

Community Legal Services Inc. Paralegal Positions

Organizational Overview:

For nearly forty (40) years, Community Legal Services, Inc. (CLS) has been committed to serving the legal needs of low-income Philadelphia residents in civil matters affecting their families, their jobs, their homes, and their incomes. We make a significant difference in the lives of poor and at-risk Philadelphians by providing advocacy, legal advice, and individual representation to thousands of individual clients each year, and by participating in statewide and national advocacy. CLS also collaborates with other public interest and community organizations to ensure that the rights and needs of those living at the low-income threshold in our society are given a continuing presence in the public policy decisions that most affect them.

Fellows may be placed in the Language Access Project, ABC Unit, Housing Unit, Employment Unit or Consumer Unit (see specific job descriptions below).

A position may also be available in the development/fund-raising area. Please contact Carol Horne-Penn for more information about that opportunity.

Position Description:

All of the fellow positions at CLS will be performing traditional paralegal responsibilities. These include:

- ✓ Interviewing both in person and over the telephone
- ✓ Providing advice and representation to the unit's clients as well as maintaining a large number of client files, under the supervision of attorneys in the unit.

See below for descriptions of fellowships for specific units.

Position Qualifications:

- ✓ Four year college degree.
- ✓ Initiative.
- ✓ Excellent oral and written communication skills.
- ✓ Ability to deal with a high volume of direct client interaction.
- ✓ Ability to learn a large volume of complex material quickly.
- ✓ Strong interpersonal skills.
- ✓ Ability to interact well in a multi-cultural environment.
- ✓ Experience in legislative or administrative advocacy, or experience with a social services agency or a nonprofit organization that advocates on behalf of the poor preferred.
- ✓ Ability to speak/write a language other than English desired

Contact Person:

Carol Horne Penn, Esq.
1424 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, Pa. 19104-2505
215-981-3740
cpenn@clsphila.org
www.clsphila.org

CLS Language Access Project Fellow

Position Description:

- General paralegal duties.
- Interview both in person and over the telephone
- Provide advice and representation to the unit's clients as well as maintaining a large number of client files, under the supervision of attorneys in the unit.
- Research, not necessarily legal, on varied topics.
- Find or assemble data on clients in presentable forms that are language sensitive; demographic information such as breakdowns of low income people in the city by language.
- Legislative or policy analysis and drafting. Could involve proposed amendments to pending legislation or policy; critique of legislation or policies.
- Update language access internal policies, materials, outreach, etc.
- Help identify various language service providers, solicit bids.
- Assist in development of method to test bilingual staff for language ability.
- Devise "testing" approach to use with various service providers on ability to help LEP clients.

CLS Employment Fellow

CLS Employment Fellow

The CLS Employment Unit in Center City Philadelphia helps low income individuals with a variety of employment problems. Many of the individuals we serve face multiple barriers to employment including a criminal history. Our clients demonstrate incredible resilience and strength in their daily lives, and working in the unit offers an opportunity to learn from them, as well as to develop skills in advocacy and legal analysis.

Position Description:

- ✓ Help clients write and submit applications for clemency (pardon applications) to the Board of Pardons.
- ✓ Be trained to interview clients, to analyze their situations in terms of complicated legal rules governing the employment of individuals with a criminal history.
- ✓ Advocate for individuals who have been unjustly denied employment as a result of their criminal record.
- ✓ Present community education workshops to assist and educate persons with criminal records who need employment.
- ✓ Work with a group of ex-offenders supporting each other through the pardon process.
- ✓ Assist attorneys in the employment unit with a variety of other employment cases.
- ✓ Have an opportunity to work on systemic advocacy and policy issues.

CLS SSI Unit Fellow

ABC is a unit with CLS that provides specialized legal assistance along with lots of interaction to help low income families obtain SSI benefits.

Position Description:

- ✓ Interview both in person and over the telephone
- ✓ Provide advice and representation to the unit's clients as well as maintaining a large number of client files, under the supervision of attorneys in the unit.
- ✓ Get records and services for seriously disabled children.
- ✓ Attend administrative law hearings of their clients.
- ✓ Analyze Cases with the supervision of attorneys working with them.
- ✓ If interested and capable, the intern will start writing letter briefs to the administrative law judge as they master this area of the law.
- ✓ Strong Spanish language skills (both written and oral) preferred

CLS Family Advocacy Unit Fellow

The Family Advocacy Unit (FAU) at CLS represents parents in Philadelphia who are involved with the child welfare system. When the City's Department of Human Services (DHS) is investigating allegations of neglect or abuse, or is taking a case to court, the FAU steps in to help the parent fight to keep her family together. If children have been removed and placed in foster care or another setting, we work with the parent to have the children returned home. The FAU represents and advises hundreds of parents each year.

The FAU uses a holistic model of parent representation. Each parent is represented by a parent advocacy team which includes a lawyer and a social worker or paralegal. As part of our work, FAU staff members connect families with resources and services that can help them stay together. We also utilize legal staff in other parts of CLS (such as our housing, utilities and welfare units) to resolve all legal problems that can be placing stress on the family unit.

In addition to representing individual parents, the FAU works to transform policies and procedures in the child welfare system and Family Court that hurt parents and families in Philadelphia. Our staff serves on State and Citywide taskforces and regularly presents at Counting Legal Education and Social Work Education courses.

Position Description:

- ✓ Interview clients both in person and over the telephone
- ✓ Provide advice and representation to the unit's clients as well as maintaining a large number of client files, under the supervision of attorneys in the unit.
- ✓ Attend hearings of their clients.
- ✓ Represent CLS and FAU in community
- ✓ Analyze cases with the supervision of attorneys working with them.

CLS Welfare Unit Fellow

The CLS Welfare Unit in North Philadelphia helps low income individuals and families get Medicaid, Food Stamps, subsidized child care, and welfare benefits, including welfare to work programs. Many of the individuals we serve face multiple barriers, including domestic violence, limited English proficiency, disabilities, and limited literacy. Our clients demonstrate incredible resilience and strength in their daily lives, and working in the unit offers an opportunity to learn from them, as well as to develop skills in advocacy and legal analysis.

Position Description:

- ✓ Be trained to interview clients, to analyze their situations in terms of complicated legal rules governing eligibility for benefits.
- ✓ File administrative appeals and advocate for clients with the Department of Public Welfare, under the supervision of an attorney.
- ✓ Represent CLS and the Welfare Unit in community.
- ✓ Have an opportunity to work on systemic advocacy and policy issues.