

JOIN US!

**JUNE
25**

1:00 pm -
2:30 pm ET

**EQUITY
MATTERS**

Under the Surface: How Racism
Continues to Shape Fraud Narratives in
Public Benefits

CLASP
The Center for Law and Social Policy

In the next session of our Equity Matters conversation series, CLASP and partners will examine the racist roots of the stories we hear about public benefits programs, why that matters now, and what we can do about it

The following is sampling of the questions asked by attendees during the Equity Matters conversation on June 25:

Q: What are the best ways that people with the lived experience of poverty and being oppressed by the system stand up and exercise power? How can we in poverty alleviation work support and amplify their power and voices?

A: Thank you for this question. There are many ways that people with lived experience of poverty are oppressed by systems, but one of the most persistent is that the very people most impacted by policies are often excluded from the spaces where decisions are made.

For those of us working in this space is to help create the conditions for experts with lived experience leadership to thrive. That means ensuring they have meaningful seats at decision-making tables, compensating them for their expertise, investing in their leadership development, and sharing access to resources, relationships, and platforms that have traditionally been reserved for institutions and professionals. AND also being willing to shift power!

Q: For information and referral services, like 211, what role can their community facing employees (resource navigators) do to advance a different narrative about accessing benefits? Both when speaking to people who are searching for benefits and need information about eligibility and when storytelling about their work?

A: Great question. As someone who used benefits and watched my family members use them, too, I remember intense feelings of shame and embarrassment in the benefits

office. Also, a lot of pressure to justify why we deserved help. I wish employees would have validated our deservingness upfront, said they trusted us, and emphasized that we didn't need to share our stories to get help. In talking to policymakers, I think the perspective of a community-facing employee is so important. Y'all really see just how complicated these application processes are and can communicate that truth to policymakers from a professional perspective.

Q: If we are acknowledging that our systems inherently are racist and were essentially made to keep "others" out do we focus on how to change it or dismantle and reimagine?

A: We have this internal debate all the time as the Public Benefits Justice team. We tend to think that it depends on the program. Some programs over rely on the private market (like housing choice vouchers) and don't help most eligible people afford housing. But others like Medicaid do reach a ton of folks and provide quality care. I think what's important is that we continue to see dismantling and reimaging as an option in our toolbox!

Q: What is the status of the public charge rule? Last I checked is it still under Biden's criteria. Has that changed?

A: The public charge rule has not change. The Biden 2023 rule is still in effect. However, a new proposed public charge rule by the Trump administration will come out soon. Check out our resources on the new proposed public charge rule: <https://pifcoalition.org/toolkits/public-charge-regulation/>