

*Reflections from Elena Sarver, NYWBAF Fellow at the National Institute of Reproductive Health*

This summer, I served as the New York Women's Bar Association Foundation Fellow at the National Institute of Reproductive Health (NIRH). I truly enjoyed my experience in helping to advance the cause of women's reproductive rights, building upon skills I learned prior to my fellowship. Specifically, during my first year at Cardozo Law School, I became a trained advocate with the Courtroom Advocates Project, which provided students the opportunity to assist victims of domestic violence with filing orders of protection. During my second year, I took a class entitled "Multiculturalism and the Human Rights of Women: International and Comparative Law Perspectives," where I learned about the many ways in which the law can be used to provide a framework to advance women's rights.

My responsibilities at NIRH were varied. I assisted with projects involving substantive work, including assisting the lawyers with their annual report. I also reviewed and summarized the proactive bills that had been introduced nationally in the past year, which touched on several topics related to women's health, including pregnancy, sexual health, and insurance coverage. I also worked on research projects relating to various legal questions surrounding possible tort remedies for health care providers.

Additionally, I learned a great deal about the field of reproductive rights and the work of a policy/legislative advocacy lawyer. Since NIRH is a sister organization to NARAL Pro-Choice New York, I also gained exposure to NARAL's work. I attended weekly brown bag lunches highlighting the work of NIRH and NARAL Pro-Choice New York, and received invitations to attend related events, including film screenings and speakers. These opportunities broadened my awareness and understanding of the specific issues in this field. Finally, I also had the chance to sit in on partnership calls with organizations that NIRH supports through its various grant-funding initiatives.

This fellowship advanced both my interest in women's reproductive rights and public interest law in general. It was fascinating to be able to see how lawyers can use their skills to think creatively, research effectively, and work with various partners in order to advance positive legislation and support their cause. I thank the New York Women's Bar Association Foundation for their generous stipend which afforded me the opportunity to do public interest work.

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