

Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County, Inc.

Contact Information

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Description of Organization

The Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County, Inc. (VLP) provides opportunities for lawyers, paralegals, and law students in Onondaga County to participate in meeting the unmet civil legal services needs of low-income people in our community through pro bono service. VLP's projects include an Eviction Defense Program, Pro Se Divorce Clinic, Talk-to-a-Lawyer Legal Clinics, Surrogate's Court Pro Se Assistance Clinic, Family Court Pro Se Assistance Clinic, Immigration Clinic, Q-Law LGBTQ legal clinic, Veterans Project, Annual Elder Law Fair, and Not-For-Profit Advocacy Program. We always are looking for attorneys to assist in our projects and with full representation.

Volunteer Opportunities

Annual Elder Law Fair: Attorneys lead community legal education seminars designed to educate the public about a wide variety of legal issues that affect the lives of elderly people. Attorneys also provide Talk to a Lawyer Clinic appointments where clients have the opportunity to meet one-on-one and seek advice, information and referrals.

Eviction Defense Clinic: Offers attorneys a chance to represent low-income tenants in eviction proceedings on a periodic basis. Landlord/Tenant Court occurs every day and requires approximately 2 hours of attorney time. Through training and representation, attorneys gain practical knowledge of the housing world, which they can apply to not only their Landlord/Tenant Court experience but also to their private practices.

Family Court Clinic: Attorneys provide pro se assistance to low-income clients with preparing custody, visitation, and child support petitions for Family Court. This is a critical service, as no other legal services provider assists with the initial filing of petitions. No prior experience with family law required – VLP will train attorneys on the process of preparing petitions.

Immigration Clinic: Immigration attorneys provide in-depth consultations to low-income clients regarding complex immigration issues.

Not-for-Profit Incorporation: This project matches corporate attorneys with not-for-profits to provide professional services in matters designed predominantly to address the needs of poor persons. Assistance usually is focused on not-for-profit corporation formation.

On-going Pro Bono Representation: VLP is always seeking additional attorneys to join our panel of those willing to accept civil legal cases for full pro bono representation to low-income clients. Areas of substantive law vary.

Pro Se Divorce Clinic: VLP assists low-income clients through the complicated process of completing an uncontested no-fault divorce. Volunteer attorneys meet one-on-one with clients to review and execute divorce filing forms and explain the divorce process to clients. Forms are prepared in advance by law students.

Q Law LGBTQ Legal Clinic: Attorneys assist low-income clients who are LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Queer) with their legal issues (including family law, name change, adoption, etc.).

Surrogate's Court Clinic: Trusts and estates attorneys provide pro se assistance to low-income clients who seek legal advice and information regarding Surrogate's Court, trusts, estates and elder law issues.

Talk to a Lawyer Clinics: Located at community centers, churches, schools and health centers throughout the community, these clinics provide low-income clients with the opportunity to meet one-on-one with an attorney regarding any civil legal matter. Attorneys provide advice, information and referrals. There are also opportunities for attorneys to provide this advice via telephone through our Tel-Law program. Within the city of Syracuse, this program provides the legal support component for Say Yes to Education Syracuse. This clinic gives attorneys an opportunity to reach outside their ordinary areas of practice by handling clients as they come in. Seeking attorneys for the clinics and to accept ongoing pro bono cases that arise from these clinics.

Veteran's Clinic: Attorneys provide veterans with legal advice, information, referrals and when possible placements for ongoing pro bono legal assistance. Our program is seeking attorneys to volunteer at the clinic or accept ongoing pro bono cases.

Areas of Substantive Law

Business Law / Contracts
Civil Rights
Consumer Law
Contracts
Corporate Governance /
Compliance
Disability
Domestic Violence
Education
Elder Law

Employment
Environmental Law
Family Law
Foreclosure
Health Care
Housing
Immigration
Insurance
Matrimonial Law
Negotiation

Non-Profit Law
Public Benefits
Real Estate
Special Education
Tax
Trusts and Estates
Unemployment
Veterans Affairs

General Notes

Capacity: VLP of Onondaga has the capacity to host as many volunteers as are interested (more than ten volunteers).

Experience: VLP will match volunteer opportunities to the areas of experience that attorneys already have or will train attorneys in new areas in which they are interested.

Supervision: Throughout the year, the VLP, in conjunction with the Onondaga County Bar Association Continuing Legal Education (CLE), sponsors training events in areas of law involving our clinics. These are free to attorneys who agree to participate in the respective clinics. Additionally, VLP has experienced attorneys who have agreed to help provide mentorship or supervision on cases if attorneys so wish.