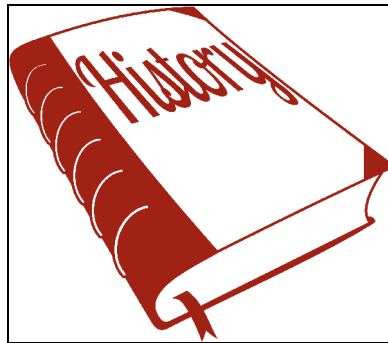


The History of Spectrum Institute

Spectrum Institute is a nonprofit organization incorporated in California in 1987. With tax-exempt status under section 501c3 of the Internal Revenue Code, the corporation is designated by the IRS as a private operating foundation.

The current focus of the organization's research, education and advocacy activities is directed toward conservatorship reform in California and guardianship reform nationally.

In addition to protecting the rights of seniors and people with disabilities who are involved in these legal proceedings, the organization also focuses on legal issues involving disability and abuse as well as the right of people with developmental disabilities to mental health therapy services.



From its inception 33 years ago, Spectrum Institute has devoted its attention to a variety of worthy civil rights and human rights issues.

The [*Family Diversity Project*](#) (1987-1999) promoted [family registries](#) and the use of broad and inclusive [definitions](#) of “family” in [public policies](#) and [private benefit programs](#). This included advocacy for the rights of [domestic partners](#) regardless of sexual orientation or [gender](#).

The [*American Association for Single People*](#), also known as [*Unmarried America*](#) (1999-2006), promoted [equal rights](#) for unmarried individuals, couples, and families. It published a [newsletter](#) and advanced public awareness in such ways as reaching out to single members of [Congress](#), promoting [Unmarried and Single Americans Week](#), and working with [national media](#). It also advocated for equal rights through [political](#) and [legislative](#) efforts. Its work was highly [acclaimed](#).

The [*Emancipation Project*](#) (2004-2006) sought to end the abuse of teenagers who were being sent by their parents to private “boarding schools” and boot camps outside of the judicial process for

“reformation” or “reprogramming.”

The [*Disability and Abuse Project*](#) (1997-2020) focused on the abuse of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by promoting risk reduction, effective response, justice, and therapy for these vulnerable victims. Among its activities were a “think tank” [conference](#) in 1997, a [national survey](#) in 2012, and launching an [investigation](#) into abuses in California’s probate conservatorship system (2012-2015). The project was discontinued in 2020.

The [*Disability and Guardianship Project*](#) (2015 - present) promotes reforms in the conservatorship and guardianship systems. It focuses on the rights of seniors and people with disabilities in these cases, promoting access to justice and the use of less restrictive alternatives such as supported decision-making. A [documentary film](#) – *Pursuit of Justice* – chronicles some of this advocacy.

The work of Spectrum Institute is done through research, education, and [advocacy](#). The organization: • operates a website where its [publications](#) are made available to the public. • issues policy reports which are sent to government officials and agencies along with recommendations for reform • publishes [op-ed articles](#) to educate judges and lawyers • provides interviews to journalists and producers in order to educate the public through print and broadcast media • files [amicus curiae](#) (friend-of-the-court) briefs in appellate litigation.

[Thomas F. Coleman](#) is the organization’s executive and legal director. His work with Spectrum Institute from 1987 to 2009 is discussed in a [book](#) of his memoirs titled *The Domino Effect*.



<https://spectruminstitute.org/>