COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL IN-HOUSE
PRO BONO PROJECTS 2014-2015

For more information about pro bono, contact Laren Spirer, Director of Pro Bono for SJI (Jerome Greene Hall 519, laren.spirer@law.columbia.edu, 212-854-1448) or visit web.law.columbia.edu/social-justice/students/pro-bono

Student-Run Pro Bono Projects

The Domestic Violence Project

- U-Visa Project: Participants represent undocumented low-income victims of domestic violence seeking a path to US citizenship through a petition for U non-immigrant status. Students are assigned a client and complete the petition application from beginning to end, and learn skills such as interviewing and drafting affidavits. This project includes a thorough training curriculum that exposes students to aspects of both immigration and family law in New York City. Contact: Kirby Tyrrell, kbtyrrell@gmail.com

- Courtroom Advocates Project: Students serve as advocates in Family Court for domestic violence victims. Under the supervision of Sanctuary for Families, students help victims draft and file petitions for Orders of Protection, educate them on their rights and safety precautions, and advocate for them during court appearances. Contact: Abby Shaw, aas2274@columbia.edu

- Uncontested Divorce Workshop: Law student volunteers participating in the Uncontested Divorce Workshop help victims of domestic violence attain uncontested divorces from their abusers. Under the supervision of attorneys from Sanctuary for Families, each two-student team meets with a client and helps her prepare and file papers for the divorce process. From this process, students can get experience working directly with a client while developing a better understanding of the issue of domestic violence. Completion of the project also involves learning and executing the procedure for filing for an uncontested divorce in the state of New York. This includes learning to draft and revise initial and final papers, as well as learning the rules around service (who is able to serve the papers, when must the papers be served, etc.) and filing. Contact: Carrie Guo, cg2777@columbia.edu

- STEPS to End Family Violence’s Family Law and Prison Outreach Project: Members of the Domestic Violence Project’s STEPS project will assist STEPS attorneys in completing intakes of potential clients for immigration cases who have been victims of domestic violence. Contact: Isa Barahona, iaj2105@columbia.edu

Educational Law and Policy Society

- Education Advocacy Project (EAP): The Kathryn A. McDonald Education Advocacy Project provides early intervention, special education, and general education advocacy for children who are involved in New York City Family Court. Students will research and analyze special education statutes, regulations and case law and will be paired with one or two EAP attorneys and work with them on their cases. Case activities may include: interviewing clients, caregivers, and medical, school, and mental health professionals; conducting investigations, including home visits, school visits, and early intervention site visits; developing case plans that include strategies for advocacy and references to relevant statutes and regulations; providing direct representation at educa-
tional meetings and impartial administrative hearings; and utilizing negotiation and advocacy skills to shape the education service plan developed for the client; collaborating with JRP attorneys, social workers, and paralegals, as well as foster care workers, and early intervention, pre-school and school district employees. Contact: Nicole Totoriello, ngt2108@columbia.edu

• The Annenberg Institute for School Reform: The Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR) works to promote quality education for all children, especially in urban communities. In New York City, AISR community and youth organizing groups and coalitions work with community groups to provide the tools and knowledge they need to advocate for change in their schools. CLS students will conduct legal and policy research on New York City, New York State, and federal education laws and policy—including topics like charter schools and restorative justice practices—to help inform AISR’s work with community groups. Students will leverage their legal knowledge to assist AISR attorneys and staff in working on education policy recommendations in coordination with AISR’s partners. Contact: Nicole Totoriello, ngt2108@columbia.edu

High School Law Institute
HSILI has law school students spend their Saturday mornings and early afternoons teaching high school students a legal curriculum based on Criminal Law, Constitutional Law, Moot Court, and Mock Trial. The knowledge our student-teachers learn in their classroom and extracurricular settings plays directly into their lesson plans. Contact: Eric West, elw2138@columbia.edu

