

ADA SHEN-JAFFE

Director, Evergreen Legal Services
Seattle, Washington



The daughter of Chinese immigrant parents working at the United Nations, Ada Shen-Jaffe had many opportunities to learn about other people living in vastly different cultures, and was regularly exposed to both levels of privilege and poverty. With these opportunities she developed a sense of awareness and responsibility, leading her to devote her entire career to poverty law. As she describes it, "...this is a calling. It's not a job; it's not even a profession. And the job will never be finished."

Ms. Shen-Jaffe began practicing law in 1975 as a Staff Attorney for Northwest Washington Legal Services and spent the next two years working to improve the legal rights of women in a general practice that spanned such diverse issues as consumer law, domestic relations, juvenile justice, and housing law. She then spent a year teaching law in Taipei, Taiwan, while her pediatrician husband pursued his medical studies. She returned to the Northwest in 1979 as Staff Attorney and Coordinator of statewide legal services for the Evergreen Family Law Unit and Jail Conditions Task Force. Her practice included education, domestic violence, family law, and prisoner's rights – all

subjects of vital interest to women and children.

After working as Deputy Director for five years, she was promoted to Director of the Evergreen Legal Services statewide legal services program in 1986. In her fight for the legal protection and benefits for

underprivileged women and children, she made a point to hire women lawyers and to nurture their professional development. During her tenure, the number of women at the highest levels of ELS leadership has grown dramatically.

Ms. Shen-Jaffe was the primary leader in the creation of LAW Fund, a statewide campaign for raising private funds to support staffed legal services for the poor in Washington State. She was recently asked to become a consultant to the Legal Services Corporation Board where she guides the LSC Board and staff in redefining its vision for legal services for the poor and developing a strategic plan to implement that vision.

Ms. Shen-Jaffe earned her B.S. from Tufts University (1970), her Master of Science from Columbia University (1972), and her J.D. from Suffolk University Law School (1975). She and her husband, Ken Jaffe, have one son.