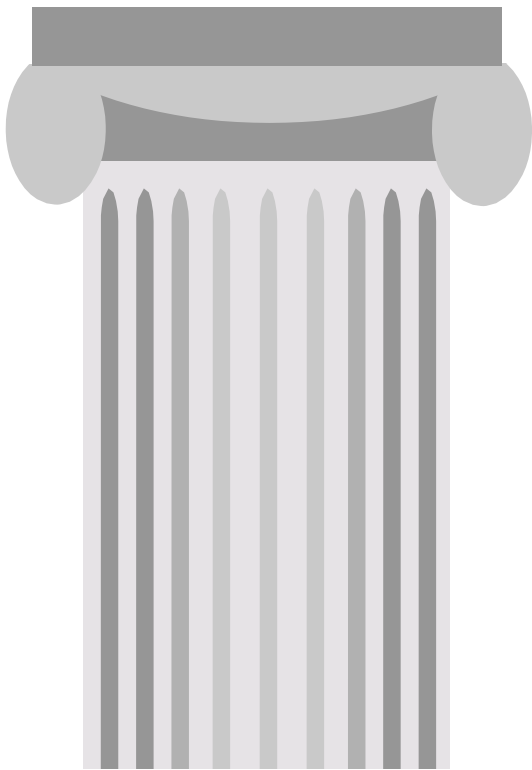


LEGAL SERVICES GUIDE



A GUIDE TO PURSUING WORK IN LEGAL SERVICES/LEGAL AID

KIM SCHROER, SUMMER FELLOW 2013

ALEXA SHABECOFF, OPIA DIRECTOR

EARLIER EDITIONS:

KAREN MARCHIANO, SUMMER FELLOW

KRISTEN NELSON, SUMMER FELLOW

Harvard Law School
Bernard Koteen Office of Public Interest Advising
Wasserstein Hall 4039
Cambridge, MA 02138 (617) 495-3108
<http://www.law.harvard.edu/current/careers/opia/>
© 2013 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	Page 3
Section 1: Introduction to Legal Services.....	Page 4
Section 2: What’s It Like to Be a Legal Services Lawyer?.....	Page 6
Section 3: Recent Funding History of Legal Aid.....	Page 9
Section 4: Salary and Hiring Trends.....	Page 12
Section 5: Preparing for a Legal Services Job.....	Page 13
Section 6: Finding a Position.....	Page 16
Section 7: Personal Narratives.....	Page 20
Section 8: Legal Services Websites.....	Page 31
Section 9: Extracurricular Activities at HLS.....	Page 32
Section 10: Academic Paths at HLS.....	Page 35

Acknowledgments

This guide is structured to give readers an overview of legal services and directions for how to get from the halls of Harvard Law School and other law schools to the “trenches” of legal services. It contains personal narratives from HLS alumni enthusiastically working in legal services. It lists HLS courses and extracurricular activities of interest to those planning to pursue careers in legal services. Finally, it lists some legal services websites to use as a starting point in identifying potential employers.

Kim Schroer	Alexa Shabecoff, Esq.	Kristen Nelson	Karen Marchiano
Public Interest Fellow Summer 2013	Assistant Dean for Public Service, OPIA Director	Public Interest Fellow 1998-2000	Public Interest Fellow Summer 2000

Acknowledgements: A big thank you to all of the legal services attorneys, scholars, and professionals who generously gave their time to speak candidly about the legal services field. Without them, this guide would not have been possible. They are:

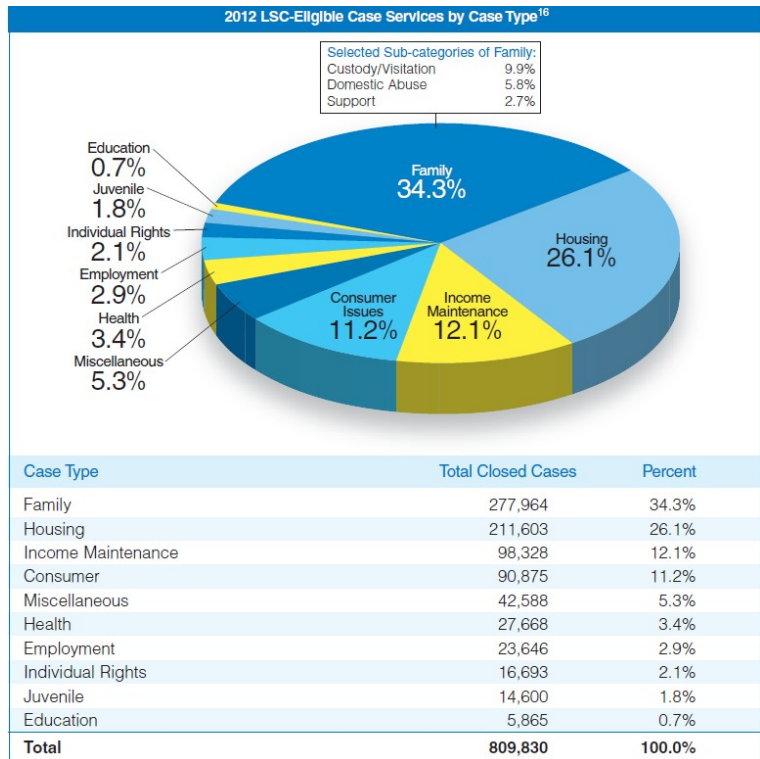
- Jeff Purcell, Greater Boston Legal Services
- Jess Rosenbaum, D.C. Access to Justice Commission
- Nina Datsur, Union Settlement Association
- Kristin Small, Empire State Justice Center
- Sarah Mattson, Legal Assistance of New Hampshire
- Levon Henry, DNA People’s Legal Services in Arizona
- Amy Chen, Bay Area Legal Aid
- Professor Jim Greiner, Harvard Law School
- Professor Russell Engler, New England School of Law
- Richard Zorza, coordinator of the National Self Represented Litigation Network
- Meredith McBurney, ABA Resource Center
- Jim Sandman, President of the Legal Services Corporation

Thanks also to the Harvard Law School graduates who took the time to write the narratives we have included with this Guide — Greg Schell ’79 of the Migrant Farmworker Justice Project, Dan Lindsey ’90 of LAF Chicago, Beth Harrison ’03 of the Legal Aid Society D.C., and Nicole Dooley ’09 of the Legal Aid Justice Center in Virginia — their words say more than we could ever describe.

Section 1 Introduction to Legal Services

Legal services programs, often called “legal aid societies,” provide direct civil representation, for free or at a reduced cost, to low income and elderly clients. Legal services attorneys ensure equal access to the justice system for people who could not otherwise afford attorneys. Much of a legal services lawyer’s work involves individual client contact, and attorneys take on cases in which a client’s fundamental rights and needs are in jeopardy.

Although legal services attorneys take cases from a variety of issue areas, some of the more common areas of practice are family law, housing, consumer law, and employment disputes. Family law often involves situations of domestic violence, and cases can include divorces, custody battles, or advocating for women who need protection from an abuser. Housing usually involves protecting families or individuals in eviction defense, advocating for access to affordable housing, or handling foreclosure cases. Consumer issues vary, but can include predatory lending or other deceptive practices.



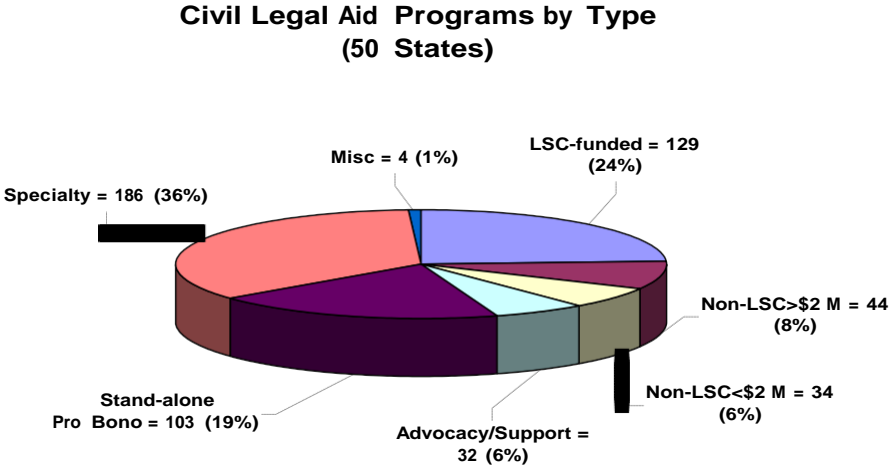
Source: LSC Grant Activity Reports – 2012.

Finally, attorneys working on employment cases fight employers that withhold wages from their workers, advocate for healthy and safe working conditions, and represent clients in wrongful termination cases. While many legal services organizations are organized by subject matter with staff lawyers that specialize in one area of practice, others have lawyers who are generalists and handle the spectrum of cases that fall within their program’s mandate.

