

**THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY
FIRST YEAR ASSOCIATES *PRO BONO* PROGRAM**

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Legal Aid's First Year Associates Program is a successful introduction to *pro bono publico* that fosters a sense of professional responsibility, provides critically needed representation to low income clients, and trains young attorneys in skills necessary for professional development. The areas detailed below are all appropriate *pro bono* assignments for first year associates.

LITIGATION OPPORTUNITIES

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEEDINGS

– – Social Security Disability and SSI Hearings

Many disabled clients never would have received entitled benefits without assistance of *pro bono* counsel. These clients, both adults and children, require a representative to investigate the facts, gather corroborating medical evidence, and prepare the client for a hearing before the Social Security Administration. An Administrative Law Judge affords *pro bono* counsel the opportunity to present the client's evidence and cross-examine medical and/or vocational experts. Submission of a pre-hearing memorandum that marshals the facts and a post-hearing memorandum that summarizes the presented evidence and applicable law further substantiate the client's claim. First year associates have a proven record of accomplishment in these proceedings.

Housing Authority Termination of Tenancy Hearings

Public housing is one of the few affordable housing alternatives in New York City. Defending clients in administrative proceedings who are threatened with eviction from the "Projects" provides crucial legal assistance to prevent homelessness. Clients frequently are elderly or longtime residents, in cases where the New York City Housing Authority is alleging that another member of the household engaged in antisocial behavior. *Pro bono* counsel engage in fact-finding and document discovery, prepare witnesses, and conduct the direct and cross examination. These are excellent cases for unadmitted or recently admitted attorneys to learn essential litigation skills and face opposing counsel.

JUVENILE RIGHTS APPEALS

The Juvenile Rights Division represents New York City's abused and neglected children and is the public defender for children accused of committing criminal acts. The division's appeals unit represents children who have been freed for adoption or have been adjudicated juvenile delinquents. Volunteer attorneys receive expert appellate counsel to break down the transcript for appealable issues, review their appellate briefs, and oversee the final submission of papers. This distinguished program trains first year associates in appellate brief writing and appellate argument.

NON-LITIGATION OPPORTUNITIES

WILLS

Among the Civil and Volunteer Divisions' clients are many elderly and persons living with the HIV/AIDS virus who need a will drafted to distribute small estates and discharge responsibilities to family members. Volunteer attorneys in the *Pro bono* Wills Project interview their clients and prepare wills, then meet with clients a second time to execute the documents. Training materials and supervision are provided. *Pro bono* counsel provide an invaluable legal service in an area of practice where staffing limitations at the Society severely restrict the numbers of clients we can serve.

ADOPTIONS

A child cannot be adopted in New York without the adoptive parent being represented by counsel. This requirement makes adoption economically prohibitive for many step-parents and relatives who are raising the children. *Pro bono* counsel will complete the necessary adoption forms, draft supplemental supporting affidavits, obtain vital records, and appear in court to obtain an Order of Adoption. Legal Aid staff lawyers will provide training materials and review the papers to be submitted to the court.

CORPORATE COUNSEL

Non-profit community organizations are particularly crucial sources of health, educational, recreational, cultural, and other human services in our poorest communities. Representation of unincorporated groups to obtain corporate charters, prepare by-laws, and secure IRS tax exempt recognition plays an important foundational role in the development of these important community-based institutions.