

**FY 2016 GUIDE TO THE  
AMERICORPS STATE AND NATIONAL  
PROGRAM  
FOR LEGAL AID ORGANIZATIONS**



*Corporation for*  
**NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE** 



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## Introduction

This Guide highlights the key components of the AmeriCorps program in the hopes of demystifying the program and assisting legal aid organizations to understand a) whether AmeriCorps is a potential match for their mission; b) how the basic grant application and implementation process works; and c) where to find more information.

### What is AmeriCorps?

AmeriCorps State and National (AmeriCorps) is a national service program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)<sup>1</sup>, which engages thousands of men and women in intensive community service each year. AmeriCorps provides grants to a broad range of local and national organizations and agencies committed to using service to address compelling community issues.<sup>2</sup> Participating organizations, including nonprofits, public agencies, institutions of higher education, Indian Tribes, and faith-based organizations, enroll AmeriCorps members in an approved national service position and engage them in intensive service.<sup>3</sup>

*AmeriCorps and the national service movement are a joy to be a part of. Most CNCS employees did national service or have some nonprofit background so they really “get” the nonprofit sector (though most do not have experience with legal aid). The movement overall is enthusiastic, optimistic and motivated.*

**-Kerry O'Brien**

**(former employee) Equal Justice Works**





*The priority areas should really align with what your program does. If you are stretching the work you do to meet a program area, it will be challenging. Stay with the mission of your organization.*

**-Jessica Colon**

**New York Juvenile Justice Corps**

### Member Benefits


Potential applicants should know about all the benefits that may be available to AmeriCorps members including:

-  Living Allowance
-  Health Care (only if full time)
-  Childcare (only if full time and subject to special qualifications)
-  Student loan forbearance and interest accrual payment

<sup>1</sup> See Corporation for National & Community Service at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/>

<sup>2</sup> 45 C.F.R. § 2520.10-2520.25

<sup>3</sup> 45 C.F.R. § 2521.10

 Eligibility for the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award upon successful completion of the program (\$5,775 for full time members, pro-rated for part time members).

### Focus Areas

CNCS has identified the following focus areas for AmeriCorps programs. While these areas have remained relatively constant, applicants should read the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) released each year by CNCS to stay abreast of any specific funding priorities. The general focus areas are<sup>4</sup>:

1. **Disaster Services** – Preparation, mitigation, response, and recovery efforts that relate to disaster events.
2. **Economic Opportunity** – Unmet needs of economically disadvantaged individuals, including financial literacy, affordable housing, and employment-related assistance.
3. **Education** – Unmet education needs within communities, especially those that help at-risk youth to achieve successes in school and prevent them from dropping out.
4. **Healthy Futures** – Unmet health needs, including accessing health care, increasing physical activity and improving nutrition in youth, and increasing seniors' ability to remain in their own homes.
5. **Veterans and Military Families** – Unmet needs of veterans, members of the armed forces, and family members of deployed military personnel.
6. **Environmental Stewardship** – Energy and water efficiency, renewable energy use, at-risk ecosystems, and behavioral change leading to increased efficiency.

Most legal services programs will fall within the “Economic Opportunity” priority area. Some also fit the “Healthy Futures” area, or target services to veterans or engage veterans in service, and therefore fall within those priorities. In the fiscal year 2016, NOFO introduced Elder Justice as a funding priority thanks to a partnership with the Department of Justice, specifically for legal aid.

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<sup>4</sup>See Corporation for National & Community Service, Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity, AmeriCorps State and National Grants FY 2017, available at [http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016\\_AmeriCorps\\_State\\_and\\_National\\_Notice\\_100915.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016_AmeriCorps_State_and_National_Notice_100915.pdf). A new Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity typically issues in early fall.

### The Impact of AmeriCorps Members

*The members were a bridge to the community. We were able to do a lot more outreach and expand the program further into the community.*

**-Jessica Colon**  
**New York Justice Corps**

*The paid staff really appreciates the projects done by the AmeriCorps members and the sacrifice they are making.*

**-Tom Dubel**  
**Legal Assistance of Western New York**

*Our members are engaged in outreach, direct legal services, creating self-help material, and working with volunteers. The AmeriCorps members were critical to creating a self-help service at the court, and they helped us touch folks that we wouldn't otherwise be able to help or represent.*

*They can do projects that staff can't take time away for.*

**-Angela Lovitt**  
**Legal Aid Society of Hawaii**

### Is AmeriCorps a fit for your organization?<sup>5</sup>

Before applying, each organization should think carefully about a number of factors.

- Does your organization have the organizational, technological and fiscal capacity to manage a federal grant? Specifically, do you have the:
  - Time and staff to develop an AmeriCorps project and draft the application?
  - Time and staff to recruit, train, and supervise your AmeriCorps members?
  - Capacity to host more than one AmeriCorps member?
  - Office space and equipment to support your AmeriCorps members?
- Does your organization have the resources to match the federal funds (cash and in-kind)?
- What does the research say?
  - Does your organization address compelling needs in one of the priority areas?
  - Can your organization achieve one or more of the national priority measures in the NOFO?
  - Would this program support your organization's mission and strategic plan or need?
  - Is there evidence that the intervention you propose (e.g. paralegals helping pro se litigants complete forms) will lead to positive outcomes (e.g. economically disadvantaged people are able to stay in their homes)?

<sup>5</sup> See Serve Ohio, Service as a Solution, State AmeriCorps Funding Opportunities, available at <http://www.serveohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Basic-AmeriCorps-Information-Spring-2015.pdf>

## AmeriCorps and Legal Services

Too often low- and moderate-income people do not access the legal services they both need and deserve. Legal aid providers have limited resources and staff, and often lack the ability to help everyone in need. Providers can utilize AmeriCorps grants and members to expand their reach and provide more direct legal services to a greater segment of the community. Some grantees have used AmeriCorps members to provide direct services in a variety of different environments including community-based legal aid offices, law libraries and local courthouses.

### Grantees Respond: Is It Worth It?

*I am amazed by how our AmeriCorps members have helped us leverage scarce resources, for the benefit of our clients and communities. They get things done, help us create community allies, and help provide infrastructure for legal services 10 and 20 years down the line. We are seeing the benefits of “paying it forward” as former members enrich our program and others as legal interns, volunteer attorneys, staff, and volunteer management partners.*

**-Gail Klearman, Iowa Legal Aid**

*The AmeriCorps grant is difficult to manage. There is a lot of reporting involved and a lot of tracking of data, goals, and objectives met. It is work, but it is definitely worth it. We have been able to reach so many more young people and enrich the programs we provide.*

**-Jessica Colon, New York Juvenile Justice Corps**

*Dealing with the bureaucracy can be a bit burdensome, but definitely worth it. We can serve more clients and do more outreach.*

**-Lee Richardson, Arkansas Legal Aid**

*Know the regulations and read the regulations often so you can plan around them. Don't be afraid to ask for clarification. It is also good to set up a tracking system early. Having the AmeriCorps program is worth the effort it takes to retain it. Receiving the grant is a great way to strengthen partnerships. It has also allowed us to bring some really excited, energetic people into the program. It has been fantastic.*

**-Angela Lovitt, Legal Aid Society of Hawaii**

*The JusticeCorps program has changed court culture for the better. Judges and court staff alike remark that the presence of these eager, capable, enthusiastic volunteers helps everyone remember why they got into public service in the first place.*

**- Martha Wright, California JusticeCorps**

*The Massachusetts Legal Assistance for Self-Sufficiency AmeriCorps is currently recruiting for our tenth year of service to begin in September 2014. AmeriCorps has provided our legal services organizations the opportunity to bring youth and vitality into our programs during difficult economic times. The program has created an incredible network that cannot be underestimated as these AmeriCorps members become the next generation of legal services advocates and non-profit professionals.*

**-Kathleen Marx, Massachusetts Legal Assistance for Self-Sufficiency Program**

*It is important for supervisors to recognize that the AmeriCorps members are not interns and they are not employees. They have to realize there is a different relationship than with other staff.*

*- Jessica Colon, New York Juvenile Justice Corps*

*You want to integrate the members, but you have to make sure they have defined roles. Members must add additional services beyond what the staff is already doing, not just shifting or supplanting work.*

*- Angela Lovitt, Legal Aid Society of Hawaii*

## What Can AmeriCorps Members Do?

AmeriCorps engages its members in providing direct services to address unmet community needs.<sup>6</sup> Direct service activities must be designed to impact a documented compelling community need, should be evidence-based, and lead to a direct measurable impact to an individual, group, or community.



National service grants may also be used for capacity building.<sup>7</sup> Capacity-building should enhance the mission, strategy, skills, and culture, as well as systems, infrastructure, and human resources of an organization that is meeting unmet community needs. Capacity-building activities help an organization gain greater independence and sustainability but cannot be solely intended to support the administration or operations of the organization.<sup>8</sup> Examples of capacity building activities include:

1. Recruiting and/or managing community volunteers
2. Implementing effective volunteer management practices
3. Completing community assessments that identify goals and recommendations
4. Developing new systems and business processes or enhancing existing systems/processes

Applicants should be aware that these are only examples and that all capacity building activities are dependent upon what qualifies for funding in the NOFO.

**NOTE:** Organizations interested in capacity building activities should also review the Guide to the AmeriCorps VISTA Program for Legal Services Organizations, at <http://blogs.justice.gov/main/archives/2357>.

AmeriCorps members may not be used to duplicate an activity that is already available and provided by the program.<sup>9</sup>

-  An AmeriCorps member may not be used to displace an employee or position, including partial displacement.
-  An AmeriCorps member may not perform services or engage in activities that would otherwise be performed by an employee as part of the assigned duties of such employee.

<sup>6</sup> 42 U.S.C. 12583(a)

<sup>7</sup> 45 C.F.R. § 2520.30

<sup>8</sup> 45 C.F.R. § 2540.100(e)

<sup>9</sup> 42 U.S.C. 12637(b) and 45 C.F.R. § 2540.100



- An AmeriCorps member cannot perform services that will supplant the hiring of employed workers.

### Examples of Legal Aid and Court-Based AmeriCorps Service and Projects

AmeriCorps members will allow you to further advance the goals of your organization and reach deeper into the community.

#### ■ AmeriCorps Legal Advocates of Massachusetts

AmeriCorps Legal Advocates of Massachusetts places 28 college and law school graduates in legal services organizations throughout the state. Since 2005, members have served under professional supervision providing legal assistance to low-income people in civil matters. Members engage in legal advocacy that has direct impact on the quality of people's lives, applying their talents and skills to help underserved, low-income people of the Commonwealth, and recruiting community volunteers to assist in these efforts.

Typical activities include:

- Leveraging the ability of professional staff to provide legal services to individuals and families needing assistance with affordable housing, family relations/domestic violence, benefits (SNAP, SSI, and SSDI) and elder issues.
- Recruiting pro bono attorneys, training volunteers, and overseeing legal clinics for low-income residents such as tenant outreach programs and Know Your Rights workshops.
- Delivering presentations about AmeriCorps, national service, and civic engagement.

#### ■ AmeriCorps in Montana

The AmeriCorps State Justice for Montanans project hosts 18 AmeriCorps members who serve as navigators of the legal system. Those members are spread across Montana and serve at the Montana Legal Services Association, court-sponsored Self Help Centers, the Montana Attorney General's Office of Consumer Protection and Victim Services, and the State Bar of Montana's Modest Means Program. The members help low-to-moderate income people apply for assistance, locate resources, and use available resources to resolve their legal issues. The Justice for Montanans Project ensures Montana's Native People have access to justice with activities like weekly outreach trips to the Crow and Northern Cheyenne Reservations.

*In 2014, 16 of our members helped 17,029 people find resources or apply for legal assistance. One member recruited and managed 170 volunteer attorneys.*  
**-Ed Higgins**  
**Montana Legal Services Association**

#### ■ Justice for Arkansans Project

The Justice for Arkansas Project is an AmeriCorps program that combats homelessness, housing instability, and employment barriers by placing AmeriCorps members statewide to provide specialized legal intervention. Members provide direct legal services to

veterans, those reentering society, families and seniors, and housing unstable individuals in poverty.

#### Iowa Legal Aid

AmeriCorps members provide direct service to low-income clients, perform outreach to underserved populations, recruit and manage volunteers, and help evaluate service provision systems. Projects have included:

- Under the guidance of her managing attorney who was interested in at-risk youth, a member began attending community meetings at the juvenile court. This led to the member laying the groundwork for community based outreach, representing Iowa Legal Aid to enhance collaborations with the community's service providers. She also organized a mock trial event with a local high school where most of the students were low-income, at-risk youth. The member's projects helped put Iowa Legal Aid in the heart of the community, enhancing important partnerships.
- AmeriCorps members helped expand pro se divorce capacity within Iowa. Members in 2006 played an essential role in testing the Iowa Supreme Court's first draft of pro se divorce forms for couples without children, helping low-income clients use the forms, and providing feedback to ensure the process was user-friendly. Following the Iowa Supreme Court's adoption of the first forms, members started pro se divorce clinics in partnership with law schools, corporate firms, and individual attorney and community volunteers. Iowa Legal Aid continues to organize pro se divorce projects across the state. In 2013, members adopted the same model to test the Supreme Court's draft forms for divorcing couples with children, again helping low-income Iowans use the forms and providing feedback to the Court.
- AmeriCorps members also helped with language access. Thanks to bilingual members and the volunteers they recruited, Iowa Legal Aid did not have to outsource a single Spanish language translation for three years. Members and their volunteers also translated self-help articles into Spanish, Arabic and Bosnian on Iowa Legal Aid's website and enhanced outreach to refugee communities the members came from and/or assisted.