There are two types of legal services organizations: those that receive funding from the federal Legal Services Corporation (LSC), and those that do not. LSC-funded programs receive a significant portion of their funding from the LSC, although this percentage has declined in recent years because of budget constraints in the federal government. Programs that receive LSC funding also have to abide by certain restrictions in their legal practice, as LSC-funded organizations are prohibited from engaging in class-action litigation and substantive lobbying. In addition, they also are restricted from opposing welfare reform and representing undocumented immigrants. Organizations that do not receive funding from LSC are free to engage in these forms of advocacy and tend to rely heavily on funding from the private bar and other donations. Because of recent funding shortages, however, the distinction between LSC

organizations and non-LSC organizations has become more ambiguous. All legal services organizations, including those that historically relied heavily on federal funds, have been forced to diversify their funding sources. In fact, many LSC-funded organizations now receive more money from other sources than they do from the LSC. For more information on funding sources for LSC programs, please see the graph on page 9 of Section 3.

While there is typically more information about LSC-funded organizations available to students, they do not comprise the majority of the legal aid organizations in the country. In fact, most legal aid organizations do not take LSC funding, as seen in the graph below. It is important that students examine all of their options before focusing on specific legal services organizations for employment. Although non-LSC funded organizations may be more difficult to locate and research, they are currently the more common type of program for legal assistance and have more diversified funding sources when compared to LSC-funded organizations. For more information on how to find these programs, see Section 8, which contains websites to assist you in beginning the search for jobs in legal services.



This pie chart was developed by the ABA Resource Center for ATJ Initiatives* from funding data collected annually from LSC, state IOLTA programs, other state-level collectors of civil legal aid data, and individual legal aid programs. There are almost certainly programs that have been overlooked.

*The American Bar Association Resource Center for Access to Justice Initiatives is a project of the Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants.

Section 2

What's It Like to Be a Legal Services Lawyer?

Legal services attorneys are expected to handle a large amount of responsibility very quickly, and are often accountable for their own cases from start to finish as soon as they are sworn into their state bar. Lawyers working in legal services have intensive client contact, a varied work load, and spend a great deal of time in court or in administrative law hearings. They often manage as many as 40 to 60 active cases at one time. Legal services lawyers also frequently collaborate on larger projects, such as community education or complex cases. However, the heart of legal services work lies in helping one person at a time.

Despite the tumultuous funding history of legal services, many legal services attorneys still proudly proclaim that they have “the best job in the world.” As Greg Schell (HLS '79), Managing Attorney of the Migrant Farmworker Justice Project in Florida explains, “I can’t imagine a better job. I love to get up and go to work. Ninety-nine percent of my clients are wonderful, wonderful people. . . I would do it again in a heartbeat.” Lawyers in legal services enjoy casual, non-hierarchical and collegial work environments and the opportunity to make a significant positive impact on individuals’ lives. They also appreciate the opportunity to directly represent their clients in meaningful cases. When asked to describe the best part of being a legal services lawyer, Dan Lindsey (HLS '90) of LAF Chicago explains that, “It always comes back to working with individual clients and the satisfaction of helping people with really significant issues who may not get help otherwise.” Schell shares the same enthusiasm: “I’ve found the work challenging and meaningful for 20 years. I can’t start to tell you how exciting it is...we are right, and most of the time it still matters. We beat Goliath nine times out of ten. That’s pretty neat.” Lawyers in legal services get personal satisfaction from seeing the immediate results of their work and often feel as though they are making a real difference with their law degree. LSC President Jim Sandman echoes this sentiment, encouraging law students to pursue a career in legal services because, “It embodies what so many people go to law school with the hope of doing: making a difference in human terms to other people using what you’ve been trained to do.”

Legal services attorneys welcome the great autonomy and responsibility they are given almost immediately upon arrival. One misconception about legal services work is that it becomes repetitive over time, as attorneys begin to see the same kinds of issues in case after case. However, most legal services attorneys find their work both intellectually stimulating and challenging on a daily basis. As Greg Schell states, “You have to be a much better lawyer today to be good in this business. The work is legally challenging and we deal with tough judges. You have to be smarter and work harder to win cases and create tangible changes in the system.”

On the downside, some legal services lawyers find the large caseloads and quick turnover of cases stressful. Many legal services lawyers also express frustration with the limited funding and resources

allocated to their offices. Recent funding declines have forced many organizations to implement salary freezes or lay off attorneys at a time when demand for legal services is at an all-time high. Others feel that their work does not have enough of a large-scale impact, and are frustrated that the individual client approach may be a “Band- Aid” solution to larger societal ills. In response to these challenges, many lawyers have found ways to both provide direct services to clients as well as work creatively to impact groups on a larger level. As Dan Lindsey explained, “I am satisfied using legal tools to help individuals on a day-to-day basis. I can help on a micro level and take advantage of opportunities to have a larger impact by working to influence the state courts and consulting with people about bills or other policy issues at the state level.”

One of the more challenging aspects of a legal services career is that legal services lawyers must live with the fact that many of their clients’ problems are much bigger than a lawyer can solve. As Beth Harrison of the Legal Aid Society of D.C. explains, “It is frustrating to see the larger issue of poverty and how people struggle with so much pain in their lives.” Legal services attorneys work with people whose daily lives are in crisis, and whose fundamental and critical human needs such as income, shelter, and safety depend on the performance of their attorney. To keep themselves from becoming overwhelmed, many legal services lawyers stress the importance of keeping an emotional balance. As Harrison states, “You have to be careful to maintain some sort of emotional balance. To work with individuals in poverty every day, you have to be able to care and be empathetic without becoming so attached or emotionally involved that it becomes unhealthy.”

Because legal services lawyers tend to be very passionate about their work, many of them say that declining cases from eligible clients is another difficult challenge. Dan Lindsey explains that, “One of the more frustrating parts of the job is that we want to take more cases so we wouldn’t have to turn people that need help away.” There are now more people eligible for legal services than ever before and the number of cases continues to increase. In response, there has been a corresponding rise in various forms of “limited representation.” Pro-se clinics, assisted self-help resources, and the development of do-it-yourself document preparation tools, all prepared by legal services lawyers, have been crucial to the effort to manage the increased demand for legal services. One of the most important challenges facing legal services attorneys going forward, according to the LSC president Jim Sandman, is learning how to manage their resources in a way that will allow them to provide as much meaningful assistance to as many clients as possible. As Sandman states, “It’s an important challenge to legal services programs to learn to make the most informed decisions possible about what resource allocations they should be making in deciding what level of service to provide to who.” Learning how to allocate their limited resources in the best interests of their clients will be an important feature of legal services work going forward.

Although legal services lawyers could take on endless numbers of cases from those in need, most organizations make a sincere effort to ensure that their attorneys have the opportunity to maintain a healthy work/life balance. Most legal services lawyers find that there is little pressure to work long hours

Legal Services Career Guide | 7

or weekends, because legal services organizations create an environment that respects people’s lives outside of the office. Since legal services work is often emotionally taxing, a conscious effort is made to ensure that attorneys don’t get burned out from the stress created by their cases. As Greg Schell explains, “If you last in this business, you have to have some sort of balance, or you will burn out. Our attorneys make it clear that they expect to be able to do things outside of the office.” Legal services organizations often offer generous vacation time and flexible schedules depending on the needs of their attorneys.

