



Citizen Lawyer Program

Pro Bono Projects

Spring 2021

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 “CSM Jobs” and then look for “Spring 2021 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.

Applications for Spring 2021 projects are due by 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, February 3.

ACLU of Iowa: Legal Research

Founded in 1935, the American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa is the nation's fifth-oldest state affiliate of the national American Civil Liberties Union. The ACLU of Iowa is a non-profit organization that promotes and defends the values reflected in the Bill of Rights through litigation, public advocacy, outreach, education, and lobbying. The ACLU of Iowa is dedicated to promoting and protecting the individual rights and freedoms ensured by the United States Constitution and Iowa Constitution.

www.aclu-ia.org

Project Information: Legal research. Under supervision, the law student volunteers will assist the ACLU of Iowa in conducting confidential legal research on various topics and other assignment

Organization Contact(s): Rita Bettis Austen at rita.bettis@aclu-ia.org and Pete McRoberts at pete.mcroberts@aclu-ia.org.

Volunteer Responsibilities: Students will help complete a survey of local ordinances across Iowa to learn which towns and cities have: (1) crime nuisance ordinances, which penalize survivors of domestic violence for calling for emergency assistance and violate both constitutional Equal Protection and local and state civil rights laws; (2) unconstitutional political sign ordinances, in violation of the First Amendment; (3) anti-panhandling ordinances, which violate the First Amendment and criminalize poverty. This will primarily involve finding ordinances online, but may also involve telephone and/or email communication with smaller towns in the state, review and summary of local ordinances in an Excel worksheet.

Students may also be assigned research to support ongoing state policy initiatives, to be determined.

All documents must adhere to document guidelines that will be provided to the student. Students will be supervised by an attorney and will receive feedback on all assignments.

Organization Responsibilities: Supervise student's written work, provide feedback, and contact law school with any concerns with the volunteers or program.

Expectations/Time commitment/Scheduling: The anticipated time commitment depends on the student's availability and how quickly they complete the assigned work. Expected time commitment is 12-16 hours per month at minimum. The student and supervisor will work together to establish deadlines for projects that work with the student's schedule.

Criteria: Ten positions are available. Students must have strong research and writing skills and must be able to work independently. Students are expected to be responsive to the supervising attorney. All work will be done remotely.

Iowa State Bar Association: New Iowans Legal Advice Clinic

The Legal Access Committee of the Iowa State Bar Association, in collaboration with the Johnson County Bar Association and IC Compassion established a free legal advice clinic for area residents in 2015. Although the clinic is open to everyone in the community, the target population are those who cannot access other legal services, such as Legal Aid, due to their current citizenship status.

Project Information: Volunteers support the operation of the clinic; legal advice will be provided by volunteer attorneys. We are looking for enthusiastic students who are excited to be a part of this critically needed resource in Johnson County. *After a hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the clinic will resume virtually during the Spring 2021 semester.* Clinics are held in the evening on the second Tuesday of each month.

Agency contact: Clinic Coordinators, Eric Goers (eric-goers@iowa-city.org) and Dedi Walker (dedi.walker@gmail.com)

Volunteer Responsibilities: Students are expected to be engaged, reliable, and open to helping as needed in the functioning of this clinic. Flexibility is a must. Volunteer responsibilities will potentially include: marketing of the clinic (posting flyers in targeted areas in town), sending out attorney recruitment e-mails, assisting in the intake process, and helping clients fill out paperwork. The clinic coordinators will supervise students.

Agency responsibilities: The agency will provide training, guidance and supervision for volunteers.

Time commitment/Scheduling: Students will be expected to commit approximately a total of 10 to 15 hours to the project during the semester, including training time. Work will be completed remotely. *This project requires availability from approximately 5:15-7:15 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month.* A required informational session will be scheduled at a mutually agreed upon time and location once all volunteers are selected.

Criteria: Two positions are available. Suitable for all students, particularly those interested in issues experienced by the immigrant community. Proficiency in a second language (especially Spanish, French, and Arabic) is highly valued. *Please indicate language proficiency on your application.*

Lavender Legal Center

Lavender Legal Center provides direct representation, advocacy, and referrals for LGBTQ individuals, with a priority for serving those with low income and our LGBTQ youth. Founded in October 2020, LLC is in its infancy. After meeting our first fundraising goal, we were able to start some services at the start of the new year and should be in full swing by February 2021.

<https://www.facebook.com/LavenderLegalCenter>

Project Information: Student volunteers will help LLC with start up details such as creating and fine tuning intake forms and reviewing other forms to ensure we meet our high inclusivity standards. There will also be research opportunities ranging from legal in nature to resource gathering. For example, LLC needs a documented process and comparative list for IEP/504 plans across schools. LLC understands that our clients succeed when they are supported on all fronts, so we need to create a shareable resource list of temporary and transitional housing for minors.

Organization Contact: Kendra Weston lavenderlegalcenter@gmail.com

Volunteer Responsibilities: Students will assist Attorney Kendra Weston by preparing or editing administrative forms for LLC and complete research projects which will then be turned into formal guides, lists, or brief memos.

Agency Responsibilities: Provide the student with an overview of the forms needed and any supporting documents to aid in the creation of those forms; descriptions of legal issue or other needed advocacy to be researched; guidance about potential sources; clear deadlines; and available via phone/email/video call for regular check-ins and feedback.

Expectations/Time Commitment/Scheduling: Most projects are low time commitment, averaging about 1-2 hours per week.

Criteria: 1-2 student positions available. Volunteers will work remotely. Suitable for all students, but preference for those with a public interest background and/or those who have worked or otherwise identify with the LGBTQ community.

State Public Defender – Cedar Rapids

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 Cedar Rapids office as needed, including case management and document/exhibit organization. A specific focus will be assisting in the backlog of cases scheduled for trial. Duties may include reviewing and summarizing juror questionnaires, reviewing discovery materials, and other trial-related issues as they arise. The cases that are expected to receive priority for trials this fall are felony cases where the defendant is currently incarcerated. Volunteers may also work on misdemeanor cases as the need arises.

This project will primarily involve remote work, with meetings and communication via videoconference and/or email. The time commitment will be 2-3 hours per week, and the hours can be adjusted based on the availability of the volunteers and supervising attorney. There may be some work, however, that will require students to travel to the Cedar Rapids office located at 425 Second St. SE, Cedar Rapids.

Agency Contact: Katie Frank, kfrank@spd.state.ia.us.

Volunteer Responsibilities: Students will assist public defender staff in the Cedar Rapids office as requested with filing, other case management tasks, and reviewing documents.

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 2-3 hours per week during set shifts at the SPD office in Cedar Rapids, to be determined by agreement with the supervisor.

Criteria: Up to two positions are available. Suitable for all students. ***Requires primarily remote work, but may include on-site work in Cedar Rapids (approximately 25 miles from Iowa City) on a weekly basis. Please note availability for on-site work in your application form.***