

LEGAL momentum

The Women's Legal Defense
and Education Fund

WOMEN AND JOB OPPORTUNITY

Pathways to Better Jobs for Women



OUR MISSION

ENSURING THE ECONOMIC
AND PERSONAL SECURITY OF
WOMEN AND GIRLS.

OUR VISION

LEGAL MOMENTUM ENVISIONS
A SOCIETY IN WHICH ALL
WOMEN AND GIRLS ARE
ECONOMICALLY SECURE,
EMPOWERED TO MAKE
THEIR OWN CHOICES, AND
CAN LIVE AND WORK FREE OF
DISCRIMINATION AND
VIOLENCE.

THE REALITY

Women continue to hold jobs with lower salaries and fewer benefits, and to face barriers to employment in desirable job sectors from which they have long been excluded. Training programs for both adults and students too often reinforce these trends, failing to provide women and girls with competitive skills and a path into non-traditional, well-compensated jobs.

OUR COMMITMENT

Legal Momentum, the Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund, has been at the forefront of protecting the rights of women in higher-paying, traditionally male-dominated fields. Legal Momentum's work in this area grew out of our groundbreaking litigation initiatives focused on both educational equity and non-traditional employment opportunities for women and girls.

OUR STRATEGY

Legal Momentum combines public policy advocacy, education, and precedent-setting litigation to expand and enforce the law. We educate policymakers, advocates, attorneys, judges, and others to ensure that laws and policies are implemented broadly, fairly, and effectively. Feedback from these stakeholders and those working "on the ground" helps us identify policies and laws that fall short for women, and informs our development of new policies and laws to ensure women's economic and personal security.

OUR PROGRAMS

Legal Momentum works with career and technical education high schools in New York City to improve recruitment and retention of girls, enhance girls' participation in training for highly paid jobs in the construction trades, and increase compliance with laws ensuring educational equity and opportunity. We also advocate on the federal, state, and local levels to ensure that workforce development programs provide skills training for women across the spectrum of job sectors, and do not reinforce the occupational segregation that has long tracked women into lower paying jobs.

SUCCESS STORY

Ivana first encountered Legal Momentum in February 2007 when we asked Veronica Session, a 20-year carpenter and shop steward, to discuss her work in the trades with 10th grade students. At the time, Ivana had doubts about her choice to train for a career as an electrician. When she began there were only four girls in her school's electrical track, and one had recently switched to cosmetology. Ivana questioned her ability to master the math involved and, though she had no interest in cosmetology, felt it might offer her an easier route. Veronica's presentation renewed Ivana's interest in completing the electrical program. Afterwards, Ivana asked her guidance counselor for help to complete the program and received additional tutoring in math. In the 12th grade, Ivana was at the top of her class and was asked to represent her school at a State level competition among her peers—the first female to represent the school in the small motor competition. She graduated in June 2009 and has become an ambassador for women in the trades by acting as a spokesperson and role model for other girls at Legal Momentum's recruitment events.

OUR IMPACT

- Conducted Title IX and Gender Equity Trainings for teachers, staff, and administrators at New York Career and Technical Education (CTE) High Schools.
- The schools Legal Momentum has worked with have doubled the number of girls enrolled in non-traditional tracks. If these girls complete the program, they can expect to earn **30% more over their lifetime** than women in traditionally female jobs.
- Presented, along with tradeswomen, at High School Choice information sessions and Career Fairs hosted by “feeder” middle schools, and at orientation sessions, attended by over 5,000 students, parents, and school staff, to raise awareness of girls’ opportunities in skilled trades programs and careers.
- Worked with school principals and guidance counselors to organize school tours and special forums focused on CTE programs to ensure that middle school educators are aware of girls’ opportunities in these programs.
- Through our *Equality Works* program, advocated for policies to improve women’s access to non-traditional jobs, supported and organized tradeswomen, and engaged in litigation challenging the rampant discrimination in these fields. These tradeswomen serve as role models and recruiters for our work with CTE schools.

OUR FUTURE

Gender Equity in Career and Technical Education (CTE) Schools: Legal Momentum has identified and developed solutions to the multiple ways in which high school recruitment processes can limit girls’ access to male-dominated CTE programs. In the coming year, we will build upon our successes to:

- Refine our proven effective strategies to help schools institutionalize effective girl-friendly recruitment and outreach programs.
- Develop and implement, in partnership with the NYC Department of Education (DOE) and the United Federation of Teachers, a protocol for training guidance counselors and teachers on gender equity in non-traditional programs.
- Complete, publish, and disseminate a comprehensive Title IX guide to educate school administrators about the federal laws that require them to promote girls’ access to the full range of career track possibilities, and to stop steering girls into stereotypically female tracks such as cosmetology
- Work with the NYC DOE to formalize and centralize recruitment and retention processes and strategies for girls.

Local, State, and Federal Advocacy: Legal Momentum will continue to work with tradeswomen, non-profit partners, Union Women’s Committees, and others to bridge the gap between CTE schools, tradeswomen and local, city, state, and national advocacy efforts. Last year, our key advocacy initiatives included meetings with the State Attorney General and NYS Division of Human Rights to discuss implementation of stimulus funds and oversight by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission of all public and federally-assisted projects. We also organized a meeting with the U.S. Department of Labor’s Northeast Region Women’s Bureau and Office of Federal Contract Compliance District Management and District Directors to discuss optimal ways for bringing in and retaining tradeswomen—particularly in light of stimulus funds coming to New York. In the coming year, we will focus our advocacy on gender equity and girls’ opportunities as they relate to the 2012 reauthorization of Perkins funds (the federal appropriation for vocational and technical education); increasing federal goals for women in apprenticeship programs and on construction worksites; and independent monitors on all “megaprojects” (\$15 billion or more).