Despite the challenges of legal services work, many legal services lawyers cannot see themselves working in any other setting. They emphasize the difference in atmosphere between private firms and legal services organizations, stressing their preference for direct client interaction. They also truly believe in the mission of legal services. As Greg Schell states, “How many people can say that they love to go to work every day? I love this job. I can’t believe I get paid to do this. I would do this for nothing. I represent hard-working clients who truly need our help.” HLS Dean Martha Minow, who serves as the Vice Chair of the Legal Services Corporation, shares this enthusiasm for legal services and emphasizes the role of law students in continuing to fight for access to justice for the poor:

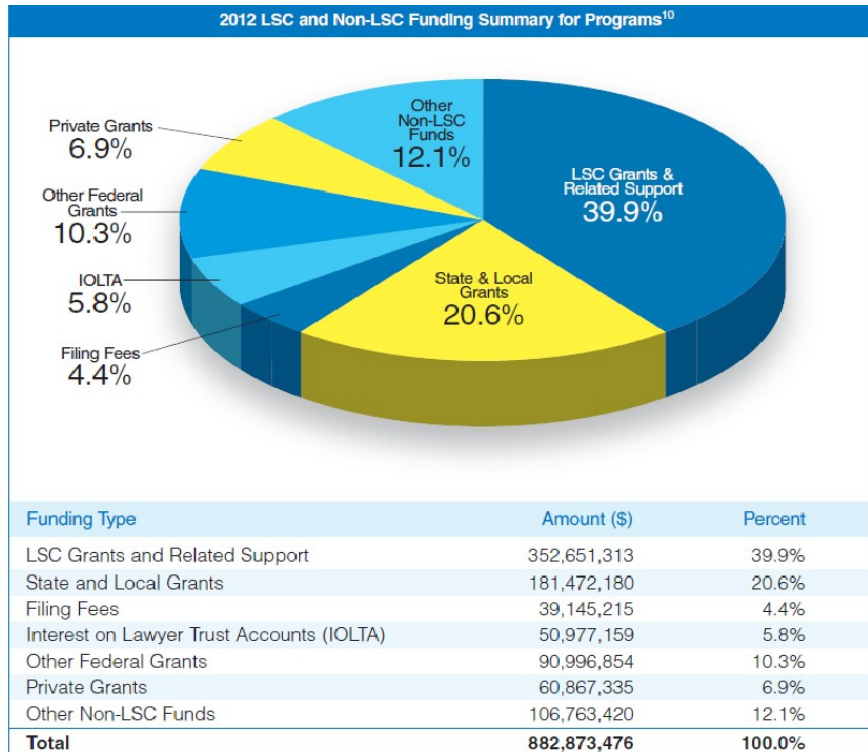
My roles as Dean of Harvard Law School and as Vice Chair of the Legal Services Corporation bring me in frequent contact with judges across the nation who describe the crisis of poor people —military veterans, survivors of domestic abuse, individuals with disabilities —trying to navigate courts and bureaucracies without legal guidance or help. With radical cuts in federal and state funding for legal services, rights are routinely sacrificed and unscrupulous practices go unchecked. What is at stake is nothing less than our society's compact with millions of its citizens and everyone's faith in the principle that justice cannot be rationed and served only to people of means. At this critical time, law schools and law students play a crucial role in remedying the widening gap in access to legal assistance.

Section 3

Recent Funding History of Legal Aid

Because funding plays such an important role in the everyday operations of legal services organizations, it is important for students to know about the field's recent funding history as they consider a career in legal aid. Before 1994, most legal services organizations received the majority of their funding from the Legal Services Corporation (LSC). However, substantial congressional budget cuts that year forced legal services programs to reevaluate their sources of funding. Most organizations were able to continue running because of revenue from IOLTA (Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts), which was seen as an innovative way to ensure that legal services programs would continue to receive the funds necessary to keep their doors open. Throughout the late 1990's and early 2000's, many legal services organizations diversified their fundraising to include a higher percentage of funds from state legislatures and donations from the private bar.

However, the economic recession severely compromised legal services organizations' ability to maintain previous levels of funding. The IOLTA accounts that were supposed to be a constant source of revenue declined rapidly as federal interest rates reached an all-time low. State legislatures made dramatic cuts in legal services funds while funding from LSC continued to decrease in the wake of the financial crisis. Donations from private law firms also declined. Many organizations were forced to lay off attorneys or impose salary freezes despite the fact that demand for legal services was rising at an unprecedented rate. From 2007-2011, legal aid centers found themselves scrambling to help as many people as they could with very limited resources. The recession simultaneously forced legal services organizations to cut back on staff and resources at a time when the population eligible for legal assistance was increasing at a rapid rate, creating a perfect storm that has forced the field to reconsider their role in increasing access to justice to those that need it most.



¹⁰ Source: LSC Funding Tables and Grant Activity Reports – 2012. LSC Grants and Related Support includes LSC basic field grants, interest/investment income, attorney fees, publication income, carryover funds, and other LSC funds. Other Federal Grants includes HHS Grants, Older Americans Act, Violence Against Women Act, HUD grants, and other federal grants.

The severity of the recession also created a new type of client for legal services organizations. Many middle class people who had previously lived comfortably above the income level necessary to qualify for legal aid were pushed below the poverty line following the economic crisis. Some legal services organizations began to see more cases from the “new poor,” which included suburban clients dealing with debt or housing issues. These clients differed from the traditionally urban population familiar to most legal aid societies, and many organizations expanded into more rural and suburban areas to offer assistance to this new class of people. However, most legal services programs still focus on serving the “poorest of the poor,” or people who have lived in poverty for most of their lives and often require assistance for multiple legal issues.

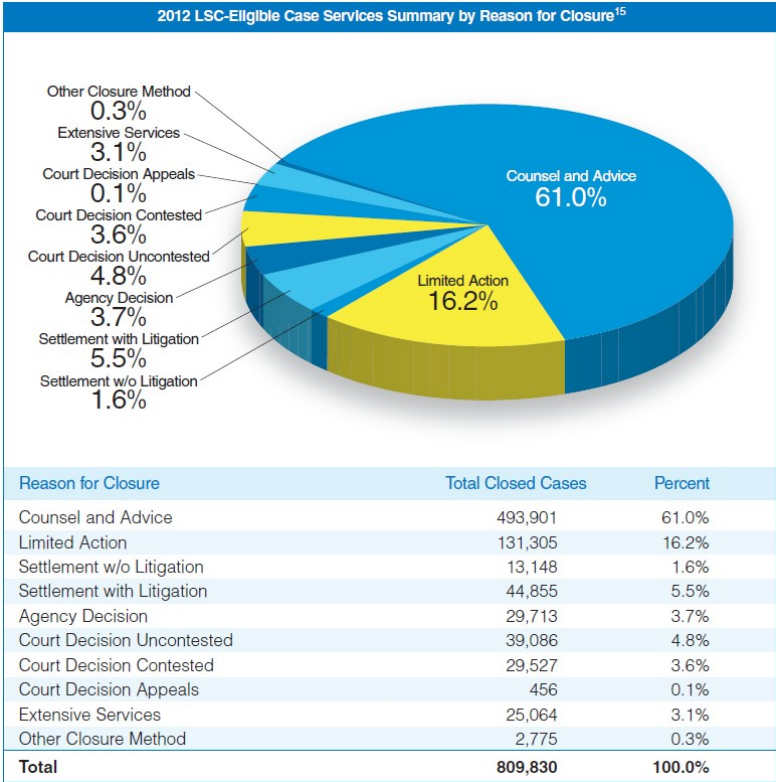
In response to this funding crisis, many organizations are now trying to develop creative sources of new funding that can provide some form of stability. In Tennessee, for example, legislators voted to use a portion of speeding fine revenue to fund legal services organizations. A similar effort was made in Texas, where a new “pole” tax on adult entertainment venues is used to contribute to legal services funding. Legal services attorneys play a key role in lobbying state legislatures to find creative ways to close the funding gap created by the decline of IOLTA revenue and federal funding.

Changes in funding have also had a major influence on the way legal services organizations deliver legal assistance to their clients. One of the most important trends in legal services today is a significant increase in what is called “limited representation.” For example, in some cases a program’s assistance could be limited to providing brief phone advice or assisting in the development of self-help centers.

Organizing pro se clinics and do-it-yourself Document preparation kits is another way that legal services organizations are attempting to adjust to the increased demand for legal assistance. Although full representation for every client would be ideal, organizations are learning that limited assistance can allow them to help more people with fewer resources.

These changes in both funding and the delivery of legal assistance have important implications for the future of legal services organizations. Some academics studying funding trends advise that law students entering the field remain flexible and recognize that they likely will spend more time than they anticipated on limited representation. Caseloads may be high, but the amount of time spent on each case will

continue to decline. Other experts on the field suggest that students interested in legal services work should prepare to think creatively about ways they



15 Source: LSC Grant Activity Reports – 2012.

can use the law to increase access to justice for poor people. For example, Richard Zorza, an independent consultant and coordinator of the National Self Represented Litigation Network, believes that the constant funding obstacles and the changing role of the legal services field in increasing access to justice will force legal service attorneys to innovate and develop new strategies to provide legal assistance to the poor. Understanding the current landscape for the field and recognizing the role that innovation will play in the future is crucial for law students to consider as they look to begin a career in legal services.

Notwithstanding the increased numbers of clients needing assistance and the strains on legal services lawyers to meet those needs, some attorneys passionately believe that they should not be focused solely on individual cases but on trying to erode barriers for those living in poverty. Jacqueline Bowman of Greater Boston Legal Services supports this enhanced role of legal aid, emphasizing that programs should avoid limiting their focus to simply solving immediate legal issues. Expanding access to justice and removing the institutional hurdles that prevent poor people from moving out of poverty, according to Bowman, are issues that deserve increased attention from legal services organizations. An example of this expansion that has gained momentum in recent years is the Civil Gideon movement, which advocates for a right to counsel in civil proceedings. Named in reference to the Supreme Court's landmark *Gideon v. Wainwright* decision in 1963, proponents of the movement are pushing for a civil system that mirrors the federal defender system. Advocates believe that a right to counsel in civil cases would represent a major step forward in bridging the justice gap in the United States. The success of the Civil Gideon movement would also ease some of the financial burden on civil legal services while transforming the role of legal aid organizations going forward. It is important for law students to be aware of these developments because they could have major implications on the future of the legal services field and the role of legal aid attorneys in increasing access to justice to those who need it most.

