for girls to play ball," said Lauren Cruz, plaintiff in the case and former member of the Alhambra High School girls' softball team. "They are symbols of the school's commitment to treating girls fairly and giving us the same respect that the boys have gotten all along. It is our right to play, and it feels good to have our rights recognized. This is something that's been a long time coming and I am very happy with the outcome of the fields. The girls' softball program is expanding and with these wonderful changes come better opportunities for succeeding generations to play ball."

The girls were joined by their counsel, Vicky Barker of the California Women's Law Center (CWLC), and Patricia Shiu, Claudia Center, and Elizabeth Kristen of the Legal Aid Society - Employment Law Center (LAS-ELC). The CWLC and the LAS-ELC brought the groundbreaking lawsuit on behalf of the Alhambra High girls for injunctive relief under Title IX and other federal and state anti-discrimination statutes. Title IX bars sex discrimination in education, including athletic programs, and the lawsuit demanded that the school and city officials increase sports opportunities offered to girls in the district. It required that new teams be added and that the disparity in athletic benefits be rectified by providing females with facilities, equipment, practice, and competition times equal to their male classmates.

After two years of litigation, the city and school district settled the lawsuit. The two new softball fields for female athletes at Alhambra High School have amenities comparable to the current boys' baseball fields. In addition, the girls received a new team room and exclusive access to a locker room that was previously reserved for boys. They also enjoy equal access to all shared facilities, including weight rooms and the gym. .

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“Title IX changes girls’ lives for the better,” said Elizabeth Kristen, LAS-ELC Staff Attorney. “The key is to make sure girls are allowed to benefit from the discipline and fun of sports throughout all of their years in school. The problem is that violations of Title IX have become so routine as to be considered tradition at the pre-collegiate level. That has to change.”

“These girls are very brave,” said CWLC’s Legal Director, Vicky Barker. “Title IX has been law for over 35 years, yet the animosity and challenges that girls face at the hands of administrators, who cherish a status quo that gives deference to sports like football, is robbing girls of their rights. The benefits of sports participation in the lives of young women are tremendous. When girls are denied the chance to play, their opportunity for future success in the classroom, at the university, at the office, and in life are greatly diminished.”

In 1972, Title IX mandated that all public and private educational institutions receiving federal funds could no longer practice sex discrimination against their students and employees. The law benefits both males and females in their athletic and scholarly endeavors and is crucial to efforts to create gender equity in schools.

The benefits of participation in sports for young girls extend beyond fitness and competition. Girls who play sports earn better grades and demonstrate higher self-esteem than those who do not. They are also more likely to graduate from high school and attend college. Female athletes are less likely to smoke, abuse drugs, or become pregnant during their teenage years. Skills gained from sports participation, including teamwork, leadership, and discipline, are crucial as women progress in the corporate world at higher levels than ever before. Eighty-percent of female managers of Fortune 500 companies have played organized sports on some level.

The Legal Aid Society of San Francisco - Employment Law Center and California Women’s Law Center are innovators in pursuing Title IX violations at the high school level.

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The Legal Aid Society - Employment Law Center, founded in 1916, is the oldest legal aid organization in the West. It is committed to protecting the rights and economic self-sufficiency of low-income and disadvantaged workers and their families throughout the Bay Area, California, and nationwide. The LAS-ELC provides a continuum of assistance, including community legal services, educational materials, technical assistance to other groups, and direct legal representation. It is nationally recognized for its legal advocacy programs that address racial equality; gender equity; immigration and national origin, and disability rights.

Since its founding in 1989, the California Women's Law Center has worked in collaboration with others to defend, secure and advance the comprehensive civil rights of women and girls. CWLC has unparalleled expertise in strategies to protect women's rights with programs to empower individuals to use the law to address the societal and legal issues that perpetuate ongoing gender inequity, women’s health issues, reproductive justice and violence against women.

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