



Miriam Harmatz, Director of Advocacy and Founder

Miriam, one of Florida's leading Medicaid advocates, is a former senior health law attorney at Florida Legal Services and adjunct professor in the Health Law Clinic at Florida International University College of Law. She founded the Florida Health Justice Project (FHJP) in late 2017.

As a young child with a health issue, Miriam learned that everyone must have insurance and that healthcare is a human right. She wrote her senior college thesis on why Congress failed to pass a national health insurance bill in 1974, and as a legal services attorney for 30 years she focused on ensuring access to healthcare for her clients.

Miriam has been lead counsel on multiple federal court cases resulting in statewide relief for Medicaid beneficiaries. These successful outcomes, including federal court cases of first impression and with national import, are the result of highly collaborative work with national experts, Florida legal aid lawyers and pro bono attorneys. On a local level, Miriam led collaborative efforts that improved access and transparency at Miami-Dade County's publicly funded hospital. This work includes administrative complaints successfully challenging outpatient and inpatient admission deposit policies, discrimination against foreign-born county residents, and violations of consumer protections provided under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the first complaint of its kind in the nation.

Because Florida has not yet expanded Medicaid under the ACA, Miriam leads FHJP's collaborative advocacy detailing the tremendous human and economic benefits of extending coverage and the adverse impacts in failing to do so.



Katy DeBriere, Legal Director

Katy is one of the state's leading experts in Medicaid law. Prior to becoming Legal Director, Katy was the managing attorney for Jacksonville Area Legal Aid's Northeast Florida Medical Legal Partnership where she secured significant and sustained funding for the partnership for the first time in its 12-year history. Katy also played a lead role in developing a statewide medical-legal partnership network and assisted hundreds of clients with access to Medicaid eligibility and services through individual administrative advocacy.

Katy began her legal career in 2008 as an Equal Justice Works fellow. The fellowship resulted in several district courts of appeal wins and a successful federal constitutional challenge to Florida's statutory scheme for the involuntary commitment of individuals with developmental disabilities. The latter case resulted in the amendment of Florida state law to guarantee an annual review of committed individuals.

More recently, Katy was responsible for the state's remedial actions to ensure continuous Medicaid enrollment for young people exiting foster care as well as individuals formerly receiving Medicaid through state adoption assistance agreements and Supplemental Security Income. Katy also has experienced litigating individual and systemic matters related to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).



Lynn Hearn, Senior Attorney

Lynn joined our team in 2023, bringing expertise from her 25 years of diverse legal practice in the public and private sectors. Prior to joining FHJP, Lynn was the Legal Advocate for the Florida Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, which operates to protect the health, safety, welfare and rights of residents of long-term care facilities. There, in addition to providing legal guidance to the program and the approximately 200 certified ombudsmen who work directly with long-term care residents, she undertook a project with legal service providers throughout the State to enhance the availability of legal services for these residents.

Prior to her work with the Ombudsman Program, Lynn was in private practice with Meyer, Brooks, Blohm and Hearn, P.A. for more than ten years where she represented individuals and organizations in education, employment, and election-related litigation. She assisted countless public school teachers and professors in protecting their employment and professional licenses. She was also instrumental in successfully blocking a proposed amendment to the Florida Constitution which would have eliminated the exclusive authority of local school boards to establish and operate public schools in their respective districts. Before this, Lynn served in state government, as General Counsel for the Florida Department of State and Deputy Solicitor General. She graduated from the Florida State University College of Law (J.D.) and the College of William and Mary (B.A. in Economics).