

Making an Impact...



Students conduct a mock interview of a victim of domestic violence at Chapman's Family Violence Clinic.

“The clinic comes as the U.S. government begins accepting applications for ‘U’ visas for the first time.... Congress created the visa in 2000 to prevent victims from being intimidated from reporting their attackers and bolster community crime-fighting.”

Orange County Register, “New law clinic pairs Chapman, community,” October 22, 2007



Professor Cianciarulo provides in-class instruction to clinical students, as well as hands-on guidance at the Family Violence Center.

Professor Marisa Cianciarulo's Clinical Students Provide Legal Services to Immigrant Victims of Domestic Violence



In 2007, Chapman University School of Law created the Family Violence Clinic to address the many legal challenges faced by survivors of domestic violence. Located in a lower income neighborhood just a few blocks from Disneyland in Anaheim, California, the clinic serves a primarily minority population. Directed by Chapman professor Marisa Cianciarulo, an immigration lawyer and legal clinician, the clinic offers a unique source of free legal assistance for undocumented immigrant clients.

The program follows a model Professor Cianciarulo learned as a student at the American University Washington College of Law and honed over nearly three years as a Clinical Teaching Fellow at Villanova University School of Law. Unlike externships, where a student's work supports a program director,

the Family Violence Clinic gives students primary responsibility for cases and direct interaction with clients. The model is facilitated by immigration regulations that allow clinical students to handle caseloads, as long as there is supervision by a licensed attorney.

“I feel it is crucial to the learning process to allow students to run the show, with my supervision,” said Professor Cianciarulo, who is joined this year by visiting clinical professors Elizabeth MacDowell and Kyndra Rotunda. “The amount of student effort is actually dictated by the needs of the client, not a per-week hourly requirement,” she added. “Students become very attached to the clients and their cases, and they are struck at how much of a role they can play in a person's life.” Participating law students engage in client counseling and interviews, fact investigation, legal research, preparation of affidavits, writing legal arguments, and submitting of applications for domestic violence-related immigration benefits.

Other low income clinics at Chapman include the Alona Cortese Elder Law Center and the Tax Law Clinic.

