



Citizen Lawyer Program

## Pro Bono Projects

### Spring 2023

Each semester the Citizen Lawyer Program (CLP) partners with non-profit and government agencies to create a number of structured law-related volunteer opportunities for students at the University of Iowa College of Law. These Pro Bono Projects provide students with an opportunity to gain experience in a legal setting, develop skills, network with practicing lawyers, explore their interests, and provide public service. These are strictly volunteer positions – students are not compensated (as they would be for summer clerkships) nor do they receive academic credit (as they would for field placements or clinic).

CLP advertises Pro Bono Project openings at the start of each semester. Each Pro Bono Project has a separate description that includes information on the agency, project duties, expected time commitment, scheduling concerns, qualifications, necessary travel, number of positions available, preferences (e.g., multi-semester commitments preferred), and restrictions (e.g., required course/skills or upper-class standing). Students should carefully review project descriptions, available through Symplicity and on the CLP website, and then apply to all positions for which they wish to be considered, ranked by preference.

Application materials (Pro Bono Project application form and the student’s resume) are submitted to CLP via Symplicity by the application deadline. CLP then makes assignments based on student applications and available positions. The number of applicants regularly exceeds the number of available positions, so students who indicate an interest in multiple projects have a greater chance of assignment. We regret that we cannot guarantee placement for all applicants. Students will be notified of assignments approximately a week after the deadline.

Symplicity can be accessed from: <http://www.law.uiowa.edu/careers/symplicity> Under the “Jobs” tab select “Job Postings” and then look for “Spring 2023 Pro Bono Projects.” Citizen Lawyer Program is listed as the employer.

Questions regarding the Pro Bono Project application process should be directed to the Citizen Lawyer Program at [law-clp@uiowa.edu](mailto:law-clp@uiowa.edu).

**Applications for Spring 2023 projects are due by 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, January 25.**

## Chicago Volunteer Legal Services: Intake

Chicago Volunteer Legal Services is a nonprofit organization that provides critical civil legal assistance to low-income Chicagoans who have nowhere else to turn. CVLS is recognized as the most comprehensive, efficient, and cost-effective civil legal aid provider in Chicago. Typical cases involve problems with basic necessities, fundamental rights or safety, including:

- Preventing illegal evictions and unsafe housing.
- Fighting against denied insurance claims.
- Securing income support such as SSI, Medicaid and disability benefits.
- Protecting a child's and parental rights.
- Defending against foreclosure and helping borrowers secure modifications.

[www.cvl.org](http://www.cvl.org)

**Project Information:** Student volunteers will assist with client intakes. Scheduling is very flexible. When an intake needs to be done, CVLS will electronically assign the file to a student, who will then conduct the intake over the phone. Phone intakes are scheduled between the potential client and student, according to their availability. Students will work in one of two groups: foreclosure defense and general litigation. Students will either be placed in our general/chancery program or in our immigration program. Spanish/French/Igbo speakers being especially helpful for the immigration program.

**Agency Contact:** Debi Martin at [dmartin@cvls.org](mailto:dmartin@cvls.org).

**Volunteer Responsibilities:** When they receive an intake assignment, students will conduct the intake telephonically at a mutually convenient time arranged with the potential client. All work can be completed remotely.

**Agency Responsibilities:** Train students on the use of the data base and provide regular oversight and feedback. CVLS will also ensure that all work can be done remotely.

**Expectations/Time commitment/Scheduling:** CVLS prefers volunteers who will commit for the entire school year. The estimate time commitment is 15-20 hours each semester. Flexible scheduling.

**Criteria:** Up to two positions are available. Students should have some interest in legal aid work and be diligent and detail oriented.

## Chicago Volunteer Legal Services: Research

Chicago Volunteer Legal Services is a nonprofit organization that provides critical civil legal assistance to low-income Chicagoans who have nowhere else to turn. CVLS is recognized as the most comprehensive, efficient, and cost-effective civil legal aid provider in Chicago. Typical cases involve problems with basic necessities, fundamental rights or safety, including:

- Preventing illegal evictions and unsafe housing.
- Fighting against denied insurance claims.
- Securing income support such as SSI, Medicaid and disability benefits.
- Protecting a child's and parental rights.
- Defending against foreclosure and helping borrowers secure modifications.

[www.cvl.org](http://www.cvl.org)

**Project Information:** Student will tackle the following research question: 19-year-old student is seeking information on how to ensure independency on her FAFSA application without utilizing her mother at this point. She has been supported for the last 11 years by her grandfather with whom she lives. The student received FAFSA for her first year of college, but it was "almost" denied due to her biological mother's misconduct on taxes. This year, her biological mother completed her taxes in the same incorrect/potentially illegal way, and as a result, she expects she will probably be denied FAFSA. As it stands, she has already filed FAFSA but has not yet heard back. Looking for research on the appropriate method of achieving proper loan status.