The Jailhouse Lawyer’s Manual
The JLM is a handbook of legal rights and procedures distributed to thousands of prisoners across the country each year by Columbia’s Human Rights Law Review. Student volunteers write, update, edit, and cite check discrete sections of the JLM and its various state supplements. Short assignments are available (up to 6 hours), but volunteers who complete longer assignments may be eligible for “by-line” writing credit. Spanish speakers are specifically needed to help translate the JLM for the new Spanish-language edition, while students interested in immigration law can focus on the Immigration Law Supplement. Contact: Caitlyn Carpenter, cbc2142@columbia.edu

Legal Clinic for the Homeless
Join a team of Columbia students staffing a legal clinic at a local homeless shelter. Working with attorneys from the City Bar Justice Center, students will be assigned a client and advocate for the resolution of various legal issues. Students commonly work on issues related to public assistance, immigration, employment, and family law. Contact: Philip Tan, pct2114@columbia.edu

Mentoring Youth through Legal Education
Debate & Mock Trial Program: Students work with attorneys from major New York firms in coaching NY high school students for constitutional law debates. The year-long constitutional law debate program is a key part of Legal Outreach’s effort to inspire and prepare young people to go to college. Student coaches establish a strong mentoring relationship with individual students through one-on-one tutoring and guidance. They will also adjudicate a series of four exciting debates conducted at CLS. Contact: Ermelinda Villagomez, ev2299@columbia.edu

Outlaws
• NYLAG Pro Bono Project: Students will assist LGBT clients in completing legal documents such as health care proxies, advance directives, and living wills. This project provides an essential service to the LGBT community, particularly those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. Often, family members who would be making health care and other choices on behalf of clients by legal default might not respect their orientation and gender related choices, such as their desire to pass on property to a same-sex partner. Contact: Richard D’Amato, rjd2139@columbia.edu

• Transgender Legal Defense Fund: Through the Transgender Name Change Project, law students assist transgender clients in petitioning to have their named legally changed to match their gender identity. This involves both
helping the client file name change documents and representing them in a hearing before the court. Therefore, students learn valuable written and oral advocacy skills, as well as gaining firsthand experience interacting with clients. Contact: Richard D’Amato, rjd2139@columbia.edu

Rightslink
Leveraging the vast research resources available to Columbia students, Rightslink provides free legal research services to human rights groups lacking the capacity or political freedom to conduct their own research. Students interested in human rights gain the opportunity to contribute to research projects covering both domestic and international issues ranging from language discrimination to human trafficking. Contact: Jacqueline Ma, jm3976@columbia.edu

Society for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
• Iraqi Refugee Assistance Project: CLS students partner with attorneys at major New York firms in order to help Iraqi families currently living in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, or Jordan. Students will work as teams and follow the client’s case through its completion. Students will have the opportunity to interview families (telephonically), assist them with the preparation of submissions to and interviews with UNHCR, IOM, and DHS. Students will research and prepare submissions on particular legal issues. Contact: Thomas Koester, tpk2106@columbia.edu
• Immigration Advocacy Project: Under the supervision of attorneys, students will work on various local projects involving advocacy and direct legal assistance to immigrants and refugees. Duties may include legal research, translation, or general case work. Spanish-speaking students may also participate in the Street Law in Español program, in which students give Know Your Rights presentations to Spanish-speaking immigrants. Students will also be contacted should opportunities arise to work with other organizations supporting immigrant and refugee rights. Contact: Abby Shaw, aas2274@columbia.edu
• Kids in Need of Defense (KIND): KIND serves children facing deportation who would not otherwise have legal representation. Project includes court observation, legal research, and client interviews. Contact: Amy Elmgren, ame2161@columbia.edu

Suspension Representation Project
SRP is a pro bono project in which law students represent New York City public school students at their suspension hearings. This project is ideal for students looking for practical litigation experience, and/or are interested in youth, education, or school-to-prison pipeline issues. Contact: Caleb Lowery (cl3163@columbia.edu), Abby Dugan (abd2143@columbia.edu), or Gena Miller (grm2103@columbia.edu).

