

Clinical Program

Thirty-five years ago, American University Washington College of Law (WCL) was one of the first law schools to develop modern clinical legal education. Today, the Clinical Program is recognized for its leadership in scholarship, development of clinical methodology, contributions to increasing access to justice for underserved clients, and breadth of offerings. Typically, approximately 230 second-year and third-year students participate in a clinic experience each academic year — making WCL's Clinical Program one of the largest in the United States. The full-time faculty and practitioners-in-residence work collaboratively to teach students about client-centered, ethical practices. In representing clients, student attorneys deepen their understanding of the relationship between abstract doctrine and real-world consequences for clients; between legal theories and the operation of law in the world; and between written rules and the practices of tribunals in which cases are decided. The Clinical Program serves a diverse group of individual and institutional clients, including immigrants and refugees, victims/survivors of domestic violence, juveniles, criminal defendants, low-income taxpayers, individuals seeking help with family law, consumer, disability, and intellectual property issues, and community groups and non-profit organizations.

The clinic seminars prepare students for client and witness interviewing, client counseling, case (or client) theory development and strategic planning, fact investigation, negotiation, persuasive written and oral advocacy, and presenting evidence before various tribunals. Student attorneys share developments and issues in their cases with other students during case rounds.

All ten clinics are open to third-year students; seven of the clinics are open to second-year students. Full-time and evening division students can participate in many of the clinics; the General Practice Clinic has a section designed specifically for evening division students. WCL offers a mix of year-long and one-semester clinics; some clinics allow for both types of participation.

General Practice Clinic and its student attorneys represent low-income clients in such areas as consumer protection, employment, family law, health, housing, public benefits and bankruptcy. Student attorneys use a range of legal skills on behalf of clients in settings that may include administrative tribunals and trial and appellate courts in the District of Columbia and Maryland.

Community and Economic Development Law Clinic provides transactional legal services to client groups engaged in community development in a variety of settings — local, national and international. The clinic represents and helps organize small non-profits, businesses, and tenants' associations in the public and private housing sectors, all of which share the goal of developing resources



Clinical Program

Professor Robert Dinerstein, Director
Kathleen Hudson, Associate Director

General Practice Clinic

Professor David Chavkin, Director
Professor Elliott Milstein
Practitioner-in-Residence
Mary (Kate) Garrett Bunker
Practitioner-in-Residence Richard Ugelow

Community and Economic Development Law Clinic

Professor Susan Bennett, Director
Professor Brenda Smith
Visiting Professor Louise Howells

Criminal Justice Clinic

Professor Binny Miller, Director
Visiting Professor Jennifer Lyman
Supervising Attorney Caeb Colravy

Disability Rights Law Clinic

Professor Robert Dinerstein, Director
Visiting Professor Dean Rivkin

Domestic Violence Clinic

Practitioner-in-Residence Jane Stoever, Director

International Human Rights Law Clinic

Professor Richard Wilson, Director
Professor Muneer Ahmad
Practitioner-in-Residence Meetal Jain
Practitioner-in-Residence Jayesh Rathod
Visiting Professor Michele Pistone

Glushko-Samuelson Intellectual Property Law Clinic

Professor Peter Jaszi, Director
Practitioner-in-Residence Victoria Phillips
(Spring 2009)
Practitioner-in-Residence Joshua Sarnoff
Practitioner-in-Residence Wendy Seltzer (fall 2008)

Janet R. Spragens Federal Tax Clinic

Practitioner-in-Residence
Nancy Abramowitz, Director
Practitioner-in-Residence Robin Westbrook

Women and the Law Clinic

Professor Ann Shalleck, Director
Practitioner-in-Residence Adrienne Lockie
Supervising Attorney Diane Weinroth

Clinical Program, American University
Washington College of Law
4801 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Suite 417
Washington, DC 20016
P: 202-274-4140
www.wcl.american.edu/clinical/

for underserved communities. This clinical experience immerses students in the ethical and social change issues involved in group representation as an innovative approach to poverty law, transactional practice, and public interest law.

