



CALIFORNIA
WOMEN'S
LAW CENTER

2021
ANNUAL REPORT

Pursuing Justice
in a Pandemic

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A Message from the **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



For more than three decades, CWLC has assisted some of the most vulnerable people in our state. Now, many of these same individuals have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic as well as federal and state court rulings, and are in even more urgent need of legal support.

The burdens of COVID-19 landed heavily on women and families. More women than men lost work during the pandemic and have jobs that are anticipated to come back the slowest. Women were more likely to shoulder the additional roles of teacher and caregiver, and the incidence of intimate partner violence rose as women were forced to shelter in place with abusers. Women of color were particularly affected and continue to experience the greatest economic and health hardships.

Faced with this crisis, CWLC responded. We trained more attorneys to help women seeking domestic violence restraining orders, we engaged in lawsuits protecting the legal rights of survivors of sexual assault, and we increased our work supporting women on the brink of homelessness. These are diverse and evolving needs. Our three-pronged role as trainer and educator, policy advocate, and litigator ensures we have the tools necessary to adapt and address critical needs which are especially important in uncertain times.

Although a more fair and emphatic administration is currently in the White House, state legislative actions and court decisions at all levels of government and across the country have underscored the uncertainty of women's legal rights. California remains a leading advocate for women's rights nationally, and we will steadfastly continue to seek and enact policies that reflect California's ideals.

The support from our donors and allies continues to inspire us. We are deeply grateful to those who share our commitment to justice, and we hope we can count on your ongoing generosity as we break down the barriers to gender equality so painfully spotlighted by COVID-19. We remain resolute in our commitment to pursuing justice for women and girls, and look forward to building a more just post-pandemic world together.

In appreciation,

Betsy Butler

Executive Director

California Women's Law Center

TRAINING ADVOCATES AND EDUCATING WOMEN

CWLC regularly provides training for legal professionals around California, helping attorneys become stronger advocates for women and girls. We also hold a variety of public events to empower community members with information about their legal rights. While this work is always important, it has been of critical importance during the pandemic. Your support allows us to step up when our community needs us the most, allowing us to bring these resources online and expand our audience in California and beyond.

Exposing Deep Inequities in NCAA Sports

Title IX sought to ensure gender equality in school sports by 1978. Yet, despite this strong statute, interpreting regulations and case law, women continue to trail men in school athletics by all measurable criteria. This includes opportunities to play, scholarship dollars, and treatment.

CWLC and our partners at Champion Women performed an in-depth analysis of data from the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act, and the results show discrimination growing at an alarming rate. This is costing women dearly. Playing sports has lifetime benefits, and 18 to 22-year-old female athletes should not have to bring lawsuits against their schools in order to be treated fairly. Responsibility rests with administrators and athletic departments, and our data findings underscore the importance of CWLC's enforcement—even during exceptional times. More than 7,000 people viewed our online discussion on this topic, featuring attorneys and Olympic and professional athletes. Find the full data report at titleixschools.com.



Only **24** colleges and universities in California are in compliance with Title IX. Nationally, **90%** of universities and colleges discriminate against women in sports.



14,011 women are currently missing out on sports opportunities at schools in California. Nationally, NCAA institutions would need to provide an additional **148,030** opportunities to match the ratio offered to men.



\$35,742,785 in athletic scholarships are being denied to female students in California. Nationally, women miss out on **\$1 billion** in athletics scholarships annually.

Women cannot escape discrimination. Data shows it is not isolated to specific conferences, competitive levels, or geographic regions.



LEGAL TRAININGS

CWLC helps legal professionals understand how to effectively apply laws and regulations to benefit women and girls. As different needs emerged during the pandemic, CWLC offered timely expert trainings on a range of urgent topics. Since 2020, we have focused on domestic violence restraining orders, equal pay laws, the future of Title IX, gender equity in sports during COVID, the rights of pregnant and parenting students, reproductive rights, and housing discrimination.

SAFE & AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Many women suddenly found themselves without jobs during the pandemic and needed legal guidance to stay housed and avoid homelessness. In addition to our trainings on gender discrimination and housing, CWLC continued to hold regular housing clinics for renters to connect with attorneys specializing in tenant rights. As soon as the pandemic began, we immediately moved our clinics online, added more clinics each month, and hired additional staff to help address housing concerns of Los Angeles residents.

