

AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania

a nonprofit, public-interest law firm

AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania launches Jaci Adams Identity Initiative

A recent [CDC study estimated that 42% of transgender women have HIV](#). Sixty-two percent of black trans women are thought to be living with HIV. For these women, and for others who may acquire HIV, a simple legal process to change their name can make a life-affirming difference.

The AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania has represented clients living with HIV in legal name changes for many years. For the last four years, with the support of [Philly AIDS Thrift](#), we've expanded our services to reach acutely vulnerable communities affected by HIV, including transgender women.

Our beloved colleague [Jaci Adams](#), who died in 2014, often spoke of the struggles that result when your identity doesn't match your identification. Without valid identification to confidently pull from your wallet, finding health care, employment, or even respect seem like impossible dreams.

To honor Jaci (pronounced *Jackie*) for all that she taught us and to continue good work in her name, the AIDS Law Project is proud to launch the **Jaci Adams Identity Initiative**. Recent favorable legal decisions now enable us to represent individuals previously ineligible for legal name change. Through the initiative, free representation will be available without referral.

Identity confirmation is more than just using a new name. It's living in the world as the person you know yourself to be.

The AIDS Law Project recently represented Keisha, a 38-year-old social worker, in changing her name. Keisha told us: "I thought it wasn't going to happen for me, because of my criminal record. When the day came and I had the decree in my hand, I felt validated as the person I am, and that society will now recognize me for the woman I am. Everybody deserves to be recognized as who they are."

The initiative will operate under the leadership of Senior Staff Attorney Adrian Lowe, supported by our intern Elizabeth Lilly, a second-year student at Temple University Beasley School of Law.

"The importance of legal name changes to trans people can't be overstated," said Adrian. "In addition to the validation that comes from documents that match who you are, appropriate identity documents enable trans people to access employment, housing, public benefits, health care, travel, you name it, with less fear of discrimination."

Name changes through the **Jaci Adams Identity Initiative** are available for Philadelphians living with HIV, as well as anyone else at risk of HIV, who can meet the legal standard of a non-fraudulent reason for changing their name.

Callers may reach the AIDS Law Project at 215-587-9377 or 267-520-0024. Requests for assistance also can be made online at <https://www.aidslawpa.org/on-line-intake>.

Founded in 1988, the [AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania](#) is the nation's only independent nonprofit public-interest law firm providing free legal services to people living with HIV and those affected by the epidemic.

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