Section 4

Salary and Hiring Trends

Salaries for legal services lawyers tend to fall at the lower end of the public interest spectrum. Starting salaries usually range from \$40,000-\$50,000, with the national average at LSC- funded organizations in 2011 coming in at \$41, 528. These salaries typically vary depending upon geographic location. Ideally, legal services organizations offer pay increases of \$1,000-\$2,000 per year, but recent funding issues have made temporary salary freezes more common. Legal services organizations try to offset low pay with a generous benefits package, often offering more flexible hours and longer leave time than private firms.

Median Salaries for Attorneys by Type of Organization and Years of Experience -2004, 2008, and 2012

Years of Experience	Civil Legal Services			Public Defenders		
	2004	2008	2012	2004	2008	2012
Entry-level	\$34,000	\$40,000	\$42,800	\$39,000	\$47,400	\$50,500
5 years	40,000	48,000	50,200	50,000	60,000	62,800
11-15 years	51,900	60,000	64,900	65,000	75,000	78,600
Years of Experience	Local Prosecuting Attorneys			Public Interest Organizations		
	2004	2008	2012	2004	2008	2012
Entry-level	\$40,000	\$45,700	\$50,000	\$36,700	\$41,000	\$45,000
5 years	52,000	60,000	61,400	46,300	53,800	56,300
11-15 years	69,300	77,500	76,700	64,000	69,200	75,000

Source: National Association for Lawyer Placement (NALP): Research and Statistics, 2012, http://www.nalp.org/2012_pubint_salaries

During the peak of the funding crisis, legal services organizations struggled to find room for new attorneys and layoffs were more common than new hires. However, it appears that the worst is over and there may be opportunities for entry-level legal services positions if you know where to look for them. As veteran legal services lawyers begin to retire and funding becomes more steady, law students need to prepare themselves as potential candidates to fill these positions. For more information on how to find open positions and how to improve your application for a legal services job, see Section 5.

At HLS, students are fortunate to have the opportunity to take advantage of the Low Income Protection Plan (LIPP), through which HLS provides loan repayment assistance for graduates who work for relatively low-paying public interest organizations after law school. This program is especially important for students considering careers in legal services, as LIPP allows them to pursue these positions without the burden of large student loans. Programs like LIPP can offset the relatively low salaries offered by legal services organizations. For more information on LIPP for HLS students, visit their website at <http://www.law.harvard.edu/current/sfs/lipp/>.

Section 5 **Preparing for a Legal Services Job**

Because hiring at legal services organizations has declined in recent years, it is important to develop a strong general background in public interest work and specific experience working with low income clients if you want to land an entry-level position or even a fellowship at a legal services organization. Most programs focus more on an applicant's demonstrated commitment to public interest law and their practical experience in the field rather than their grades in law school. Law students who do not already have extensive experience working with low income clients need to take advantage of their time in law school to develop relevant skills and build a resume that tells a story about their dedication to starting a career in legal services.

Use Your Summers to Build Experience in Public Interest Work

Legal services organizations often hire attorneys straight out of law school, or with relatively little work experience. Therefore, most organizations look for students who have significant experience in public interest to help ease the transition into their program. In particular, legal services organizations look for a candidate's demonstrated commitment to helping the underprivileged through internships or volunteer experiences. Particularly for students who have not had such experiences before law school, summer law internships are an ideal way to accumulate them. Greg Schell emphasizes that when he reviews the resumes of potential candidates, he wants to see that there is a chance that they are going to stay in this work. Previous experience in public interest work can be an excellent way to demonstrate this type of long-term commitment. Most programs want candidates who are already comfortable working and interacting with people in poverty before they start work as a legal services attorney.

Spending your summers doing some type of public interest work, even if it isn't specifically legal services work, is important. Likewise, any work you do on behalf of indigent clients will enhance your chances of landing a legal services job after graduation. When applying for legal services jobs, whether for the summer or after law school, any experience working with the low-income and elderly, even if it is non-legal in nature such as serving food in a soup kitchen, or if it dates from before law school, should be included on your resume. In your cover letter and interview, stress your desire for direct client contact, as well as your commitment to serving indigent clients. Most legal services organizations are looking for someone that has both passion for working with the poor and the temperament to confront the challenges associated with this type of work. Summer experiences can be very helpful in demonstrating that you are committed and qualified to be a legal services attorney.

Finally, because so many legal services positions are now landed through fellowships, spending a summer at a legal services organization can enhance your chances of being sponsored for fellowships with that organization.

Language Skills

Language skills are a major advantage for candidates looking to begin a career in legal services. Because legal services organizations in many areas of the country are seeing an increase in Spanish-speaking clients, and are trying to leverage limited resources, fluency in Spanish can set you apart from other applicants with similar qualifications. In some legal services offices, Spanish fluency can be almost a prerequisite for a position. Proficiency in other foreign languages, especially Chinese and Vietnamese, is a major benefit for potential legal services candidates. The importance of specific language skills often varies depending on the region of the country in which you are looking to work, so make sure you research the geographic area and the demographics of the clients of particular legal services organizations before you inquire about positions there. However, in general, developing language skills (especially Spanish) is a critical advantage in a tough job market.

If you do not yet have fluency in a second language or in a language prevalent in the community in which you wish to work, you can use your time during law school to build language skills. In some law schools you will be able to cross register at your undergraduate institution or take a course in the evening division. You may also want to consider working in a country or a region of the U.S. that will immerse you in the language you want to develop. Finally, if you can afford it, an immersion course is a great investment. At HLS, a number of our students have enrolled in immersion programs that also have a social justice ethos.

Participate in Clinics and Use Your Time in Law School Wisely

Clinical work during law school is crucial to strengthen your application for a position in legal services. In fact, many organizations specifically look for clinical experience when considering an application. Clinical experience also helps law students improve their ability to work directly with clients and allows them to determine whether they can handle this type of work on a daily basis. As Jeff Purcell of Greater Boston Legal Services explains, “You can’t just teach people how to try cases—the way you learn to argue a case is to actually argue cases. Clinical programs are where you learn these skills.” At HLS, clinical placements that give you legal services-type exposure include the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau, the Community Lawyering Program of the Wilmer Hale Legal Services Center in Jamaica Plain and the Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinic at Greater Boston Legal Services. All of these placements provide you with the chance to work directly with low income clients in a community-based setting under the supervision of experienced advocates. Several of Harvard’s clinical externship placements can also provide you with valuable experience working on issues relevant to legal services clients; for example, the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute works on impact cases and policy advocacy on issues affecting the poor residents of Massachusetts. For more information on clinical courses, see Section 9 of this guide.

Student practice organizations and other extracurricular activities at HLS provide great opportunities to build practical experience relevant to legal services. For example, the Tenant Advocacy Project allows 1Ls to represent tenants in subsidized housing administrative hearings. Project No One Leaves, which is administered by the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau but open to 1Ls, enables students to work with community organizers to reach tenants facing potential eviction as a result of foreclosure to inform

them of their rights, help them organize, and connect them to lawyers who can fight their evictions. For more suggestions of extracurricular activities, see Section 9: Extracurricular Activities at HLS.

Although courses are not as important to prospective employers as practical experience, take advantage of the opportunity to take courses that will enable you to be better prepared to be an effective poverty lawyer. Courses that teach you how to be an advocate, such as evidence and trial techniques, are especially useful in preparing you for actual representation. But there are many other courses that can be helpful; this might include substantive law courses (such as housing law), courses on the systems that you work in (such as administrative law or federal courts), or courses that force you to think critically about the delivery of legal services. For more information on these types of courses at HLS, please see Section 9 of this guide. However, don't avoid all courses that appear at first blush as "corporate," as some of these can be very important to poverty lawyers as well. For example, many programs that are important to low income people are affected by the tax code, so taking a course on taxation can be very useful.

Finally, if you are an HLS student, OPIA is happy to guide you through all this as you explore legal services and try to develop a relevant track record.

Section 6

Finding a Position

Jobs at legal services organizations are often much more difficult to find than positions in the private sector. After you have developed a background in public interest work, it is important to research potential employers, inquire about possible fellowships with particular organizations, and reach out to specific programs in which you are interested to give yourself the best opportunity to find an entry-level position in a tough hiring market.

