

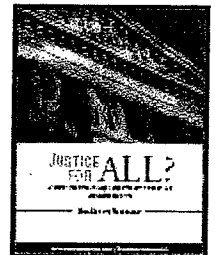
New report sheds light on an under-used strategy

By Danielle M. Reyes, Program Officer, the Meyer Foundation

As we work to address the needs of District families living in poverty, support for direct services and advocacy efforts related to employment, education, housing, immigration, and health and mental health are often top priorities. Legal issues do not often make this list, yet the consequences of unaddressed civil legal problems can have a devastating impact on the communities we care about.

Insufficient legal services leave many low-income individuals and families facing crises including eviction proceedings, domestic violence, bankruptcy, wrongful termination of employment, medical debt, and deportation. Less than 10 percent of the legal services needs of DC residents are currently being met.

At a recent funders' briefing held at the Meyer Foundation, Sunil Mansukhani, the executive director of the Access to Justice Commission, spoke to these complex issues and shared other key findings from the Commission's newest report, *Justice for All? An Examination of the Civil Legal Needs of the District of Columbia's Low-Income Community*. It is the most comprehensive report ever done on the legal needs in the District of Columbia and presents not only challenges, but opportunities. DC is a city rich with legal expertise, and there is significant and untapped potential in deploying legal services and an opportunity to create a legal services network that can not only address the immediate needs of families, but also reform policies that directly impact low-income communities.



As we explore ways to meet the needs of low-income communities, *Justice for All?* offers us new information and clear recommendations towards a more comprehensive approach to reducing poverty.

The open funders' briefing of the "Justice for All?" report was hosted by the Meyer Foundation, the DC Bar Foundation, and the Access to Justice Commission on Dec. 3. For more information contact Sunil.Mansukhani@dcaccessjustice.org.