

Season Greetings

"The holiday season is a perfect time to reflect on our gratitude and seek out ways to make life better for those around us." —Anonymous

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Lexi Hanson



Lexi Hanson, Staff Attorney

In October, BLC welcomed our newest Staff Attorney, Lexi Hanson! A graduate of the University of Washington Bothell with a degree in Law, Economics, and Public Policy, she earned her law degree from Seattle University School of Law in 2025. Before joining BLC, Lexi worked with the Washington State Attorney General's Office and externed for the Honorable Judge Jamal Whitehead in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington, where she gained hands-on experience with civil rights cases.

Passionate about helping individuals in poverty with disabilities navigate the legal system to reaffirm their rights and achieve economic security, Lexi chose to join our legal team to make a meaningful difference in people's lives. She is zealous about ensuring that those who are unable to work due to their disabilities still receive the resources they need to get by, after paying into the Social Security system through decades of employment. After gaining experience with civil rights and employment law issues in law school, **Lexi is eager to further BLC's mission to empower economically vulnerable communities** in a way that allows them to overcome systemic barriers and maintain access to the benefits they are entitled to. One of her favorite aspects of her attorney position is having the ability to help disabled veterans through BLC's long-running partnership with the King County Veterans' Program (KCVP). Through this collaboration, Lexi visits KCVP's Tukwila office twice a month to help veterans traverse the Social Security system and determine whether they need to be referred to other organizations to resolve other potential legal issues.

When asked about the importance of her work with BLC now and in the new year, Lexi said:

“As we've seen with the recent cuts to SNAP and other government benefits, the work BLC does for low-income communities in King County is more important than ever. Disabled individuals are among the most marginalized groups in this country. Because many of our clients are people of color, they face even more barriers in attaining socio-economic stability. In a perfect world, I would love to see the Social Security Administration take active steps to make the process more accessible to our clients so it does not feel so frustrating and overwhelming for them.”

We're so lucky to have Lexi as part of our dedicated legal team here at BLC!

We Are Moving! as of January 1 new year, new office!

NEW OFFICE LOCATION:
401 2nd Ave S.
Suite 204
Seattle, WA 98104
P: 206-686-7252



TRAINING SPOTLIGHT

2025 Access to Justice Conference

On September 18th, Hillary Lovell, BLC's Directing Attorney for our Disabled Homeless Advocacy Project, had the opportunity to present an important Continuing Legal Education Training focused on the **Social Security rules and regulations that impact Washington's Native American populations** at the statewide **2025 Access to Justice Conference** (ATJ) in Yakima. Every two years, the ATJ Conference brings together 300 community members, legal system advocates, judges, attorneys, and policymakers across Washington State committed to dismantling legal systems of oppression and poverty. In partnership with experienced staff from Northwest Justice Project's Native American Unit, our training (titled *Reimagining Economic Security: Addressing the Gaps and Barriers in State and Federal Cash Assistance for Native Americans*) provided critical information for Native American communities who encounter complex challenges to obtaining and maintaining their Social Security benefits, which include:

● SSA's frequent miscalculation of or estimation of tribal income resulting in cessations, overpayments and/or underpayments of disability benefits

● SSA's misapplication of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act income exclusion, resulting in benefit cessation, incorrectly estimated income, and

● SSA's improper denial of Canadian-born indigenous people who are rightly eligible for SSI and exempt from non-citizenship requirements under the Jay Treaty.

BLC is proud to be the primary legal aid organization in Washington State that has expertise in Social Security benefits. For more than five years, BLC has had one dedicated attorney that provides direct, face-to-face support on a regular basis to Native American populations at Chief Seattle Club. Our Applications Clinic also supports Chief Seattle Club members by providing outreach at their locations to complete benefits applications. Additionally, our legal teams helps tribal members with disabilities via our partnerships with Seattle Indian Health Board, and through self-help publications and Know-Your-Rights publications and trainings. 10% of BLC's clients each year are Native Americans / Indigenous community members.

As a result of this unique community education and these resources, **our goal is to reduce the legal barriers that local Native American individuals and families – living across the Puget Sound – face when navigating the complexities of the Social Security system**. Our work with tribal communities is especially important because they often have little or no access to legal services.

Do you need a Continuing Legal Education Training or workshop for your staff or clients? Please email us at info@benefitslawcenter.org.