Evaluate Your Employment Options

Law students need to do research to evaluate what kind of legal services program is right for them. Deciding whether to work for a legal services organization that is at least partially federally funded or one that is non-federally funded is one consideration. LSC-funded organizations provide the opportunity to do extensive work with individual clients. However, LSC-funded programs are also restricted from certain kinds of legal work, and individuals wishing to do more impact work may have to think creatively in order to achieve results. Furthermore, because they rely on federal funding, their resources are often dependent on the state of the economy and the current federal government budget. Non-LSC-funded programs offer the opportunity to engage in unrestricted legal activity, but their financial futures, dependent upon private organizations and various sources, are often unpredictable. In recent years, though, they have actually fared better than LSC-funded programs because of their diversified funding sources. While LSC-funded programs struggled to overcome a decline in their major source of funding, non-LSC funded programs were able to respond better because they had other sources of funding that were not as dependent on the state of the economy.

When searching for jobs, it is important to research the financial history of the organization in which you may be interested. In particular, look for information on its sources of funding; if they are listed and easily available on their website, the organization is probably relatively stable in terms of funding. Furthermore, the larger and more diverse their sources of funding are, the more stable the organization is likely to be. Finding a stable program can increase both your chances of being hired and your ability to retain your position long-term.

In addition, pay close attention to the reputation and demographics of the legal services organization you are considering. Jonathan Asher of the Legal Aid Society of Metropolitan Denver explained, “Recent law school graduates ought to be enthusiastic about pursuing a career in legal services, but need to be careful where they do it. There are some places they will pick up bad legal habits.” He recommends contacting lawyers in the program’s community who know the reputation of the organization within the bar and with private attorneys and firms.

Finding a legal services organization that prioritizes issues you care about is also important. Do research on what types of cases the organization handles, and what kinds of community work and bar committees they are involved in. Furthermore, investigate the make-up of the organization. A mix of experience levels is

important, as a good legal services organization should have a balance of experienced veterans and young attorneys. You should also look for whether a program you are considering is doing the type of advocacy you want to do. If you want to do full-blown representation, you may want to avoid an office that is relying primarily on limited representation. Some offices take a pretty traditional approach, having clients come to them via intake and relying primarily on courtroom and administrative advocacy. Other programs are out in the community trying to identify clients that need assistance, working with community-based organizations, and sometimes even engaging in their own community organizing. Some programs are highly focused on individual cases; others, even those with federal funding restrictions, also emphasize law reform work. Figure out which mix of advocacy styles fits your own personality and work style and look for a program that matches you.

Find out how attorneys' legal work is supervised at the organization. Securing a helpful, more experienced mentor at a new job is critical, especially in a field like legal services, where conditions have fluctuated and changed in recent years.

Another factor related to supervision is the type of training that the program will offer you. How will they orient you initially at the program? Some legal services programs will not provide you with much initial training, expecting you to learn on the job, so you must be comfortable with that type of responsibility in order to be happy with the program. Others invest money in the professional development and training of their lawyers, sending staff to substantive conferences like the National Legal Aid and Defender Conference or trial trainings like the National Institute of Trial Advocacy. Still other programs are unable to fund such trainings. Figure out how important that type of training is to you and evaluate the programs you are looking at accordingly.

An additional aspect of legal services programs to consider is the individual attorney caseloads for different types of cases. Some programs are good about imposing control mechanisms on staff caseloads so that the attorneys have the appropriate time to devote to each case. As Beth Harrison states, "While there is always more that can be done, we aren't going to represent everyone because we know we can't—we try to keep case loads and hours manageable while doing high-quality representation." Other programs allow staff to regulate their own caseloads. The danger in the latter approach is that there may be pressure on the staff — because of the fact that there are always more clients who need help than there are advocates to help them — to keep taking on new cases even to the point where those cases cannot receive the attention that they need.

Think about the types of resources that you need to be a happy new lawyer and whether the program you are evaluating has them. Very few legal services programs have unfettered access to Lexis or Westlaw but many of them have good law libraries. Is the library at the program you're looking at adequate, or are you going to have to go elsewhere to do your legal research? In the resource category, is the program willing and able to spend the money to litigate cases? For example, if you need to take a deposition in a case, will the program authorize the funds? What if you need an expert witness—can the program afford to fund one if it is the right thing to do for a case? You will never find a legal services

program that has all the resources available at big firms, but you should look at the spectrum of programs and see which one meets your needs.

Perhaps most importantly, evaluate whether you find the staff at the program to be the type of people with whom you want to work. Legal services offices, as has been noted above, are usually very collegial. Attorneys often collaborate on litigation and other matters. It is essential that you relate well to, and even enjoy, the majority of the staff you will be working with. Many legal services lawyers say that their colleagues are one of the best parts of their jobs. As Jeff Purcell states, “One of the most important things about your job is your everyday experience and the relationships you have with the people you work with. Everyone in my office is working together—I would never say anything negative about anyone in my office. It is pretty gratifying.”

Fellowships

Because of the recent funding crisis in the legal services field, fellowships are now more important than ever when it comes to beginning a career with a legal services organization. In fact, in many cases fellowships are one of the only ways to land entry-level positions at legal aid offices in the current economic climate. Fellowships fund students to spend a year or two working with a particular program, which appeals to organizations that may be unable to afford to hire a new attorney with their own resources. A fellowship can also translate into a career opportunity at the completion of the project. Two of the more common fellowships used at legal services organizations are the Skadden Fellowship and the Equal Justice Works Fellowship. Students should strongly consider applying for fellowships, as they are an excellent way to get your foot in the door of a legal services organization in a tough hiring market. At HLS, students also use our own Kaufman, Skirnick and Public Service Venture Fund Fellowships to break into legal services jobs. If you are an HLS student or graduate, you can contact Judy Murciano, OPIA’s Fellowships Director, for more information about your funding options.

Network, Network, Network

It can be difficult to find information about openings within legal services when they do occur. Many legal services organizations don’t have the time or money to advertise their positions widely. Openings that are posted may be found on the website of the National Legal Aid and Defender Organization (NLADA), www.nlada.org, in the PSJD database, www.psjd.org, on Idealist (even though it is not specifically legal), or in the classified ads for the local legal periodical. At HLS, we post position announcements in HELIOS. However, because you might miss the one place a legal services office posts, if at all, making sure you are in a network of legal services lawyers can be critical to finding out about openings.

It is best to develop these contacts early in law school. Developing connections with legal services attorneys can help you both determine whether the field is the right fit for you and help you enter interviews with the ability to speak knowledgeably about why you want the position to begin with. If you are able to take time to volunteer with a program, the connections you make can be instrumental to

landing a position in the future. However, if you are unable to develop those contacts early in law school or are looking for jobs in a different geographic area than where you previously worked, simply reaching out to a legal services attorney that works in an office that interests you can be extremely beneficial as you look to find a job with that organization.

Section 7

Personal Narratives

Because the climate and nature of legal services work varies depending on both the geographic location and funding status of the organization, hearing about legal services work first-hand from HLS alumni throughout the country is a useful way to gain insight into the field. The four alumni whose narratives follow work for both LSC and non-LSC funded organizations, and have graciously offered to share their experiences with you.

**Dan Lindsey '90, Supervisory Attorney, Consumer Practice Group, LAF Chicago
Chicago, Illinois**

There are two reasons why I am a career legal aid lawyer. Both are reflected in the statement of an HLS friend of mine when he quit his corporate law firm job: “Dan, I finally got sick and tired of working 70 hours a week so that this mattress company could make more than that mattress company.”

I don't represent mattress companies, and I don't work 70 hours a week. My work matters, and I have a life outside of work. What more could I ask for?

Well, I guess I could ask for a copier that doesn't regularly jam, and a pest-free office, and a salary that keeps pace with inflation—but I can live without those. I cannot live without a job that matters, or with a job that denies me an outside life.

Every day I get up and go to work knowing I am making a difference in the lives of our society's most vulnerable citizens. At LAF, we fight to keep people from losing life's most precious goods: a home, a car, a job, a child, and residency.

I work in our Consumer Practice Group. I mostly fight to keep people in their homes. Here is a typical day in the life.

Every day I get up and go to work knowing I am making a difference in the lives of our society's most vulnerable citizens.

I arrive at work and check my e-mail. Ms. Jones' lender has *finally* sent us a loan modification offer after we submitted the same paperwork five times over the course of several months, then waited another 60 days to hear from the lender. I look at the offer. The terms are good. The lender says the offer must be signed and returned by July 9. I double-check the date on my wall calendar: July 10. Sigh. I am tempted to send a snarky e-mail advising the lender that our limited legal aid budget does not enable us to purchase a time machine. Instead I send a diplomatic response citing the lender's error and promising a timely response.

