Volunteer Opportunities for Law Students in the Chicago Area

Law students can help meet the needs of low-income and other vulnerable people in our community through pro bono service. Pro bono not only helps people in need, but also allows students to develop legal skills, create a network within the legal community and gain the emotional satisfaction that comes with helping people in need. Law students at all levels can get involved, and additional opportunities are available for students with 711 licenses.

Law students can get involved in any of the ongoing pro bono opportunities listed below and can use them to fulfill state bar or law school volunteer requirements. Law students interested in internships, externships or clinical experience should start with their schools for more information about their programs. Law students may also contact any of the organizations listed in the CBF Guide to Pro Bono Opportunities. Law students with questions should contact Angela Inzano at ainzano@chicagobar.org or 312-554-4952.

**LiveHelp Operator**
The LiveHelp Program is a chat service that allows people looking for legal information and self-help resources on IllinoisLegalAid.org to ask a remotely located LiveHelp volunteer for assistance in navigating the website. LiveHelp Operators empower more than 600 low-income IllinoisLegalAid.org visitors a month to resolve their own legal issues when they can’t find or afford an attorney. LiveHelp volunteers provide direct person-to-person online help so that people in need of legal assistance can obtain the information they need to achieve more positive outcomes to their legal problems. Volunteers can participate from any computer with internet access.

**Organization:** Illinois Legal Aid Online (www.illinoislegalaid.org)

**Practice areas:** All areas

**Opportunity type:** Non-representation, educating the public about the law, technology

**Skills required:** Subject matter experience

**Skills acquired:** Client counseling, client/witness interviewing

**Time commitment:** Completion of the required training (2 hrs.), then 2 hours per week.

**Contact:** livehelp@illinoislegalaid.org to request training materials or to sign-up for an in-person training.

**Training and support:** Volunteers must attend a 2-hour orientation and conduct a 30-minute “practice chat” with the LiveHelp Program Coordinator prior to volunteering. The Coordinator provides volunteers with ongoing support.

**Expungement and Sealing Help Desks**
Volunteers conduct criminal history research and provide consultations to individuals seeking to clear their criminal records through expungement and sealing. Volunteers meet with clients, read their criminal history or RAP sheets, determine their eligibility for relief, and help them file the necessary paperwork. The desk at the Daley Center is open Monday through Thursday from 9:00 am to 12:30 pm. The desk at the Markham Courthouse is open on Wednesdays from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.

**Organization:** Cabrini Green Legal Aid (www.cgla.net)

**Practice areas:** Expungement, sealing and other forms of criminal records relief

**Opportunity type:** Non-litigation, self-help desks

**Skills acquired:** Client counseling, client/witness interviewing

**Time commitment:** Completion of required training (3.5 hrs). Volunteers are then asked to commit to completing a minimum of six 3.5-hour sessions working at a Help Desk over 6 months, which can be scheduled at the volunteer's convenience.

**Contact:** Eric Zopf at ericzopf@cgla.net or 312.374.6191

**Training and support:** Volunteers are required to complete a 3.5-hour training at CGLA’s office. The volunteer coordinator and staff attorneys provide ongoing support.

**Emergency Services Volunteer Opportunity**
Emergency Services volunteers provide brief services for litigants filing civil Orders of Protection. Volunteers conduct interviews, complete pleadings, and draft affidavits. Volunteers also thoroughly explain the court process and may accompany litigants to court to provide support. Volunteers do not provide representation and there is no ongoing case commitment. This opportunity is open to attorneys, students, and other legal professionals.

**Organization:** Ascend Justice (www.ascendjustice.org)

**Practice area:** Domestic violence

**Opportunity type:** Litigation

**Skills acquired:** Interview, drafting pleadings

**Skills required:** All volunteers are competent to handle this matter after the training provided.

**Time commitment:** Completion of a 2.5-hour formal training and then one 4-hour shift per week (students) or month (attorneys and legal professionals).

**Contact:** Kim Washington at kwashington@ascendjustice.org or 312.325.9155. Please submit a resume and short statement as to why you’re interested in volunteering.

**Training and support:** Ascend Justice provides formal training and ongoing supervision and support for our volunteers.