

Legal Rights Center, Inc.

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For Immediate Release

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SUBJECT: **Program from the Recently Closed Council on Crime and Justice Relocates to the Legal Rights Center**

Minneapolis, MN July 25, 2016 – Joshua Esmay, the former Director of Public Policy and Advocacy at the Council on Crime and Justice, has joined the staff of the Legal Rights Center where he will be continuing his work helping people overcome the myriad collateral consequences that result from a criminal record. These are the formal and informal barriers that prevent people from accessing employment, safe housing, and participating in their communities after having been convicted, or even simply accused, of a crime. Mr. Esmay facilitates fair hiring trainings with employers, employment service providers, and criminal justice personnel; assists individuals facing legal barriers created by criminal records; and advocates for policy reforms that allow those who have completed their sentences to be restored as full, productive, members of our community.

Mr. Esmay graduated from the University of Minnesota Law School and began his career practicing in the Ramsey County Public Defender's office. He also serves as co-chair of the Second Chance Coalition and past-president of the Minnesota Community Corrections Association.

“This work is a crucial legacy of the Council on Crime and Justice. Over a decade ago, the Council's Racial Disparities Initiative identified collateral consequences as a key cost associated with the racial disparities in the criminal justice system, and we have long supported policy reforms to reduce the barriers that people face after being accused of a crime. The Council's board has been working with local foundations that have historically supported this work to ensure that it continues once the Council is gone. We are very pleased that it will have a new home at Legal Rights Center.” *Perry Moriearty, Board Chair, Council on Crime and Justice.*

“For more than 50 years, the Council on Crime and Justice has provided local expertise in articulating how low income communities are challenged not only by crime but also by the policies and practices imposed in response. Criminal justice processing has become a growth industry that invokes many long-term harms. The Legal Rights Center is grateful that we are able to add direct assistance for overcoming criminal record problems, and related policy advocacy, to our other means of addressing overcriminalization: community-based defense representation to ensure equal opportunity for justice, school-based restorative practices to re-engage students and prevent juvenile justice system involvement, and policy advocacy focused on ending the school to prison pipeline.” *Michael Friedman, Executive Director, Legal Rights Center*