



MESSAGE FROM  
ATTORNEY GENERAL ERIC HOLDER AND  
DIRECTOR OF THE DOMESTIC POLICY COUNCIL CECILIA MUÑOZ



Civil legal aid providers can make a substantial difference when it comes to preventing veterans from experiencing homelessness, or helping children graduate from school, but many social service providers and government policymakers are not aware of their potential positive impact. To address that information gap, the White House Domestic Policy Council (DPC) and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) convened a “Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable” (Roundtable) to explore ways in which civil legal aid can support Federal efforts to promote access to health services, housing, education, employment, family stability and community well-being. Staffed by the Access to Justice Initiative — a DOJ office launched in 2010 to help spearhead national efforts to expand access to civil legal aid and criminal indigent defense — the Roundtable involves 17 collaborating Federal agencies.

These agencies have been working diligently to determine which programs that help the vulnerable and underserved could be more effective and efficient, and produce better outcomes for Americans, if legal services were among the range of supportive services provided. The Roundtable has three main objectives: 1) to identify federal funding streams at agencies that could achieve improved outcomes and more efficiently reach their goals by adding civil legal aid partners; 2) to identify opportunities where civil legal aid partners can collaborate with agencies more generally, outside of the grant-making process; and 3) to identify and do away with unintended barriers that can prevent civil legal aid providers from becoming grantees, subgrantees, or partners in Federal initiatives.

The Roundtable’s work is premised on the recognition that applying the power of legal services to meet Federal objectives creates more opportunities for Americans to grab the next rung on the ladder out of poverty. Our communities are strengthened when lawyers help veterans secure benefits for which they are eligible, assist families navigating school disciplinary hearings to lessen the time children are away from school, and secure protective orders so victims escape domestic violence. In short, legal services can transform lives for the better, and there is a role for the Federal Government to play in helping to ensure access to these critical services.

To facilitate this important work, the DOJ Access to Justice Initiative website will now feature the “Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable Toolkit,” an online resource guide containing useful information about civil legal services, and how those services can help advance a broad array of Federal objectives. The Toolkit will help further engage the legal services community, and will identify for both legal service providers and Federal agencies the program areas where legal service providers’ work can add the most value, including by listing examples from across the Federal Government of grants and activities that engage civil legal aid.

The Toolkit, available at [www.justice.gov/atj/legalaid](http://www.justice.gov/atj/legalaid), will be a dynamic resource that will continue to be updated and refined as we identify additional opportunities for enhanced partnerships with the civil legal aid community.

We look forward to the work ahead.

Sincerely,

Eric H. Holder, Jr.  
Attorney General

Cecilia Muñoz  
Assistant to the President and  
Director of the Domestic Policy Council

## Co-Chairs of the Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable

U.S. Department of Justice

White House Domestic Policy Council

## Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

Corporation for National and Community Service

U.S. Department of Agriculture

U.S. Department of Education

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

U.S. Department of the Interior

U.S. Department of Justice

U.S. Department of Labor

U.S. Department of the Treasury

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Legal Services Corporation

National Science Foundation

Office of Management and Budget

Social Security Administration

White House Domestic Policy Council