*When applying for a state formula grant, be sure you understand your State Commission's priorities. For example, in Illinois they value geographic diversity. So our program is looking to increase our member numbers and expand across the state. Also note that some State Commissions want to fund fewer programs, but in a bigger way.*  
**- Stacey Weiler**  
**Illinois Justice Corps**

#### Equal Justice Works

Since 1993, through an AmeriCorps grant, Washington, D.C. based Equal Justice Works has been able to create public interest opportunities for law students and lawyers to expand legal services for vulnerable populations every year. In 2013, Equal Justice

Works implemented the Veterans Legal Corps and Disaster Legal Corps, with 40 lawyers and 360 law students serving across the country. Lawyers serve at legal aid organizations or courts that are selected through competitive process each spring. Preference is given to sites that can host at least two lawyers, have strong data collection systems and a history of achieving and documenting positive outcomes for clients. Sites are also expected to provide matching funds from non-federal sources. Lawyers are part of the yearly Leadership Development Training for all Equal Justice Works Fellows. Law students serve as part of the “AmeriCorps JD” program for 300 hours during the

*AmeriCorps money can attract other money. We have gotten more funding outside of AmeriCorps because being a part of AmeriCorps gives our program credibility, support, and recognition. It really makes a difference. Without these funds our program would not exist and we could not expand.*

*-Danielle Hirsch and Stacey Weiler, Illinois Justice Corps*

school year or the summer and they apply directly to Equal Justice Works after securing employment in a qualifying nonprofit organization. Nonprofit organizations may, under certain circumstances, receive pre-commitments to have their law students be AmeriCorps JD members.

In 2014, with a grant from CNCS, Equal Justice Works launched the Employment Opportunity Legal Corps (EOLC) that placed 40 lawyers and approximately 100 students into service around the country to remove legal barriers to employment for economically disadvantaged individuals. Additionally, Equal Justice Works is one of several grantees administering justice AmeriCorps, which was launched in 2014 to assist unaccompanied immigrant children.

#### **The California JusticeCorps Program**

Started in 2004, the California JusticeCorps program places over 250 undergraduate students and recent college graduates in service in court-based self-help centers. JusticeCorps members serve in either minimum time (300 hours) or full time (1,700 hours) positions and are recruited from eight designated partner universities. The minimum time members come from a variety of majors including pre-law, criminal justice, political science or sociology. The full time members are often second year JusticeCorps members taking a gap year before law school or other graduate school. Under the supervision of court attorneys, JusticeCorps members are trained to provide neutral information to pro se litigants who utilize the services of the courts' self-help centers to resolve housing, family and financial matters. Specifically, JusticeCorps members:

- Triage long lines of pro se litigants waiting for services
- Identify legal issues and offer referrals to appropriate services within or outside the courts
- Identify appropriate legal forms and assist in completing and filing

*We have twenty full-time members who are placed in seven different offices.*

*They do intake, outreach, direct services, and recruiting. We get law students when we can, but we also use recent college graduates who are dedicated people looking to get direct legal services experience or figure out if they want to go into law.*

*-Martha Wright  
California JusticeCorps*

- Explain processes and procedures
- Prepare materials for and help to facilitate legal workshops
- Observe during court hearings and explain judicial orders to litigants

Since the program began in 2004, 1,700 members have successfully completed the program and have had the following impact

- Provided 490,000 instances of assistance in up to 24 different languages
- Filed 330,000 legal documents
- Completed more than 500,000 hours of national service

## Funding Opportunities FY 2017

A. CNCS awards AmeriCorps grants to state and territory Commissions on National and Community Service, as well as to tribal organizations<sup>10</sup>, on a formula basis. CNCS also awards competitive grants to commissions in states and territories, and to organizations operating in more than one state (National Direct grants). State and territory commissions must use their grants to make subgrants to other organizations, they cannot operate AmeriCorps programs directly. AmeriCorps programs can be operated by government entities within states or territories (e.g., cities, counties), Indian Tribes, public or private nonprofit organizations (including religious organizations and labor organizations), and institutions of higher education either under AmeriCorps National Direct grants from CNCS, or under subgrants from state and territory commissions.

Organizations that propose to operate in only one state **must** apply through the state or territory Commissions.<sup>11</sup> Each state and territory administers its own selection process and decides whether to award a subgrant from its formula grant or to put the application forward to CNCS for competitive funding. Organizations should contact their state Commissions to receive the appropriate application materials and to learn about state specific deadlines. The list of state and territory Commissions and their contact information can be found here: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions>.

<sup>10</sup> Federally-recognized Indian Tribes and tribal organizations are eligible to apply for grants under this program. A nonprofit that desires to apply for a grant as a "tribal organization" on behalf of a federally-recognized tribe, or multiple specific federally-recognized tribes, must submit a sanctioning resolution adopted by the Tribal Council (or comparable tribal governing body) of each tribe. The resolution must identify the nonprofit by name as a "tribal organization" and it must authorize the nonprofit organization to act on behalf of and include the tribe in a CNCS grant application for the purpose of conducting the activities and providing the services described in the application. See, Corporation for National & Community Service, Announcement of Federal Funding Availability, AmeriCorps Indian Tribes Grants FY 2015, available at [http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2015\\_AmeriCorps\\_Indian\\_Tribes\\_Notice\\_Revised\\_Final.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2015_AmeriCorps_Indian_Tribes_Notice_Revised_Final.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> *Supra* note 4, at 6.

*The application process is competitive and there are an increased number of people applying and decreased funding. Be as detailed as possible as to how the program will work. If not successful in the application the first time, get as much feedback as possible and apply again.*

*-Jessica Colon, New York Juvenile Justice Corps*

## Types of Grants

Both CNCS and state and territory commissions can award the following types of AmeriCorps grants. See the NOFO for details on how to select the appropriate grant.<sup>12</sup>

**FR** **Cost Reimbursement Grants** – These grants fund a portion of program operating costs and member living allowances. Cost reimbursement grants include a formal matching requirement and are available to new, re-competing, and continuation applicants<sup>13</sup> Cost reimbursement grantees are required to provide mid-year and end of year progress reports, semi-annual financial reports, and an internal or external evaluation report as required by 45 C.F.R. §§2522.500-2522.540 and §§2522.700-2522.740.<sup>14</sup> Traditional cost reimbursement grants support the majority of AmeriCorps programs.

**FR** **Fixed Amount Grants** – These grants are available for programs that enroll full-time members or less than full-time members that are serving in a full time capacity only (for example, someone serving full time in the summer for ten weeks). These grants provide a fixed amount of funding per Member Service Year (MSY) that is substantially lower than the amount required to operate the program (a maximum of \$13,000 per MSY). Programs are not required to submit budgets or financial reports, there is no specific match requirement, and programs are not required to track and maintain documentation of match. If programs do not enroll and retain their allotted member slots, then the amount of their grant is reduced accordingly. Fixed amount grants are only available to re-competing and continuation programs.<sup>15</sup>

**FR** **Education Award Only Program Grants** – Organizations can apply for a small fixed amount per MSY, can enroll less than full-time members, and use their own resources to cover all other costs. These grants are smaller, with a maximum \$800 per MSY. AmeriCorps allows programs to apply for Education Award Only grants. Organizations must raise the additional revenue required to operate the program.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> See 45 CFR 2521.60 for more information on the match requirement; *see also supra* note 4, at 4.

<sup>14</sup> *See supra* note 4, at 28.


<sup>15</sup> Fixed Amount grants are not available to new applicants unless applicants are seeking an Education Award Fixed-amount Grant Program. *See supra* note 4, at 6.

AmeriCorps grants generally cover a three-year project period. However, CNCS usually makes an initial award and will reevaluate the program for continuation based on factors including satisfactory performance, demonstrated capacity to manage the grant, compliance with grant requirements, agency priorities, and the availability of appropriated funds.

### Match Requirements

AmeriCorps funding in general does not provide full support for the total program costs, so additional resources are necessary to successfully operate the program. Matching requirements described in 45 C.F.R. §§ 2521.40 -2521.95 apply if you are a subgrantee of a State commission or a direct program grantee of the Corporation that received a cost-reimbursement grant.<sup>16</sup> These requirements do not apply to Education Award Programs or Fixed Amount grants.<sup>17</sup> Applicants should consult the NOFO for grant-specific information about matching requirements.<sup>18</sup>

### Required Match Level<sup>19</sup>

 A first-time successful applicant is required to match the AmeriCorps grant at 24% for the first three years of operation. Starting with year four, the match requirement gradually increases

AmeriCorps Funding Year	1, 2, 3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
Grantee Share Requirements	24%	26%	30%	34%	38%	42%	46%	50%

### Program Costs

The cost of running an AmeriCorps program will be determined by the amount of funding an organization is able to request and receive from CNCS. The size of the AmeriCorps operating grant is determined by the number of members requested. The maximum grant that an organization will receive is what AmeriCorps calls the “cost per Member Service Year (MSY)” multiplied by the number of full-time members the organization has requested. The maximum cost per MSY is included in AmeriCorps’ annual Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).<sup>20</sup> For example, if AmeriCorps determines the maximum allowable cost per MSY is \$13,300 and an organization decided to request the full amount, it would calculate a proposal in the following way for 10 full-time members:  $\$13,300 \times 10 = \$133,000$ .<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> 45 C.F.R. 2521.35

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> *Supra* note 4.

<sup>19</sup> 45 C.F.R. sec. 2521.60(a) every year to 50 percent by year ten, according to the minimum overall share chart found in 45 CFR §2521.60.

<sup>20</sup> *Supra* note 4, at 10.

<sup>21</sup> *Supra* note 26.

An AmeriCorps budget must include a living allowance for full-time members in an AmeriCorps program carried out using assistance provided under 45 C.F.R. § 2521.30, including an AmeriCorps program that receives educational awards only pursuant to § 2521.30(c).<sup>22</sup> Programs may, but are not required to, provide living allowances to individuals participating on a part-time basis, but such assistance is subject to certain restrictions.<sup>23</sup>

**General Summary of Grants FY 2016<sup>24</sup>:**

Grant Types	Cost Reimbursement	Fixed Amount	
		Available Subtypes	EAP
Available Subtypes	Traditional	Full-Time/Less than FT serving in a full time capacity	EAP
Maximum Cost Per Member Service Year (MSY)	\$13,730	\$13,430	\$800
Type of Slots in the National Service Trust	All	Full-Time or Less than Full-Time serving in a full time capacity Only	All
Budget Submission Required	Yes	No	
Availability of Funds linked to enrollment and retention of awarded MSY	No	Yes	
Special Requirements	N/A	School Turnaround AmeriCorps applicants are not allowed for Full Time Fixed Amount grants	N/A
Match Requirements	Yes	No, but organizations must raise the additional revenue required to operate the program.	
Financial Tracking Requirements	Yes	No	
Available to New Applicants	Yes	No	Yes

<sup>22</sup> 45 C.F.R. § 2522.240(b)

<sup>23</sup> 45 C.F.R. § 2522.240(b)(3)

<sup>24</sup> *Supra* note 4, at 4.

## Next Steps: AmeriCorps Application

### Application Process

An organization can become an AmeriCorps program by applying directly to CNCS or to a state or territory Commission depending on what program it intends to operate. CNCS releases a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and application instructions each year, usually in early fall, that contains key dates and deadlines.<sup>25</sup> The deadline for direct applications to CNCS is usually January or February, with a May, June or July notification. Organizations should use the NOFO and application instructions to complete and submit their application through the eGrants online system.<sup>26</sup> State and territory Commission deadlines may be significantly before the CNCS deadlines, so prospective state applicants are encouraged to make contact with the commission in the state or territory where they intend to apply as soon as possible.

### Application Tips from the Field

*CNCS posts the results of grant competitions on the Open Government portion of its website. Reviewing successful applications can give you a good idea of the scope and level of detail that CNCS expects.*

**-Kerry O'Brien, (former employee) Equal Justice Works**

*Regarding reporting, an organization can self-define performance measures, although you may lose some points on the application. Also, if you are able to tap into the State AmeriCorps programs, try and do that. It is harder to receive a grant from the national program if your program does not fit closely within the focus group.*

**-Tom Dubel, Legal Assistance of Western New York**

*If you have a staff union, you may need a written concurrence from that union to have AmeriCorps members. [See 45 C.F.R. § 2520.65(a)(4)] Some organizations have obtained these easily, some with concessions during collective bargaining and some organizations' program designs have the AmeriCorps members in different job classifications than those covered by the union contract.*

**-Kerry O'Brien, (former employee) Equal Justice Works**

<sup>25</sup> See *supra* note 4 for general application information.

<sup>26</sup> Create an eGrant account at Corporation for National & Community Service eGrants online system, available at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/egrants>.



