

## Cancer Legal Resource Center

“People with cancer often find themselves fighting more than just their disease. Patients can and do find themselves facing cancer-specific legal problems that require specialized attention.... When the suffering of cancer is compounded by the frustration of legal difficulties, patients can turn to the experienced professionals of the Cancer Legal Resource Center for the help they need so they can focus their attention on fighting their disease and improving their quality of life.” (Cancer Management Magazine, May/June 1998).

The Cancer Legal Resource Center (CLRC) helps people with cancer and their families with a wide array of legal issues, including:

- needing to take time off from work for treatment,
- getting access to healthcare,
- keeping health insurance after a diagnosis,
- eligibility for government benefits,
- guardianship of minor children,
- estate planning.

People contact the CLRC when faced with pressing legal concerns in addition to their serious medical issues. These legal issues cause people unnecessary worry, confusion, and stress, and can be overwhelming. When these legal issues are not addressed, people may find themselves surviving the disease, only to find that they have lost their homes, jobs, insurance, or families. In addition, these legal battles unnecessarily distract from the battle with cancer.

The CLRC offers free legal information to callers all over the country through its toll-free Telephone Assistance Line - (866) THE-CLRC. The CLRC also provides Cancer Rights Workshops and materials for patients, families, employers, health care providers and others. And our volunteer Professional Panel will assist callers in cases involving complex issues.

There is no other program in the country like the CLRC, which is why the American Cancer Society refers its callers with legal questions to the CLRC. We receive over 250 calls each month and the need for CLRC services is overwhelming.

## **Success Stories**

Since it opened in 1997, the CLRC has helped over 70,000 people, including nearly 20,000 callers to the Telephone Assistance Line. Examples include:

- L had been battling cancer for three years. She then learned that her cancer had recurred in her lungs and her leg. Her oncologist determined that, because she had already tried conventional chemotherapy without success, she needed a new drug that was only available in clinical trials. Her health insurance plan, however, refused to approve participation in the clinical trial. L's daughter called the CLRC Telephone Assistance Line. We researched the relevant laws about clinical trials and explained the procedures to appeal the health plan's decision. Based on the CLRC's guidance, L appealed the health plan's denial of treatment to a state agency. The agency reversed the health plan's decision and L is now receiving the chemotherapy that she needs.
- D called the CLRC on behalf of a friend who had leukemia and needed a bone marrow transplant. His friend's brother was a positive match to be a bone marrow donor. However, the brother lived in Vietnam and the United States Embassy had denied a visa for the donor brother to come to the U.S. for the operation. The CLRC helped the family contact a federal agency for assistance. Approximately 3 weeks after filing their request, the family was notified that the brother was authorized to come from Vietnam to be a donor for his brother. He flew in on Christmas Day from Vietnam.
- M called the CLRC from New Jersey. She had first had breast cancer several years ago. She was treated and had silicone breast implants. She then had a recurrence of breast cancer and was scheduled for surgery again. She needed both a breast cancer surgeon and a plastic surgeon. She needed a particular plastic surgeon who was familiar with silicone breast implants. However, he was not approved by her health plan. M's surgery was rapidly approaching and her insurance carrier was not responding to her appeal. The same day M called, the CLRC contacted one of our volunteer attorneys in New York. The attorney contacted the insurance carrier on M's behalf, and two days before her scheduled surgery, the carrier reversed its position and approved coverage for her surgeon.
- S is a child with leukemia. S's HMO refused to cover her special treatment protocol, because her hospital was not a network provider. However, the hospitals within the HMO network would not provide the same treatment protocol. S's grandmother contacted the CLRC, which recognized the solution and directed them to a government agency overseeing HMOs. The agency had the HMO's decision reversed. S was able to receive her treatment "out of network" and is surviving and thriving after cancer. One of the CLRC's volunteer attorneys also set up a special account at the family's church, where contributions can be made to help S.

## DISABILITY RIGHTS LEGAL CENTER

### **CLRC Timeline**

- 1997 CLRC opens as a joint program of the Disability Rights Legal Center (formerly the Western Law Center for Disability Rights) and Loyola Law School
- 2000 CLRC partners with the California Division of the American Cancer Society to expand CLRC services throughout California
- 2003 CLRC's national toll-free number (866-THE-CLRC) begins, making it easier for people across the nation to access CLRC services
- 2006 CLRC receives funding from the Lance Armstrong Foundation to provide in-person "Ask the CLRC" clinics in communities throughout Southern California
- 2007-2008 CLRC celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
- April 19, 2007 CLRC serves its 20,000<sup>th</sup> caller
- August 4, 2007 CLRC Casino Royale to celebrate its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
- September 30, 2007 The Bob Cooney Golf Tournament to benefit the CLRC
- November 29, 2007 The first Cancer Vanguard Award is presented to Nancy Brinker, the founder of Susan G. Komen for the Cure, at the DRLC Annual Gala & Silent Auction
- March 15, 2008 CLRC hosts the second Cancer Rights Conference in Riverside, CA
- March 29, 2008 CLRC hosts the first Cancer Rights Conference in Los Angeles