

## **MINNESOTA JUSTICE FOUNDATION**

### **STREET LAW PROJECT**

*“Preventive Legal Services” in Minnesota High Schools: Volunteer law students teach low income and “at-risk” juveniles about their legal rights and responsibilities, and their available legal resources*

#### **Street Law Project Summary**

Volunteer law students teach high school students about selected areas of substantive law and local legal resources. MJF collaborates with legal service organizations and alternative high schools throughout Minnesota. This collaboration produces and supports placements around the state and a manual of legal outlines and classroom methods.

Volunteer law students spend at least 10 hours over the course of a class term with high school students under sponsorship of a classroom teacher.

Volunteer public defenders speak at various sites about the juvenile justice system and criminal legal rights.

Training Law Students:

MJF coordinates two-day trainings in September and January.

Training information and materials cover:

Legal outlines on consumer, family, housing, criminal, juvenile, school, immigration, government benefits and employment.

Teaching methods, including class outlines, games, quizzes, discussion questions, etc.

Lesson Planning

Wisdom and advice from current and past Street Law volunteers.

#### **Background**

The “Street Law” program began at Georgetown University over 25 years ago. For many years, Jennifer Bloom at the Minnesota Center for Community Legal Education taught a Street Law program at Hamline University School of Law. In January of 1998, Sharon Fischlowitz of the Minnesota Justice Foundation (MJF), Keith Ellison, then of the Legal Rights Center, Carol Batsell Benner of the Hennepin County Public Defender’s Office, Jennifer Bloom, Peter Knapp of William Mitchell College of Law and Sam Magavern of the Legal Aid Society of Minneapolis began to develop a new Minnesota Street Law program.

## LEGAL OUTLINE SUMMARIES IN THE MINNESOTA STREET LAW PROJECT MANUAL

**Participating attorneys provide the outlines included in the Street Law manual. Outlines focus on those issues relevant to low-income, at-risk juveniles.**

<b><u>Consumer</u></b>	Credit cards; credit reports-understanding them, how to get yours, how they are used; “Rent-to-own” stores; warranties; creating a budget; a minor’s rights under a contract.
<b><u>Criminal</u></b>	Generally, public defenders visit Street Law sites for one to two class periods to teach criminal issues. Discussion topics include: the difference between adult and juvenile systems; E.J.J. (extended juvenile jurisdiction); Certification; status offenses; what the police may do when they stop you; what should you do when the police stop you; when do you have a right to a lawyer; how to behave if you WANT to get arrested; how a juvenile record affects you.
<b><u>Employment</u></b>	Interviewing for, maintaining and leaving a job; the types of questions an employer may ask in an interview; discrimination; harassment; the maximum hours you can work each week; who is entitled to your paycheck; conditions under which you can be fired; where you can go for help.
<b><u>Family Law</u></b>	Paternity; custody; visitation/parenting time-when can a parent not see his or her child; child support-generally, how it’s obtained when the father is a juvenile; domestic violence; marriage and divorce laws; the rights and responsibilities of the mother, the father, and the grandparents with respect to children.
<b><u>Government Benefits</u></b>	The former AFDC Program; the current MFIP Program-definitions, structure, the limitations of and juvenile eligibility issues of MFIP; general resources for financial assistance and support for juveniles; SSI; General Assistance; Emergency Assistance.
<b><u>Immigration</u></b>	The application process for US citizenship; the reasons why citizenship is important; the consequences of living in the US and not being a citizen; and how the different types of criminal charges and convictions affect immigration status; Visas.
<b><u>Juvenile</u></b>	How the Foster Care system works; how a juvenile can legally live on his/her own; what emancipation means in Minnesota; how a juvenile becomes emancipated “in fact”; what is Juvenile Court; the differences between juvenile and adult court; CHiPs; how a juvenile can get an order for protection.
<b><u>Landlord/Tenant</u></b>	Renting, living in and moving out of a rental home; the rights and obligations of the Landlord and the Tenant, both before and after the lease has been signed; housing discrimination; housing assistance (monetary and legal), illegal leases; and MUST PAY RENT issues.
<b><u>School</u></b>	School zones; locker searches; ALCs and Charter schools; I.D.E.A. (Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act); Attendance and truancy; Fees; busing; uniforms; access to records; suspension and expulsion; discrimination; harassment.
<b><u>Additional Classes</u></b>	Students are trained to create classes from legal materials. Materials can be found in their legal textbooks, newspapers, government courses, at the Minnesota Center for Community Legal Education, etc. Often the high school students suggest topics of interest to them, and law student volunteers create specific classes.

## Sample MJF Street Law Program Site Descriptions

Site	Description
City Inc. South (Jr. & Sr. High)	Serves inner-city adolescents with academic and social skills deficiencies who have dropped-out or have been suspended or expelled from public school, or who are in transition back to the community.
City Inc. North	A community service agency serving primarily inner-city young people and their families.
CLUES	The Chicano Latino Community Center runs a Preparation for the Future program designed to empower Chicano Latino youth to become self sufficient and to achieve educational and career success.
Duluth ALC - Pilot Program	Students, ages 16 - 18, who have left regular high school and are not attending a half-day alternative program to earn high school credits.
Duluth ALC - PM	Students, ages 16-25, in an independent study diploma program.
Duluth ALC - ESL at Copeland	A group of about 8 immigrant women whose English skills range from beginning to upper intermediate. Most are of Hmong origin.
Duluth ALC - Teen Parent	A special half-day program for pregnant teens which includes a lot of health and childrearing along with regular high school classes.
Duluth ALC - ESL at ALC	A group of up to 20 students from 8 different language backgrounds. They are learning English at a low intermediate level.
Duluth ALC - Unity H.S.	High school students, ages 15-19, who are attending a full-time alternative high school. About half of these students are in special education, and have emotional/behavioral issues.
Hopkins	Public High School.
Katahdin	A day treatment program for repeating juvenile offenders and chronic truants. Katahdin provides an individualized education program with individual and family counseling.
M.E.E.R.C. (Sr. High)	M.E.E.R.C. (Minneapolis Education & Employment Resource Center) emphasizes School-to-Career. The staff is committed to helping students graduate and set future goals.
MPLS South	Public High School in Minneapolis
Neighborhood House	A multi-cultural, multi-lingual community center working with families and organizations to enhance personal growth and foster community leadership and cultures in West St. Paul.
PEASE Academy (Sr. High)	Serves students who are considered at risk of school failure, involvement in criminal behavior and chemical abuse, and teenage child-bearing. Each student makes a commitment to living a sober life-style, and to being non-violent, non-racist, and non-sexist and to live sober, productive and fulfilling life.
PYC Oliver (Jr. High)	Serves junior high school age youth, primarily in north Minneapolis, who have been challenged to achieve school success or who are in need of special support to succeed in school.
PYC Capri and Lyndale (Sr. High)	Serve junior high school age youth, primarily living in north Minneapolis, who have been challenged to achieve school success or who are in need of special support to succeed in school.
South	Public High School in Minneapolis.
YMCA: Blaisdell, Hiawatha & North Community	After-school Earn and Learn programs at YMCAs offered to students enrolled in Minneapolis public high schools. The Program works with students to create activities that are active, fun, and directly related to improving academic skills, community leadership, and personal development.