My inbox includes a fax from Mr. Smith. He found his tax returns for the last four years, which we need

to submit in connection with a bankruptcy we filed to save his home. I review his latest tax return. I am no tax expert, but I know that 6,000 minus 2,000 does not equal 400. Mr. Smith owes some taxes. We are going to have to amend his schedules. I call and leave a message.

Another e-mail is actually a voice mail from a reporter asking me to call her about a pending bill on vacant and abandoned properties. I call her right away. I like to keep reporters happy.

I ignore the e-mail about timekeeping records, answer the one from a private attorney asking for strategic advice on his foreclosure case, and open the motion to compel that my new attorney needs me to review. The lender doesn't want to give us the business records related to the mortgage securing our client's home. It's because the mortgage was taken out by our client's deceased mother, from whom he inherited the property. The lender says it can't provide the records we want because this would violate privacy laws—the privacy of the dead mom. I imagine adding a snarky sentence about a shovel, a pen, and a waiver. Instead I beef up the paragraph on why we need this information: without it our client can't figure out what taxes are owed, and he will lose the family homestead. I make the changes and hit send.

It's time for court. I'm up on an emergency motion to postpone sale. The bank wants to foreclose even though there is a loan mod application pending, which they're supposed to process first. They claim they properly processed the app. I've got a housing counselor affidavit that says otherwise. The housing counselor says the only denial came over the phone, and the borrower was told, quote, "You're too old to get a loan mod." It will be fun if the lender tries to rely on that.

Sure enough, the lender backs off, and we live to mod another day. We're in on these motions every week. Stuff that should be a no-brainer, since everyone wins with a loan mod, and everyone loses with a sale—but without us the lenders would sell the homes every time.

After my hearing I'm off to a Supreme Court Rules Committee meeting. Because of my years focusing on defending low-income homeowners, I've been appointed to a special committee convened by the state supreme court. We're to draft and recommend foreclosure rules to help homeowners facing foreclosure, and to curb the chaos prevailing in the court system. We will eventually submit rules which the Supreme Court will adopt, requiring more robust loss mitigation and mediation in foreclosure cases.

After my meeting, it's back to the office for a strategy session in advance of an upcoming trial. This is one of our foreclosure rescue fraud cases, one of the consumer law niches we helped create in recent years. We've filed over 100 of these cases, and a few have now gone to trial. Scammers prey on homeowners by offering special programs to save the home from foreclosure; instead, the home is stolen, the equity is stripped, and the homeowners become mere tenants soon facing eviction. This will be a particularly gratifying trial. We'll get to ask our client about the man who scammed her (and hundreds of others), the man she testified against in a recent federal mail fraud trial, and the man who will be wearing an orange jump suit for the next 18 years. We will be trying to get her home back, or at least as much of the stripped equity as possible.

As the day winds down I check my e-mail again. I ignore another message on timekeeping. I provide some more advice to an attorney, help a colleague who strolls into my office with some questions, look at some new case decisions, confirm that I'll do a webinar about the Supreme Court rules once they issue, and check my calendar. I'm on intake tomorrow. I read the intake notes and do some quick on-line research in advance on my intakes (a foreclosure, a debt buyer action, a car repo case, and a utility shutoff).

Thus ends a day in the life. Some themes emerge. My day is busy, varied, and never dull (unless I do the timekeeping). I get to do important work for clients who really need my help, and really appreciate it. I get to work with smart, dedicated colleagues. I learn something new every day.

And, to be a little more specific, since I mostly fight banks and lenders and finance companies, I get to fight on the side of the angels. The wealth gap grows ever wider in our society, as those primarily responsible for The Great Recession of 2007 have largely skated free. It is my clients who have felt the brunt of that recession. It is always my clients who feel the brunt. But I get to fight these Powers That Be, on behalf of the Little Guy. I get to balance the scales of justice, just a bit.

One last thing. If it's a Thursday after Labor Day, I am leaving the office at 4 p.m. sharp to coach soccer. I can do that. I can go to school concerts, swim meets, plays, practices, recitals. I can take a 2- to 3-week family vacation every summer. People here realize that our work matters, but that life outside work matters, too.

Recently, when the life of our dear friend, colleague, and career legal aid lawyer Bill Kolen was cut short by the scourge of cancer, our agency virtually shut down on the day of his memorial service. It was a given that we could all go to the service, on agency time. Bill embodied the best in legal aid lawyering. He had a consuming passion to fight for the downtrodden, but a passion tempered with a kindness and humility reminding us that we are lawyers second, human beings first. I am privileged to work in a place where that truth is lived out every day.

**Greg Schell '79, Managing Attorney, Migrant Farmworker Justice Project
Lake Worth, Florida**

Back in prehistoric days—before the internet, personal computers and the OPIA—few public interest groups recruited at HLS. In my third year, I recall fewer than a dozen such organizations showing up in Cambridge, so those of thinking about public interest careers scrambled to interview with these groups. Knowing nothing about the organization or their work (remember, no internet, no public interest hiring guides), I signed up to chat with a representative from Florida Rural Legal Services. I could tell from the outset that this would be a different kind of job — heck, I was overdressed, because the FRLS recruiter showed up in blue jeans and a flannel shirt. For the next hour or so, he regaled me with tales about a small farming town in southwest Florida, stories that seemed fantastic and exaggerated. I knew nothing about Florida or farmworkers, but it was the only public interest job I was offered, so I accepted the position to work in Immokalee, Florida, at the princely salary of \$9,500 per year. I considered this akin to a Peace Corps stint, a few years learning a bit about the practice of law and then on to bigger and better things, in a more hospitable location.

More than three decades later, I am still representing migrant farmworkers in Florida in employment matters. I discovered that the recruiter had actually understated the conditions that the farmworkers faced and the incredible hostility of the local legal and economic establishment to advocacy pressed on their behalf. But I also learned that the law can be a truly powerful tool on behalf of the disenfranchised and disadvantaged. And I also found that creative lawyering could use fairly mundane legal disputes to establish legal precedents that literally transformed the working conditions for millions of low-wage workers across the nation. I had the privilege of representing the finest group of clients any lawyer could ever have, and to become a far better lawyer than I ever anticipated when I left HLS. And, to top it all off, I never had to wear a tie to work.

Since I started, I have always worked in a local legal services office setting, talking on a daily basis with farmworkers needing legal help with a range of employment-related problems. Besides the omnipresent complaints of wage underpayment, workers come to our office with complaints of serious safety and health problems, often caused by exposure to toxic pesticides or unsafe working conditions, or sexual harassment by their supervisors. Almost all of these problems stem from a longstanding problem—low-wage workers in general, and farmworkers in particular, are relatively powerless vis a vis their employers. By law, farmworkers are denied many of the basic employment rights most Americans take for granted. They are excluded from the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act; the McDonald's worker is paid overtime wages for putting the lettuce and tomato on a burger, but the law denies overtime pay to the worker who harvested those vegetables. On smaller farms, employers are not even required to pay their workers the minimum wage. In half of the states, farmworkers are not entitled to worker's compensation coverage for workplace accidents. And, probably not coincidentally, farmworkers are excluded from the National Labor Relations Act; so, except in the handful of states that have adopted statutes guaranteeing farmworkers the right to collectively bargain, farmworkers have no protection when

their employer inevitably retaliates in response to collective efforts on their part to boost wages or working conditions.

Sad to say, but the lot of farmworkers has noticeably worsened in the years I have been advocating on their behalf, in large part because of a chronic labor surplus caused by our immigration laws. In 1986, over 1.2 million farmworkers received permanent resident status under the Immigration Reform and Control Act. By 1988, fully 95% of America's farmworkers were documented. However, although the 1986 law required employers to check the immigration status of new hires, law enforcement and the allure of cheap, exploitable labor quickly changed the composition of the farm labor workforce. The newly legalized farmworkers were promptly displaced in favor of vulnerable undocumented workers and guest workers legally imported from Mexico and the Caribbean. Adam Smith was right; a surplus of available labor leads to depressed wages and working conditions, the situation that is the norm in American agriculture.

Some advocates would find these circumstances depressing and discouraging. Certainly, there are dark days, when the odds seem hopelessly stacked against our clients. However, there are many more days when my colleagues and I have been able to overcome these odds and win victories for our clients. And on more than a few occasions, these victories have fundamentally changed the lives of farmworkers and other low-wage workers across the country.

I also found that creative lawyering could use fairly mundane legal disputes to establish legal precedents that literally transformed the working conditions for millions of low-wage workers across the nation. I had the privilege of representing the finest group of clients any lawyer could ever have, and to become a far better lawyer than I ever anticipated when I left HLS.