## Application Tips from the Field (Con't)

*Each priority area has a set of pre-defined performance measures that programs are encouraged to use. If your program is unable to track the recommended performance measures you may define your own. Significant weight is given to programs that use the funder's performance measures, especially for programs competing at the national level. Typically, more leeway is allowed to define your own performance measures at the state level.*

**-Martha Wright, California JusticeCorps**

*CNCS, like many federal agencies, is really focused on outcomes and on having some evidence that the program you propose will actually make a difference. Unfortunately, the legal aid sector does not have much research to back up our efficacy, though we know that legal aid is a very effective anti-poverty intervention. Making a case, even if on the weaker side, is more important than making no case, or providing excuses about why you can't make a case.*

**-Kerry O'Brien, (former employee) Equal Justice Works**

*AmeriCorps programs are encouraged to create a logic model. The model should define the specific community need, the inputs (services) designed to meet that need, and the outputs and outcomes (benefits) to be achieved.*

**-Martha Wright, California JusticeCorps**

*Going into the process, identify your likely partners, be familiar with the performance measures, and recognize that learning the language of AmeriCorps requires time and commitment. Also be ready to handle the additional fiscal and reporting responsibilities. Make sure you have a great fiscal staff that can manage the grant and not be intimidated. And before applying, connect with and talk to people who already have existing projects, even those that are not legal services organizations.*

**-Gail Klearman, Iowa Legal Aid**

*If you are modeling your AmeriCorps program after one that already exists, be sure to clarify that in your application. Provide performance data from that program and be clear about how you will implement their best practices. Application reviewers know that new programs will have greater success if they base their proposed activities on what's already proven to work.*

**- Martha Wright, California JusticeCorps**

## What about the Match Requirement?

### **Martha Wright, California JusticeCorps:**

*For the California JusticeCorps program, funding comes primarily from our AmeriCorps grant. We receive about \$850,000 per year in federal funds which we use to pay for three staff positions (a program director for each of our three regions), some staff travel, member supplies, program evaluation, member training expenses and about half of the \$20,000 living allowance provided to each of our 22 full time members. We do not pay a living allowance to our minimum time members.*

*Our cash match is made up of our contribution to the remaining portion of full-time member living allowances (\$10,000 each) and also their benefits. The rest of the match is primarily in kind including about 4 additional staff positions at the Administrative Office of the Courts and the local courts. Both the state AOC and the local courts contribute the necessary cash and in kind match together which has proven an effective way to leverage the AmeriCorps funds.*

*One of the primary benefits AmeriCorps members receive is an education award, which is not reflected in grant budgets, but rather provided from a federal trust directly to members upon successful completion of their service. The education award ranges are included as a table in every NOFO. See*

*[http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016\\_AmeriCorps\\_State\\_and\\_National\\_Notice\\_100915.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016_AmeriCorps_State_and_National_Notice_100915.pdf), pg. 21. The award can be used to pay down student loans or it can be wired directly to a post-secondary educational institution to pay expenses.*

### **Kathleen D. Marx, Massachusetts Legal Assistance for Self-Sufficiency Program:**

*The MLASSP split is 1/3 CNCS money, 1/3 other cash from partners, and 1/3 matching in-kind for costs other than member costs. As of 2014, MLASSP was in year nine meaning that we have a 50% match requirement. The cost per member breaks down as follows: \$13,000 CNCS/AmeriCorps, \$12,500 partner cash match (partner refers to the 12 participating legal aid and legal non-profit organizations that host the members), and \$4,950 minimum in-kind partner match (though in our program the partner's actual in-kind match is reported at \$12,000 per member). This breakdown is based on the living stipend for 2013-2014 of \$17,000. In-kind match includes supervising attorney's time, office space and equipment, travel to and from AmeriCorps training and events, and cost of attending site specific training and events.*

### **Alison Paul, Executive Director, Montana Legal Services Association:**

*The Justice For Montanans Project of the Montana Legal Services Association (MLSA) is a partnership between MLSA, the Montana Supreme Court Administrator's office, the State Bar of Montana, and the Montana Attorney General's Office of Consumer Protection and Victim Services. When MLSA first looked at sponsoring an AmeriCorps State and National Project, we quickly became daunted by the match requirement. We received a planning grant to explore the concept and determined that we could not do it alone. After that, we put together a partnership to help cover the costs. We have developed a financial model that involves both in kind and cash contributions by each partner. In-kind contributions are in the form of supervisory time and office space. Cash contributions are used to cover direct member expenses not paid for by the AmeriCorps grant and the direct costs of administering the program, including a part-time AmeriCorps Coordinator. For a partner with only one member, the cash match is less than \$10,000 for a full-time AmeriCorps member.*

## What about the Match Requirement? (Cont'd)

### **Stacey Weiler, Illinois JusticeCorps:**

*All expenses attributed to an AmeriCorps program budget must be reasonable, necessary and allocable. Keeping these standards in mind, you should budget for all program expenses including staff salaries and fringe benefits, travel, training, supplies and member expenses; such as living allowance, member gear, health care and insurance costs. These program expenses will be attributed either to the AmeriCorps grant, and will be reimbursed by CNCS or a state commission, or they will be considered part of the grantee's match contribution. Regardless of which source the expenses fall into, they are subject to the same grant provisions and regulations and careful records must be kept.*

*Determining which expenses are reimbursed and which are part of the match is up to the applicant. To simplify our program, the bulk of the Illinois JusticeCorps match comes from staff salaries and member living allowances – these are the most consistent expenses enabling us to insure that we are meeting the match percentage in our contract. While new grantees are only required to match 24% of the funds provided by the grant, we found that the actual cost of the program compared to the maximum funding from AmeriCorps per member service year required that we match up to 38% in the first year. This also may have made our application more competitive.*

*Tip: if you are going to begin an AmeriCorps program and run it with existing staff, the existing staff's salary, in proportion to the amount of time she spends on the AmeriCorps program, can be recorded as the match. If that person's salary was already budgeted by the organization, and she is taking on additional AmeriCorps responsibilities, there will not be an actual additional "cash" expense made by the organization in order to meet the match. However, very careful records must be kept. For 20% of her salary to be counted as the match, your organization must keep time records that are signed by the employee -- only the portion of her salary that equals the actual time spent can be counted towards the match.*

### **Kerry O'Brien, (former employee) Equal Justice Works:**

**Bottom Line:** *Don't be scared by the match requirement. It is not the case that your organization has to come to the table with 24-50% matching funds. Grantees come up with match money in a variety of ways. Review the rules, review the circumstances of your agency, your partners and your state, local and private funders and many creative solutions can emerge.*



*Because the members are not getting the same salary as the other employees, there need to be other benefits such as training. Members should feel they are getting much more than just filling gaps in an organization*

**- Jessica Colon, New York Juvenile Justice Corps**

*Most of our members are full time college students who see our program as a unique opportunity to learn first-hand how the legal system works. They earn an Education Award but we don't pay them a stipend – they are in it for the mentoring from attorneys, judicial officers and court staff and for the service experience itself.*

**-Martha Wright, California JusticeCorps**

## Recruitment

There are a number of ways to recruit AmeriCorps members. Different legal service organizations have utilized different recruitment tools and focused their recruiting efforts based on their unique needs. Organizations can decide what type of members they want as long as the members are U.S. Citizens, Nationals, or lawful permanent resident aliens age 17 and older. Members may be full-time or part-time.

### Recruiting Tips from the Field

#### **Stacy Weiler, Illinois Justice Corps:**

*It is important to find the right people. You want people with energy and initiative. You should also be flexible about your numbers and be clear about your priorities. Full-time members are unbelievably helpful. The part-time members in college are a little harder because they are juggling a lot and it is harder to ensure consistency in their attendance. We also had students that were minimum time members, but only worked for a ten week period during the summer, so they were essentially full-time.*

*We got the word out in a mix of ways. We used university volunteer listservs and recruited through university professors and the pre-law and criminal justice student organizations. Recruiting through the AmeriCorps portal was challenging because we got applicants with no real or specific interest in our organization.*

#### **Thomas Dubel, Legal Assistance of Western New York:**

*We advertise through the state jobs website and we get a lot of hits off of the AmeriCorps website. With jobs prospects tight, we have no problem recruiting. Additionally, because the application and reporting process is complicated, it doesn't pay to have a small number of AmeriCorps members. If you just want a few, you can seek out relationships with other AmeriCorps grantees in your community and try to subcontract members through a larger organization that receives grants.*

#### **Lee Richardson, Arkansas Legal Aid:**

*We advertise on the NLADA website, PSJD, idealist.org, and reach out to schools such as Duke and Seattle University. We are able to bring in a lot of applications and several of our AmeriCorps members have stayed and become staff attorneys.*

#### **Angela Lovitt, Legal Aid Society of Hawaii:**

*We have eighteen full-time equivalent positions or 10 full-time, 3 part-time and 6 quarter-times. We used to have law school graduates and paralegals. Now all of our full-times are college graduates interested in going to law school. The part-time and quarter-time members are law school students, college students, and a retiree. We advertised through a posting on our website and Craigslist. We also do outreach to the local community colleges and the pre-law program at the university.*

#### **Martha Wright, California JusticeCorps:**

*Try to develop partnerships for recruitment whether it's with a law school or a paralegal program or a local undergraduate university. When you develop strong relationships those partners become a valuable asset year after year. They can help advertise your opportunity, distribute applications and even screen and interview potential members. Remember that you aren't just looking for help at work, you are offering a valuable learning and career development opportunity that educational institutions will want to make available to their students. Before recruiting, develop a detailed job description and an application. Consider what qualifications you are looking for that would be valuable to your organization including prior service experience or second language skills.*

## Reporting Requirements

A variety of tools must be in place to effectively manage and report on AmeriCorps program activities. Existing programs can help explain what systems they use to log their members' time, manage their files and track performance measure data.

AmeriCorps award grantees must submit periodic financial and progress reports during the project period as well as a final financial report. Each state has different requirements and procedures for reporting. Performance measures must be tracked and reported on at least a bi-annual basis, in some cases quarterly. These measures focus on the primary service activity and describe the impact on the beneficiaries of the service. They include both outputs (number of people served, products created, or programs developed) and outcomes (changes or benefits experienced by service recipients).

Grant applicants must select from among the CNCS National Performance Measures, if their program design aligns with those, or they may create their own performance measures, although applications without national performance measures are placed in a lower priority Tier in the competition. Applicants must also design and provide the tools they will use to track and report their data.

Grantees requesting over \$500,000 will also need to conduct an independent, outside program evaluation. Costs for evaluation can be included in the grant budget.

## Helpful Links and Resources

For additional information or assistance in learning how to become an AmeriCorps State or National grantee, you can refer to the following links:

- **Notice of Funding Opportunity FY 2017**
  - ☐ This page contains all the core solicitation documents an applicant must review before submitting a grant:  
<https://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2017/ameri-corps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2017>
  - ☐ Application Instructions:  
<http://www.nationalservice.gov/documents/main-menu/2016/2017-application-instructions>
- **2017 Mandatory Supplemental Guidance**  
<http://www.nationalservice.gov/documents/main-menu/2016/2017-mandatory-supplemental-guidance>
- **eGrant Online System Information and Tutorial:**  
☐ <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/egrants>
- **A Guide to the AmeriCorps VISTA Program for Legal Services Organizations**

-  <http://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/atj/legacy/2012/07/12/vista-manual-7-3.pdf>
- **CNCS Resource Hub**  
 <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants>
- **Key regulations and statutes for AmeriCorps State and National Grants**  
 <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/managing-ameri-corps-grants>
- **CNCS Knowledge Network**  
 <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources>
- **Results of previous grant competitions, including posted funding decisions**  
 <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/open-government-initiative/transparency/results-grants-competition>
- **Overview of AmeriCorps State and National and contact information**  
 <http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/ameri-corps-state-and-national>
- **List of State Service Commissions and Contact Information**  
 <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions>
- **Key AmeriCorps Grant Terminology and Concepts**  
 [http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/AmeriCorps\\_Key\\_Terms\\_2016.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/AmeriCorps_Key_Terms_2016.pdf)
- **Performance measures Resources**  
 <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement>
- **Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps Legal Fellowship**  
 <http://www.equaljusticeworks.org/post-grad/ameri-corps-legal-fellowships>

## Appendices

- 1) Massachusetts Legal Assistance for Self-Sufficiency Program Partner Application
- 2) Illinois JusticeCorps Position Description
- 3) Illinois JusticeCorps Member Application
- 4) Illinois JusticeCorps Member Position Description
- 5) Legal Aid Society of Hawaii AmeriCorps Position Description
- 6) Legal Aid of Society of Hawaii – Member Monthly Activity Report
- 7) Legal Assistance of Western New York Position Announcement
- 8) Justice for Arkansas – AmeriCorps Service Plans
- 9) Iowa Legal Aid AmeriCorps Project



## MLASSP Partner Agencies

Catholic Social Services of Fall River  
Community Legal Aid  
Greater Boston Legal Services  
Justice Center of Southeast Massachusetts  
Lutheran Social Services of New England  
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute  
Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee  
Merrimack Valley - North Shore  
Legal Services, Inc.  
MetroWest Legal Services, Inc.  
Neighborhood Legal Services  
Rosie's Place  
South Coastal Counties Legal Services, Inc.

## BENEFITS

Members making a firm one year service commitment, and who complete 1700 hours of community service, will receive:

- A \$17,000 taxable living allowance, paid bi-weekly
- Health benefits
- An educational award in the amount of \$5,550
- Place eligible student loans in forbearance with interest paid upon completion of service or some candidates may qualify for Public Service Loan Forgiveness
- Day care assistance, if eligible
- Hands-on, supervised exposure to the practice of law
- The opportunity to change lives, using the law



## Massachusetts Legal Assistance for Self-Sufficiency AmeriCorps



For further information contact us at:

Massachusetts Legal Assistance  
for Self-Sufficiency  
South Coastal Counties  
Legal Services, Inc.  
P.O. Box 2507  
Fall River, MA 02722  
Phone: 508-676-5022  
Fax: 508-676-8657  
[www.mlassp.org](http://www.mlassp.org)



The Massachusetts Legal Assistance for Self-Sufficiency is an AmeriCorps program sponsored by South Coastal Counties Legal Services, Inc., a private non-profit law firm providing legal assistance in civil matters at no charge to eligible low-income clients.

The Program is funded through the Corporation for National and Community Service, and administered through the Massachusetts Service Alliance.



