

## **Law Students: Cultivating the Next Generation of Volunteer Lawyers**

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### **Brief Description:**

*This presentation will focus on developing and implementing a volunteer program for law students with a focus on techniques for establishing similar programs, insights on creating and maintaining inter-organizational relationships and ways to encourage student and attorney involvement. Panelists will also discuss the dual goal of the student program: the delivery of legal services utilizing law students and instilling the commitment to pro bono service in future lawyers.*

### **Topical Outline:**

#### **I. How to Develop and Implement a Successful Student Pro Bono Program:**

##### **A. Assess Community Legal Needs, Identify Gaps, and Develop a Solution**

Example: pro pers appear in court without the knowledge to calculate child support according to state guidelines.

1. What is the need?
2. What is a solution?
3. How does the solution benefit groups involved in the project?  
Identify the groups: pro pers, students, lawyers and judges

##### **B. Identify Mission/ Goals of Program – Program Focus**

1. Strictly legal work v. mixture of legal and public service work
2. Criminal v. civil legal work
3. Draft constitution or mission statement

##### **C. Identify Supporters & Lay Groundwork to Establish Partnerships**

1. Raise awareness and gauge student interest
2. Consider Dean, faculty, curriculum, student leaders, alumni
3. Key community partners include legal aid providers, pro bono programs, non-profits, state & local bar associations, courts & private attorneys performing pro bono.)
4. Consider need for creative and meaningful projects with quality supervision

#### **D. Establish Structure**

1. Managed by law students v. outside organization or faculty member
  - i. Managed by law students
    1. Apply to be a law school organization, including obtaining an interested advisor
    2. Gather board of students &/or assign roles to staff the project
  - ii. Outside organization or faculty member
    1. Research position at established programs with like structure
    2. Draft a proposal to the university
2. Determine how to involve each group/partner in the project
  - i. select a project coordinator
  - ii. select contact person for each group
  - iii. know who is in charge
3. Establish and define the relationship with other organizations
4. Explore avenues to access the legal work
  - i. Survey and develop projects through membership
  - ii. Acquire projects through association with established organizations, such as Volunteer Law Project, etc.

#### **E. Develop a Realistic Budget & Obtain Funding**

1. Funding is necessary.
2. Figure out what the equipment/technology needs are
3. What are supply and personnel costs?
4. Look for sources of funding, including Bar foundation, grants, the Courts

#### **F. Institute Standard Operating Procedures**

1. Know in advance what the rules are and instruct students accordingly.
  - i. First semester 1L participation per law school rules
  - ii. Unauthorized practice of law & student practice rules
  - iii. Liability concerns
  - iv. Possible conflicts with ideology of law school
  - v. Students convey no negative information to clients & make no negative decisions; students only advise as to problems
2. Ascertain criteria required to meet as a condition to volunteer or join the pro bono student organization.
  - i. Hours of service
  - ii. Law school class
  - iii. Specific training requirements for programs/assignments
    1. General guidance on professionalism
    2. Professional responsibility/ethics
    3. Divorce
    4. Bankruptcy
3. Determine the program's procedure/flow
  - i. Individual case assignments and/or group projects
4. Draft necessary forms/paperwork for procedures
  - i. Student registration form
  - ii. Letter of commitment/contract
  - iii. Overview/description of the program
  - iv. Generic template to issue an assignment with instructions
  - v. Assignment completion form

5. Resolve question as to whether to develop website or other electronic system for record keeping and communication purposes

### **G. Operating the Program/Anticipate Challenges**

1. Who coordinates students?
2. What do you do if student cancels or doesn't appear for clinic or court?
3. Limit expectations of the students
4. Convey importance of program to students

### **H. Student Recruitment**

1. Determine how many students are needed for project.
2. Hold a kick-off meeting to gain student members or volunteers
  - i. Invitation should emphasize real legal experience, networking opportunities, etc.
  - ii. Distribute membership packet; Explain how volunteer process works
  - iii. Invite local dignitaries (judges, etc.)
  - iv. Present a volunteer lawyer to speak about why he/she volunteers or law student to describe volunteer experiences
  - v. Get the dean and other organizations involved and present
  - vi. Free food
3. The Message
  - i. To Law Students
    1. make a difference by providing legal services to an underprivileged client
    2. gain practical experience handling a real case
    3. receive personalized mentoring from a local attorney
  - ii. To Attorneys
    1. doing pro bono work to help needy clients
    2. fulfilling your ethical duty (50 hours)
    3. less time-consuming because a student is helping you (reduces time commitment by 15-30 hours)
    4. mentoring a student
4. Competitive recruiting among so many student groups
  - i. Advertise the limited time commitment (incl. that attorney knows you're not available during breaks and finals)
  - ii. Point out that this is likely their only opportunity to simultaneously provide service and do real legal work – real world experience is very attractive to students.
5. Effective marketing strategies
  - i. Get 1Ls involved – builds hype, fills the room, they are most likely to participate – and make sure you have opportunities for them (if can't participate in your program, try a Volunteer Opportunities meeting)
  - ii. Online sign-up opportunity
  - iii. Continue to send e-mails reminders for 2-3 weeks after the kick-off, directing students to the online audio and sign-up (include links directly in the e-mail)
  - iv. E-mails are the best way to advertise at some schools
  - v. Posters
  - vi. Flyers on carrels or in mailboxes twice

- vii. Things to offer and mention when advertising:
  - 1. Food
  - 2. Good guests (judges, dean, people from other organizations)
  - 3. Benefits of participation
  - 4. Briefly explain the program
  - 5. Provide contact info for someone for questions
- 6. Consider a selection process for student volunteers
- 7. Offer trainings

#### **I. Program Improvement & Evaluation**

- 1. Create mechanisms to receive feedback from all partners
  - i. Post feedback form on website
  - ii. Utilize an assignment completion form to gauge attorney and student performance and satisfaction
  - iii. On site client satisfaction questionnaires
- 2. Utilize personal email/phone contact to follow-up on ongoing assignments in order to spot attorney/student communication problems, conflicts, etc.
  - i. Maintain consistent interaction with law students to make sure they are satisfied with frequency of opportunities, possibly consider more projects that involve group involvement i.e., Living Wills Session.

