

Harvard Law School's
Hale and Dorr Legal Services Center
Offers a Rich Variety of
Clinical Practice Opportunities

"At the Hale and Dorr Legal Services Center, everybody wins. People from the greater Boston area receive superb legal assistance and Harvard Law School students gain valuable clinical experience"

Dean Elena Kagan, 2003

At the Hale and Dorr Legal Services Center – Harvard Law School's largest clinical teaching facility – HLS 2Ls and 3Ls develop lawyering skills and explore substantive legal areas from a practitioner's perspective. All students earn course credits as they represent clients under the supervision of the Center's clinical staff. Located in Boston's culturally diverse Jamaica Plain neighborhood, the Center is a general practice law firm that serves more than 1,200 clients each year. Some of these clients are poor but many can, and do, make co-payments or pay on a lower-than-market basis for the service they receive. The Center has placements for up to 80 HLS students each semester in connection with many clinical courses or through the Continuing Clinical and Independent Clinical Work Programs.

When working at the Center for clinical credit, you will choose one of the Center's clinics, which are grouped in substantive practice groups and you will work with Center Clinical Instructors who are experts in their field and who will help you build and manage your own caseload. In several of the Center's clinics you may have the opportunity to work with partners and associates from the Boston law firm of WilmerHale whose HLS alumni provided funds for the present Jamaica Plain clinical center. Every year firm partners and associates donate hundreds of pro bono hours to supervise students and consult on Center cases, mainly in the estate planning, corporate-legal and litigation practices of the Center.

The Center has litigation and administrative practices that offer you the chance to appear in court or before agencies on preliminary motions, to argue your client's case, and to present and cross-examine witnesses. The Center also has transactional practices involving planning and deal making for individuals, small businesses, not for profits and Community Development Corporations (CDCs). All students at the Center have direct responsibility for client work. You will co-counsel with your supervisor, but in most instances, you will be your clients' main advocate. You'll quickly learn what it's like to analyze real-life problems, respond effectively to emergencies, and manage a challenging caseload. In short, you will learn what it's like to be a practicing attorney!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Will I be able to appear in Court for my clients?

Legal Services Center students will be certified to practice in Massachusetts State Courts under a special rule (Rule 3:03) of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts that affords 2Ls and 3Ls a limited license to practice in civil cases. All 2Ls and 3Ls, in good standing at the Law School and engaged in clinical practice at the Center, will be eligible for certification based on the law and practice training they receive as part of the Clinical Workshop. The HLS Office of Clinical Programs arranges for student certification and you will receive written confirmation when your authorization to practice is approved.

What are the Center's hours? Will I have some flexibility in setting my work hours at the Center? How do I meet my obligations to my clients and keep up with my course work and other obligations?

The Legal Services Center is open from 8:30 a.m. until 6:00 p.m., Mondays through Fridays. Your supervisor and all staff in your practice unit and at the Center are committed to your succeeding in practice as well as meeting obligations of your clinical course, other curricular and extra-curricular obligations and will work out a schedule that takes all of your commitments into account.

Additionally, the Center has flex-time policies for scheduling clinical hours. During the first three weeks of the semester, students must be on site for all of your clinical hours as you acclimate yourself to the Center's practice routines and protocols. As the semester progresses, you and your supervisor will work out your on site schedule consistent with your client needs and other professional, law practice related commitments such as meetings with clients or case relevant parties, conducting investigations, taking depositions, etc. Because the Center's on-line case management system permits off site access to your files and each student has an individual voice mailbox (also remotely accessed), many weeks you may be able to complete up to two-thirds of your clinical hours off site. In addition, many of the Center's supervisors are available for student conference hours on campus.

We invite and encourage you to spend as many of your clinical hours at the Center as possible but we recognize that you, like all busy professionals, have multiple demands on your time. Part of your clinical experience will involve developing good time management skills so that you are able to meet your law-practice commitments and your concurrent educational and personal commitments and obligations.

What are the Center's facilities and resources?

The Center is located in a renovated four-story building with all the amenities of a medium-sized law firm. Students have individual workstations at two-seat carrels with a telephone, computer, file cabinet and individual voice mail. The Center has a state of the art computer system, networked and linked to HLS, and a sophisticated case management system used by all students and staff. The on-line

case management system allows you to access your client files off site. The Center's library contains a wealth of relevant practice materials, and on-line research tools are available at every terminal in the office. The Center has interview offices, conference rooms, a student lounge with a galley kitchen, and vending machines. It is located immediately adjacent to the Stony Brook MBTA station on the Orange Line, and so is directly accessible by public transportation. Off-street parking is available for students who commute by car and a security person provides escort service to the MBTA and parking area.