## OVERVIEW

The Legal Assistance for Self-Sufficiency AmeriCorps Program (MLASSP) will place 28 college and law school graduates with an interest in public service law in participating legal

services organizations throughout Massachusetts. Members will serve under professional supervision providing legal assistance to low-income people in civil (non-criminal) matters. Members will be exposed to a wide range of legal assistance activities beginning with initial client contact and eligibility determinations, to case development, negotiation, hearing and appeal. The following civil law areas are commonly practiced in participating legal services organizations:

- **Housing**
- **Domestic Relations - Domestic Violence**
- **Education**
- **Income Maintenance and Health Benefits**
- **Legal Problems of Elders**
- **Immigration**



## FROM OUR MEMBERS

*...the AmeriCorps service year allowed for in-depth experience at every stage of cases. From conducting initial client interviews, to representing clients at hearings, to drafting appellate briefs, the placement allowed me to spend my first year as a practicing attorney learning much about two broad areas of public interest law, as well as about the legal aid setting in general.*

- Dan. B., MLASSP 2013

*This experience has been both challenging and rewarding. From the difficult clients to the hope we gave to others, and everything in-between, it has been a growing and learning experience not only in regards to immigration and public service, but about me as well.*

- Patricia A., MLASSP 2013

*As I complete my second year of service as an AmeriCorps, I look back on the invaluable experience I gained as a legal service attorney, and leave the program with the commitment and burden of continuing the fight against poverty through legal advocacy.*

- Natalie S., MLASSP 2012 & 2013

## QUALIFICATIONS

- At least 18 years of age
- U.S. citizen or permanent resident
- A college degree
- A commitment to obtaining justice for poor people
- A desire to work with a diversity of low-income people
- Developed oral and written communication skills



*The Legal Assistance for Self-Sufficiency program is an equal opportunity project, available to all, without regard to race, color, national origin, disability, age, sex, sexual orientation, political affiliation, or religion; it is committed to the inclusion of people with disabilities as members and will provide reasonable accommodations for interviews and service placement upon request.*



## Massachusetts Legal Assistance for Self-Sufficiency AmeriCorps Program



### Community Impact, 2005 – 2013

Massachusetts Legal Assistance for Self-Sufficiency AmeriCorps Program (MLASSP) places 28 college and law school graduates in non-profit legal services organizations throughout the state. Since 2005, members have served under professional supervision providing legal assistance to low-income people in civil (non-criminal) matters. Members engage in legal advocacy that has direct impact on the quality of people's lives, applying their talents and skills to help underserved, low-income people of the Commonwealth, and recruiting community volunteers to assist in these efforts. Typical MLASSP activities include the following:

**Projects** – With a collective 3,306 hours of legal supervision and 3,294 hours of training, 28 AmeriCorps Legal Advocates provided 46,590 hours of volunteer legal assistance and recruited 279 volunteers to serve an additional 2,931 hours in the 2012-2013 service year. This resulted in 3,763 low-income individuals/families receiving the legal services they required to be transitioned into or maintained in safe, healthy, affordable housing, or the assistance they need with cases involving family relations/domestic violence, benefits (SNAP, SSI, and SSDI,) and elder issues.

**Education and Community Outreach Events** – Members recruit pro bono attorneys, train volunteers and oversee legal clinics for low-income residents such as tenancy outreach programs and CORI outreach, organize Know Your Rights workshops and citizenship classes, host Special Education Rights Workshops, assist with Lawyer for the Day programs, host volunteer recruitment events, and leverage the ability of short-staffed legal aid professionals to provide much needed services.

**Fostering an Ethic of Service** – In the past service year alone, MLASSP/AmeriCorps delivered numerous presentations about AmeriCorps, national service, civic engagement, and legal rights/education including:

- o AmeriCorps Opening Day,
- o MLASSP Orientation and Kick-Off,
- o The MLASSP EOY Celebration,
- o South Coast Serves community engagement forums,
- o University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Career Services Events,
- o Martin Luther King Day National Day of Service in Washington, DC,
- o Numerous MLKDay activities in all regions of the State,
- o Mayors Day of Service in Boston,
- o Recruitment events at Roger Williams University, University of Massachusetts School of Law and Northeastern University School of Law.

**Community Collaborations** – MLASSP is a collaboration of 13 legal services organizations representing every Massachusetts county, the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corp., Massachusetts Bar Foundation, the United Way of Taunton/Attleboro, the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, the Medical/Legal Partnership, The Language Access Coalition, state and local Bar Associations, and numerous other community and social services agencies

**Building Community** –

- o 220 members have served in MLASSP 2005 – 2013
- o 96% of AmeriCorps members successfully complete the program
- o Ten of the 28 members serving in 2012-2013 are currently employed in the legal field, five went on to graduate school, and six A/C members returned for a second year of MLASSP service.



**Massachusetts  
Legal Assistance for Self-Sufficiency Program  
2013-2014 AmeriCorps Partner Application**



The Legal Assistance for Self-Sufficiency Program is a project of The Justice Center of Southeast Massachusetts, LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of South Coastal Counties Legal Services, Inc., a private non-profit law firm providing legal assistance in civil matters at no charge to eligible low-income clients. The program is funded through the Corporation for National and Community Service and administered by the Massachusetts Service Alliance. All placements are contingent on the approval of grant funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service.

**Member Benefits:** Members make a firm one-year service commitment and those who complete 1700 hours of community service will receive the following:

- A \$17,000 taxable living allowance, paid bi-weekly
- Health benefits
- An educational award in the amount of \$5,550
- Day care assistance, if eligible
- Loan forbearance on qualified student loans
- Hands-on, supervised exposure to the practice of law
- A minimum of 50 hours training in basic legal issues and national service.

**Partner obligations include the following:**

- \$12,100 cash contribution
- \$4,950 in-kind match
- Suitable space and equipment for the member's use
- Member supervision by a legal professional (approximately 2 hrs. per week)
- Member training to supplement MLASSP training
- Fiscal and programmatic reports

**Expectations:** Each member is expected to meet the following objectives based on MLASSP's accomplishments reported in the first six years of funding:

- matters screened (cases): 90
- advice/brief service cases: 75
- extended representation cases: 30
- housing assistance: 14 client referrals/18 clients placed or maintained in safe, affordable housing
- attend all MLASSP training and events
- undergo 90 hours of supervision by a legal professional
- recruit 5 volunteers to serve a minimum of 20 hours of service.

We have found that most projects can meet these objectives handily and have time for other important activities. Members in the first seven classes have accomplished extraordinary things

with appropriate supervision, and we hope that all members will experience both direct client activities, as well as participation in impact activities. It is understood that not all members will meet all objectives; however, it is expected that each member will contribute in a way that correlates with his/her service assignment while helping to meet the overall grant requirements.

**APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS:**

*All placements are contingent on funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service.*

- 1) **Application Forms:** Please complete the attached forms, one for the site administrator responsible for signing the partner contract, the other for the supervising attorney. If you are applying for more than one member, please complete a supervisor form for each placement slot you request. Electronic applications are available on our website at [www.mlassp.org](http://www.mlassp.org) on the partner page.
- 2) **Member Service Plan:** Past members suggest that the interview and placement process is more welcoming if the service plan is outlined at the time of the interview so that applicants are clear on exactly what their role will be. With this in mind, we are asking partner sites to include a sample copy of the service plan, which will assist us in deciding upon the allocation of slots. If you previously had a member and the service plan is the same, please note on the application.
- 3) **National Service Background Checks:** The Serve America Act requires AmeriCorps programs to provide national service background checks on all members and supervisors, including a CORI, a SORI and a FBI fingerprint check. Further information will be distributed to new supervisors during the recruitment process.

**Application Submission:** Send to Kathy Marx, AmeriCorps Program Director, at [kmarx@justicema.org](mailto:kmarx@justicema.org) so that we can begin to move the recruitment process forward. Priority will be given to applications received by April 1, 2013.

Mailing address:

Massachusetts Legal Assistance for Self-Sufficiency  
Justice Center of Southeast Massachusetts LLC  
231 Main Street, Ste. 201  
Brockton, MA 02301-4342  
Phone: 508-586-2110 Ext. 2019  
Fax: 508-587-3222

**Note:** Partners may not make offers of employment to AmeriCorps applicants during the application period, or after the applicant becomes a member, until the member has completed a term of service with MLASSP.

**MLASSP 2013-2014 SITE PARTNER APPLICATION  
FOR COMPLETION BY SITE ADMINISTRATOR**

1. Please provide legal services organization name, name and title of person completing this form, mailing address, telephone number, and email address.
  
2. If you are not the person who will be the primary contact for arranging candidate interviews, please provide contact information for that person, including name and title, mailing address, telephone number, and email address.
  
3. Please indicate the number of AmeriCorps members you are requesting for the 2013 - 2014 program year. State the number of positions you would use, even if it is higher than what you might expect to receive.
  
4. Please provide contact information for each person who you propose to directly supervise AmeriCorps members in your organization, including name and title, mailing address, telephone number, and email address.
  
5. Please describe any guidelines and eligibility requirements you will utilize for accepting clients, including the screening process and formula used.
  
6. AmeriCorps are not permitted to participate in cases involving financial gain to their partner site. **Please confirm that the member will not assist in any “for profit” legal cases.**
  
7. MLASSP will post notices of the availability of AmeriCorps positions on national and local web sites. We ask that our partners assist in recruitment by placing advertisements in their local newspapers and their website in order to attract candidates familiar with the community they will serve. Please indicate which local advertising you will provide.
  
8. Would you like us to post your specific placement on the MLASSP website? If so, please give a few brief sentences describing the placement for prospective applicants.
  
9. Please confirm that you can meet the financial contribution requirements for MLASSP, or not.







## Full-Time AmeriCorps Position

ILLINOIS JusticeCorps 2013

CHICAGO BAR FOUNDATION



Illinois JusticeCorps is an innovative new program to enhance access to justice for the growing number of unrepresented people in the courts by empowering and training student volunteers to help people without lawyers with the court system. JusticeCorps members will help people with legal questions and problems and assist them in navigating the courthouse.

At present it is very difficult for people to know where to go, what to ask for, who to see for documents, approvals, and advice in courthouses. People coming to court on their own are often confused, intimidated, and scared without meaningful assistance navigating the court. Helping members of the public to navigate this complex and daunting system means people without attorneys will be able to complete the purpose of their visit more efficiently. Members will be thoroughly trained about the activities which take place in the courthouse and on the commonly asked questions, areas of law and resources so they can best assist people.

### **Job Responsibilities may include:**

- Staffing self-help centers or information booths to give navigational and legal information and referrals
- Accompany people without lawyers around the courthouse to help them complete the necessary steps to move forward with their legal matters
- Working with and being accountable to court and clerk staff as well as legal aid attorneys from partner organizations
- Designing and implementing workshops and information sessions on going to court on your own and other topics for the general public
- Encouraging the culture of AmeriCorps and community volunteerism through planning and participating in service projects and other AmeriCorps events
- Taking on the role of team leader and mentor for minimum-time AmeriCorps members and student volunteers
- Recruiting, training and managing Community College volunteers through the Street Law partnership

### **Candidates Should:**

- Be friendly and display a positive energy
- Be outgoing with a nice personality that demonstrates a willingness to help strangers
- Have a communication style that is clear and patient
- Listen carefully to understand what people need or want
- Understand boundaries in offering assistance and offer help not advice
- Conscientiously and accurately gather and submit data needed for reports
- Be flexible and adaptable to ever changing demands of the daily job environment
- Be able to work both independently and as a member of a group
- Be able to demonstrate initiative and creativity in identifying needs and ways to address them
- Be responsible and dependable
- Bilingual in English and Spanish is strongly preferred

**The position requires that the full-time member:**

- Make a one-year, 1700-hour commitment that will begin in August 16, 2013.
- Serve at least 35 hours a week, 8:30am to 4:30pm, at the Daley Center (50 W. Washington, Chicago, IL 60602).
- Attend all training sessions and other events to learn the facts needed to give accurate information. (See Important Dates attachment)
- Conscientiously gather and submit data needed for reports

**Benefits:**

- Participant will be an AmeriCorps Member
- \$18,000 Living Allowance distributed evenly throughout the participant's term of service
- Individual Health Insurance
- After completion of 1700-hour commitment, volunteer will receive \$5,550 Education Award for education expenses or loan repayment.
- Great professional skills development, work experience and professional references

**How to apply:**

- Send completed Illinois JusticeCorps Application and resume (if available) to Stacey Weiler at [sweiler@chicagobar.org](mailto:sweiler@chicagobar.org); Subject line: Illinois JusticeCorps Full Time Application

**Questions:**

- Please contact Stacey Jonas at [sweiler@chicagobar.org](mailto:sweiler@chicagobar.org) or 312.914.9521 with questions about the position or the application process.





**Illinois JusticeCorps**  
**Important Dates – 2013-2014 Program Year**

As an Illinois JusticeCorps member, you will be required to attend scheduled trainings and events related to the program. Please be aware of the following dates when you will be expected to be available to participate:

**Pre-Service Orientation – Mandatory**

Saturday, September 7, 2013 – Orientation and Training

**Illinois JusticeCorps Program-Wide Trainings and Workshops**

Saturday, October 26, 2013

Saturday, February 8, 2014

Saturday, April 26, 2014

**AmeriCorps Events and Service Days**

9/11 Day of Service – Wednesday, September 11, 2013

National Service Recognition Day – Thursday, October 10, 2013

MLK Day of Service – Monday, January 20, 2014

AmeriCorps Week – March 2014 (TBD)

Occasionally, additional events and workshops will occur during the normal service hours or evenings. We will provide as much notice as possible when additional times are scheduled.



## STUDENT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

ILLINOIS JusticeCorps



The Chicago Bar Foundation is looking for student volunteers to become AmeriCorps Members.

