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Massachusetts General Hospital's Center for Law, Brain & Behavior Advances Juvenile Justice in Launching First-of-its-Kind Cutting-Edge Brain Science "NeuroLaw Library"

BOSTON – June 11, 2024 – In an effort to make the legal system more effective and just for all those affected by the law, today, the [Center for Law, Brain & Behavior \(CLBB\)](#), one of the nation's leading institutes committed to providing the most accurate and actionable neuroscience for judges, lawyers, policymakers and journalists, is launching the [NeuroLaw Library](#), the nation's first information resource dedicated to fairer, more effective science-informed judicial outcomes. The NeuroLaw Library is a free, open access repository for those involved in the juvenile and adult criminal justice system in need of accurate and applicable neuroscience resources. The CLBB is based out of Massachusetts General Hospital, a founding member of the Mass General Brigham health system.

The NeuroLaw Library is designed to be used across the judicial spectrum – defense attorneys, prosecutors, judges, probation and parole officers, advocates, incarcerated persons and their families – with a curated collection of open-source journal articles, amicus briefs, and affidavits. Additional features include educational videos, a neurolaw dictionary, and toolkits for attorneys and incarcerated persons. Comprehensive indexes and search mechanisms provide an easier user experience, as do accessibility programs for people with a vision or hearing impairment.

"Criminal law is about mental states which all too often rely on antiquated concepts of the human mind and behavior," said Judith G. Edersheim, JD, MD, co-founder and director of the Center for Law, Brain & Behavior. "With advances in neuroscience – or brain science – NeuroLaw Library is an unprecedented opportunity to debunk those inaccurate ideas in the service of justice and to achieve goals such as lower recidivism rates."

Through the use of AI, complex materials in the archive can be adapted to five different reading levels, starting at the sixth grade – a feature designed to meet the needs of justice-involved persons restricted in the amount of time they can spend in the prison library or who may have limited educational backgrounds. As of 2020, the United States prison population totaled 1.26 million persons housed in more than 6,300 federal or state prisons, almost all of which have libraries.

"In making the findings of neuroscience free and available to all, the NeuroLaw Library helps level the courtroom playing field," said Library Director Stephanie Tabashneck, PsyD, JD. "It's an invaluable resource for attorneys with heavy caseloads and limited budgets and for defendants and plaintiffs who lack financial means."

The first module of the NeuroLaw Library – titled Juvenile and Emerging Adult Justice – is one of five content modules planned, with a staggered release over the next two years. The release of this module reflects the growing impact of neuroscience research on sentencing reform and sentence mitigation in felony cases involving crimes committed by youth.

Driven by a neuroscience-based understanding of adolescent and young adult brain development, significant changes in laws and court rulings about parole eligibility and mandatory life sentences without parole have occurred at both the federal and state level. The Neurolaw Library will help accelerate that trend.

“CLBB’s Neurolaw Library is a vital resource for those seeking to understand and address the complex issues surrounding youth and mass incarceration,” said Marsha Levick, JD, Chief Legal Officer, Juvenile Law Center. “It’s extensive collection of materials offers critical insights for professionals working to reform the legal system and advocate for fairer, science-informed policy.”

Future modules to be developed over the next two years include Aging Brains/Elder Fraud Prevention; Trauma, Memory and Asylum Law; Sentencing Reform; and Addiction and the Law.

About the CLBB

The Center for Law, Brain & Behavior (CLBB) is based in the Department of Psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital. Our mission is to transform law, public policy, and professional practice in criminal justice through the use of accurate, actionable neuroscience. We train lawyers, judges, probation staff and others who directly shape how the criminal justice system works. Our faculty write and disseminate briefs and white papers, give testimony to legislatures and government entities, and consult with lawyers and judges in criminal defense and prosecution cases. We also forge partnerships to mount demonstration projects, for example: a pre-arraignment diversion program for young adults, a sentencing diversion program, and a financial fraud protection program for older adults with cognitive impairment and vulnerability to undue influence.

About Massachusetts General Hospital

Massachusetts General Hospital, founded in 1811, is the original and largest teaching hospital of Harvard Medical School. The Mass General Research Institute conducts the largest hospital-based research program in the nation, with annual research operations of more than \$1 billion and comprises more than 9,500 researchers working across more than 30 institutes, centers and departments. MGH is a founding member of the Mass General Brigham healthcare system.