

SASKIA A. VALENCIA

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TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Brooklyn Law School, Brooklyn, NY

Clinical Legal Fellow

July 2023 – present

Co-teach in the Disability and Civil Rights Clinic, which provides legal services to indigent adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in civil rights, guardianship, and family court cases. Prepare for and co-teach a weekly seminar on disability justice, litigation and advocacy skills, theories of lawyering, and case rounds. Clinic student supervision includes preparing students for litigation in state courts and providing feedback on student drafts of motions and briefs, and student organized disability justice-related panel discussions. Co-develop and spearhead clinic's pilot Doula Project aimed at providing a comprehensive doula training program and doula services for pregnant people and parents with intellectual and developmental disabilities with the ultimate goal of reducing disproportionate rates of family regulation system involvement.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Brooklyn Defender Services Family Defense Practice, Brooklyn, NY

Senior Staff Attorney

April 2018 – June 2023

Provided direct representation to parents and caregivers accused of abuse and neglect in family court with a specialization on post-dispositional cases. Built relationships with clients, social workers, and other legal advocates and offices to achieve clients' goals. Manage high caseloads and litigated hearings and trials while ensuring proper data collection. Co-counseled and provided specialized consultation and supervision to attorneys on post-dispositional cases, trained and mentored new attorneys, and supervised law student interns and work in collaboration with law school clinics. Participated in a city-wide working group with other advocates and defender organizations to address the needs of young parents involved in the family regulation system. Member of internal hiring committee.

Youth Represent, New York, NY

Interim Supervising Attorney and Staff Attorney

September 2017 – April 2018

Represented youth ages 24 and under on criminal and reentry matters, including representation in criminal, family, and administrative courts. Corrected RAP sheet errors while advocating for youth to obtain meaningful employment and education. Taught Know Your Rights workshops to youth in community-based organizations in all five boroughs. Managed and supervised partnership with the Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center and represented the Center's patients on a variety of civil and criminal matters. Launched and managed a Criminal Record HUB project, which partnered with local immigration non-profit legal service providers to collaborate and support undocumented youth with involvement in the criminal legal system. Drafted amicus briefs and supervised attorneys, law students, and paralegals.

Skadden Fellow

September 2015 – September 2017

Successfully implemented Youth Represent's first medical-legal partnership with the Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center. Provided direct representation and community education using an intersectional approach to at-risk and court-involved youth to resolve legal problems that impacted their mental health with the goal of improving overall mental health outcomes and chances for successful re-entry after involvement in the legal system.

American University Washington College of Law Expungement Clinic, Washington, DC

Student Attorney

January 2015 – May 2015

Assisted clients with petitioning for expungement of their criminal records under student practice rule in Maryland. Conducted legal research on "Ban the Box" laws in Virginia and expungement of records related to marijuana civil citations in Maryland.

American University Washington College of Law, Washington, DC

Dean's Fellow, Office of Public Interest

January 2015 – April 2015

Helped law students find pro bono opportunities, conducted outreach to public interest employers and alumni, and drafted a weekly public interest e-newsletter, which was sent to over 750 recipients.

The Honorable Maribeth Raffinan, D.C. Superior Court, Washington, DC

Judicial Intern

January 2015 – April 2015

Prepared for juvenile and domestic relations hearings and trials by reviewing files, conducting legal research, and writing memoranda related to severance of juvenile cases; habeas corpus relief; juvenile evidentiary issues, including the use of DNA swabs, identification suppression, expert witnesses; and termination of parental rights.

American University Washington College of Law Criminal Justice Clinic, Washington, DC

Student Attorney

August 2014 – December 2014

Represented clients in juvenile delinquency proceedings in Maryland. Handled all aspects of representation including interviewing and counseling clients, investigating their cases, negotiating with prosecutors, advocating with the Department of Juvenile Services, and engaging in courtroom advocacy. Represented a client facing multiple misdemeanor and felony charges and a client in a release hearing.

Youth Represent, New York, NY

Legal Intern

May 2014 – August 2014

Conducted client intake interviews with youth facing criminal charges and dealing with subsequent civil consequences, including housing and employment matters. Second seated a hearing regarding a conditional sealing of a drug offense. Researched legal issues and drafted a memorandum regarding attorney's fees for staff attorneys in preparation for litigation. Reviewed and corrected client RAP sheets and participated in Know Your Rights workshops for the community.

The Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia, Washington, DC

Law Clerk, Juvenile Services Program

January 2014 – May 2014

Represented detained youth in disciplinary hearings at a youth detention center. Drafted and filed appeals for adverse findings. Assisted youth in filing grievances and addressed issues of confinement. Advocated for youth by contacting service providers and empowered youth by teaching self-advocacy skills.