I am often asked if I regret having attended HLS, given that I have devoted my entire career to providing free legal services to poor migrant workers. I answer with an emphatic "No!" The poor and dispossessed who dare to battle major corporations or the government start out with a slew of disadvantages and challenges. Many of these shortcomings can be overcome through aggressive, smart lawyering by passionate attorneys. Not only did I receive excellent training at HLS, but more importantly, I lost any fear of the hot shot national firms that so often are our opponents in major cases. After all, these were my classmates at HLS, or lawyers from similar backgrounds. Like the football coach likes to tell his undermanned team when they face a bruising opponent: our opponents are just like us — they put on their pants one leg at a time. Because I am not intimidated by opposing counsel, many of whom are included on the list of the nation's finest lawyers, I am unafraid to trot out novel theories to achieve justice for my clients. And having attended HLS, with its heavy corporate law emphasis, I have a pretty good sense as to how to craft arguments to appeal to a judiciary filled with graduates from the big private firms. While I was far from the smartest in my HLS class — I was a fairly undistinguished student at HLS — I have had a hand in

a remarkable number of precedential decisions of nationwide importance, almost all of which were victories for the indigent plaintiffs. The lessons learned at HLS, both inside and outside the classroom, have contributed immensely to this success.

Coming out of law school, I didn't give much consideration to the setting in which I would practice. Many talented public interest lawyers practice in appellate-type practices. These groups rarely are in the community where their clients reside, and usually have their cases referred to them by lawyers or other advocates working directly with the clients. While these public interest organizations often end up winning important legal victories for their clients, they rarely were involved in litigating the original dispute that has now presented a court with a significant question of law. It is unusual for these public interest groups far removed from the community where the case arose to have engaged in extensive conversations with their erstwhile clients about their objectives in bringing suit. My situation is quite different. I am involved with the case from the initial intake interview, and my clients and I together help develop legal strategies to attack the problem they presented to me that first day. As the case progresses through the legal system, my clients and I together plot how best to obtain the results they desire from the litigation. Many times, I am able to add my broader perspective in these discussions to persuade the plaintiffs to look beyond the immediate dispute in an effort to correct structural or institutional practices that produced their problems in the first place. This process, which is empowering to the clients, is something many lawyers in traditional public interest settings never experience. For me, this is a part of the job I am not willing to forgo for a setting far removed from my clients.

I am also often asked if my work doesn't become repetitive and even boring. Hardly! Employers have a seemingly boundless capacity to develop schemes to shortchange their workers. As the situation of my client population has collectively worsened over the years, and the courts have turned increasingly pro-business, it has become a much greater challenge to prevail on behalf of our clients. When I first started out, we won almost every case, often without much difficulty. That is no longer true. The victories come less frequently (although we still win the overwhelming majority of our cases), and only with an exceptional effort of our part. I guess I thrive somewhat on the David vs. Goliath nature of our work, and the ever greater odds against us serve as a great motivator. For me personally, the best part of my practice is my interaction with a group of clients I greatly admire and who are enormously appreciative of my efforts on their behalf. Their cause is just and straightforward — they simply want to be paid a fair day's wage for a fair day's work, and to be treated with respect at their jobs. These are principles that are neither liberal nor conservative, and about which most judges and juries can agree. It is my job to help my clients articulate and present their concerns to an audience, be it a judge or jury, that knows little of my clients' world or their struggles. In this role, I am more of a sociologist and story teller than a traditional lawyer.

I still have the same sort of practice I did when I left HLS in 1979, something of an oddity among public interest attorneys. I have chosen not to become an administrator or manager, or to move on to a more

traditional public interest practice or to work with a law school clinical program. This is indeed a choice — I simply love my work and still relish every day at the office. My salary is no longer \$9,500, but it remains just over half of what the top New York firms are offering their first year associates. Nonetheless, I have been able to purchase a home, raise a family and build a modest retirement portfolio. And I suspect my rewards in terms of job satisfaction outstrip those of many of my classmates who have chosen more lucrative careers upon leaving HLS. For HLS students considering a life-long career in public interest work, I would urge them to seek out a practice about which they are and will remain passionate. The work setting is important. I have been fortunate to work in programs with directors who have been strongly supportive of my work, even when it generated substantial political backlash. My directors have not only tolerated, but have encouraged, pushing the proverbial envelope with novel, even audacious, theories. There is no chance that I would have been able to remain in this line of work without such support and encouragement from above.

Beth Harrison '03, Supervising Attorney and Director, Court Based Legal Services Project, Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia

Many new attorneys ask me what the “average” day in my practice is like. As a legal services attorney, I find this question impossible to answer. One of the things I love about my job is the wide variety of things that I do and the different parts of my brain that I use. I am part-time litigator, part-time social worker, part-time supervisor, part-time policy advocate.

I have been an attorney in the Housing Unit at the Legal Aid Society of DC for eight years. I am now a Supervising Attorney and the Director of one of our court-based offices. And here are some highlights from an "average" week:

* * *

Monday: Hearing in court with a law firm associate on loan to my office for six months whom I supervise. The judge authorizes our client to use the rent money on deposit with the court to hire a contractor to make thousands of dollars in repairs. A small but important victory for our client and her children.

Back at the office, I am working up a new case in which we represent a tenant association in a 75-unit building fighting a 50% rent increase under rent control. We make plans to hold an evening meeting at the building next week.

Tuesday: Two-hour meeting with the local agency charged with enforcing the housing code about proposed regulatory changes. We spend an hour debating the right standard for heat and air conditioning. I promise to send them revised regulatory language in two days.

Meanwhile, I am engaged in a flurry of emails back and forth with the opposing counsel in one of my cases, debating repairs and access to my client's apartment. I have an intern drafting discovery responses in the same case.

Wednesday: Meeting of housing advocates at our office to brainstorm legislative proposals to address mold in residential housing. We share research about what other states are doing and talk strategy.

I am late to the meeting, because one of my longstanding clients with serious mental illness has dropped by without an appointment. I found out this morning that her legal guardian is forcing her to give up her apartment. I have successfully fended off four separate eviction cases against her during the past four years. I struggle to explain what is about to happen.

Thursday: I spend several hours mapping out a trial plan for a complicated rent control case that I am co-counseling with two attorneys in my office. The case involves three attempted rent increases, a parallel bankruptcy case, complex accounting formulas, and claims of housing code violations, retaliation, and bad faith. I estimate the trial will take at least nine full days — and I cannot wait.

Friday: I spend most of the day in our courthouse office, where we provide same-day representation to low-income tenants facing eviction. My client — whom I just met — has his trial today. We review the facts, his evidence, likely outcomes, and his options for settlement. I negotiate back and forth with the landlord's attorney. The landlord's story changes with each new round. In the end, the judge grants our request for a continuance to gather new evidence.

Back at the office, almost 5:00 p.m. on the dot, and one of my current clients calls. His toilet has not worked for two days. I tell him there is not much we can do until Monday, but I will have a serious chat with the landlord right now. On my way home, I cross my fingers that my client will have plumbing this weekend.

In between all of this, I am reviewing new intakes, working with our pro bono coordinator to place cases, mentoring some of those pro bono attorneys, meeting with staff attorneys to check in and reviewing their drafts, fielding telephone calls from former clients with new issues, and providing brief advice to applicants who we cannot help.

* * *

My job takes me to court several times a week. I do the things that most litigators do: file pleadings, conduct discovery, argue motions, conduct evidentiary hearings, negotiate settlements, and occasionally have trials. I also work on various law reform projects intended to change the larger system, including agency reform, legislative advocacy, and appellate litigation. I supervise newer attorneys and guide their early professional development. I enjoy all of these things, but none of them are the reason I do the work that I do.

I love my job because it lets me form professional and personal relationships with people who are very different than me in so many ways: income, race, education, age, geography, and everything in between. Many of them have serious disabilities, struggling with mental illness or physical limitations. When our relationships work well, we become partners trying to solve problems together. I empathize but I know that I cannot care too much — I cannot absorb all of my clients' struggles. They reward me with hugs, tears, and ultimately their trust. Sometimes we win, sometimes we lose, but always my job is to center my work around them, empower them, and fight for them.

It is not all roses. I struggle with incompetent government agencies, unprofessional opposing counsel, and difficult judges. I work within a system that devalues my clients and their cases, a system that sometimes says I am not a "real attorney" and my work does not matter. I have my share of clients who never trust me, or disappear, or complain about me, or end up being evicted after hours of work. Every day, I see unfairness. Every day, I see the human effects of poverty.

But every day there also is the hope that what I am doing can make a difference for a real family with very real problems. I would not have it any other way.

**Nicole Dooley '09, Attorney, JustChildren Program of the Legal Aid Justice Center
Petersburg, VA**

Just about every day at the Legal Aid Justice Center (LAJC) starts the same for me – I sit down at my desk with a cup of tea and check my email and task list for the day. The day never contains itself to that task list, of course, but it's always a good place to start.

