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www.volunteerlawyersnetwork.org

Would you like to facilitate helping persons in poverty succeed in their legal matters?

Current openings for social work students at the Volunteer Lawyers Network legal clinic-

Organization information: VLN protects the basic human needs of people in poverty by connecting clients in need with volunteer lawyers. Our volunteers provide services at walk-in legal clinics, by phone, at forms workshops, and full representation. The types of issues our attorneys help with include: housing, consumer debt, garnishments, family, bankruptcy, employment, and immigration.

Site information: This position is at the Hennepin County Government Center, where VLN has a walk-in legal clinic. Clinic hours are 11-1 every day, plus 1-3 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Other clinic times include: Tuesdays and Thursdays 9-11 and 1-3 (conciliation court clinic), weekdays 8:30- noon (housing court clinic), Mondays and Thursdays 10-noon (family law clinic).

Position information: The students would act as “clinic assistants.” Their job would be to take demographic and issue information from clients, sit in with the clients and attorneys during the legal advice sessions, provide legal resources for the attorneys and clients, and (when requested and under the attorney’s supervision) help clients with following the attorney’s advice. For example, the student could help with writing a letter to a landlord, drafting an answer form (to a summons and complaint), help the client complete service or process.

Position Training: Includes prep work (see: <http://www.volunteerlawyersnetwork.org/resources/CA>), one 90-minute review of legal issues seen at the clinic, and about 20 hours of onsite shadowing experienced clinic assistants.

Commitment requested: Eight hours a week (within clinic hours) for two semesters.

Benefits to VLN clients: While the primary duties would be the above legal tasks, some clients would benefit from knowing about other services in the community. (Of all clients, probably 20-30% of them do not have legal, but social, issues; the help the attorney provides is more problem solving than legal.) Your perspective will help VLN improve the clinic services and infrastructure.

Benefits to social work students: Besides gaining legal issue interviewing skills, legal issue spotting skills, and general interaction with people in poverty, you will gain understanding of many of the legal issues which people in poverty face, as well as some of the legal resources available to people in poverty. All students who do this placement say how much they learn about legal issues, about people in poverty, and about lawyers. (They also witness firsthand how *effective* legal services depend not only on the attorney’s knowledge of the law, but on his/her ability to communicate concepts concretely and in plain language.)

For more information, contact martha@volunteerlawyersnetwork.org.