

Children's Law Center

Cultural Humility Pro Bono Training

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Roadmap



CLC Pro Bono Program



Cultural Humility



Practice Tips



Key Takeaways

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CLC Pro Bono Program

About Children's Law Center



WE REACH
1 out of 9 children
IN DC'S POOREST
NEIGHBORHOODS EACH YEAR



WE HAVE LAWYERS ONSITE AT
6 health clinics
ACROSS DC TO HELP FIND
AND FIX BARRIERS TO HEALTH



WE HAVE SERVED
**30,000 children
and families**
SINCE 1996



WE PARTNER WITH MORE THAN
500 pro bono lawyers



WE PARTNER WITH DISTRICT
AGENCIES, THE DC COUNCIL
AND COMMUNITY LEADERS TO
FIND OR IMPLEMENT
city-wide solutions
THAT BENEFIT ALL DC KIDS

Children's Law Center fights so every child in DC can grow up with a loving family, good health and a quality education. Judges, pediatricians and families turn to us to advocate for children who are abused or neglected, who aren't learning in school, or who have health problems that can't be solved by medicine alone.

CLC Pro Bono Cases

Family

- ◆ Caregiver Custody
- ◆ Custody Guardian *ad Litem* (GAL)

Health

- ◆ Housing Conditions

Education

- ◆ Special Education

Supporting Pro Bono Attorneys



Screening
CLC thoroughly screens clients when assessing cases for pro bono placement to ensure the case is a good fit for a pro bono attorney.



Training and Resources
CLC offers in-person and online training and an abundance of resources on our website, including model pleadings, training materials and videos.



Mentoring
Experienced CLC attorneys mentor our pro bono lawyers. Mentors provide initial case recommendations, discuss strategy and legal issues, and remain available throughout the duration of the case.

On Demand Resources

Pro Bono



Though Children's Law Center is the largest non-profit legal provider in DC, many more children come to us than we can help. We are honored to partner with more than 500 pro bono attorneys every year from the area's top law firms, in-house legal departments and government agencies to help fill the gap.

If you are a pro bono attorney, we hope you will partner with us. We provide world class mentorship, training and written materials to help attorneys feel more comfortable navigating new areas of law. In addition to gaining valuable trial skills, we promise that you will be deeply touched by your experience – because our cases are life changing.

Want to learn more about becoming a pro bono lawyer for Children's Law Center? [Check out our FAQs](#) and sign up to [join our mailing list](#)! Closing a case? [Click here](#).

For information on how to partner with us, please contact Jen at JMasi@ChildrensLawCenter.org.

Resources >

Fact Sheets

Pleadings

Training Manuals

Training Presentations & Videos

Other



Meet Our Mentors



Pro Bono Partners



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Cultural Humility

Cultural Humility

- ◆ The process and practice of increasing self-awareness concerning implicit and explicit biases by:
 - ◆ learning about other cultures and
 - ◆ unlearning stereotypes that impede one's ability to genuinely engage with another person



Why are we addressing this?

-
- ◆ **Attorneys have legal expertise and provide clients with critical assistance in navigating legal issues**
 - ◆ **To reach a positive outcome for the client, we must acknowledge:**
 - ◆ **Our race, culture, and life experiences that we bring to our relationship with the client and how they impact our advocacy**
 - ◆ **Our clients are the experts in their lives and cultures, which requires that we listen and learn**

Goals and Grounding Norms

Goals

- Define and explore what cultural humility means in our pro bono cases
- Share practice tips and key takeaways

Grounding Norms

- Encouraging active participation
- Respecting every participant's form of engagement to maintain an inclusive training environment

What does cultural humility entail?

Lifelong Learning

- Critical and ongoing self-reflection
- Acknowledgment of your culture, life experiences
- Recognition that everyone is a complex multidimensional being whose culture impacts thoughts, beliefs, actions, interactions

Client Expertise

- Acknowledgement of client as expert in their life
- Respect for client culture, life experiences, family system

