



Press Release

For Immediate Release

Contact:

Pat Craig, Colorado Legal Services, pCraig@colegalserv.org, 970-668-9612

Colorado Legal Services selects Matt Baca as new Executive Director

Mar. 1, 2023 (DENVER) – Today, Colorado Legal Services announced that it has selected Matt Baca as its new Executive Director, effective March 2023. Baca will succeed CLS's long-time Executive Director, Jonathan (Jon) Asher, who has served in that role for over forty years.

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is Colorado's statewide nonprofit legal aid program, with thirteen offices providing civil legal assistance to low-income individuals and seniors throughout the state. CLS provides free legal assistance in a broad variety of legal areas, including family law, eviction defense, consumer protection, services to survivors of serious crime and human trafficking, and many others.

“We could not be more pleased to have Matt as our next Executive Director,” said Tina Smith, Chair of the CLS Board of Directors. “He is passionately dedicated to the provision of legal service to those who need it most and has the ability to inspire that vision in others. Matt truly is a rising star on the Colorado scene, and CLS is fortunate to have him join us. Under Matt’s leadership, CLS’s future is wonderfully bright.”

Jon Asher, the esteemed outgoing Executive Director of CLS, is a nationally-regarded [champion of legal services and of economic justice](#). Asher will retire in March.

“Matt is an impressive and inspiring leader, with a demonstrated passion for serving low-income Coloradans,” Asher said. “Serving CLS as Executive Director for four decades – alongside our exceptional staff, Board, and, of course, the clients we assist – has been a great honor and a privilege. I am committed to supporting CLS through this transition and to celebrating its dynamic future of service to Coloradans.”

Baca has a deep respect for his predecessor, Asher, whom he regards as a mentor and an icon in the legal aid community, not only in Colorado, but nationwide.

“I am honored and humbled to return to CLS as Executive Director,” said Baca. “To follow Jon, a hero of mine and an inspiration to countless others, is an unparalleled opportunity to serve. I look forward to celebrating CLS’s story so far and writing the next chapter with CLS’s Board, its brilliant and dedicated staff, and the clients we serve.”

Baca returns to CLS after an appointment by Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser as Director of Community Engagement. In that role, Baca oversaw outreach and engagement, the Safe2Tell

program, consumer intake and data, the opioid response, and more in the Attorney General's Office. Baca also worked on the statewide eviction moratorium during the pandemic, defending a lawsuit challenging the moratorium.

"Matt is a valued and much-admired leader in the Department of Law, and I am grateful for his dedicated service to Coloradans over these last four years," said Weiser. "His passion for serving low-income Coloradans is evident in all his work, and I wish him success as he fills the shoes of Jon Asher, who is a titan and an inspiration in the Colorado legal community."

Before working for Attorney General Weiser, Baca worked as a Staff Attorney in CLS's Migrant Farm Worker Division, where he was an integral part of a team that tried the [first civil human trafficking trial](#) in Colorado, and before that, he was an attorney at Earthjustice, a public interest environmental law firm. Baca grew up in Colorado and attended the University of Colorado-Boulder before graduating from New York University School of Law, where he was a Root-Tilden-Kern Scholar, and simultaneously earned a Master's in Public Administration from the Harvard Kennedy School. He is a board member of the Colorado Hispanic Bar Association and a commissioner on the Colorado Access to Justice Commission.

Baca's selection as Executive Director was the result of an exhaustive, nationwide search by CLS. After soliciting applications from qualified candidates, a 15-member search committee, made up of Board members, staff, and stakeholders, conducted a series of interviews, followed by town halls with the CLS staff and Board. The search committee recommended that Baca be hired for the position, a recommendation that was endorsed by the CLS Board. CLS was assisted in the search process by Patricia Pap of Management Information Exchange.

About Colorado Legal Services: CLS is Colorado's statewide nonprofit legal aid program providing civil legal assistance to low-income individuals and seniors throughout the state. CLS's 13 local offices provide free legal service in the areas of family law, housing law, including eviction and foreclosure defense, denials, reductions, and terminations of all manner of public benefits, elder law, consumer law, including defense of debt collections and bankruptcies, services to migrants and agricultural workers, services to survivors of serious crime and human trafficking, including visas and wage collections, criminal record sealing to restore access to jobs, housing, and education, and services to two tribal nations in the southwestern corner of Colorado. CLS also has an ID Unit that assists clients in obtaining or correcting identification documents; a Low-Income Taxpayers Clinic that assists clients with federal tax delinquencies, debts, and other tax-related issues; and a Medical-Legal Partnership serving low-income patients at two UCHealth clinics (affiliated with the University of Colorado) in Denver. Almost 1.4 million Coloradans qualify financially for CLS's services. CLS's current staff of 80 attorneys and 55 paralegals is supplemented by a robust private attorney involvement program. Learn more here: www.coloradolegalservices.org.