**Agency Contact:** Debi Martin at [dmartin@cvls.org](mailto:dmartin@cvls.org).

**Volunteer Responsibilities:** Student will look up information to answer the research question and then will provide CVLS with a short memorandum summarizing the answer along with sources.

**Agency Responsibilities:** Provide the student with guidance on questions they have and feedback. CVLS will also ensure that all work can be done remotely.

**Expectations/Time commitment/Scheduling:** The estimate time commitment is 5-10 hours each semester. Flexible scheduling.

**Criteria:** Up to one positions is available. Students should have some interest in legal aid work and be diligent and detail oriented.

## Disability Rights Iowa –Law Center for Protection and Advocacy: General Intake

Disability Rights Iowa (DRI) serves eligible individuals with disabilities in a variety of legal rights. DRI aims to defend and promote the human and legal rights of Iowans with disabilities. We promote safety, opportunity, access and self-determination for all Iowans through a program of self-advocacy, education, information and referral, non-legal advocacy and legal and systems advocacy. DRI is the official Protection and Advocacy system for Iowa. Federal law charges us with access authority to enter locked facilities to investigate conditions of the facilities and to ensure that individuals with disabilities are not abused or neglected. Our current legal and non-legal advocacy work focuses on protecting the educational rights of students with disabilities, ensuring individuals with disabilities have equal access to services and places, removing barriers to employment, increasing alternatives to guardianships, protecting access to long-term health services and supports, protecting and improving the lives of youth. <https://disabilityrightsiowa.org/>

**Project information:** Students will assist attorneys by interviewing clients, spotting issues, performing research, and drafting letters and other documents. Students may also be asked to file/copy documents, locate resources for a client, or assist attorneys in other ways. DRI office is opened to the public currently. DRI offers in-person intakes on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays from 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. It is anticipated that the work for this project could be done either remotely or in-person and will involve working primarily with the Legal Director and the DRI Intake Team.

**Agency Contact:** Catherine E. Johnson, [cjohnson@driowa.org](mailto:cjohnson@driowa.org)

**Volunteer Responsibilities:** Assist with prospective clients who call in from around the state. A student will gain experience doing live client intakes, and issue spotting. Students will first virtually observe an attorney interview clients, and then begin to interview clients under the attorney's supervision. Students must be reliable and commit to at least five hours a week during office hours (8:30AM-5:00PM). Because of the training that will be needed, the agency requires volunteers to commit through **the fall semester**.

**Agency Responsibilities:** Provide students with training and other instruction regarding applicable law and procedures. Provide supervision and guidance as needed about intake procedures and other duties. Be available as agreed upon (email/phone/in-person) for periodic progress check-in. Contact the law school to discuss any concerns with the volunteers or program.

**Expectations/Time commitment/Scheduling:** Students will be assigned to the Legal Director and will work with the Intake Team. Students will assist with completing the intakes assigned to the Intake team during the week. Student will need to coordinate with the Legal Director and/or the Intake Team to ensure coverage and supervision availability. Additional volunteer time is available upon request. Shifts must be arranged. **Because of the training that will be needed, the agency requires volunteers to commit through the fall semester (ending with time to prepare for exams).**

**Criteria:** One position is available for the spring semester. Suitable for all students. Students must be able to commit to at least 5 hours and participate in a required training session. ***Applicants should indicate on the application what days and hours they have available to volunteer.***

## State Public Defender – Iowa City

The State Public Defender of Iowa (SPD) coordinates provision of legal representation to indigent persons under arrest or charged with a crime, in juvenile cases, and on appeal in criminal and post-conviction relief cases. This legal representation is provided through SPD offices or through private attorneys who contract with the SPD or who are appointed by the Court. By specializing in criminal defense work and juvenile matters, public defenders, investigators, and support staff provide high-quality, efficient, cost-effective legal representation to indigent clients.

<https://spd.iowa.gov/>

**Project Information:** Students assist with the operations of the SPD's Iowa City office as needed, including case management and document/exhibit organization. Other duties as assigned may include covering phones or calling defendants regarding court hearings. This project requires students to travel to the Iowa City office located at 725 S. Clinton St., Iowa City.

**Agency Contact:** Peter Persaud, [ppersaud@spd.state.ia.us](mailto:ppersaud@spd.state.ia.us)

**Volunteer Responsibilities:** Students will assist public defender staff in the office as requested with filing, other case management tasks, and answering phones.

**Agency Responsibilities:** Provide guidance as needed about protocol, case management and intake procedures. Be available to the student and law school as agreed upon (email/phone/in-person) for periodic progress check-in. Contact the law school coordinator to discuss any concerns with the volunteers or the program.

**Expectations/Time commitment/Scheduling:** Students are expected to commit to 3-5 hours per week during set shifts at the SPD offices, to be determined by agreement with the supervisor.

**Criteria:** Up to two positions are available. Suitable for all students.