

Press Release



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UW Law School's Immigrant Justice Center receives Gordon Sinykin Award of Excellence

MADISON, Wis. (May 6, 2026) — The University of Wisconsin Law School's [Immigrant Justice Center](#) provides legal services to underserved individuals across Wisconsin, offering representation in immigration matters and assistance to detained immigrants.

That work has earned the center the [Wisconsin Law Foundation's](#) 2026 Gordon Sinykin Award of Excellence. The Foundation is the charitable arm of the State Bar of Wisconsin.



Directed by UW Law School professor Erin Barbato, the Immigrant Justice Center operates a year-round service-learning program in which law students, under faculty supervision, represent clients seeking humanitarian relief and defend individuals facing removal in Immigration Court.

The center conducts monthly screenings at the Dodge County Detention Center, where students assist detained immigrants and identify cases requiring further intervention. At the appellate level, the program files briefs with the Board of Immigration Appeals and trains students in oral advocacy. The center also works with family law and criminal defense attorneys on immigration-related legal issues.

“Amid heightened tensions surrounding enforcement, asylum, and social movements concerning immigration, IJC serves as a beacon of light not only for those requiring assistance but for all those who care about due process and the rule of law,” said UW Law School Dean Daniel Tokaji.

“The Immigrant Justice Center exemplifies the very purpose of the Gordon Sinykin Award of Excellence, said Deanne Koll, chair of the award committee.

“Through its tireless work providing legal services to Wisconsin’s underserved immigrant community – particularly victims of crime, persecution, and human trafficking – IJC advances both public understanding of the law and meaningful access to justice. Their commitment ensures that some of our most vulnerable neighbors are able to navigate the legal system with dignity, fairness, and hope.”

The Gordon Sinykin Award of Excellence recognizes a lawyer, law firm, or group of lawyers for their work on a law-related public service or education project.

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ABOUT THE WISCONSIN LAW FOUNDATION

The Wisconsin Law Foundation is the charitable arm of the State Bar of Wisconsin. The foundation supports programs that promote public understanding of the law, improve the administration of justice, and provide legal services to those in need.

ABOUT THE STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN

The State Bar of Wisconsin is the integrated professional association, created by the Wisconsin Supreme Court, for attorneys who hold a Wisconsin law license. With more than 25,000 members, the State Bar aids the courts in improving the administration of justice, provides continuing legal education for its members to help them maintain their expertise, and assists Wisconsin lawyers in carrying out community service initiatives to educate the public about the legal system and the value of lawyers. For more information, visit wisbar.org.

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