Accountability

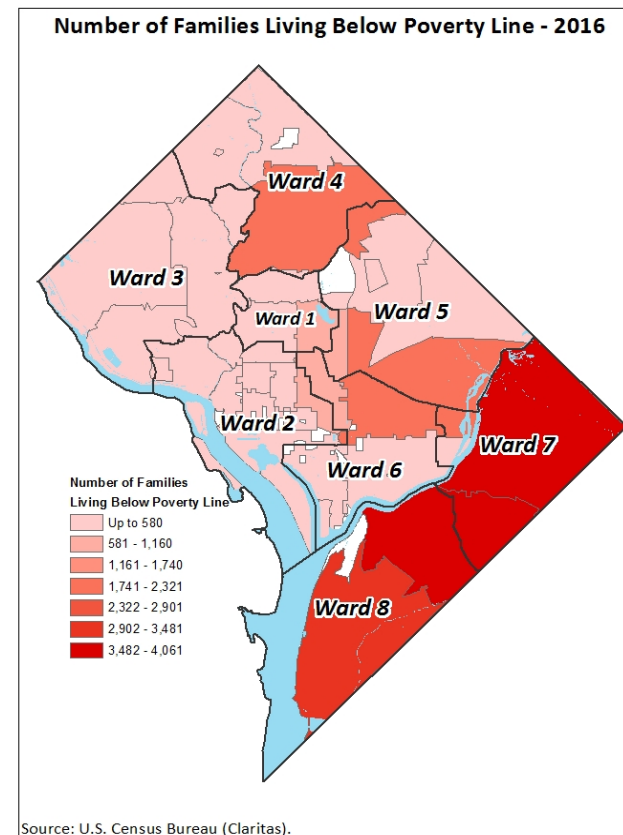
- Responsibility
- Intentionality
- Consideration

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CLC Clients

Who do we serve?

- ◆ Predominantly Black and Brown children, parents, and caregivers living in poverty in D.C.
- ◆ Intersection of race and poverty



Key Definitions

- ◆ **Systemic Racism**
 - ◆ The policies and practices entrenched in established institutions, which result in the exclusion or promotion of designated racial groups.
- ◆ **Anti-Black Racism**
 - ◆ The intentional devaluation and exclusion of Blackness that is formed by voiding Blackness of its value, while also systematically marginalizing Black people and their issues. It speaks to the unique ways in which discrimination, violence, and harm imposed upon, and specifically impacts Black people.
- ◆ **Intersectionality**
 - ◆ The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group.

Issues Impacting Families



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Invisible Knapsack Exercise

Question 1

- ◆ How many items did you mark off as having experienced as a privilege?
 - ◆ 0-10
 - ◆ 11-20
 - ◆ 21-35
 - ◆ 35-50

Question 2

- ◆ How many items did you mark off as never having experienced as a privilege?
 - ◆ 0-10
 - ◆ 11-20
 - ◆ 21-35
 - ◆ 35-50

Question 3

1.
 - ◆ Which feelings initially rose to the top while doing the activity?
 - ◆ Guilt and shame
 - ◆ Anger and frustration
 - ◆ Surprise, shock, interest
 - ◆ Uncertainty/confusion
 - ◆ Apathy
 - ◆ Other (*participants have permission to enter any feelings that aren't listed in the chat*)

**What is
poverty?**

**2020 Poverty Guidelines for the 48
Contiguous States and the District of
Columbia**

Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline
1	\$12,760
2	17,240
3	21,720
4	26,200
5	30,680
6	35,160
7	39,640
8	44,120

Snapshot

- ◆ 1 in 5 DC residents (and 1 in 4 children) live at or below poverty line (\$26,200 for a family of 4)
- ◆ 1 in 5 DC children have asthma – tenfold difference between NW and SE quadrants
- ◆ At least 5,000 DC children have unmet mental health needs

The Impact of Poverty

- ◆ Poverty creates stressors that ripple throughout the family
 - ◆ Increases risk of trauma
 - ◆ Impacts daily functioning
- ◆ Public systems that deliver services are difficult to navigate and services are often inadequate

Scarcity

- ◆ Not having enough
 - ◆ Impacts decision-making
- ◆ “Tunneling” - sacrificing to prioritize most urgent needs while neglecting other important needs

“We are emphatically not saying that poor people have less bandwidth, quite the opposite. We are saying that all people, if they were poor, would have less effective bandwidth.”

Sendhil Mullainathan and Eldar Shafir, Scarcity, Why Having Too Little Means So Much (2013)

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CLC Cases

What does
cultural
humility
mean in
practice?



What is your role?

Best Interest (GAL)

- Attorney recommends what is in child's best interest, which requires careful consideration of child's life, circumstances, and family
- What child wants is important factor to consider

Stated Interest (Caregiver, Housing, Education)

- Client is the boss
- Client decides goals, which requires listening to what legal issue means to them and checking for understanding

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Best Interest Representation

Custody GAL



- Custody guardian *ad litem* (GAL) attorneys represent the child's best interest in a high conflict custody case
- What custodial arrangement is in a child's best interest?

