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IAALS Releases New *Allied Legal Professionals* Landscape Report and Online Knowledge Center in an Effort to Increase Legal Options for the Public

DENVER, CO (November 16, 2022)—IAALS, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System at the University of Denver, announced today that it released its new [*Allied Legal Professionals landscape report*](#), along with an accompanying [online Knowledge Center](#). With generous support from the Sturm Family Foundation, this project seeks to help standardize a new tier of legal professionals nationally, with the goal of increasing the options for accessible and affordable legal help for the public.

“Today, the *majority* of Americans are faced with a very serious access to justice problem—not only low-income populations, as many people believe. And the pandemic has only made matters worse in recent years,” says [Jim Sandman, chair of IAALS’ board of advisors](#) and President Emeritus of the Legal Services Corporation. “For example, studies show that around 40–60% of the middle class have legal needs that remain unmet. Simply put: people want legal help, and they are not getting the help they need.”

The access to justice problem reflects the way in which current regulations constrict new pathways to accessible legal services and leave consumers with few alternatives. However, one solution that has been spreading quickly across the country is in the form of allied legal professionals—licensed and regulated professionals who are not lawyers, but have been authorized to represent clients in limited matters.

“IAALS has been closely watching those states who have altered their unauthorized practice of law rules to allow this new tier of legal services providers, creating avenues to legal help for many who cannot afford an attorney,” says [IAALS Manager Michael Houlberg](#). “The few programs that have been created—and those still in the planning stage—have all been set up with a slightly different framework to fit their jurisdictions’ needs. We created the [Allied Legal Professionals project](#) specifically with the goal to map out what these different programs look like, understand the benefits and challenges that exist within each one, and then create recommendations for a national approach with the assistance of subject-matter experts based on data and best practices.”

The *Allied Legal Professionals* landscape report offers a preliminary compilation of existing programs, presented across a framework that allows for comparison between and among the various state and international efforts. The accompanying online Knowledge Center is designed to be an up-to-date resource with current state information for those considering how these programs can be achieved and improved upon.

Additionally, IAALS recently hosted a [convening](#) where experts and national partners came together to develop recommendations and best practices for states developing allied legal professional programs.

“The *Allied Legal Professionals* landscape report served as a foundation for IAALS’ convening of diverse leaders in this space,” says [IAALS CEO Brittany Kauffman](#). “It’s important that we gather all voices in this discussion. That process is at the heart of how our organization is able to make impactful change, on a national level. The takeaway from the convening, and the report, was a common understanding of the urgency of the access to justice crisis we are faced with—and a renewed sense of energy around allied legal professionals as an important and impactful solution.”

As more data comes out on these various programs, it is likely that more states will join in implementing them. One of the first steps states have taken when developing their own program has been to look at what other states are doing. IAALS’ report and Knowledge Center are designed to be used as a resource for states interested in creating their own allied legal professional program to understand not only what other states’ programs consist of, but also their reasoning behind many of their decisions.

“As someone who has worked closely with, and speaks regularly to, the people who are actually affected by a system that they can’t access, I am overwhelmed by the stories of injustice,” says [Janet Drobinske, IAALS Senior Legal Assistant](#). “Yet, being involved in this work at IAALS brings me hope. Everyone who cares about this country’s systemic access to justice issue should be excited about the possibilities that a new tier of service providers can bring—for states, for lawyers, for allied legal professionals, and, most importantly, for the people.”

In early 2023, IAALS will release a formal report with final recommendations and considerations for states interested in implementing or amending their own allied legal professional program.

[MORE ABOUT THE PROJECT](#)

IAALS’ *Allied Legal Professionals* project will establish national best-practice thinking around allied legal professional programs by:

- Analyzing existing and proposed programs, the limited empirical research available, and similar experiences and programs from other countries and other professions (like nurse practitioners);
- Creating a framework for evaluating the relative advantages and challenges in the different models that exist;
- Convening diverse leaders and stakeholders to review the data and experiences, and establish recommendations and best practices; and
- Building a model for states to follow when considering and establishing allied legal professional programs in the future.

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About IAALS

IAALS, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System at the University of Denver, is a national, independent research center dedicated to facilitating continuous improvement and advancing excellence in the American legal system. Our mission is to forge innovative and practical solutions to problems within the American legal system.