ENFORCING POLICIES THAT PROMOTE GENDER EQUITY

Good public policy is only effective when it is enforced. CWLC works to ensure that laws protecting the civil rights of women and girls are passed, implemented, and operating as intended. With your support, CWLC is able to work with lawmakers in Sacramento to advance state policies, as well as monitor laws to make certain they are implemented effectively. Advocacy requires bringing attention to key issues impacting women and girls, and we are proud to frequently collaborate with inspiring partners to host public events that elevate the continued need for gender equity.

Designed to Deceive: A Study of the Crisis Pregnancy Center Industry in Nine States

While high profile legislative and legal battles threaten reproductive health care around the country, the proliferation of Crisis Pregnancy Centers (“CPCs”) is quietly threatening abortion access.

In 2021, CWLC partnered with The Alliance: State Advocates for Women's Rights and Gender Equality to release a report exposing the anti-abortion practices used by CPCs across the country, including in California. These groups lure vulnerable pregnant people to their offices using deceptive marketing practices, then subject patients to anti-abortion and inaccurate medical information instead of offering legitimate health care and resources. Frequently targeting low-income women and people of color, CPCs systematically mislead clients and provide few or no real medical services. This level of deception can cause delays in care and result in unnecessary health risks. The report recommends several actions California can take to protect women and increase the accountability and transparency of CPCs. These include prohibiting the administration of, and referrals for, the unproven and potentially dangerous “abortion pill reversal” and other false or misleading information about reproductive care, and expanding the application of the California consumer protection statute.

A Few Facts About CPCs

1

The number of Crisis Pregnancy Centers in California (185) is 20% higher than the number of health centers offering abortion care.

2

A majority of CPCs in California make false or biased medical claims about pregnancy and abortion. CPCs in California are more likely to share deceptive information about abortion than CPCs in other states.

3

Most CPCs in California do not provide medical care and are not staffed by licensed medical professionals—yet they still receive federal and state dollars for their services.



BREASTFEEDING ACCOMODATIONS

In 2021, CWLC released our "ABCs of Breastfeeding Report Card" which expands the previous work we did in Los Angeles County analyzing lactation accommodation policies in 414 public school districts across California. Federal and state laws require workplaces and schools to provide appropriate breastfeeding accommodations, and compliance is crucial for supporting new parents and school staff in pursuing their educational and professional goals. When CWLC initiated this report card in 2019, the average grade for California school districts was a C, indicating inadequate support for students and employees. CWLC helped California school districts improve their compliance and success in sharing this information, ultimately raising grades statewide to an A or B in 84% of the districts. We will continue to work with non-compliant school districts to raise their grades to meet the needs of women and girls.

PUBLIC EVENTS

The pandemic highlighted existing gender inequities and CWLC responded by taking our events online by convening several forums to discuss issues impacting women and girls. Since 2020, we collaborated with several inspiring leaders on a range of topics including conversations with Congressmembers Katie Porter and Adam Schiff, Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis, activists Dolores Huerta and Lilly Ledbetter, and the Los Angeles Sparks WNBA Team.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

CWLC filed an amicus brief in the U.S. Supreme Court in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, opposing Mississippi's 15-week abortion ban. We outlined the disproportionate financial and psychological harm this law would cause to low-income women forced to travel in order to obtain an abortion. This case marked the first time the Court ruled on the constitutionality of a pre-viability abortion ban since the landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973. In 2022, this case was used to overturn nearly fifty years of legal precedent and strip women of their constitutional right to abortion. CWLC, along with the majority of Americans, vehemently opposes this decision. We are committed to seeing women's legal rights restored.

LITIGATING FOR JUSTICE

CWLC avoids lengthy and costly trials whenever possible, but when necessary, we litigate. By focusing on impact litigation, we bring justice to plaintiffs and set legal precedent to benefit future generations of women and girls across California. This work is often done in partnership with other law firms, and we remain grateful for the generous support and commitment these partners extend to CWLC.

Double Victory for Girls' Softball

In 2021, CWLC reached settlements in two Title IX athletics cases, both in San Diego County. At Vista High School, the girls' softball team had inferior facilities, equipment, and treatment compared to the boys' baseball program. Our litigation resulted in a new softball field with upgraded dugouts, bullpens, bleachers, and an electronic scoreboard, and the District agreed to increase their sports offerings for girls to ensure equitable treatment.