Illinois JusticeCorps is an innovative new program to enhance access to justice for the growing number of unrepresented people in the courts by empowering and training student volunteers to help people without lawyers with the court system. Student volunteers will help people with legal questions and problems and assist them in navigating the courthouse.

Volunteers should:

- Be outgoing with an extroverted personality
- Be willing to help strangers with problems
- Have a communication style that is clear and patient
- Be able to use active listening skills to understand what people need/want
- Be able to exhibit initiative in showing people how to solve problems
- Be responsible and dependable
- Have an interest in the legal and court system

The position requirements:

- 300-hour volunteer commitment. Hours should be completed by the end of the 2013-2014 academic year, including at least 30 training hours.
- Commitment to work one eight (8) hour or two four (4) hour shifts during weekday court hours (8:30am-12:30pm or 12:30pm-4:30pm) at the Daley Center (50 West Washington, Chicago, IL).
- Attend all training sessions to learn the facts needed to give accurate information
- Be willing to work with people who are often stressed, anxious and sometimes challenging
- Conscientiously gather and submit data needed for reports
- Non-English Language proficiency a plus

Benefits:

- Volunteers will be AmeriCorps Members
- After completion of 300-hour commitment, volunteer will receive \$1175 Education Award for education expenses or loan repayment.
- Great professional skills development, work experience and professional references

How to apply:

- Visit <http://www.chicagobarfoundation.org/courts/illinois-justicecorps> for more information and application materials.
- Send completed Illinois JusticeCorps Application and resume (if available) to Stacey Weiler at [sweiler@chicagobar.org](mailto:sweiler@chicagobar.org); Subject line: AmeriCorps Volunteer Application

# Illinois JusticeCorps Member Position Description



**Title:** JusticeCorps Member

**Service Location:**

Richard J. Daley Center  
50 W. Washington St.  
Chicago, IL 60602

**Member Impact:**

Illinois JusticeCorps is a program that places students in court-based legal advice desks and self-help centers to help people without lawyers navigate the civil judicial system. For individuals coming to court without legal representation, having access to a legal advice desk or self-help center where they can receive guidance and a lawyer can give them some quick legal advice and assistance is critical. A self-help center can provide procedural information and guidance to additional legal resources, including: court-based legal advice desks, courtroom and clerk locations and contact information for a free legal aid hotline. A well-run legal advice desk can “triage” a person’s legal situation, help her understand her legal problem, refer her to pro bono and legal aid lawyers (where appropriate) and give her brief advice and “self-help” resources for simpler legal matters. Experience has shown that a little bit of legal assistance can go a long way and often solve the problem for many people coming to court on their own.

The Illinois JusticeCorps position will assist in providing support for the thousands of people that visit the Daley Center every year.

**Immediate Supervisor**

Stacey Jonas Weiler  
Program Director, Illinois JusticeCorps  
[sweiler@iljusticecorps.org](mailto:sweiler@iljusticecorps.org)

## **Service Position Summary**

Each member will serve in a variety of capacities in court-based legal advice desks and legal self-help center. Tasks may include but are not limited to:

- Providing litigants with information about options and referrals to appropriate services within or outside the courts;
- Explaining legal processes;
- Assisting to identify and accurately complete legal forms; and
- Providing litigants with information about required next steps in their cases.
- Accompany litigants throughout the courthouse as they complete the task to further the resolution of their legal issue.
- Recruit, train and manage traditional volunteers who further the mission of the Illinois JusticeCorps program.

The Illinois JusticeCorps member may also be strategically placed throughout the court in order to be available to members of the general public and to assist attorneys and volunteers at the legal aid advice and self-help centers.

## **Essential Functions of Position**

The Court Navigator will be expected to:

- Offer to assist members of the public by explaining the courthouse locations for various offices and desks where legal help will be provided
- Accompany members of the public if the need arises in physically moving from one place to another in the building
- Review documents the member of the public has brought if necessary to help understand what office or court desk is the right one
- Assist members of the public in navigating web-based resources
- Manage crowds and create order out of chaos
- Be kind, patient and compassionate to all members of the public
- Stand or walk for long periods of time

## **Principal Working Relationships**

The Illinois JusticeCorps member will work closely with the Illinois JusticeCorps Fellows who will serve as team leaders. The JusticeCorps member will be under the supervision of the Program Director but will also build relationships with other legal aid advice desk staff, the Cook County Law Library staff, and other people working for the Circuit Court of Cook County and the Clerk's Office.

### **Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities**

- Be friendly and display a positive energy
- Be outgoing with a nice personality
- Be willing to help strangers with problems
- Communicate clearly and patiently with people who are often stressed and anxious
- Listen carefully to understand what people need
- Understand boundaries in offering assistance and offer help not advice
- Conscientiously and accurately gather and submit data needed for reports
- Bilingual in English and Spanish is strongly preferred
- Be flexible and adaptable to ever changing demands of the daily job environment
- Be detail oriented to spot patterns of information and commonly encountered problems members of the public are presenting to reinforce and improve the service we are offering

### **Academic and Experience Qualification**

A high school degree or equivalent is required. Enrolled in a College or University preferred.

### **Commitment Required**

As a minimum-time AmeriCorps member, the Illinois JusticeCorps member will commit to an 9-month term for a minimum of 300 hours. The member will work 8-hours a week during Court hours either in one full day or two 4-hour shifts.

### **Training**

Pre-service Orientation training is required along with 3 to 4 other half-day trainings on weekends throughout the service term. The member will participate in all on-site training and specific legal aid help desk training as needed.

### **Service Conditions**

Service is performed indoors in a multistory high-rise office building. AmeriCorps members must be able to navigate crowded spaces, use elevators and escalators and walk and stand for periods of time.

### **Physical, Emotional, and Intellectual Demands**

- Working with the general public, including low-income individuals, people with disabilities, the homeless, non-English speaking people and others that find themselves in desperate situations can be taxing. This individual will need to be able to cope with the emotional toll this work can take on her.
- Patience is required when working with all types of people, especially those who are scared, confused or frustrated with the legal process.
- This position will require constant learning and relaying of information which may change.

I have read the position description for the Illinois JusticeCorps member and I understand my role and responsibilities in the program.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name



## Illinois JusticeCorps Member Application

To be considered for a volunteer position, you will need to meet some initial eligibility requirements. Before applying, please carefully review the following to make sure you qualify:

- All Illinois JusticeCorps applicants must be 17 years or older, a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States with a high school diploma/GED. The following eligibility documentation must be included with your application:
  1. To prove AGE – a copy of driver’s license or birth certificate
  2. To prove CITIZENSHIP or PERMANENT RESIDENT ALIEN OF THE USA: We will need a copy of one of the following: (i) a birth certificate showing that the person was born in the US, Puerto Rico, Guam, the US Virgin Islands, American Samoa or the Northern Mariana Islands; (ii) a US passport, (iii) a report of birth abroad of a US citizen by the State Department, (iv) a certificate of birth-foreign service issued by the State Department, (v) a certification of report of birth issued by the State Department, (vi) a certificate of naturalization issued by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, (vii) a certificate of citizenship issued by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, (viii) a permanent resident card, (ix) alien registration receipt card) or (x) a passport indicating that the INS has approved it as temporary evidence of lawful admission for permanent residence.
  3. To prove high school diploma or its equivalent or be enrolled in an institution of higher education – a copy of high school diploma or higher education school enrollment document
- To be eligible to serve, you will have to consent to and pass a three-part criminal history background check that includes a name search of the National Sex Offender Registry, a finger print search of the Illinois State Police registry and the state in which you reside if it is not Illinois, and an FBI fingerprint national criminal history background check. Further, you will need to pass an Illinois DCFS CANTS (Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System) check.
- Illinois JusticeCorps members are required to complete 300 hours of service (which includes training workshops held during some weekday evenings and weekends). To meet this goal within an academic year, you should plan to serve, at least, two shifts of four hours per week, and all hours must be completed during the 8:30 am to 4:30 pm court hours of operations. Service hours should be completed by the end of the student’s academic year and must be completed within one year of joining the program. Please make sure your schedule is flexible enough to accommodate these requirements.
- Participants must provide continuous service throughout the entire program year (September-May/June). Students planning to study abroad or take a break in the middle of the academic year or during intersession will not be accepted into Illinois JusticeCorps.
- Participants must attend a pre-service orientation and other mandatory training and member events. See attached Important Dates document.

**APPLICANT PROFILE**

Last Name                      First Name                      Middle Initial

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Current Address    Apartment #

\_\_\_\_\_  
City                                      State                                      Zip Code

\_\_\_\_\_  
Permanent Address    Apartment #

\_\_\_\_\_  
City                                      State                                      Zip Code

\_\_\_\_\_  
Daytime Phone    Evening Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Are you at least 18 years of age with a high school diploma or equivalent?  
 Yes     No

Are you a citizen of the United States or a permanent resident alien?  
 Yes     No

\_\_\_\_\_  
How did you hear about the Illinois JusticeCorps AmeriCorps Program?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**LANGUAGE SKILLS**

Are you bilingual? Yes No If yes, what language(s) do you speak and with what proficiency? \_\_\_\_\_

**PERSONAL STATEMENT**

Please attach a brief personal statement that indicates why you want to participate in Illinois JusticeCorps, what you hope to gain and how the experience fits into your future goals.



**REFERENCES**

Please provide the name, address, and telephone number of three references who are not related to you.

Name	Relationship	Email	Telephone
<hr/>			
<hr/>			
<hr/>			

**EDUCATION**

What is the **highest grade level** of education that you have completed? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you currently enrolled in school? Yes No Where? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your major or area of study? \_\_\_\_\_

**EMPLOYMENT**

Are you currently employed? Yes No If yes, how many hours per week? \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours per week do you plan to work during the term of service? \_\_\_\_\_

**SERVICE AVAILABILITY**

Please select your preferred service location?

- Daley Center (50 W. Washington St. Chicago, IL 60602)
- Markham (16501 Kedzie Ave, Markham, IL 60428)
- McLean County (104 W Front St, Bloomington, IL 61701)

Members will be expected to work at least two four-hour shifts during courthouse hours (8:30am-12:30pm or 12:30pm-4:30am) each week.

**CERTIFICATION**

*I hereby certify that the information provided on this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand that any misinformation or material omission could result in unfavorable consideration or immediate dismissal.*

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Illinois JusticeCorps is an equal opportunity program. Women, people of color, people of all ages, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are encouraged to apply. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

Please send completed application to Stacey Weiler – [swelier@chicagobar.org](mailto:sweiler@chicagobar.org) with the subject line “Illinois JusticeCorps – Volunteer Application”

## Illinois JusticeCorps Position Descriptions



### Daley Center JusticeCorps Fellow :

- Serves as a team leader and mentor for the part-time volunteers.
- Responsible for scheduling and delegating student volunteers and making sure that priority stations are staffed and members are fulfilling roles and responsibilities.
- Familiar with all JusticeCorps shift assignments and able to fulfill any given role in the absence or cancellation of a regular volunteer
- Identifies need for non-member volunteers, assists in the recruitment, training and supervising of volunteers.
- Assists in planning workshops and reflection sessions for student volunteers about service, civic engagement and other leadership skills.
- As a team, the Daley Center JusticeCorps Fellows are responsible for designing, training and supervision of Community College student participants in the Street Law class.
- Reports Directly to Cook County Coordinator and keeps them apprised of any issues or disciplinary matters that need to be addressed with student-volunteers
- Help to plan and organize service projects for members and for required National Service Days – including outreach and recruitment of non-member volunteers (at least 15 volunteers for one-time activities).
- Completes 160 hours of training and professional development relevant to the program and service.

### Daley Center JusticeCorps Fellow :

- Responsible for the day to day operation of the self-help web center.
- Along with Daley Center Team Leader– serves as a team leader and mentor for the part-time volunteers.
- Maintains a relationship with the staff of the Cook County Law Library and makes sure the self-help center is running smoothly and consistently.
- Regularly fulfills each shift assignment and is willing to take on shifts when there is a need or in the absence or cancellation of a student volunteer
- As a team, the Daley Center JusticeCorps Fellows are responsible for designing, training and supervision of Community College student participants in the Street Law class.
- Assists Program Coordinator in planning workshops and skills-based trainings to assist furthering all members' knowledge of the legal system and skills related to their service.

- Works with Cook County Coordinator and legal aid partners and help-desk staff to identify ways in which student volunteers can be most effective in their posts and develop best practices at each assignment
- Reports Directly to the Cook County Coordinator about student volunteer progress towards performance measurement goals and completion of member tally sheets.
- Completes 160 hours of training and professional development relevant to the program and service.

Legal Aid Society of Hawaii, AmeriCorps Project  
Kaulike Family Unit Member Advocate 2013

**Position Description:**

This position involves providing one-on-one assistance and clinical education to low-income Legal Aid clients. The member provides brief services to clients with family law related cases, conducts family law clinics, creates self-help materials, conducts outreach and education and provides volunteer support.

**Duties and Responsibilities May Include:**

- Providing one-on-one assistance brief services assistance to clients;
- Assisting in development and delivery of self-help clinics, such as uncontested divorce and paternity;
- Staff Legal Aid Intake Hotline 1-2 shifts per week;
- Development and revision of self-help legal materials, including legal materials on Legal Aid's web site;
- Organize and participate in outreach and education efforts;
- Recruit and manage volunteers;
- Attend meetings and trainings as assigned by the supervisor;
- Maintain monthly reports and timesheets as outlined in AmeriCorps agreement; and
- Refrain from participation in activities prohibited by AmeriCorps regulations and provisions.

Full-time position requires a 1700 hour commitment which must be completed within the AmeriCorps program year.