Case Study


- ◆ You are the GAL for Nicole (age five) whose parents disagree about custody.
- ◆ Nicole lives with her mother in temporary housing.
- ◆ Her mother alleges that Nicole's father is abusive and should not have visits with Nicole.
- ◆ Nicole's father alleges that Nicole's mother does not adequately supervise Nicole and he is concerned for Nicole's safety.

Examining Our Biases

- ◆ Bias
 - ◆ We all have biases that influence how we perceive and interpret information.
 - ◆ It is critical to identify and examine our biases because they influence what we assume about people's behavior and how we assess what is appropriate or preferable.
- ◆ What biases came up for you in Nicole's case?
 - ◆ Parenting? Childhood? Race? Class? Environment?

Why does this matter?

How you interpret a child's life circumstances, family dynamics, and parents' behaviors



impacts your best interest recommendation for that child



which impacts that child's life and future

Ongoing Reflection

- ◆ What do you find credible?
- ◆ How are your concerns about a parent related to parenting and the impact on this child?
- ◆ Is your best interest recommendation centered upon this child and her family realities?



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Stated Interest Representation

Caregiver Custody

- ◆ **Attorneys represent third-party caregivers seeking to obtain custody of at-risk children**



Housing Conditions



- ◆ **Attorneys represent parents and caregivers living with housing conditions impacting their family's health**

Special Education

- ◆ **Attorneys represent parents and caregivers of children who need specialized services and support to make progress in school**



Case Study

- ◆ You represent Ms. H in a pro bono case.
- ◆ You have not connected with Ms. H recently. She did not attend your last scheduled meeting. You have left two voicemail messages but have not heard back.
- ◆ You started working with Ms. H because you think her case is important and you want to help her with the legal issues impacting her family.
- ◆ When she does not respond, what are your thoughts?

Considering Client Realities



- ◆ You later learned that Ms. H missed your last meeting because she could no longer afford the cost (money and time) of travel for the meeting. She also ran out of phone minutes to return your calls.

Ongoing Reflection

- ◆ What biases am I bringing to my work? How are they impacting how I engage with my client?
- ◆ Do I understand my client's goals and what the legal issue means to them? What does client want?
- ◆ What else is on my client's plate and how does scarcity impact our work together?



