



# Weill Cornell Medicine Center for Human Rights

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## Statistics

As of October 2019, the WCCHR has conducted **614** evaluations for **531** clients from **75** countries. **160** clients or **95%** of the cases that have been adjudicated have already been granted asylum or another form of relief.

## Upcoming Events

- WCCHR Annual Holiday Party December 13th from 7:30 to 9:30 pm in Belfer Research Building, 413 E 69th St NY, NY

## WCCHR Annual Fall Asylum Training

The WCCHR hosted its annual Fall Forensic Asylum Training in September. The 2019 Fall training marked the second consecutive year of the largest asylum evaluating training in WCCHR history, with a total of 250 attendees, both in-person and through live stream across the United States. The evaluation training introduced clinicians, students, and healthcare workers to the medical affidavit process and guidelines for physical, psychological, and gynecological evaluations of asylum seekers.

WCCHR evaluators spoke on topics including how to conduct physical and mental health evaluations for asylum seekers as well as insights into evaluating women and LGBTQI asylum seekers. Attendees also had the opportunity to hear from two distinguished speakers about the affidavit process: Beth Lyon, Clinical Professor of Law at Cornell Law School, and Carmen Maria Rey, Assistant Professor of Law at Brooklyn Law School, allowing volunteers to learn about both the medical and legal aspects of the evaluation and affidavit processes.



## Discussion on the “Public Charge” Rule and Protecting Immigrant Healthcare Access

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On October 15, WCCHR co-sponsored a discussion on the “public charge” rule proposed by the US Department of Homeland Security and the implications of the perceived direction of immigration policy. This event was also co-sponsored by Cornell Law School, Cornell Center for Health Equity (CCHEQ)/Diversity Center of Excellence (DCOE) and Cornell University NYC Visioning Initiative. Speakers included faculty members and student presenters from Cornell Law School and Dr. Joseph Shin, WCCHR Co-Medical Director, was part of a panel at the end of the event.

The “public charge” test is utilized by immigration officials to determine the eligibility of immigrants to become permanent residents, adjust their status, or reenter the United States. Under the recent proposed changes which have been put on hold by court order, receiving Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or public housing benefits, and even uninsured or low-income status can become grounds for inadmissibility.

The talk focused on the significant effects that such proposed changes could have on the health of immigrants and their families and the ways in which the mere introduction of such changes has alarmingly impacted communities. There was also a discussion on the practical steps to protect the health of patients and the physician’s and healthcare worker’s role in advocating for immigrant patients.

Students expressed appreciation for the fact that both legal and medical aspects of the policy effects were presented. Anita Amin, a first-year WCMC student, stated, “Looking around the room, I found it reassuring that we were gathered in that room that day, from medical professionals and students to law students, researchers, and social workers to see what we could do to raise awareness about the rule and work on protecting those vulnerable to it.”

To read more about the “Public Charge”: <https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-the-high-price-of-the-public-charge-rule-20191029-ibgogybbbjehlho6tupkn6ur4y-story.html>

## Spotlight on...

Priyanka is a second year medical student who is currently one of two Events Coordinators and a Case Manager for WCCHR. She graduated from Harvard in May 2018 and joined WCCHR originally to pursue her interests in service and to understand how human rights and legal issues influence healthcare outcomes. She spent a majority of her time before medical school working with underserved populations and sought to further this work in medical school with WCCHR. Priyanka has helped execute a variety of events for WCCHR and most recently led the efforts for the Fall Training, which had the largest attendance and participation to date. She will be continuing in WCCHR as the Director of Organizational Operations.

### Priyanka Narayan



### Ellen Arfin, LCSW



Ellen Arfin, LCSW is a practicing psychotherapist in New York City. She received her BA from Cornell University in 1971, and her MSW in 1976 from Columbia University. Her work is informed by her psychoanalytic training, her interest in attachment theory and trauma studies. For many years she taught a course in human development at the Institute for Contemporary Psychotherapy. She was also faculty at the School for Visual Art, where she taught a course on psychological theories such as the psychology of the creative process. Ms. Arfin has presented on maternal hatred at various conferences and her paper, "Watching My Mother Die" was published in the *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* journal in 2011. Ms. Arfin joined WCCHR in 2017, where she continues to evaluate refugees seeking asylum in the United States. This work is particularly meaningful to her because it combines her clinical skills with her values of providing assistance to those seeking a safe haven in the United States.