**Preferred Qualifications:**

- Some college education
- Fluency in other language(s) strongly preferred
- Ability to work independently and as a part of a team
- Strong writing and communication skills
- Desire to assist others
- Self-starter & flexible personality
- Knowledge of computer applications: Word, internet, email
- Prior experience in legal background not required; training provided
- Prior experience assisting indigent or disadvantaged populations is a plus.

**Full-Time Member Benefits :**

up to \$22,200/yr. living stipend (full stipend if service completed over 12 months)  
\$5,550 education award (for student loans and qualified educational expenses)  
Student loan forbearance (on qualified loans)  
Interest accrual paid (on qualified loans)  
Medical and dental benefits  
Flexible vacation and sick leave time



## Legal Aid Society of Hawaii, AmeriCorps Project Justice Intake and Center for Equal Justice Member Advocate

### **Position Description:**

The member conducts client intake screen on the legal hotline, provides brief legal services in Center for Equal Justice, creates and revises self-help materials, organizes and participates in outreach events and supervises volunteers.

### **Duties and Responsibilities May Include:**

- Members will assist in staffing the Legal Intake Hotline which involves screening applicants for eligibility, completing applications, providing legal information and advice under supervision of supervising attorney, and providing referral;
- Full-Time member will also staff the Center for Equal Justice (CEJ) which involves providing legal advice, assisting in the completion of simple court/administrative forms, writing letters and making phone calls on behalf of clients, as well as screening and referring clients for further assistance where appropriate;
- Development and revision of self-help legal materials, including legal materials on Legal Aid's web site;
- Coordinate & participate in outreach activities;
- Recruit and manage volunteers;
- Attend meetings and trainings as assigned by the supervisor;
- Maintain monthly reports and timesheets as outlined in AmeriCorps agreement; and.
- Refrain from participation in activities prohibited by AmeriCorps regulations and provisions.

### **Preferred Qualifications:**

- Some college education
- Ability to work independently and as a part of a team
- Strong oral communication skills
- Desire to assist others
- Self-starter & flexible personality
- Knowledge of computer applications: Word, internet, email
- Prior experience in legal background not required; training provided
- Prior experience assisting indigent or disadvantaged populations is a plus.

Part-time position requires a 900 hour commitment within the program year. Full-time position requires a 1700 hour commitment within the program year.

### **Full-Time Member Benefits:**

up to \$22,200/yr. living stipend (full living stipend if service completed over 12 months)  
\$5,550 education award (for qualified education expenses and student loans)  
Student loan forbearance (on qualified loans); Interest accrual paid (on qualified loans); Med/dental benefits; Flexible vacation and sick leave time

### **Part-Time Member Benefits:**

up to \$11,754/yr. living stipend (full living stipend earned if service completed over 12 months)  
\$2,675 education award (for qualified education expenses and student loans)  
Student loan forbearance (on qualified loans); Partial interest accrual paid (on qualified loans);  
Flexible vacation and sick leave



**LEGAL AID MEMBER**  
**Monthly Activity Report**

Member: \_\_\_\_\_

Month: \_\_\_\_\_

**BRIEF SERVICES/REPRESENTATION/CASE MANAGEMENT**  
**(DO NOT INCLUDE CEJ CLIENTS)**

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of NEW CLIENTS served

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of New Clients who are veterans

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of New Clients who are Family Members of a Veteran (same household)

**CLINICS or WORKSHOPS** *(Attach clinic logs and evaluation sheets from attendees.)*

DATE	TITLE	LOCATION	# OF PEOPLE ATTENDING

**MATERIALS CREATED** (brochures, videos, recorded scripts, manuals, clinic materials, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Number *completed and in use.* (**Attach copies**)

\_\_\_\_\_ Number *in progress* (write titles below)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**TRAININGS ATTENDED** *(include statewide AmeriCorps conferences as a training.)*

DATE	TITLE	LOCATION	HOURS

**VOLUNTEERS RECRUITED OR SUPERVISED**

DATE	VOLUNTEER NAME	VOLUNTEER SERVICE DESCRIPTION	HOURS BY VOLUNTEER

LEGAL ASSISTANCE OF WESTERN NEW YORK INC. (LawNY)  
POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT: AMERICORPS LEGAL ASSISTANTS  
ACCESS TO JUSTICE PROJECT

Project Description:

The Access to Justice Project is a partnership between LawNY and AmeriCorps, America's most prominent volunteer service program, which seeks to address the legal needs of the poor by expanding the level of legal assistance available particularly in the areas of home foreclosures and housing assistance, healthcare access, public benefits and employment. The project will recruit and support additional volunteers and enhance efforts at collaboration with human services agencies.

The persons selected as AmeriCorps paralegals will work in our seven established poverty law offices. They are offered the opportunity for direct, substantive legal experience, excellent training and a chance to make a critical difference in the lives of poor people and their communities. Subject to final grant decisions positions are expected to be available in each of the following offices: Bath, Elmira, Geneva, Ithaca, Jamestown, Olean and Rochester.

Members receive a living allowance of \$14,000/annually and may be eligible for health insurance, an educational award of \$5,550, child care expenses and suspension of student loans. Commitment to a full one-year term of service is required. The term of service must start between September 1, 2013 and November 30, 2013.

Member Responsibilities:

1. Provide screening and intake for poor persons seeking civil legal assistance;
2. Recruit and support volunteer lawyers, students and community members;
3. Assist staff attorneys in providing legal services to clients ;
4. Work with community agencies serving the poor to strengthen collaborations ;
5. Provide outreach and community education for targeted groups/clients;
6. Participate on relevant staff committees/work groups;
7. Participate in impact cases or projects.

Member Qualifications:

Members should have at least two years of college or equivalent experience. Prior experience working with the poor or disadvantaged is preferred. Members should have a personal commitment to eliminating poverty and its effects in our communities and to high standards of professional performance.

Application Procedure:

To apply mail or e-mail a letter explaining why you are interested in the position, your preference of office location and a resume with three references to:

Thomas Dubel, Legal Assistance of Western New York  
215 East Church Street, Suite 301, Elmira, NY 14901 or  
tdubel@lawny.org  
Phone: (607) 734-1647, Fax: (607) 734-1018

Legal Assistance of Western New York Inc. is an equal opportunity employer.



#### General Work

As an AmeriCorps member I will provide civil legal assistance to the low income residents of Arkansas. My project will be reentry and economic opportunity. I will provide civil legal assistance to individuals who are recently released from incarceration and participants in the area's drug or mental health courts that have yet to be incarcerated. I will work with individuals recently released from incarceration or convicted and are on probation to improve their employability by removing barriers, such as expunging criminal records or addressing civil legal problems that may keep from obtaining a driver's license or completing an education course.

#### Goals of the Project

The ultimate goal of the project is to assist individuals in drug court be successful and complete the program with as few distractions as possible. My duties will include advice, counsel, brief services, and direct representation of this at risk population, including drug and mental health court participants. Another goal of the project is seeking to remove barriers to housing needs, family law issues, and other legal issues that would contribute to recidivism.

#### Building Community Relationships

Conduct clinics and workshops to increase awareness about the services Legal Aid provides and assist individuals with access to the justice system without an attorney. Attend drug court programs and introduce myself to local judges, and be available on drug court days to answer questions and make drug court participants aware of the services Legal Aid offers. Form relationships with non-profit organizations that provide services to recovering drug addicts. Continue the relationship that has already been established with Mid-South Health Clinic and the Mental Health Court.

#### Expanded Drug Court

Currently, in Mississippi County there is not a drug court. The goal is to start a drug court in Mississippi County by the end of my year as an AmeriCorps member. Another goal is to expand our drug court reach. Begin a regular physical presence in drug courts in the Delta. Establish a presence and a reputation with the drug courts in the Delta region in places where people may know about the services we offer.

#### Networking

Networking is essential to the success of Legal Aid's presence in the community. Therefore, I will meet local judges, and attorneys. I will also establish relationships with local non-profit organizations, as well as drug recovery programs.

### Follow Up Prior Expungements

Collect data from prior clients we represented in expungement cases. The goal would be to find out have they been able to find a better job, better housing, and if they have had any other criminal cases since we expunged their record.

### Personal Goals

As a personal goal I hope to gain better advocacy skills. As well as better my legal writing and research skills. Working the HelpLine and completing intakes should help me with reaching my goals, as well as appearing in court, and writing advice letters to clients.

Work Plan 2013-14

As a part of the Medical Legal Partnership at Arkansas Children's Hospital, I have devised the following work plan to assist in facilitating the goals of the MLP as well as my objectives under the AmeriCorps partnership:

- *Work towards helping clients live in healthier housing.* Studies show that housing conditions directly impact one's health- especially children. Through working with the doctors and clinics at ACH, I plan to directly represent clients who are living in unsafe housing and find workable resolutions. I will also be gathering data regarding specific environmental factors and cross section this data with the health issues of the client.
- *Assist clients with other legal issues which impact health and/or quality of life.* Besides physical environmental factors in the home, other factors such as income, food, and for the children, school environment. As part of the MLP, assisting families who have issues with any of these factors in which there are a legal solution available will be another crucial focus I will undertake.
- *Continue to develop the Legal Needs Screener.* The Legal Needs Screener is an ongoing project of the MLP. As we move into a different phase of the project, I will be testing the questions with patients in the clinics to assess their legal needs as they relate to the priorities of LAA.
- *Training and continuing education.* To be an effective advocate, I plan to obtain as much knowledge as possible about issues which affect our client base at ACH. This includes, but is not limited to: special education, benefits, and housing.
- *Community outreach.* Many people are unaware of the various types of services Legal Aid provide. Therefore, I plan to network, plan, and attend community outreach events which will enlighten the community about the work legal aid is doing and how LAA can assist with the legal issues that are within our priorities.
- *Other personal goals:* Reinstate my Michigan Bar License and sit for the Arkansas Bar Exam.

## Goal

The project's overarching goal is to 'provide legal services to at risk veterans' and was designed to address legal issues unique to veterans in Legal Aid of Arkansas' North-West service area. My individual goals specific to the veterans project are defined in the AmeriCorps Member Contract Attachment A, (covering period 09/04/2013 – 08/29/2014) and they are as follows:

- Increase number of veterans (and their families) served
- Identify issues impacting veterans in NW Arkansas
- Coordinate with pro bono volunteer partners

In my service year, I would like to determine how effective the project has been, identify areas that need work, and help to expand the current framework so that we may meet the legal needs of veterans in Arkansas.

## How to Reach the Goal(s)

In order to increase the number of veterans and their families served, I will need to identify first how many veterans were referred and of those referred, how many were actually served. Capturing and measuring those numbers will be done by reviewing all KEMPs cases opened, handled, and closed with a showing of the vet flag set who reside in the NW Arkansas service area. It would also be necessary to review those that were referred, identified as veterans, but rejected (due to issue type or income, etc.). Once we know how many vets came to LAA for help, then a baseline can be set in order to determine what an increase would be over the next service year.

To increase the number of veterans served, continuity of services is crucial. Maintaining existing relationships and continuing existing veteran outreach services will be necessary to provide continuity of service. As the word spreads throughout the veteran community that we are there, and new referrals are made, we should experience an increase in numbers.

To identify issues impacting veterans in NW Arkansas, a review of what types of issues we have received and are continuing to receive, from intakes and referrals, both those from VHSC and 7 Hills, should give a good indicator of veteran's issues in the NW area. It may also help to establish new relationships serving the veteran community and hear from them issue types that they are aware of that may be prevalent yet unmet.

Finally, to coordinate with pro bono volunteer partners, it will be necessary to first understand the types of issues we have, determine if they are within the service goals of LAA, and then develop a plan and method of referring cases to the pro bono resources secured during the previous service year. Because veterans requiring services are varied, and not necessarily in line with existing LAA LSC case

priorities, it may be necessary review priorities, funding, and referrals specific to the needs of the veteran community.

Activities surrounding goals

Benchmarking and analysis:

- 1) Determine over the past year the number of cases referred through veteran outreach
  - a. By reviewing KEMPs client records in this service area marked as 'vet' (or army, navy, etc.)
  - b. By reviewing KEMPs intake/eligibility records in this service area who vets yet were rejected for some reason
    1. This one may be a problem and I'll need to identify someone to work with on being able to identify these records; a quick review of the eligibility table fields in the KEMPs reporting screen does not have any indicator of veteran
  - c. Continue to check and review new cases coming in through vet clinic outreach as well as veterans seen at 7 Hills outreach
- 2) Determine over the past year the different types of cases referred through veteran outreach
  - a. Using same criteria above in #1 look through old case types and problem codes to determine type of cases
  - b. Review new cases that are coming in through the vet clinic outreach and the 7 Hills outreach (if the individual is a veteran)
  - c. Talk with other professionals serving the veteran community to ask what types of issues they are seeing in NW Ark with veterans that are currently unmet
- 3) Determine if the cases are the type that LAA can help
  - a. Through normal LSC regulation and priorities OR
  - b. MLP requirements
  - c. OR if some adjustment of the workgroup priorities in the area of veterans services, MLP, are necessary, by review and discussion with ██████████ as well as ██████████

Other:

- 4) Review the referral network with Veteran's Healthcare System of the Ozarks
  - a. How are referrals coming in – what channels, etc.?
  - b. What about the Combat Vet Center that's opened up across from the VA hospital,
    1. Are they affiliated with VHSO and if so
    2. Do they know we have an outreach in the Township location on Monday
  - c. What other relationships need to be established to help promote and attract veterans and their families to our outreach services?
    1. Do the county service officers know we exist
    2. Are there other persons or positions identified that we need to reach out to
- 5) Review and understand the agreement with 7 Hills Homeless Shelter and how or if that interacts with the veteran service project.