#### **J. Recognition of Participants**

- 1. Show appreciation to student volunteers
  - i. At semester end, hold a party for students
  - ii. Tee shirts
- 2. Recognize achievement
  - i. law school award for students doing a certain number of pro bono hours during law school
  - ii. Annual award for one student's noteworthy dedication to *pro bono*
  - iii. Official certification for *pro bono* on law school transcript
  - iv. invite those that participated previously to talk about their experiences at the next kick-off
- 3. Law School Initiatives
  - i. Design a pamphlet detailing all of the *pro bono* initiatives present at the law school to be used in the school's recruiting materials
  - ii. Promote the school through visibility in community, i.e. as a panelist, speaker and word of mouth
- 4. Recognize work of the legal community, including court and lawyers
  - i. Annual spring event to thank attorneys who participate in the program
  - ii. Wine and cheese reception or other social event
  - iii. Offer program for free CLE credit

## II. Models of Student Pro Bono Programs

### A. Pro Bono Alliance: Utah Bar / Utah Legal Services / BYU Pro Bono Alliance

1. A partnership made up of three organizations: we provide student volunteers to help volunteer attorneys with pro bono cases.
2. Program history: started by a law student working through the school's public interest club and a community research class; original kickoff was September 2004 – now in our fourth semester
3. Participants
  - i. volunteer law students (2Ls, 3Ls)
  - ii. volunteer attorneys (mostly in the two largest metro areas in the state)
  - iii. clients: currently come from Utah Legal Services (those they can't represent) – we will be expanding this
4. Staff
  - i. one coordinator at state bar
    - (1) covers some recruiting of and interaction with attorneys
  - ii. one coordinator at Utah Legal Services
    - (1) does almost all case intake, some client relations, much of attorney relations
  - iii. student coordinator at BYU
    - (1) covers all student recruiting and interaction, much of attorney recruitment, keeps Alliance running
  - iv. assisting coordinator at BYU
    - (1) permanent contact, provides support when needed, helps with ongoing needs as requested
  - v. faculty member at BYU
    - (1) helps with planning, evaluation, obtaining contacts, expanding program

### B. Volunteer Student Law Project: University of Dayton School of Law/Greater Dayton Volunteer Lawyers Project

1. Five law students founded VSLP in 2003.
2. GDVLP acts as a feeder of legal opportunities to VSLP, which is completely student-managed.
  - i. Individual cases that the GDVLP receives from Legal Aid are assigned to an attorney who may elect to work on the case with a law student. OR
  - ii. Cases (i.e. bankruptcies and divorces) are handled on a batch basis and assigned to attorneys who work with a group of law students to service multiple clients. OR
  - iii. VSLP and GDVLP organize clinics open to the community based upon assessed need. (example: living wills session)
3. Participants
  - i. Volunteer law students (1L (can only begin legal assignments in their second semester), 2L, 3L)
  - ii. Volunteer attorneys (who are members of the GDVLP)
  - iii. Clients (who are referred to GDVLP by Legal Aid)

4. Staff
  - i. VSLP Executive Board (6 members)
    - (1) Publicize program/recruit law students
    - (2) Institute/maintain record keeping system of membership forms, feedback systems, etc.
    - (3) Meet/communicate with law students regarding projects and program needs
    - (4) Create clinics, special projects to provide additional opportunities for legal experience, appreciation for pro bono efforts, etc.
  - ii. GDVLP Executive Director
    - (1) Receives cases
    - (2) Distributes case assignments to attorneys and VSLP members
    - (3) Deals with client relations
    - (4) Provides support system for VSLP

**C. Volunteer Lawyer Program (VLP), VLP Advocate Program, Southern Arizona Legal Aid, Inc.**

1. A partnership made up of the VLP, the law school, state and federal courts & social service agencies
2. Program history: In the fall of 1999, the Volunteer Lawyers Program and the University of Arizona College of Law formed a partnership, VLP Advocates, to help deliver legal services to those residents most in need of civil legal help. The idea behind the partnership began to take shape when law students who serve on the University's Community Service Board began to discuss ways in which law students could get involved in law-related community services.
3. Participants
  - i. Volunteer law students (1Ls, 2Ls & 3Ls)
  - ii. Volunteer attorneys
  - iii. Clients: come either from Legal Aid or outreach at courts and other social service agencies
4. Staff
  - i. One attorney/law student coordinator at the VLP
    - (1) covers recruitment, recognition, training of law student volunteers.
    - (2) schedules and coordinates volunteer attorneys
    - (3) serves as liaison with the court
  - ii. Two volunteer law student coordinators at the University of Arizona
    - (1) schedule law student volunteers, assist with Recruitment

**Bibliography & Website Links:**

1. Volunteer Lawyers Program of Arizona's Student Website:  
<http://www.vlparizona.org/LawStudents.htm>
2. Utah State Bar/ BYU Law School Pro Bono Alliance  
<http://www.law2.byu.edu/ProBono/index.htm>
3. [http://www.utahbar.org/probono/assets/poverty\\_tour.exe](http://www.utahbar.org/probono/assets/poverty_tour.exe)