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CU law students worked for AIDS discrimination clinic

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Mark Barnes, the director of AIDS policy for the New York State Department of Health, is a former assistant clinical professor of law at the School of Law, and a former co-director of the AIDS Law Clinic that was formed in 1988. The Law Clinic, which was the only law school clinic performing AIDS discrimination litigation in the country when it began, closed in 1989.

It provided free and low-cost adversarial services, such as filing law suits, for AIDS related discrimination because most free legal services for AIDS patients at the time were geared towards non-adversarial services, such as drafting wills or child custody agreements, according to clinical Professor of Law Deborah Greenberg, who also co-directed the Law clinic.

In the 1988-89 academic year, the clinic counseled 30 clients and formally represented 25; by the end of 1989, 14 of the clinic's cases were resolved in favor of the

clinic's clients and only two were unsuccessful, according to a report written by Barnes, Greenberg, and Laura Pinsky, director of the Columbia Gay Health Advocacy Project, and a consultant to the clinic.

Law students acted as legal representatives for clients in the clinic, filing complaints with appropriate institutions and even acting as representatives in courtrooms. Students also developed non-adversarial projects, such as drafting an AIDS policy for a private non-profit school, according to the report.

The Law clinic closed in 1989 because Barnes left the University and Greenberg decided to stop the clinic, Greenberg said.

However, other schools have since called Columbia for information on how to create their own clinics, she said.

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