Criminal Justice Clinic is designed with the twin goals of teaching student attorneys about the theory and practice of advocacy in the criminal and juvenile justice systems and teaching them how these skills translate more broadly to other practice settings. Some students practice as defense attorneys representing indigent clients under the supervision of clinic faculty; others work under the supervision of prosecutors in local prosecutors' offices. Students can experience both roles in alternate semesters. The clinic practices in Maryland, where students handle misdemeanors and minor felonies, on charges ranging from disorderly conduct to car theft.

D.C. Law Students in Court is a joint project of five Washington, D.C. law schools. The clinic was created to provide student attorneys with hands-on courtroom experience and to address the disparity in legal representation in two of the city's highest volume courts. Student attorneys represent clients primarily in the Landlord Tenant and Small Claims branches of the D.C. Superior Court.

Disability Rights Law Clinic and its student attorneys represent clients in a variety of substantive areas related to disability law and people with disabilities (both mental and physical). Most of the clinic's cases are in the area of special education, although the clinic also has handled cases under the Americans with Disabilities Act and matters involving the intersection between the criminal justice system and mental disability. From time to time, the clinic has taken on broader advocacy projects related to representing clients, for example, a project monitoring the timeliness of due process hearings in special education cases in D.C. in connection with a consent decree.

Domestic Violence Clinic represents victims/survivors of domestic violence seeking civil protection orders and/or self-petitioning to change their immigration status. The opportunity to gain experience in family and immigration arenas allows the student attorneys to evaluate the benefits and limits of these interventions into the complex problem of domestic violence.

Janet R. Spragens Federal Tax Clinic represents low income individuals with matters before the Internal Revenue Service. Students handle cases from intake through final resolution by administrative process, litigation or settlement. Many low income clients have tax issues surrounding tax benefits

related to family status, especially earned income tax credit issues. Others have matters related to self-employment, debt cancellation, wrong identity, etc. Many seeking our assistance are limited English speakers who have difficulty navigating a complex area of law and are without resources to hire legal representatives. Students develop experience with various substantive areas of tax law, tax administrative procedure, and tax court procedure as well as the critical lawyering skills at the heart of all clinical programs.

Glushko-Samuels Intellectual Property Law Clinic concentrates on client representation that helps student attorneys better understand the concept of the public interest in copyright, patent, trademark and allied fields. Student attorneys participate in two types of matters. Student-managed projects involve advising creative artists, non-profit organizations, small inventors and entrepreneurs, scholars, traditional communities, and those who otherwise would not have access to high-quality intellectual property law services, as well as representing them before various agencies (Copyright Office, Patent and Trademark Office, World Intellectual Property Organization, etc.). Student attorneys also work with faculty to promote intellectual property law reform.

International Human Rights Law Clinic offers student attorneys the opportunity to represent individuals, families, or organizations alleging violations of recognized or developing human rights norms before international and domestic judicial bodies. The clinic features two sections: a General Human Rights Section (GHR), and one that is focused more specifically on Immigrants' Rights (IR). The GHR section provides representation in two types of cases: international human rights cases and projects and political asylum cases. The IR section provides representation on a broad range of cases involving immigrant communities in the D.C. area. These include cases of exploited low-wage immigrant workers, asylum and non-asylum immigration cases, and language rights cases.

Women and the Law Clinic enables students to analyze the relationship of gender to the law and lawyering. Student attorneys treat each client not as a discrete "case" but as a complex person dealing with issues implicating many aspects of the legal system. While cases often involve family law issues, student attorneys also represent clients in other civil and administrative actions. By addressing both a client's family-related and other legal issues, student attorneys examine how gender operates within the law, how family law intersects with other substantive areas of the law, and how related problems are handled differently within a variety of legal settings.