██████████ AmeriCorps Workplan  
09/04/2013 – 08/29/2014

- a. Will any new funding open up areas to handle veteran's issues out of 7 Hills or will any veterans seen at the 7 Hills outreach clinic continue under LSC classifications and priorities only.
- 6) Develop a plan to utilize the pro bono resources previously identified for the veterans services area
  - a. ██████████ developed a network database of available and willing pro bono resources specifically for veterans services
  - b. Being able to refer cases to these resources is necessary in order to continue to help veterans
    1. But are there issues of local veterans that LAA is restricted from helping
      - a. By LSC regulation
      - b. By overarching goals of LAA
    2. Or is there some funding and availability outside LSC guidelines that will allow us to refer cases to the pro bono resources that have volunteered for veteran services
    3. Will the referral of veterans issues continue through current referral channel, ██████████ ██████████ or will there be a new process exclusive to veterans and veteran resources established

Disclaimer

All goals and priorities are subject to change based on developing needs of the position, priorities of the workgroup, or by review and modification by those I report to in the Legal Aid of Arkansas organization.

[REDACTED]  
AmeriCorp J.D.

Consumer Workgroup

Supervisor: [REDACTED]

Work Plan for September 2013 – August 2014

My role as an AmeriCorps advocate at Legal Aid of Arkansas in Jonesboro is to provide civil legal assistance and outreach to participants in the area's drug courts. I will be focusing on maintaining the relationships our program has with the area drug courts that we currently attend, as well as fostering possible new relationships with other specialized courts. I will advise, counsel, and if appropriate, offer representation to drug court participants to help them successfully complete the drug court program and re-enter society. I will also focus on expanding our re-entry services beyond attending the area drug courts and beyond focusing mainly on expungement. I will attempt to address other common re-entry issues such as family law issues, financial issues, housing problems and education barriers. I will also participate in weekly helpline shifts and attend the weekly consumer workgroup meetings.

- 1) Goal One: Assist Participants in the Specialized Court Programs With Civil Legal Issues to Prevent Recidivism
  - a) Strategy: Attend Drug Court programs in Randolph, Lawrence, Craighead and Greene counties
    - i) A regular, physical presence has already been established in these drug courts. I will continue LAA's presence in these drug courts. We also have existing relationships with the judges and probation officers in these drug courts. I will work with these providers to identify any clients that may need assistance.
    - ii) I will do in-person intakes when at the drug courts or telephone intakes when clients are referred to me by probation officers outside of my normal presence at drug court.
    - iii) I will attempt to expand advice and services beyond expungement to assist participants with family, housing, or employment issues
  - b) Strategy: Expand LAA's presence to other specialized courts
    - i) I will attempt to expand our physical presence to other drug courts.
    - ii) There has been interest in having an LAA representative attend the Jackson County Drug Court in Newport, as well as the Mental Health Court in Jonesboro. I will attempt to reach out to these programs in the hopes of establishing some sort of physical presence there.
- 2) Goal Two: Further Outreach Beyond Drug Courts to Other Service Providers
  - a) Strategy: Establish relationship with local probation offices and officers
    - i) I think it would be helpful to establish relationships with probation officers outside of the drug court program. There are many people on probation dealing with the same re-entry issues as drug court participants that we are not currently reaching. If some



of the area probation offices at least knew that we are willing to assist with common recidivism issues they may be able to refer clients to us for brief services before they need to come through our helpline with bigger issues that require more intense representation. We could also provide probation officers with information about how to address common re-entry problems so some people may be able to address common problems on their own.

- b) Strategy: Establish relationship with non-profit organizations that provide community outreach and work with people facing re-entry issues
  - i) It may also be helpful to establish relationships with drug rehabilitation centers where clients are facing re-entry issues.
  - ii) I will attempt to seek out job training and work placement organizations willing to work with us. One of the biggest barriers to successful re-entry is the inability to secure stable employment. I could do outreach events educating people on expungement, driver's license suspension, etc. which can be barriers to finding a job. I can also attempt to find local businesses that are willing to hire participants in our local drug courts.
  - iii) I will also try to set up semi-regular outreach events. These events can be at area libraries, community centers, etc. and can help educate people about expungements, employment issues, and other legal issues that are barriers to re-entry. These may become important as the expungement law changes. Local community organizations may also be helpful to reach out to and see if they would be interested in sponsoring an outreach event.
  - iv) I will continue to update and stock our fact sheets at the Craighead County Library. I have noticed that our fact sheets are widely used there. I will try to keep our information rack filled. I will also see if there are other places where we could place fact sheets where they could be easily re-filled. I will also try to make sure that the information on the fact sheets is up to date.
- 3) Goal Three: Expand Re-entry Assistance Beyond Expungements
  - a) Strategy: Background checks as an obstacle to housing and employment
    - i) Improper background checks may be hurting the chances of those trying to re-enter by limiting their employment and housing prospects. I will educate people about the procedures that employers must follow when they take adverse action based on a background check. I will also attempt to do outreach explaining the importance of making sure that there are no errors on your criminal record or credit report. I could also possibly reach out to employers about the procedures they must follow when doing background checks. I can formulate a new fact sheet and/or advice letter.
    - ii) I will also attempt to identify common issues facing those with a criminal record. This may include research into issues such as: professional licenses, driver's license, accumulated debt, bankruptcy, finding employment, finding stable housing, and beginning education programs. I will attempt to find out what the most common

issues are faced by those in our service area and what we can do to alleviate those issues.

- b) Strategy: Focus on female specific re-entry issues
  - i) Present outreach events to women who are facing re-entry issues and may have different concerns than men do. Women may be more concerned with finding safe and stable housing and gaining custody of their children. Many women may be coming from domestic violence situations so it is important for them to feel safe before they can face other re-entry problems. Women may also benefit from a mentor who can help them re-establish their self-esteem. I could do presentations at women's shelters or DV groups with information more tailored for women offenders.
- c) Strategy: Attempt to deal with re-entry issues before people are released from incarceration
  - i) Many issues that people face when released from incarceration stem from problems that can be avoided or at least thought about before being incarcerated. I believe this can be done either by visiting prisons and educating inmates about what they can do before they are released or providing information to those who deal with people before they are incarcerated – prosecutors or defense attorneys. I can attempt to draft an information packet for those who are facing incarceration about the civil collateral consequences of a conviction and what steps they can take to mitigate those consequences.
  - ii) Many of those recently released are facing large amount of back child support. We can help those who have to pay child support file motions that allow them to possibly suspend those payments while they are incarcerated.
- 4) Goal Four: Other Projects
  - a) Strategy: Complete expungement follow-up questionnaire to determine the type of impact getting an expungement has been for some of our clients
  - b) Strategy: Update expungement fact sheets with implementation of new law
  - c) Strategy: Participate in Consumer Work Group meetings and Helpline
  - d) Strategy: Take on administrative law cases
    - i) Since I will not be admitted in Arkansas for some time but I will be admitted in Maine, I would like to take on some administrative law cases such as unemployment, SSDI, etc. since I can provide direct representation and appear in court.

# Justice for Arkansans

## AmeriCorps Service Plan



### I. Introduction

I will be serving my six-month AmeriCorps term at the Arkansas Children's Hospital Medical-Legal Partnership. The goal of the medical-legal partnership ("MLP") is to better serve Arkansas' impoverished communities by working with medical practitioners to address legal and social health determinants that cannot be fixed by a typical medical intervention. By adopting this holistic-care model, the MLP hopes to improve patient health outcomes.

My role at the MLP will be that of a housing attorney and advocate. By focusing on housing issues, the MLP hopes to increase patient health and housing security both at an individual level, and on a statewide systemic level. Arkansas currently has no implied warranty of habitability or statutory protections that ensure tenants are provided with safe, healthy, and habitable environments in which to live. As a result of this deficiency, impoverished communities of Arkansas experience a much higher incidence of housing insecurity and respiratory illnesses than the national norm.

During my term of service I will be handling individual housing cases, developing organizational legal theories, planning outreach events, recruiting pro bono volunteers, conducting health provider training, and developing new screening tools to help untrained health providers identify housing issues.

### II. Individual Housing Cases

The MLP's primary goal is to provide legal services to individual patients and their families. This process includes accepting referrals, interviewing patients, identifying legal issues, formulating advocacy strategies, and implementing those strategies. As an advocate, I will be taking on and handling my own cases under the supervision of an attorney licensed to practice in the state of Arkansas. I will serve as the point person and primary contact for both the referred patients and the referring medical professionals. And, ultimately, I will complete a successful legal intervention that results in better health outcomes for patients.

The most integral part of individual case handling is communication and follow-through. It will be my goal to move cases along quickly by actively engaging both client's and medical professionals in the advocacy process. I will also make every effort to engage with and educate the different professionals and community members, including adverse parties; I deal with throughout the advocacy process.

Ideally I will be able to use each individual case as a vehicle to advance all of my other service goals.

### III. Planning Outreach Events

As an AmeriCorps member one of my primary duties is to empower individuals and communities who feel powerless. Many people suffering from poverty do not have the appropriate skills to navigate the legal problems in their lives, and families with members suffering from long term health problems or disabilities are at an even greater disadvantage. The MLP exists specifically to address these issues; yet program awareness and understanding is still startlingly low. Through planning and hosting patient outreach events and clinics I will raise awareness of the MLP's existence and the services it offers.

### IV. Recruiting Pro Bono Partners

The Arkansas rules of professional conduct encourage every attorney in the state to render at least fifty hours of pro bono legal services per year, but the number of Arkansas attorneys who take heed of this encouragement is, unfortunately, quite low. The MLP at Arkansas Children's Hospital, however, is uniquely positioned to recruit new pro bono partners who normally would not meet their recommended service requirements. Because the MLP was established under the auspice of Walmart Inc, it is uniquely positioned to recruit pro bono partners in Arkansas' largest firms, and exploit their clout in achieving its organizational goals. Using outreach events and free legal as a vehicle, I will work to recruit and more intimately involve outstanding members of the legal community to participate in the MLP.

### V. Conducting Health Provider Training

By in from Doctor's, Nurses, Social Workers, and Administrators at Arkansas Children's Hospital is integral to the MLP's success. The MLP relies on these people for referrals, access to patients, funding, and support services. In its first two years, however, the MLP has experienced significant growing pains due to a lack of organizational understanding and buy-in. I hope to increase buy-in by conducting targeted housing security training events and presentations to educate hospital staff on what sort of problems to look for in their patients. In addition, I will develop success stories from my individual housing cases in an effort to help hospital staff understand how big of a difference the MLP has and can make.

### VI. Developing New Screening Tools to Help Untrained Health Providers Identify Housing Issues

The MLP still experiences problems in getting medical providers to identify and refer cases that are ripe for legal intervention. This is due in part to the aforementioned lack of organizational understanding and buy-in. Health providers at a major hospital experience an unmanageable onslaught of medical, social, and administrative information on a weekly basis. That onslaught of information has made it difficult for the MLP to cut

through the noise and make hospital staff who are mostly ideally situated to identify legal issues understand the importance of referring those patients to the MLP. In order to bypass this problem, I will develop both legally and medically approved screening questions to help identify housing insecurity issues. Patients and their families will access these screening questions electronically, and any legal issues identified will be automatically referred directly to the MLP.

These screening tools will unclog the referral pipes by cutting out the middleman. And, ultimately, the screening tools will bring the middle man back into the equation by allowing the MLP to force the issue and educate health providers, who would have missed the issue entirely, on how a successful legal intervention positively impacted the patient's health.

- I. Housing workgroup goals
  - a. Learn more about specific legal issues facing the indigent related to housing and picking up skills necessary to litigate those issues by:
    - i. Taking housing related cases as assigned,
    - ii. Assisting or observing other attorneys in housing cases when possible,
    - iii. Participating in all housing workgroup phone calls,
    - iv. Undertaking self-study, researching, and attending educational events when time permits
  - b. Assist in larger state-wide initiative to study the effect of criminal eviction and warranty of habitability laws by:
    - i. Participating in joint CALS workgroup calls,
    - ii. Gathering empirical evidence as requested,
    - iii. Taking on housing cases as assigned, and
    - iv. Performing other related duties as assigned.
  - c. Assist ██████████ in the development of a tenant's association in Arkansas by:
    - i. Continuing to do research on other tenant's associations and Arkansas's landlord's association,
    - ii. Meeting with and working with ██████ as he sees fit, and
    - iii. Doing other tasks as assigned or as they become necessary in the course of development.
  - d. Develop and deliver educational presentations to members of the community as deemed appropriate and necessary.
  - e. Provide assistance on the housing helpline by working one two-hour shift every week.
- II. Seven Hills Homeless Center goals
  - a. Generally
    - i. Continue to make Legal Aid's services readily available to the homeless by holding outreach hours and doing intakes at Seven Hills's Homeless Center in Fayetteville.
  - b. Extra project ONLY IF time permits (and to the extent that the homeless are technically "housed" in public areas, on public transportation, shelters, etc.)
    - i. Gather empirical and anecdotal data about the daily lives of the homeless by:
      1. Speaking with ██████ the counselor at Seven Hills, to get a general sense of the condition of homelessness and where to begin researching,
      2. Speaking with or surveying the homeless directly after obtaining any and all necessary permissions,
      3. Speaking with other organizations that care for and collect data on the homeless in Arkansas, and possibly in Mississippi and Louisiana,

