

# EQUAL JUSTICE WORKS®

*Helping Lawyers Help Community*



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LLP**

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## SIX-MONTH FELLOWSHIP UPDATE

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Mani is addressing the issue of disproportionate minority contact through a holistic approach by providing legal representation to children who are in the criminal justice system, the mental health system and foster care system.

### NEED ADDRESSED BY PROJECT

Mani's project will allow an attorney to provide wrap-around legal services to children in foster care, rather than having several attorneys represent one child for various legal issues. This is a new approach to dealing with the significant overlap of involvement that individual foster care youths face in numerous legal systems, like the criminal justice, child welfare, health care, and educational systems. By allowing an attorney to become familiar with the child and their needs, they will be able to successfully advocate for the child. Additionally, the project will work with various foster care organizations to provide trainings for foster care parents.

### HIGHLIGHTS TO DATE

In the first six months, Mani has:

- Provided direct representation in school disciplinary, special education, and criminal proceedings for over 20 clients
- Developed a collaboration with the Randall O. Sorrels Legal Clinic at South Texas College of Law, through which he provided legal assistance to transition-age youth who are in Child Protective Services' (CPS) care and need assistance in criminal matters

### WHAT'S NEXT

In the next six months, Mani plans to:

- Continue developing contacts in the juvenile justice, education and foster care systems
- Work with a number of legal aid organizations that focus on issues that impact youths
- Develop a relationship with one of the CPS courts, by staffing the court on a weekly basis to provide services in criminal and education matters for the children in CPS care