PUBLIC LAW CENTER

PROVIDING ACCESS TO JUSTICE
FOR ORANGE COUNTY'S LOW INCOME RESIDENTS

2024 Law Clerk Job Description

The Public Law Center is committed to providing access to justice for low-income residents of Orange County. Through volunteers and staff, the Public Law Center provides free civil legal services, including counseling, individual representation, community education, and strategic litigation and advocacy to challenge societal injustices.

We will accept at least one law clerk per project.

General Job Duties: Law clerks will gain skills in at least some of the areas below:

- *Client Interaction*: Perform new case intake interviews; contact clients for follow-up through interviews and telephone calls; perform fact gathering; present new cases at weekly Case Acceptance meetings.
- *Legal research & writing*: Prepare opening case memos; draft correspondence, pleadings, and motions.
- *Pro Bono Support*: Assist in drafting manuals, samples, and educational presentations to support pro bono attorneys working on PLC cases. Prepare cases for placement.
- *Community Education and Outreach*: Research legal issues; prepare client education materials; assist in conducting presentations to clients.
- *Positions will be on a hybrid schedule.*

Specific Project Duties:
In addition to the general duties described above, each law student will be assigned to one of the following projects:

Community Development
Assist community-based nonprofit organizations and small businesses. Projects vary and may include the following: corporate formation and compliance; taxation; reviewing contracts; intellectual property; and employment issues.

Consumer Law
Assist with consumer matters, including debt collection (harassment and defense), bankruptcy, predatory lending, student loans, homeownership disputes, various types of frauds and scams, and identity theft. Assist with courthouse-based clinics where individuals are provided brief counsel and advice. Will also include work focused on older adults, particularly applications for elder abuse restraining orders and assistance with financial scams that target the elderly.

Family Law
Assist with providing trauma-informed legal services to litigants with domestic violence, custody, divorce, child & spousal support, guardianship, and dependency adoption matters. Work includes interviewing clients, attending legal clinics, preparing pleadings and legal briefs, writing letters, and providing advice and counsel to clients. Students who have completed Evidence and Civil Procedure may be eligible to make court appearances. SPANISH SPEAKER PREFERRED.

Housing & Homelessness Prevention

Assist individuals and families with legal issues regarding their housing, including evictions, rent increases, unsafe living conditions, landlord-tenant disputes, public housing, and housing voucher/subsidy terminations. Assist with client intakes, legal research and investigation, demand letters, reasonable accommodation requests, and counsel and advice. Assist with litigation by drafting pleadings, interviewing clients, and preparing cases with handling attorney for court proceedings.

Mobile Home Advocacy

Assist mobilehome owners, who are also tenants in the parks where their mobilehome is located, with solving legal issues arising out of their homeownership and/or tenancy. Work includes legal research and investigation, demand letters, counsel and advice, and litigation. Potentially work on advocacy efforts for local and state-wide improvements to protections for mobilehome owners and help mobilehome residents form resident associations as a means to advocate for themselves.

Housing Element Advocacy

Assist with the review of draft and adopted housing elements to ensure they comply with state housing element law and draft comment letters regarding issues of noncompliance and advocating for improved programs to increase the production and preservation of affordable housing. Assist in monitoring city actions to ensure compliance with approved, adopted housing elements and state law. Research and investigate potential violations. Potentially work with community groups to assist in their advocacy for affordable housing and emergency shelters. Research and investigate fair housing issues and policies and programs that foster patterns of segregation. Assist with ongoing litigation related to Housing Element compliance and preparation for additional litigation.

Immigration

Assist victims of human trafficking, asylum seekers, victims of crime, unaccompanied minors, individuals facing deportation proceedings, and others who need assistance completing and following up on pending applications before US Citizenship & Immigration Services and the Immigration Courts. Complete intakes and assist individuals in completing applications at DACA, naturalization, adjustment of status, special immigrant juvenile status (SIJS), and consultation clinics. Translate documents and interpret client meetings via phone or Zoom (if Spanish speaking). Attend community and collaborative meetings. SPANISH SPEAKER STRONGLY PREFERRED.

Health and Probate Law

Assist indigent persons referred through ALAP and other MLPs with general civil matters, including issues involving the Affordable Care Act, estate planning, discrimination on the basis of disability, and benefits issues. Attend legal clinics in person at MLP Family Resource Centers to address the legal needs of low-income individuals, enabling them to focus on their health and well-being. SPANISH SPEAKER PREFERRED.

Veterans Project

Assist low-income veterans by providing legal services on a variety of issues including housing matters and eviction defense, government benefits applications and appeals, discharge upgrades, and post-conviction relief. Attend and assist with legal clinics.

Federal Tax Law

Students will work with Public Law Center's tax attorney to interview clients, conduct fact investigation and legal research, draft pleadings and other documents and assist with developing educational materials for low-income taxpayers in Orange County. Students will receive training on federal tax law. Virtual position. Spanish speakers preferred, but not required.

Impact Litigation and Policy Advocacy

Students will focus on impact litigation cases and policy issues affecting low-income communities. Students will assist in the preparation of pleadings, motions, and discovery requests. Students will also gain experience in policy advocacy, including drafting regulatory comments and letters, researching legal issues, and participating in coalition meetings.

Qualifications:

- First, second, or third year (part-time) law student;
- Demonstrated commitment to serving low-income or disadvantaged individuals, families, and communities;
- Excellent research and writing skills;
- Ability to work efficiently and independently with moderate level of supervision;
- Sensitivity and ability to work with victims of domestic violence and other sensitive populations;
- Fluency in Spanish or Vietnamese preferred for most positions

Time Commitment: Full-time for 10 weeks, from May 20, 2024 through July 27, 2024.

Compensation: PLC offers $5000 stipends for up to eight law clerks who are unable to secure PILF grants via their school or other outside funding. Alternatively, applicants may be able to seek academic credit through their school's externship program.

How to apply: Please send a resume and cover letter detailing why you are interested in working with PLC and which specific projects you are interested in working on to lawstudent@publiclawcenter.org.

Deadline: Applications reviewed on an ongoing basis.