4. Taking further steps to conduct research in the field as those steps become apparent, and
  5. Conducting traditional legal and scholarly research.
- ii. Use empirical data, anecdotes, and research to write a scholarly article on the need for and propriety of adopting the “homeless bill of rights” that has been adopted in Rhode Island, Connecticut, Illinois, and is pending in California by expanding on a paper I wrote for an independent study project on poverty law while in law school.
- III. Medical-legal partnership goals
- a. Assist in development and expansion of the MLP program by:
    - i. Helping develop screeners,
    - ii. Providing support to Wal-Mart’s attorneys,
    - iii. Conducting “Legal Lunches” at ACH Lowell,
    - iv. Maintaining a positive relationship with Wal-Mart attorneys, and
    - v. Performing other duties as assigned.
  - b. Learn more about ACH MLP and MLP programs generally by:
    - i. Going through training at ACH Lowell and ACH Little Rock,
    - ii. Participating in workgroup calls,
    - iii. Assisting and observing other attorneys when possible,
    - iv. Undertaking self-study, researching, and attending educational events when time permits.
  - c. Handle cases referred through MLP that are not given to Wal-Mart attorneys.
- IV. Washington County & Benton County pro se helpdesk goals
- a. Generally
    - i. Try to figure out what [REDACTED] left behind and where to go from here
    - ii. Provide simple, non-specific legal guidance to pro se litigants using the Arkansas Legal Services website.
    - iii. Clarify the role of the helpdesk by:
      1. Creating literature, such as a brochure, and making it available to pro se litigants who might visit the clerks’ offices, and
      2. Contacting clerks directly to inform them of our role.
    - iv. Collect relevant administrative and substantive legal information into a simple how-to word document to make transfer of the helpdesk to other volunteers an easier process by:
      1. Taking notes after every shift and placing them into a word document and
      2. Doing basic research into procedural and substantive law on those topics that come up most frequently, including but not limited to: divorce, custody, support, guardianship, paternity, expungements, name changes, contempt, and answers.
  - b. Extra project ONLY IF time permits
    - i. Assess the value and effectiveness of the helpdesks by:
      1. Creating a set of criteria for evaluation, and
      2. Developing a method by which to survey helpdesk visitors, clerks, and judges and gauge their satisfaction.
    - ii. Research how to improve the pro se helpdesk by:



1. Contacting the organizers of other pro se helpdesks, and
  2. Conducting scholarly research on pro se helpdesks.
- iii. Change the way the pro se helpdesks are run if collected data and research suggest change would be beneficial.

V. Personal goals

- a. Learn more about the broad legal and non-legal issues facing the indigent by:
  - i. Working on goals listed above,
  - ii. Performing outreach and interacting with community organizations who aid the indigent in different ways,
  - iii. Undertaking self-study, researching, and attending educational events when time permits.
- b. Begin developing a wide range of legal skills and basic knowledge by:
  - i. Working on goals listed above,
  - ii. Watching experienced attorneys in court litigating issues unrelated to the goals above only when time permits, and
  - iii. Taking very simple cases unrelated to the goals above only when time permits.

██████████  
AmeriCorp Attorney  
Consumer Work Group  
Supervisor: ██████████  
Service for September 2013 – August 2014

**Overall Goal: To perform legal services for drug court participants and develop community education materials in order to prevent re-entry and reduce recidivism.**

**Drug Court Development**

- Continue to attend Drug Court in Washington and Benton County to maintain a presence with the courts and the drug court participants. Washington County Drug court is held every Monday; Benton County is held every 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month.
- Help to develop drug court priorities for drug court cases to determine whether a case should be accepted should drug court be integrated into Legal Aid's work groups in the future
- Increase relations with local probation offices, public defender's offices, and treatment centers to increase referrals
- Work on increasing our presence with the Benton County Drug Court program and try to begin attending their staffing meetings if there is no scheduling conflict

**Drug Court Education**

- Perform outreach/give seminars at treatment centers concerning expungements, reinstating driver's licenses, and other areas affecting drug court participants
- Analyze other areas that are barriers to successful treatment of drug court and affect drug court participants after completion of the program
  - Make a binder with typical areas of concern fact sheets (driver's license, housing, family law issues)
  - Increase pro se materials concerning these areas
- Work with ██████████ and ██████████ to follow up with expungement clients to detail the impact their expungement had on income, housing, etc.
- Integrate re-entry goals into the Consumer Work Group Work Plan

**Provide Legal Services and Develop Trial Advocacy Skills**

- Attend Drug Court in Washington and Benton County to do in-person intakes
- Provide direct legal services in cases that are currently affecting drug court participants by drafting legal pleadings and providing courtroom representation

- Provide indirect legal services through advice and directing participants to the helpline, legal services website, help desk, legal aid attorneys, and private pro bono attorneys
- Gain courtroom experience through client representation
- Represent clients in a variety of areas, particularly family law, expungements, and housing
- Develop intake skills by working the helpline, doing in person intakes, and working with clients at the Help Desk

#### **Other Legal Aid Work**

- Perform intakes over the phone via the Helpline and in person at the Springdale office
- Work with the Consumer Work Group to help clients with garnishment, bankruptcy, creditor, and other consumer issues
- Work with the Consumer Work Group to bring focus to issues affecting re-entry and recidivism
- Help to provide legal education concerning self-representation to pro se clients at the Washington and Benton County Help Desks. Help Desk is held on Wednesday mornings for Benton County, and all day Fridays for Washington County.

#### **Networking**

- Work and cooperate with other attorneys in the Northwest Arkansas area to develop positive relationships with Legal Aid of Arkansas and learn from other legal professionals
- Meet and develop relationships with the judges and clerks in the Benton and Washington Counties

## 2013-2014 Work Plan – Veterans' Affairs in the Delta

### Conduct Outreach to increase Legal Aid services for Veterans

Narrative: As the first AmeriCorps working on veterans' affairs in the Delta region, the member aims to conduct outreach activities in locations where veterans, service members, and their families are concentrated. These outreach activities will be aimed at informing veterans, service members, and their families about the services that might be available to them at Legal Aid of Arkansas.

#### Targets:

1. Locate potential points of contact where these outreach activities would be most effective at reaching Arkansas' veterans and active military population, such as veterans' support organizations, government points of contact with veterans, and veterans' healthcare facilities.
2. Plan and execute outreach times at two (2) of these points of contact around the service area per month.
3. Create a brochure to hand out at these outreach events for those veterans and service members that might encounter a legal problem in the future.

### Collaborate with other Veterans' services organizations

Narrative: In order to increase services provided to veterans and service members, the member will locate and attempt to collaborate with various veterans' service organizations throughout the service area. These could include private organizations, as well as public veterans' benefits offices. The member will include organizations that provide services or support to family members of veterans and active-duty service members.

#### Targets:

1. Compile a list of veterans' service organizations in the service area.
2. Contact leaders in these veterans' organizations and enlist their help in informing veterans and service members with legal issues that the services provided by Legal Aid of Arkansas might be available to them.
3. Provide the brochure created for outreach to these organizations to keep on hand and distribute.

### Provide Direct Client Services

Narrative: The member will provide legal services to clients who are veterans, service members, or their family members. Additionally, in order to provide the best possible legal services to veterans and service members, the member will be active in the Legal Aid of Arkansas Helpline and other cases specifically related to the legal issues often faced by veterans, such as federal benefits.

#### Targets:

1. Become proficient in all types of federal benefits cases in order to better understand the benefits that might be available to veterans and service members in need of economic assistance.
2. Gain a working knowledge of the various areas of the law practiced by the attorneys at Legal Aid of Arkansas so that the member may better assist and educate veterans, service members, and their families during outreach activities.



3. Work directly with a variety of legal aid clients in order to increase my knowledge and skills to give the best possible legal assistance to veterans and service members who come to outreach events or contact our Helpline.

Partner with Project Homeless Connect in Memphis to reach Veterans and other clients there with Arkansas legal problems

Narrative: The Project Homeless Connect is a bi-annual event in Memphis, Tennessee that serves the homeless of the Mid-South, providing legal services as well as many other necessary services in one concentrated area. One of the founding and organizing members has indicated that there are always indigent clients at the event who have Arkansas legal issues. Partnering with Project Homeless Connect would be a great way to expand outreach for Legal Aid of Arkansas to an underserved segment of the population, including any Veterans who might be among the homeless population.

Targets:

1. Contact the organizers of the legal aid portion of Project Homeless Connect to obtain details concerning their next event and any potential for a place for Legal Aid of Arkansas in the project.
2. Collaborate with the project leaders to ensure the member's goals of outreach to Arkansas or those with Arkansas legal issues, specifically veterans, are met through any potential involvement with the project.
3. Optimize the outreach opportunity with appropriate outreach materials, specifically utilizing the brochure created for veterans.

Explore potential Veteran's related MLP opportunities the service area

Narrative: An MLP with the veterans' hospital in the Northwestern service area has been established and provides an important point of contact between Legal Aid of Arkansas and a large population of veterans potentially in need of legal services. The creation of a similar MLP or relationship with veterans' outpatient clinics in this service area would help to further increase our ability to provide legal services and information to the veterans in the area.

Targets:

1. Locate and compile a list of any veterans' healthcare facilities in this service area.
2. Contact those facilities and attempt to establish an MLP similar to the one at the VA hospital in Northwest Arkansas.
3. At minimum, establish relationship with those facilities for potential outreach activities and brochure distribution.



- Outreach and Education
  - I will work with Legal Aid's housing work group to develop and/or deliver presentations to the client community and other service providers about the legal rights and responsibilities of low-income homeowners, landlords, and tenants.
  - I plan to seek out various community organizations and local public housing authorities to develop a strategy to build and maintain relationships with these groups to facilitate outreach.
  - Staff community events for Legal Aid as needed
- Medical Legal Partnership
  - Conduct client intakes and interviews at Medical-Legal Partnership locations at Federally Qualified Clinics in the Northeast Arkansas area
  - Assist with the expansion of the Medical-Legal partnership to the Jonesboro Center for Children—including conducting screenings and other work with the program as needed
  - Provide direct and referral services depending on the particular client needs
  - Participate in any Medical-Legal Partnership related workgroup calls.
- Criminal Eviction Law
  - Observe hearings to get a feel for how criminal eviction cases are being handled in Northeast Arkansas
  - Help the LAA housing work group to develop and implement strategies to begin the process of getting the criminal eviction law eliminated or changed in Arkansas
- Housing Work Group Generally
  - Conduct client intake and interviews on the HelpLine
  - Provide legal advice and brief services to clients with various housing issues
  - Provide direct client representation as directed by the housing work group
  - Participate fully in the housing work group and provide general support to the group as needed
  - Assist with in-court representation to improve and develop my advocacy skills
  - Develop communications for distribution in the community to showcase work done by the housing work group and gain exposure for Legal Aid of Arkansas
- Legal Information Development
  - Develop and/or update legal information and fact sheets for distribution on the Legal Aid Website and at outreach and education events
  - Update the landlord-tenant section of the Poverty Law Practice Manual to
  - Organize resources (advice letters, pleadings, etc.) to make them more usable and accessible for the housing workgroup
  - Update Legal Aid's foreclosure pleadings
- AmeriCorps and Legal Aid of Arkansas
  - Participate in service events, such as 9/11 and Martin Luther King Day

## Information about Iowa Legal Aid's AmeriCorps Project

Project Description: Iowa Legal Aid has received AmeriCorps State funding since 2005, placing members in our 10 regional offices that are spread across Iowa. What individual members do at their sites can vary somewhat, based on the talents and special skills of individual members, the needs of their sites, and the organization as a whole. For example, a member who has high level Spanish/English interpretation/translation skills will likely have tasks that include interpreting between limited English proficient clients and attorneys in the office s/he serves, interpreting by phone between LEP clients and their attorneys in other Iowa Legal Aid offices, and translating written communications between Iowa Legal Aid and LEP clients, as well as translating legal self-help articles for our website.

Core AmeriCorps member tasks include conducting community legal education (CLE) presentations and providing volunteer recruitment/management. Through CLEs, members go into the communities they serve, and speak to audiences of low-income people and/or their service providers, to expand their knowledge of the services Iowa Legal Aid provides, and their understanding about important legal rights and responsibilities. Members recruit and manage a wide variety of volunteers, including lawyers, law students, college students, interpreter/translators, and other community members. During the 2012-13 project year, the members managed over 3,300 hours of volunteer service to Iowa Legal Aid and its low-income clients.

Specific projects have included:

- Coordinating Pro Se Divorce Clinics across the state, using different models to best leverage different community resources (e.g. law school student focused, corporate firm collaborations);
- Educating low-income Iowans with disabilities about a state property tax rebate program for home owners and renters, and helping them file claims;
- Coordinating Iowa Legal Aid's translations system;
- Coordinating Martin Luther King Day of Service projects. One example is the 2013 project in Cedar Rapids, where the members recruited people with disabilities who receive services at the Arc of East Central Iowa. Nineteen Arc volunteers created CDs that contained Iowa Legal Aid self-help articles, health living information from the county public health agency, and other essential local resource information (e.g. meal sites, shelters), which Iowa Legal Aid distributes to low-income individuals;
- Coordinating a Mock Trial competition at an alternative high school, recruiting a local judge to judge the competition, and hold an information session for the students.



Tips for Successfully Recruiting and Supervising Members:

1. Publicize the opportunity through a wide variety of organizations and modes, including college recruitment sites, community partners, vocational rehabilitation organizations, civil and human rights agencies, work force development, veteran support organizations, refugee support groups.
2. Make sure applicants understand the nature of their commitment: they need to understand what benefits will and will not be available to them (stipend, student loan forbearance, Segal Education award, possible eligibility for child care assistance and/or other government benefits), as well as how important their successfully completing their service term will be to them AND to providing better access to justice to Iowa Legal Aid's clients.
3. Work with members and their site supervisors to ensure that everyone has a clear idea of what project-wide commitments the member will have, and provide a variety of training models to both to help each perform their commitments. Also be open to making changes where appropriate and meaningful – seek feedback and use it.