How many clinical credits should I choose for clinical work at the Center?

To get the most out of your experience at the Center, we strongly recommend that you elect at least 3 clinical credits during your first semester at the Center. You will learn the most if you are able to take on a number of increasingly challenging cases, and this will be possible by working 15 hours per week (for 3 clinical credits). The policy and strategic implications of each practice area emerge from the inter-relation and variations of case types within a substantive area. The initial learning and professional development curve is steep, but requires some degree of immersion in practice to produce. Students who elect 3 or 4 clinical credits are consistently the most satisfied with their clinical experience and manage their time most effectively. You may add to or decrease your clinical hours within the first weeks of the semester and we urge you to plan for at least 3 clinical credits and to discuss with your supervisor how you might adapt your work if you find you must decrease to 2 clinical credits. Remember that your clinical practice ends the last week that classes meet and that there is no paper or examination for clinical work. Therefore, reading period is available for exam preparation or course papers related to your classroom work.

I may work at a law firm after graduation. Does work at the Center help students who are not planning a legal services or public interest career right after law school?

Many students who work at the Center take jobs at large law firms after graduation. Our students report that their experience at the Center helped them develop valuable skills that were readily transferable to the large firm setting - including interviewing, legal and factual analysis, drafting, argument, case management and dealing with ethical and professional issues. We frequently hear from law firm recruiters and hiring partners that clinical experience is viewed as a major plus by firms. Additionally, alumni of the Center report that their clinical experiences gave them an advantage in getting more interesting and responsible assignments soon into their firm work.

What is the Jamaica Plain neighborhood like?

Jamaica Plain - "JP" - is a center of urban revival and renewal. It is one of the most diverse and vital neighborhoods in the city of Boston. Within a short walk of the Center you will find a variety of shops and "Best of Boston" restaurants, many specializing in ethnic cuisines. Frederick Law Olmstead's "Emerald Necklace" runs through JP and includes the beautiful Jamaica Pond, Harvard's University's

Arnold Arboretum (a world-famous botanical garden), and Franklin Park with its zoo and 18-hole public golf course. An MDC recreational ice-skating rink is open in the winter directly behind the Center, and the original Sam Adams Brewery (free samples offered with tours!) is two blocks from the Center's Boylston Street location. Many students will have a chance to visit other interesting and historic parts of Boston in connection with their casework. You will receive information on local sites and restaurants during preliminary orientation at the beginning of the fall and spring semester.

How will I commute to and from HLS and the Center?

The Center is easily reached by MBTA or car. *Public Transportation:* The Center is located directly next to the Stony Brook station on the MBTA Orange Line. Traveling from Harvard Square, take the Red Line to Downtown Crossing where you transfer to the Orange Line. The subway trip takes anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour, depending on the time of day and the connections you make. Many students use time on the subway ride to prepare for clinical work or for class meetings. *Car:* The trip by car takes about 30 minutes, depending on the time of day. Many students are able to coordinate their schedules and share rides to and from the Center. Free, off-street parking is available for students who drive. (Directions are available on our website.)

How can I arrange to work at the Center?

Students work at the Center by taking one of the several HLS courses that offer clinical placements here. Information and details about Clinical Pre-Registration, the 2007/2008 clinical curriculum, and the complete course descriptions will be available on the following websites:

Clinical Office: www.law.harvard.edu/academics/clinical/curriculum.htm

Registrar's Office: www.law.harvard.edu/academics/registrar/

Legal Services Center: www.law.harvard.edu/acacemics/clinical/lsc/

Will I receive a grade for my work at the Center? How do I know how I am doing in my practice?

While each clinical course has its own grading policy, most courses provide for two separate letter grades: one for the course's classroom component and the other for your clinical work at the Center. Other grading options that may be selected by the course instructor include: separate Pass or Fail, a single grade for the class and clinical work that reflects the weighted credits for each component. The Office of Clinical Programs will communicate the grading policy for the course you are enrolled in directly to you at the start of the semester.

