

## Elder Financial Justice Clinic – 2016 Report to Partners

Financial exploitation is the most common form of elder abuse, costing seniors an estimated \$2.9 billion each year. The University of Illinois College of Law’s Elder Financial Justice Clinic (EFJC) was established to fight against financial exploitation, which it does through a three-pronged approach: representation, education, and advocacy.

### STRONG LEGAL REPRESENTATION FOR FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION VICTIMS

The EFJC is the first law school clinic in the country focused on combating elder financial exploitation. The clinic provides free legal services throughout Illinois to people 60 and over and vulnerable adults who have been victims of any type of financial fraud or abuse. More than **50** EFJC students have together devoted over **10,000** hours to advocating for Illinois seniors, and they are leaving law school with the skills, experience, and enthusiasm necessary to start filling the void in civil representation for financial exploitation victims.

### EDUCATION ABOUT AND PREVENTION OF FINANCIAL ABUSE

EFJC students and Professor Andres have presented to more than two dozen groups of seniors and senior services providers about financial exploitation and available legal remedies for victims. Professor Andres, EFJC students, and EFJC clients have also appeared on statewide radio shows to raise awareness of financial abuse and the clinic’s services.

### LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY AND NATIONAL THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

In March 2015, Professor Andres proposed legislation to Illinois Representative Tom Bennett to allow all victims of financial exploitation to bring a civil cause of action for financial exploitation. The new law, **Public Act 99-0272**, took effect January 1, 2016, and allows financial exploitation victims to recover treble damages and attorney’s fees from abusers.

Professor Andres, one of 30 experts to have participated in the National Center for Victims of Crime’s (NCVC) Roundtable on Elder Financial Exploitation in 2014, is currently working with the NCVC and the American Bar Association to develop model legislation for a financial exploitation civil cause of action that could be adopted by states nationwide.

In February 2016, the Elder Law Journal published Professor Andres’ article, “Making Elder Financial Exploitation Cases Part of a Sustainable Practice.” The article diagnoses the lack of civil representation for victims of financial abuse, urges civil attorneys to take on financial exploitation cases, and gives attorneys tips for how to do so.

In October 2016, the Retirement Research Foundation awarded EFJC an **\$85,000 research grant** to study the non-monetary benefits of the clinic’s representation to its financial abuse victim clients. The study aims to help legal services providers decide how to prioritize financial exploitation cases and seeks to refine a clinic model that can be implemented at law schools nationwide.

### MATT ANDRES DIRECTOR, EFJC



### FALL 2015 CLINIC CLASS



### SPRING 2016 CLINIC CLASS



### 2013-16 EFJC RESULTS



**54 CLIENTS**



**22 ILLINOIS COUNTIES**



**\$429,643 RESTITUTION**

### TYPES OF FRAUD CASES



**44%** FAMILY/FRIEND/CARETAKER

**26%** CONSUMER

**20%** CONTRACTOR

**4%** INVESTMENT

**4%** SCAMS

**2%** MORTGAGE