Tenants’ Rights Project
Students assist attorneys at local community organizations in all aspects of low income tenant representation. Work includes legal research, motion and memorandum drafting, client intake, and court appearances. Cases range from eviction defense to living condition complaints. Contact: Steven Deutsch, sad2172@columbia.edu

Resilience Advocacy Project
Students will work with attorneys to provide information in various areas to youth in schools and youth organizations. Students will lead “Know Your Rights” and advocacy workshops for youth around issues ranging from dating violence to reproductive rights, to public benefits and education, in order to help teens build social justice focused youth advocacy clinics in their communities. Contact: Angie Juarb, amj2160@columbia.edu

Workers’ Rights Student Coalition
Workplace Justice Pro Bono Project: Students will help clients file wage claims for wages that they were not paid, or if they were paid less than minimum wage. This project is in partnership with MFY’s Workplace Justice Project. Contact: Ben Setel, bs2822@columbia.edu
Projects with Partnering Law Firms and Organizations

Bankruptcy Assistance Project
Under the direction of Legal Services for New York, students will conduct client intake to assess the appropriateness of cases and will help clients file bankruptcy petitions. Students can apply upon SJI notice. Training will be held on September 19th from 10:00am-4:30pm in JG 107. Contact: Bill Kransdorf, wkransdorf@lsny.org

Cadwalader Non-Profit Incubator
Under the direction of attorneys from Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft, students will assist organizations in attaining 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status by ensuring the proper filing of paperwork. Students can apply on a rolling basis. The first training will be held on October 24th, 10am-2pm in JG 107. Contact: Carrie Slaton, carrie.slaton@cwt.com

Davis Polk Asylum Workshop
Under the direction of Davis Polk & Wardwell, teams of Columbia students assist in preparing the factual record and brief the legal issues involved in complex asylum cases that bring human rights violations from around the world into the US legal arena. Students can apply upon SJI notice. The workshop will be on Tue nights, 6:30-9pm beginning October 14th JG 546. Contact: Jami Johnson, jami.johnson@davispolk.com

LawHelp/NY
Students will staff LiveHelp, an online, real-time chat service that will direct users toward relevant self-help materials, legal assistance organizations and court information. Volunteers will receive several hours of training on the LiveHelp software and in handling common questions using the resources on LawHelp/NY and the websites of New York State Courts. Students can apply upon SJI notice. The first training will be held on September 29th from 6:30-9pm in JG 107. Contact: Kristin Gallagher, Kgallagher@nylawhelp.org

Manhattan Legal Services Housing Intake Clinic
Manhattan Legal Services will hold a weekly housing intake clinic during the Fall Semester. During intake sessions, students will conduct one-on-one intake interviews with potential low-income clients, helping to assess legal issues presented in the case, as well as potential defenses and evidence for litigation. All work will be performed by students under the supervision of Sandhya Reju Boyd, Esq., the MLS Director of Housing. Students will be required to complete 4 hour training at the beginning of the semester which will cover basic NYC housing law, client interviewing skills, and public benefits. Students are asked to commit to 3 to 6 shifts per semester. Each shift will last approximately 6 to 8 hours. MLS is seeking 4 students to staff each clinic. Training will take place on September 12th, JG 101 from 10am-2:30pm. Students interested should email Director of Pro Bono, Laren Spirer at laren.spirer@law.columbia.edu

Spring Break Caravans
Spring Break Caravans are a popular way for students to combine travel, fun, and public service. Student-directed teams may be granted small travel stipends to help particular organizations with legal work during the week of Spring Break. To learn more, please visit the Caravans page on the SJI website. If you are interested in organizing a caravan placement, contact the Pro Bono Program Coordinator (probono@law.columbia.edu or 212-854-3318). If you are interested in participating, please keep an eye out for emails during the year on how to apply!