



CIVIL RIGHTS EDUCATION
AND ENFORCEMENT CENTER

The Civil Rights Education and Enforcement Center (CREEC) is a nonprofit legal organization that fights for liberation through the lens of intersectional disability justice with a combination of education, legal advocacy direct services, and impact litigation.

PRACTICE AREAS & NEEDS

Disaster and Environmental Justice – Winter, Spring and Summer Interns

CREEC is fighting for Environmental Justice on the frontlines of the climate crisis by centering people with disabilities in environmental and disaster resilience advocacy. Mainstream “environmental justice” work focuses primarily on race, ethnicity, and income. If disability enters the conversation, the emphasis is always on how environmental injustices produce disability, not on the equal value of disabled lives. Environmental injustices disproportionately impact people with disabilities. We suffer disproportionate rates of morbidity and mortality due to the climate crisis; resultant, increasingly frequent and destructive disasters; and discriminatory land use policies and siting. We are also excluded from environmental advocacy and decision-making. CREEC’s work centers people with disabilities and applies a Disability Justice lens, but it serves everyone. Disability law is a powerful tool for compelling governments to include, plan, and provide for everyone in their climate and disaster responses, regardless of financial means. Disability law also holds untapped power and promise in other areas of environmental advocacy, such as combating the expansion of petrochemical infrastructure and other toxic facilities.

This winter and spring we anticipate needing assistance with investigation and case-building in communities that experienced disasters in the Central Valley of California and New Orleans. This work will include legal research, analysis of returns from records requests, analysis of disabled populations in the communities in question, and more. This work will continue into the summer where support with filed litigation administrative advocacy.

Addressing Disability in the Carceral Continuum – Spring and Summer Interns

The prison industrial complex has a long history of perpetuating dangerous and lethal systems for disabled people. Our prisons are filled with disabled people (at least 40% of people in state prisons have a disability). Many of those with cognitive and behavioral health disabilities do not have access to the proper accommodations that they need while incarcerated. Reports also estimate that 50% of people killed by police are disabled. Many officers are not trained to respond appropriately to the needs of disabled people but are still the first responders to calls for people experiencing a mental health crisis.

Additionally, the use of solitary confinement, lack of proper communications technology for d/Deaf and hard of hearing folks, and the militarization of local police forces threatens the freedom and lives of disabled people, particularly those of color. CREEC advocates for disabled people dealing with carceral systems, from policing, to courts, to incarceration, who have to fight for their human rights while navigating the justice system.

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CREEC is involved in litigation challenging police response to peaceful protesters challenging police misconduct. CREEC represents a disabled individual whose repeated requests for an accommodation when he was stopped and detained during the George Floyd protests. Spring and summer will be spent preparing for trial and an intern could expect to assist with the full range of pre-trial preparation.

Accessibility & The Built Environment – Spring and Summer Interns

The communities in which we live and services upon which we depend are not designed for everyone. Buildings, sidewalks, and public places are too often inaccessible to different types of bodies and abilities. Access to government and educational programs increasingly rely on the internet, kiosks or electronic communication not designed for full access by disabled people.

CREEC harnesses the power of the ADA to help people achieve accessibility in their daily lives. From defending the right of people to take service animals on transportation, to helping ensure cities have adequate and safe sidewalks and curb ramps, and fighting the digital divide that leaves the disabled and other communities behind, CREEC works with individuals and community partners to uphold the promises of the ADA and make sure that people can fully thrive and participate in their communities.

Work during the spring and summer will focus on case development around the country.

Immigration – Spring and Summer Interns

CREEC recognizes the inhumane approach of the US's current system and knows that immigration itself can be a disabling event. Immigration detention, which is civil in nature and therefore purportedly non-punitive, has long been problematic, with high rates of deaths and suicides in custody and widespread allegations of physical and sexual abuse and substandard medical and mental health care. The detention system puts everyone in ICE custody at risk of harm. It provides inadequate medical care, discriminates against people with disabilities, stigmatizes and exacerbates the mental health needs of detained people, and causes further trauma to a population that faces high rates of trauma. There are many people with disabilities in detention and the immigration system broadly; in fact, populations such as asylum seekers have higher than average rates of PTSD, anxiety, and other mental health disabilities. CREEC helps disabled people in this cruel system access their human rights.

Additionally, ICE has increasingly become reliant upon digitally based systems for posting bail, seeking asylum and other border entry procedures. People with disabilities, and their families, are less likely to be able to access these systems. As a result, they have suffered delays and even denials as a result of ICE's failure to have accessible alternative systems.

Work this summer and spring will include work on pending litigation challenging the ICE's failure to ensure proper mental health care and accommodation of disabilities in detention centers.