

COMMUNITY JUSTICE PROJECT

CJP HIGHLIGHTS

November 2019

CJP Wins Injunction in Lead Poisoning Case

Pittsburgh attorneys Dan Vitek and Megan Lovett won a preliminary injunction on behalf of a tenant whose 3-year-old grandson was lead-poisoned. The Allegheny County Health Department had inspected the family's rental home and found multiple lead hazards present throughout the home, including in chipping paint, dust, and soil.

Lovett and Vitek, co-counseling with Neighborhood Legal Services, were granted a preliminary injunction, which required that the landlord abate the hazards and pay for a hotel room to keep the family safe until the abatement was complete. When the landlord failed to comply with the injunction, Lovett and Vitek won an order finding the landlord in civil contempt and ordering him to pay the tenant \$1,000. The abatement is now complete and the family's home has been declared clear of lead hazards by the Health Department.

CJP Reaches Consent Decree with Bisconti Farms

CJP represented the charging party and intervenor plaintiff in an EEOC sexual harassment class action lawsuit against Bisconti Farms, a mushroom harvesting operation in Berks County. Along with the EEOC and Justice at Work, CJP helped to reach a consent decree that will require Bisconti Farms to make changes to its policies and practices to prevent future sexual harassment at the farm. The consent decree also provides \$200,000 in monetary relief to the class of identified sexual harassment victims.

CJP Advises Mobile Home Residents Forced to Leave after Re-Zoning

CJP has been engaged by longtime residents of a manufactured home community in West Mifflin, Allegheny County, who recently received notice that their trailer court [will be shut down](#) to redevelop the land for a different commercial use. CJP is working with and on behalf of residents to ensure that the park owner fulfills its obligations, and that residents receive the full benefit of their rights, under the Pennsylvania Manufactured Home Community Rights Act.

Recovery House Obtains Zoning Win

In a ruling for CJP client Cornerstone Residence, the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas dismissed the City of Clairton's statutory appeal of a deemed zoning approval of the Cornerstone Residence's occupancy permit application, agreeing that its proposed use as a residence for those in addiction recovery is a single-family dwelling.

Third Circuit Remands Paroled Offender Class Suit

The Third Circuit has remanded the Stradford class action against the state Department of Corrections (*Stradford et. al. v Secretary of Pennsylvania Department of Corrections*). CJP attorney Don Driscoll, with Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project attorney Alexandra Morgan-Kurtz, had appealed from a District Court dismissal of our equal protection complaint involving denial of half-way house placements to paroled offenders with a sex offense classification.

CJP in the News

A Somerset County judge in October fined the owner of Cherry Lane mobile home park \$10,000 for not removing burned trailers from the park. CJP attorney Dan Vitek represents the Cherry Lane Residents Association and successfully petitioned the court to declare park owner Divinity Investments in contempt of an earlier court order. *The Daily American* newspaper in Somerset County has been following developments in CJP's lawsuit against the owner of Cherry Lane mobile home park and reported on the latest development in the October 21 article, [Judge fines Cherry Lane Estate' owner](#).

Lead Poisoning Public Affairs Campaign Launches in Pittsburgh

As part of CJP's Heinz-funded work to reduce lead poisoning in the Pittsburgh region, CJP continues to provide legal assistance to families, to work to raise public awareness, and to push policymakers to shift their approach to lead poisoning. This past month marked the official launch of the "Get the Lead Out, Pittsburgh" campaign, in partnership with CJP allies.

This policy-oriented media campaign is directed principally toward families affected by lead poisoning to provide relevant information, access to legal assistance and other resources, and the opportunity to join the effort to push policymakers and housing providers to shift their approach to lead poisoning from a reactionary model to a prevention model. More about the campaign is available at GetTheLeadOutPgh.org, on Facebook at [@GetTheLeadOutPgh](https://www.facebook.com/GetTheLeadOutPgh), on Twitter at [@GTLOPgh](https://twitter.com/GTLOPgh); and on Instagram at [gettheleadoutpgh](https://www.instagram.com/gettheleadoutpgh).

CJP Engages Spanish Speakers About Lead Poisoning and Tenants' Rights

In October, CJP helped coordinate a two-part Healthy Homes Fair with the Latino Family Center of Pittsburgh, Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, the Alliance for Infants and Toddlers, and Women for a Healthy Environment. The "Feria de la Salud y el Hogar" began with a weekday seminar on lead poisoning and tenants' rights for families affected by lead poisoning, and it culminated with a half-day event for families in which food, festivities, free lead testing of toys and other objects, access to free blood lead testing, and free legal consultations with CJP were provided.

SUPPORT OUR WORK

A gift to CJP goes a long way in providing effective legal assistance to protect the basic needs of and rights of Pennsylvania's poor families and low-wage workers.

Please consider making a gift to:

Community Justice Project, 118 Locust Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101