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Practice Tips

Practice Tips

Lifelong Learning

- ◆ Self-reflection
- ◆ Self-awareness

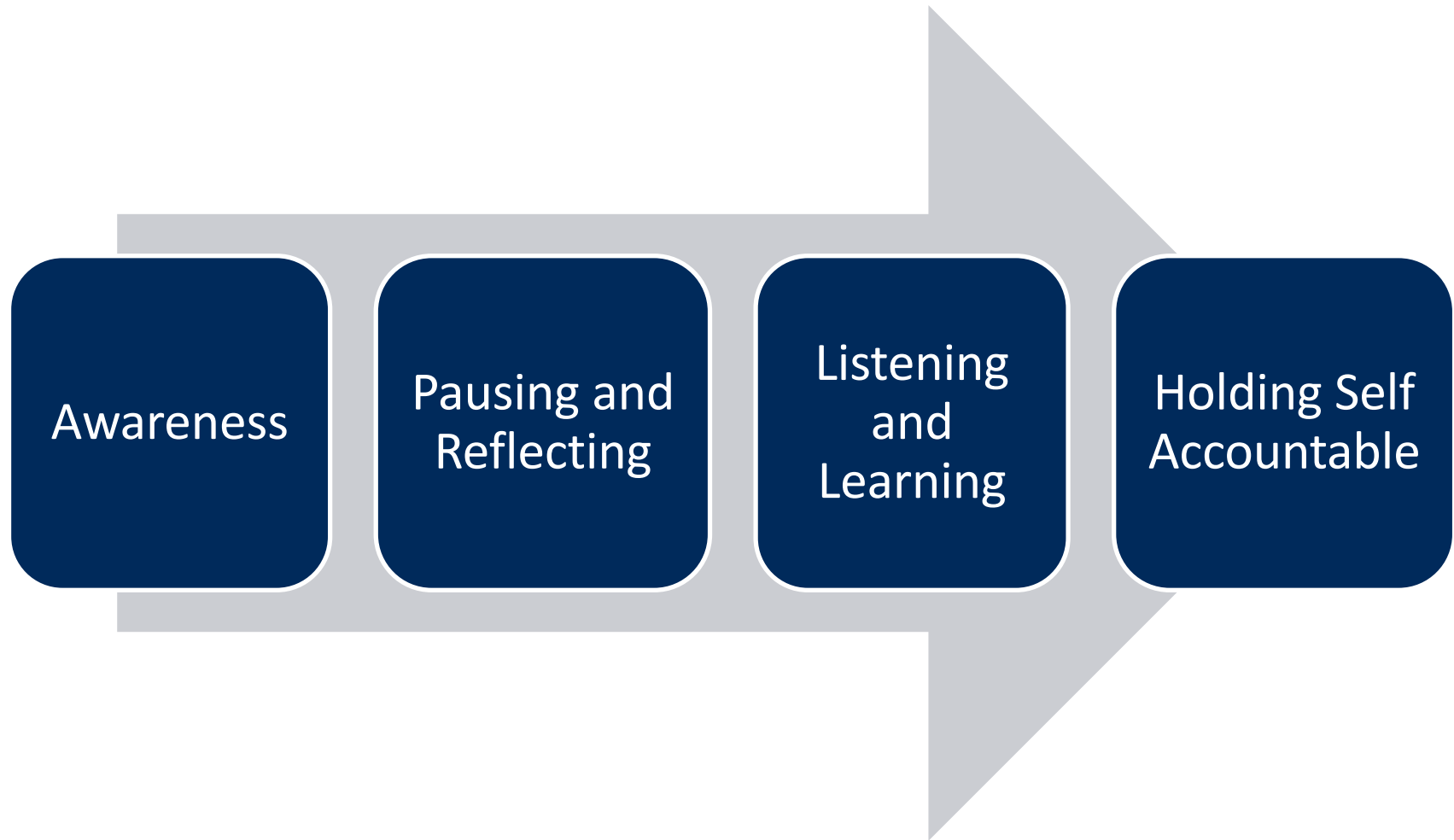
Client Expertise

- ◆ Listening
- ◆ Learning
- ◆ Checking for understanding

Accountability

- ◆ Meeting each client anew
- ◆ Seeking resources for learning
- ◆ Calling your mentor

Culturally Humble Lawyering



Key strategies for being culturally humble

BE SELF-AWARE

● Consider what preconceptions you bring to your advocacy

LISTEN, WATCH, LEARN

● Content, not words; verbal and non-verbal; ask why if you don't understand

AVOID STEREOTYPES

● Get to know each person as an individual

RESPECT

● Recognize that your own values and morals aren't the touchstone – it is the client's/family's that you must understand

DON'T JUDGE

● Imagine multiple meanings, not just what fits into your world view; similar circumstances can be interpreted in various ways

TALK AND REFLECT

● Think and talk with others about cultural differences; reflect on your advocacy and recognize gaps in your knowledge and understanding of other cultures

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Key Takeaways

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- ◆ When we work on a legal issue impacting a child's family, health, and/or education, we must acknowledge our work is not in a vacuum
 - ◆ Impact of systemic racism, poverty, trauma, etc.
 - ◆ How bias and scarcity show up for us and our clients
- ◆ AND respect that clients vary

Key Takeaways

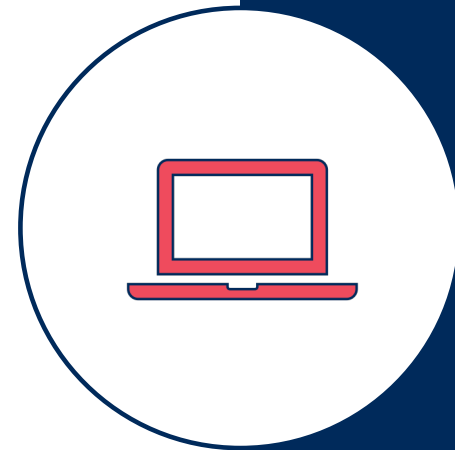
- ◆ Cultural humility acknowledges what the attorney and the client each bring to the relationship
 - ◆ Attorney's race, culture, and life experiences
 - ◆ Client's race, culture, and life experiences
- ◆ Combining the attorney's legal expertise and the client's expertise in their life = positive case outcome
 - ◆ Cultural humility is integral to our advocacy

Key Takeaways

- ◆ We are all learning!
- ◆ We are partners in this work.
 - ◆ CLC mentoring is a great space to navigate this learning together.
- ◆ Don't forget to take care of yourself!

Training Survey Request

- ◆ Please complete our electronic survey. Available online at:
 - ◆ <https://clcprobonotrainingculturalhumility.questionpro.com/>
- ◆ Thank you for your feedback!



**Questions?
Interested in a case?**

**Email Jen Masi
jmasi@childrenslawcenter.org**



Thank you!



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