Advocates for Children of New York, New York, NY

Legal Intern

May 2013 – August 2013

Conducted intake interviews with parents whose children had special education needs. Researched legal issues and drafted memoranda for special education attorneys in preparation for administrative hearings and federal litigation. Assisted attorneys with managing cases by drafting advocacy letters and notices, meeting with clients, and advocating on their behalf at Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings. Collaborated with various agencies involved in their education; and conducted outreach by developing and presenting a training regarding the NYC public education system at a local social services agency.

The Children's Village, New York, NY

Senior Multi-Systemic Therapist (MST)

May 2011 – August 2012

Provided intensive in-home and community-based family treatment to address and resolve the behavioral roots of criminalized behavior by youth. Interviewed clients and prepared psychosocial assessments. Advocated on behalf of clients in court and out of court with probation officers and the Office of Children and Family Services. Developed and implemented a treatment intervention plan with families; engaged primary caregivers and other key participants in treatment; and collaborated with the juvenile legal system, schools, and community to further clients' goals and keep them home with their families.

MST Problematic Sexual Behavior Therapist August 2010 – May 2011
Provided family therapy to youth charged with and convicted of sexual offenses. Focused on aspects that contributed to the problematic sexual behavior, helped primary caregivers build support networks, and taught caregivers how to provide guidance and support to youth to develop social skills to establish healthy relationships.

Mental Health Systems, Inc., San Diego, CA
Family Service Coordinator August 2008 – December 2009
Provided intensive case management with schools, service providers, and the juvenile justice systems to address youth and families' needs. Worked with a multi-disciplinary team of educators, psychologists, medical professionals, probation officers, and informal supports to enable systematic change. Provided in-home mental health support to high-risk youth classified as severely emotionally disturbed and their families. Conducted psychosocial assessments, made diagnoses using the DSM-IV TR, and created individualized treatment plans.

St. Vincent de Paul Village, San Diego, CA
Mental Health Therapist Intern and Assessment Specialist August 2007 – August 2008
Provided individual therapy to adults and adolescents, play therapy to children, and family and dyadic therapy with a focus on attachment theory in a homeless shelter. Conducted psychosocial assessments, created provisional diagnoses and individualized treatment plans, and developed and facilitated psycho-educational and support groups for mothers and their young children, adolescent girls, and adult women.

EDUCATION

American University Washington College of Law, Juris Doctor, cum laude, May 2015
Honors: American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy, & the Law, *Symposium Editor*, Vol. 23, "The Criminalization of LGBTQ Youth: A Call to Action" (April 1, 2015)
Activities: Students United for Youth Justice, *Mentoring director and student mentor*

University of San Diego, Master of Arts in Marital and Family Therapy, August 2008

University of Pittsburgh, Bachelor of Science in Psychology, magna cum laude, December 2005

SELECTED PANEL DISCUSSIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

National Interdisciplinary Parent Representation Conference, Denver, CO
American Bar Association May 2023
Panelist: *Preserving Family Bonds in Termination of Parental Rights and Long-Term Foster Cases: Revisiting Attachment Theory, Critiques, and Applications*

Stepping It Up: Strategies for Successful Family Defense, virtual
New York State Defenders Association September 2022
Panelist: *Litigating Permanency Hearings: Goals, Strategies, and Applications (or Why, Whether, How?)*

National Parent Representation Conference, Tysons Corner, VA
American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law April 2022
Panelist: *Preserving Family Bonds: How to Advocate for Clients in TPR and Post-Dispositional Cases by Recentering Our Clients' Voices and Revisiting Attachment Theory*

Paving the Way Conference, Brooklyn, NY
Revolutionary Healing: Paving the Way to Healing and Recovery April 2017
Panelist: *"Trauma Informed Legal Advocacy and Building Community and Stability with Clients"*

Getting to Work with a Criminal Record: New York State License Guides, 1st ed. 2018
Prisoner Reentry Institute, John Jay College of Criminal Justice and New York City Justice Corps

What Up with DAT?

Bronx Defenders and Center for Urban Pedagogy

September 2017

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Safe Passage Project, New York, NY

October 2017 – April 2018

Volunteer Attorney

Represented an undocumented 20-year-old Guatemalan youth on a guardianship matter in Bronx Family Court with the ultimate goal of obtaining a Special Findings Order to enable him to become eligible for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status.

Parole Preparation Project, National Lawyers Guild, New York, NY

October 2016 – August 2017

Volunteer

Collaborated with and helped prepare an applicant for a parole hearing while he was serving an indeterminate life sentence in the New York State prison system.

Legal Immigration Services, Gay Men's Health Crisis, New York, NY

Fall 2016

Volunteer

Assisted immigrants in applying for naturalization using the USCIS form N-400 at various citizenship drives in New York City.

BAR ADMISSIONS

New York State

Eastern District of New York