



## Examining Right to Counsel in D.C. Family Court

Summer Associate Project Exchange

### Single or Multiple Opportunities

Single

### Organization Name

Mother's Outreach Network

### Background

Mother's Outreach Network is spearheading a project examining how the absence of a right to counsel in family law proceedings in Washington, D.C. produces racially disparate outcomes.

### Scope of Work

Examine how the absence of a right to counsel in D.C. family law proceedings produces racially disparate outcomes and develop structural reform recommendations.

### Timing

End of summer deadline.

### Jurisdiction

District of Columbia

### Contact Information

Please contact Paul Lee ([plee@step toe.com](mailto:plee@step toe.com)) and Natallya Velev ([natallya.velev@ropesgray.com](mailto:natallya.velev@ropesgray.com)) if you'd like to be assigned to this project.

### Description

Mother's Outreach Network is spearheading a project examining how the absence of a right to counsel in family law proceedings in Washington, D.C. produces racially disparate outcomes. The project analyzes how facially

neutral policies enable different parts of the family court and related administrative systems to operate in silos, allowing actions in one setting to undermine protections in another, often to the detriment of family integrity. This dynamic is most acute where favorable custody outcomes are destabilized through parallel abuse and neglect proceedings or related administrative actions. The project will synthesize legal analysis, case patterns, and practitioner insight to develop guiding principles and structural recommendations for aligning court and agency practices. The analysis will serve as the foundation for a working paper and practical guidance to support the convening of a cross-division committee within the D.C. Superior Court.

For purposes of this project, family law proceedings will include not only civil protection, domestic relations, and abuse and neglect matters before the courts, but also relevant administrative proceedings whose actions shape, trigger, influence, or intensify involvement with the judicial system. The analysis and recommendations should also consider pathways for implementation through court rule, administrative regulation, practice standards, and legislation, with the goal of advancing the transformation and unification of family court and related processes so that these systems operate cohesively to support, rather than undermine, the stability of children and their parents.

Subtasks (0)

Reminders(1)

1 day(s) before