

The Aging Justice Project

A Voice for Women & A Force for Change

The Illinois Aging Justice Project (AJP) is a yearlong intensive policy training program that will equip older women with the capacity to advocate successfully for policies that allow older women to age with dignity, economic security, and access to affordable health care. AJP is a joint project of the Jane Addams Senior Caucus, the Midwest Academy, and the Sargent Shriver Center for Poverty Law and is modeled after the Women's Foundation of California, Women's Policy Institute where they have trained women in policy advocacy resulting 14 bills passed in the legislature that benefit women of all ages, especially women of low-income families.

Program Goals

The goals of the Aging Justice Project are to:

- Sharpen legislative & administrative policy advocacy skills and political analysis of women
- Provide women with knowledge and information about the Illinois policy landscape
- Increase women's confidence in participating in the legislative process and to work with decision makers to craft public policies that reflect the needs of older women in Illinois
- Build relationships between women in Illinois with a commitment to long term action for change
- Improve the lives of all Illinois' seniors, particularly older women of color
- Promote racial justice

Fellows:

There are 12 Fellows from different organizations in Illinois. The 2012 Program includes fellows from the following organizations: Jane Addams Senior Caucus, AARP of Illinois, Chicago Abortion Fund, Lakeview Action Coalition (LAC), Service Employees International Union (SEIU), American Federation of State County & Municipal Employees (AFSCME), and the Beck Research Initiative for Women, Gender and Community at DePaul University.

Program Structure

The program runs from September 2012-June 2013. We meet for training two days per month. We are divided into two policy project groups that each creates proposed legislation and work to get it passed in the legislature. The policy teams are working on the following legislation:

Illinois Family Caregiver Act (IFCA)

This project is aiming to add language to the already existing federal law Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) that will include grandparents raising grandchildren and who don't have custodial rights as well as grandchildren taking care of their grandparents.

Repealing the Social Security Unemployment Offset

Repealing the social security and unemployment offset will remove social security and disability retirement benefits from the definition of "disqualifying income" for purpose of determining the amount of unemployment benefits a person will receive. Current law states, if a person applying for unemployment receives either social security or disability retirement benefits, half of the amount of those benefits is deducted from the unemployment compensation. Illinois is only one of 2 states that have not taken repeal action on this discriminatory offset rule that was originally established via a federal law. Older workers in each of Illinois surrounding states are able to collect full unemployment benefits.

Trainers/Mentors

Kara Bender from JASC and Kate Barthelme from Midwest Academy are the program trainers. Additionally, the policy teams are assisted by two mentors: Khadine Bennett, ACLU Illinois and Adrienne Alexander, AFSCME Council 31.

Funding:

AJP is a grant funded program. Support is generously provided by the Women's Foundation of California, Retirement Research Foundation, Sophia Fund for Advocacy of the Chicago Foundation for Women, Crossroads Fund, Woods Fund of Chicago, Polk Bros. Foundation, Driehaus Foundation, SEIU Healthcare, and AARP of Illinois.