In a second gender-based athletic agreement, CWLC enforced the City of Santee's compliance with AB 2404, the Fair Play in Community Sports Act. This law mandates gender equity in youth sports hosted by public agencies, including Parks and Recreation Districts. As a result of CWLC's efforts, Santee will improve their softball facilities and construct two new fields. The agreement also stipulated that the City's Park and Recreation District collect data on participation levels, and assess program funding, equipment, scheduling, practice times, and coaching.

In both cases, CWLC proudly co-counseled with our partners at Legal Aid at Work.



Title IX prohibits gender discrimination in educational institutions that receive federal funding.

CWLC enforces Title IX in 3 significant ways:

- By advancing equity in sports
- By protecting pregnant and breastfeeding students from discrimination
- By holding schools accountable for enabling environments where gender-based violence and harassment prevent women and girls from learning

In 2021, we submitted comments to the U.S. Department of Education urging the prompt reinstatement of protections. While we await new regulations in 2022, we applaud the Biden administration's issuance of a new interpretation affirming that gay and transgender students are indeed protected under Title IX.

SEXUAL ASSAULT & HARASSMENT

Schools are legally responsible to provide safe learning environments for every student, no matter their gender. In 2021, CWLC filed a brief with the California Supreme Court to grant review of the Court of Appeal's decision in *Boermeester v. Carry*, arguing that victims of gender-based violence should not be forced to undergo cross-examination by the students accused of abusive activity against them and currently facing expulsion. Disciplinary proceedings can be fair without enacting criminal trial procedures. A procedural system which imposes onerous requirements only in gender-based harassment and assault cases propagates the harmful narrative that survivors are untrustworthy and perpetrators need extra protection from "false" allegations.

We also filed an amicus brief in support of Jane Roe, a former college student who was not notified when her assailant's three-year suspension from school was lifted due to a writ of petition he filed in state court without the victim's knowledge. Ms. Roe was not informed that her attacker was seeking to overturn the school's decision, and she was therefore excluded from proceedings. Survivors deserve to be informed about proceedings related to their own sexual assault cases, and we argued this point in *Jane Roe v. John Doe and Regents of the University of California*.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

CWLC worked with allied organizations to successfully argue at the California Court of Appeal that mutual restraining orders can jeopardize a survivor's right to custody, discourage her from seeking other forms of support, and even motivate abusers to use mutual restraining orders as a discreditation tactic. The Court's ground-breaking precedential opinion lifted the restraining order on the plaintiff in this case, and cautioned against allowing implicit bias to affect the judiciary's perception of survivors.

In a separate matter, CWLC again joined allied organizations to support a survivor's ability to seek safety in undisclosed locations without jeopardizing their legal standing. In this case, an abuser was able to get a default judgment against a woman who was sheltering in a confidential place and therefore could not be served with court papers. This judgment included an extremely harmful allegation of immigration fraud. CWLC argued that courts should grant motions to set aside default judgments in instances where domestic violence survivors cannot be located because of their flight from violence.

FINANCIALS

July 1 - June 30

Last year, attorneys
donated over

1,011 hrs.

of pro bono legal support
to CWLC and the women
we serve

CWLC works with a
network of highly skilled
attorneys who generously
contribute their expertise
to assist our legal efforts
on a pro bono basis

Pro bono legal efforts
totaled more than

\$635,600

of in-kind donations
last year

	FY 19-20	FY 20-21
TOTAL ASSETS	\$3,154,543	\$3,918,614
EXPENSES		
Program Services	\$1,056,429	\$1,203,424
Rent & Utilities	\$68,309	\$62,049
Fundraising	\$57,452	\$62,534
TOTAL	\$1,182,190	\$1,328,007
REVENUE		
Court Awarded Fees & Rewards	\$69,532	\$67,266
Grants & Contributions	\$581,727	\$717,991
Donated (In-Kind) Legal Services	\$463,036	\$635,617
Other Revenue	\$149,046	\$503,553
TOTAL	\$1,263,341	\$1,924,427
ASSETS		
Total Liabilities	\$141,107	\$308,758
Net Assets	\$3,013,436	\$3,609,856
TOTAL	\$3,154,543	\$3,918,614
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	\$81,151	\$596,420

SUPPORTERS

We gratefully acknowledge our generous supporters and thank you for your ongoing partnership in the pursuit of justice for women and girls.

Pursuing justice with gifts of **\$10,000 and above**

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