In addition to formal, written evaluations at mid-semester and end-of-the-semester, you will receive frequent, informal critique and feedback from your supervisor, student colleagues and members of the clinical staff at the Center throughout the semester. The mid-semester evaluation will provide you with an

opportunity to assess your own learning and progress and, with your supervisor, to set an agenda for the remainder of the semester. At the end of the semester, you will receive a final, written evaluation and a wrap-up conference with your supervisor.

Each semester, you will have the opportunity (on a confidential basis) to evaluate your practice experience and your supervisor at the Center. We regard this mutual professional assessment and critique as a central part of “learning how to learn” to practice law.

What do students who have worked at the Center say about their clinical experiences?

In addition to our clients, the Center’s students are its most enthusiastic supporters. Here’s what a few of our former students have to say about their experiences at the Center:

“I cannot recommend highly enough the experience that the Legal Services Center offers. The skills I learned during my year at the Center will be invaluable for my practice after graduation - everything from case management to investigation, negotiation and courtroom practice. Most importantly, I learned how to communicate with and advocate for my clients. I really feel that I’ll be ahead of the game when I enter the working world next year because I’ve already learned the basics of good practice.” - KJ

“I decided to practice at the Hale and Dorr Legal Services Center almost on a whim. I knew I wanted to do clinical work at some point, but when I discovered that I could avoid the dreaded winter term and instead work full time at the clinic I jumped at the opportunity. I didn't know what to expect having had no direct legal services experience in the past, and I was understandably nervous about doing something that would actually have an impact on someone's life. But the supervision I received at the Center was amazing and I soon began to feel confident and competent in my work. Fairly quickly, I was drafting motions, conferencing with opposing counsel, and conducting client interviews. Nothing else in my law school experience has been nearly as rewarding as my clinical experiences. I remembered why I came to law school after all and that being a lawyer can be fun and you can feel good about what you do!” - ED

“Through my work in the Community Enterprise Project (CEP), I have become more proficient in analyzing and drafting several key legal documents that are utilized in real estate transactions. I have also gained greater understanding of my own aptitudes and professional leanings. Prior to my clinical, I was well aware of my interest in community economic development. However, it was not until I participated in the clinical that I was able to put this interest into a legal perspective.” - AB

“In every way, working in the Family Clinic at the Center was a very positive experience. I learned a great deal about lawyering and about my own strengths and weaknesses; I gained practical experience; I met truly wonderful and

interesting people -- both clients and staff -- and I got credit for doing something that I genuinely enjoyed.” - JF

“Entering law school, I had no idea what I wanted to do after graduation. In the past three years, I have tried to get a variety of legal experiences, from policy and research to litigation. My most meaningful and worthwhile experience while at law school has been representing low-income individuals in the Housing Clinic at the Hale and Dorr Legal Services Center, one of HLS’ clinical placements. In my first case, the judge dismissed the eviction claim against my client. I went into the hallway to explain to my frantic client that he and his family could stay in their apartment. At that moment, I knew that I loved this type of work. - JZ

“The administrative hearings [in the Administrative/Disability Law Clinic] themselves posed another set of challenges, such as dealing with vocational and medical experts who assessed the client's ability differently from the treating physician, judges who proceeded without the necessary translator or insisted on more medical evidence, and clients' who became very emotional during the hearing. Almost all of my cases made me grapple with difficult questions about the boundaries of my role as representative and how best to serve the needs of my clients.” - FM

“For me, the benefits of the Legal Services Center experience are clear. I developed skills there that are highly valued in the law firm setting – skills including managing a caseload, dealing with colleagues and superiors, conducting fact investigations, counseling clients, negotiating, and drafting everything from leases to motions and trial briefs. The Center provides students a laboratory in which to learn about the practice of law. Part of the education process involves making mistakes and learning from them. The Center’s staff function, in large part, to assist students in working through our mistakes. Often, the professional law firm doesn’t have time to do this and is not always so forgiving.” - JF

“I worked at the Center for one year and am now an associate in the Litigation Department at Hale and Dorr [WilmerHale]. Like many third-year students, I wondered how helping indigent clients at the Center could possibly help me prepare for work at a large firm. I see now that my work at the Center was of great benefit. For instance, I learned to look for the ordinary and the available – paystubs, tax returns, checking account statements and calendars – to prepare an effective case. Understanding the importance of the “ordinary” helps in understanding any case, from how to ask questions in a deposition to knowing which documents to request to knowing how and where to find factual information needed for litigation. Without my clinical experience at the Center I would have missed a large part of what the practice of law is really about.” - HS