

**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 Energy Unit, Aging and Disabilities Unit, Employment Unit, Housing Unit, Welfare Unit, SSI Unit, Language Access Project, or Family Advocacy Unit (see specific job descriptions below).

**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 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 Persons (email both):**

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### **CLS Energy Unit Fellow**

The Energy unit assists low-income Philadelphians to obtain and maintain utility service and is engaged in cutting edge work on Utility affordability issues to further principles of “universal service” in Philadelphia, across the state and nation-wide. Legal work in this unit involves a dynamic combination of individual and group representation and systemic advocacy. Many clients come to CLS representation to obtain utility service (electricity, natural gas and water), to maintain utility service and to obtain service reconnection when such utility service has been terminated. A paralegal fellow would be an integral part of the legal unit and do the following:

#### **Position Description:**

- Conduct intake
- Interview clients
- Use internet and legal research tools to develop cases
- Research and understand relevant utility laws, and apply them to cases
- Negotiate on behalf of clients
- Represent clients in informal hearings
- Prepare simple memos and summaries of cases
- Prepare clients and evidence for hearings
- Conduct community education
- Refer cases to outside agencies and organizations when needed
- Maintain files
- Manage multiple assignments
- Attend advisory committee meetings as needed.

### **CLS Aging and Disabilities Unit Fellow**

The Aging and Disabilities Unit in North Philadelphia helps low income older adults (ages 60+) and younger people with disabilities to get public benefits that provide essential income and health coverage, including Medicaid, Medicare services and SSI. Many of our clients come to us for help accessing in-home long term care services so that they can remain independent in their own homes instead of having to enter a nursing home. We also represent clients who live in nursing homes or boarding homes that are violating their rights or providing poor quality care. Many of our clients are frail, and they are among the most vulnerable residents of the City. At the same time, their tremendous life experience and resilience makes working with them very rewarding.

#### **Position Description:**

- Be trained to interview clients, to analyze their situations in terms of complicated legal rules governing eligibility for benefits and licensing requirements for institutional settings.
- File administrative appeals and advocate with the Department of Public Welfare and the Social Security Administration, under the supervision of an attorney.
- Present community education workshops to educate older adults, individuals with disabilities, and their families about their legal rights.
- Have an opportunity to work on systemic advocacy and policy issues

### **CLS Housing Unit Fellow**

The Housing Unit at Community Legal Service's center city office represents low income tenants living in Public Housing, Section 8 housing, subsidized housing and private housing. Our clients come to us for help in a wide range of housing issues: eviction cases in landlord tenant court, appeals of eviction cases in the court of common pleas, illegal lockouts, repair issues, illegal utility shut-offs, lead paint issues, rent calculation issues, denials of admission due to criminal records, past judgments or immigration issues. Many of our clients are working hard to maintain stable housing for themselves and their families despite the housing complications that arise from domestic violence, criminal arrests and records, mental health issues, low literacy and involvement with multiple bureaucracies.

The Haverford House Fellow for the Housing Unit would:

- ✓ Be trained to interview clients, gather evidence and sort out the multiple and often interrelating issues the tenant faces
- ✓ Present the clients with their options for resolving their housing situations and explain the advantages, disadvantages, and risks of their options so that the clients can make informed decisions.
- ✓ Advocate on behalf of the clients to resolve issues with their landlords, landlord's attorney or attorneys for the Philadelphia Housing Authority. Compose demand letters laying out the client's claim and the legal foundation for their claim.
- ✓ Represent clients in administrative hearings with Public Housing to resolve repair, rent calculation and eviction cases, and with Section 8 to prevent the tenant's termination of their Section 8 rental subsidy. In private housing, represent tenants before the Fair Housing Commission regarding threatened evictions or rent increases.
- ✓ Assist clients in navigating the court process and filling out pro se petitions and appeals.
- ✓ Conduct community education workshops for tenants and social service providers on housing rights
- ✓ Work with attorneys in the unit on identifying systematic issues and advocating for change through policy, legislative advocacy and impact litigation.
- ✓ Advocate on behalf of clients who are denied admission to subsidized housing due to their criminal records.

### **CLS SSI Unit Fellow**

This opportunity entails working with the CLS SSI unit to assist low income people (children teenagers and adults) with disabilities to get disability benefits from the Social Security Administration. The work will involve lots of interaction with low income families.

Position Description:

- ✓ Interview clients both in person and over the telephone
- ✓ Provide advice and representation to the unit's clients as well as maintaining client files, under the supervision of attorneys in the unit.
- ✓ Get medical records and services Attend administrative law hearings with clients.
- ✓ Analyze cases with the supervision of attorneys If interested and capable, the intern will start writing letter briefs to the administrative law judge as they master this area of the law.
- ✓ Spanish language skills a plus

## CLS Welfare Unit and Medical Legal Partnership (MLP) 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.
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The Welfare Unit also runs a **Medical Legal Partnership**, led by a staff attorney who performs on site intake at the medical clinic in North Philadelphia. Lack of food, income, heat or other basics makes it very difficult for individuals to pay attention to their health needs, or to successfully manage health conditions. Those issues are compounded for immigrants. CLS works with several health care clinics in formal and informal Medical Legal Partnerships to address public benefits and utility issues for low-income individuals and families, with a particular focus on immigrants. The paralegal fellow in the MLP would perform the following duties:

- Interview potential clients concerning public benefits issues (and possibly utility issues—our MLP work includes both public benefits and utilities)
- Assess eligibility for benefits
- Gather medical records and other evidence
- Work with an attorney to determine what actions to take, advocate with the welfare department or with a utility, and help work up cases for hearings.

## CLS Language Access Project Fellow

The Language Access Project advocates on behalf of people who have been denied equal access to services or benefits because of their limited English proficiency (LEP). CLS addresses language access problems with government agencies, the courts, health care providers, and in other settings. CLS has successfully challenged or is currently working on challenging the practices of a variety of government or government-funded organizations when they have not taken reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to LEP persons.

### 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 maintain client files, under the supervision of attorneys in the unit.
- Work with community organizations to address language access problems by providing information and technical assistance, collaborating on policy advocacy, and offering community education.

- Research, not necessarily legal, on varied topics, including demographic data.
- Legislative or policy analysis and drafting. Could involve proposed amendments to pending legislation or policy and critiques of legislation or policies.
- Update language access internal policies, materials, outreach, etc.
- Help identify various language service providers and solicit bids.
- Assist in development of method to test bilingual staff for language ability.

### **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. Most parents are 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 client files, under the supervision of attorneys in the unit.
- ✓ Analyze and help prepare cases for court and meetings, including helping to gather documents, records and other relevant evidence with the supervision of attorneys working with them.
- ✓ Attend hearings of their clients.
- ✓ Participate in FAU community education events

### **CLS Employment Fellow**

The CLS Employment Unit has hosted 8 Haverford fellows in the past. This unit 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.
- Support community clinics on expungements and pardons
- Assist attorneys in the employment unit with a variety of other employment cases.
- Have an opportunity to work on systemic advocacy and policy issues.