As an education attorney at JustChildren, the child advocacy program of LAJC, the task list usually includes drafting demand letters to school districts on behalf of children who have been suspended from school or aren't receiving appropriate special education services (or both), calling the firm that represents most of the school districts in the area to discuss recent letters or requests, or evaluating medical records for families I represent in their applications for disability benefits for their children.

A typical case for me might be a student in sixth or seventh grade, a year or two older than you would expect for that grade level, who has long struggled in school both academically and behaviorally. The school has not done enough to address these issues, passing the student from grade to grade, despite clear signals that the student's needs are not being met. Most parents don't know any avenues they have to demand additional services. Many parents who ask for extra help or for their child to be evaluated for special services are told no. They come to us after their child starts receiving longer and more numerous out-of-school suspensions for behavior related to their difficulties understanding material in class. I will help the family identify and request services the school should be providing to address the student's difficulties.

Other parents come to us after they have been turned down multiple times in their application for disability benefits for a child who has struggled for years in school due to ADHD or an emotional disability, and the parents cannot afford the extra services the child needs to overcome the impairment created by that disability. I represent the family at a hearing before an administrative law judge, presenting the evidence showing that the child qualifies for federal benefits designed to provide resources to address the child's disability.

I went to law school with the express purpose of becoming a child advocate. Before HLS, I taught seventh grade in Atlanta Public Schools, and saw firsthand the enormous hurdles poor students, especially those of color, face in achieving academic success. I became a lawyer so I could be a more effective advocate for children, fighting for them to receive the education that every child ought to be afforded, independent of wealth, race, or location. I am now able to do that, although through my individual case work I am only able to help a fraction of the students in the area that are not being appropriately served.

However, these individual cases take up about half of my time, with the other half devoted to more systemic work. This work for me includes addressing more systemic issues with individual school districts through litigation and less formal means; advocating for children's educational rights in front of the state

Board of Education; and working with other advocacy groups to expand access to public pre-school, which is not universal in Virginia.

Recently, for example, I appeared before Virginia's Board of Education as they began the process to make significant changes to the state regulations for accrediting public schools. I gave public comment advocating for paying greater attention to reducing rates of suspensions in public schools, and will continue to advocate before the board to make this change until the regulation changes become final. After having appeared before the Board each month for several months, continuing a long tradition of JustChildren advocacy before the Board, individual board members have thanked me for JustChildren's thoughtful input and have taken my suggestions into account when implementing state regulations.

At the end of each day, after finishing up phone calls to parents, sending letters to school districts, putting the finishing touches on a public comment, or participating in a conference call with other advocates, I record my time for the day and check my task list for the next day. With each day's own individual frustrations and triumphs, I can't imagine putting my law degree to better use.

Section 8

Legal Services Websites

<http://www.lsc.gov/local-programs/program-profiles>

A list of LSC-funded programs can be found here, as well as other information about the Legal Services Corporation.

<http://www.nlada.org/Jobs>

The NLADA is an excellent resource for finding current job postings at legal services organizations across the country. Visit their website to view these postings.

http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_services.html

This is the homepage for the American Bar Association's Division for Legal Services. It contains links to news stories, job announcements, and directories of legal services organizations.

<http://legalaid.uslegal.com/>

Although this website is not an official source of information about legal services organizations, it contains several non-LSC funded organizations and can be a useful starting point when searching for potential employers.

<http://www.probono.net/>

This website provides resources for pro bono and legal services attorneys and others looking to assist low income or disadvantaged clients.

Note: There is currently no comprehensive list of all of the legal aid organizations in the United States. However, if you have a particular state in mind, you can look up its IOLTA funding recipients and find a list of organizations that may be a good starting point when researching possible employers. You can also look at the state's bar foundation websites and see if they have lists of organizations that qualify as legal services programs.

Section 9

Extracurricular Activities At HLS

Extracurricular activities at HLS can be a great way to meet others who are interested in legal services and get some practical experience in the field. The following is a list of some of the student organizations at Harvard Law School that relate to legal services.

Child and Youth Advocates

Child and Youth Advocates (CYA) brings together students interested in a wide variety of children's issues, including child welfare, juvenile justice, and education. They aim to heighten awareness and encourage discussion of these issues at HLS, facilitate student involvement with children and youth in Cambridge and Boston, and advocate for children's rights in various contexts. CYA organizes and coordinates volunteer activities with several children's organizations in the Boston area. Volunteers may help with one-time events or get involved on an ongoing basis. Through the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program, students advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children involved in juvenile court proceedings. Serving as an educational advocate, tutoring a child in Cambridge public schools, or participating in conferences, panels or brown-bag lunch discussions with faculty are other ways in which students can become involved. CYA also works closely with HLS's Child Advocacy Program, which provides even more opportunities for students to engage in children's issues. In addition, students may find support to start their own projects. For more information about Child and Youth Advocates, visit their website at <http://www3.law.harvard.edu/orgs/cya/>.

Harvard Defenders

Harvard Defenders, a Harvard Law School Student Practice Organization (SPO), is the only legal service organization in Massachusetts that represents low-income defendants for free in criminal show-cause hearings. Each year, Harvard Defenders represents clients accused of a wide variety of crimes, including assault and battery, larceny, shoplifting, assault with a dangerous weapon, criminal harassment, and identity fraud. In addition, for those with legal issues not related to show-cause hearings, Defenders' full-time telephone referral service helps callers understand their legal needs and directs them to other legal service agencies. All substantive student casework is supervised by attorney John Salsberg, who has served as Harvard Defenders Clinical Instructor since 1980. Through individual instruction and group meetings, John provides continual support, training, and oversight to students who meet with him regularly to discuss case details and develop appropriate case strategies. For more information about the Harvard Defenders, visit their website at <http://www.law.harvard.edu/academics/clinical/defenders/>.

Harvard Immigration Project

The Harvard Immigration Project (HIP) is a SPO at Harvard Law School. It provides community outreach, education and advocacy, and pro bono legal representation to immigrants through four main projects:

Community Outreach and Training, Immigration Services, Iraqi Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), and Bond Hearing Representation. As members of the Harvard Immigration Project, LLMs, first, second, and third-year law Harvard Law students work as part of student-led teams under the supervision of a clinical instructor and local pro bono attorneys, and in collaboration with local, national, and international legal and policy organizations to promote immigrants' rights. In addition, HIP hosts a number of events and trainings for members throughout the school year including speakers, career and academic advising, and direct action campaigns. For more information about the Harvard Immigration Project, visit its website at <http://www3.law.harvard.edu/orgs/hip/>.

Harvard Negotiators

Harvard Negotiators is an HLS student organization that enables law students to become actively involved in the field of negotiation and dispute resolution by working with real clients. Using the core concepts developed by faculty and researchers at the Program on Negotiation, Harvard Negotiators creates teams to design systems for dealing with internal disputes, conduct conflict assessments of complex real-life situations, or provide advice for upcoming negotiations. All interested HLS students are invited to join regardless of experience level. The Negotiators work closely with Professor Bordone's Harvard Negotiation and Mediation Clinical Program. The clinical program is the for-credit option for students interested in working with clients in the fields of negotiation, dispute resolution, and conflict management. For more information about the Harvard Negotiators, visit their office at 513 Pound Hall, or their website at <http://www3.law.harvard.edu/orgs/negotiators/>.

Prison Legal Assistance Project

The Prison Legal Assistance Project (PLAP), another Harvard SPO, represents Massachusetts prisoners in administrative hearings. Student attorneys serve as advocates for prisoners charged with violating prison regulations, as well as representing clients in parole and revocation hearings before the Massachusetts Parole Board. PLAP also provides research assistance for inmates facing legal difficulties, and occasionally litigates cases in state and federal courts. PLAP gives its members, including 1Ls, full responsibility over their cases and offers them the opportunity to represent clients at hearings. A concise training program, along with the continuing guidance of the PLAP office manager and supervising attorney, allows students to receive the skills necessary to provide effective representation of their clients. For more information about PLAP, visit its website at <http://www.law.harvard.edu/academics/clinical/plap/>.

Project No One Leaves

Project No One Leaves' mission is to empower citizens living in foreclosed properties to protect their homes and communities through grassroots organizing, legal education, and civic engagement. It aims to bring together tenants and owners, students and neighbors, and individuals of all backgrounds to achieve this common purpose. In Boston, Massachusetts, Project No One Leaves works in conjunction with City Life/Vida Urbana to inform tenants and former homeowners of their rights. Project volunteers also work with legal services lawyers to fight post-foreclosure evictions, and work with Boston Community Capital

to help some former homeowners buy back their homes. For more information on Project No One Leaves, visit its website at <http://www.projectnooneleaves.org/>.

Tenant Advocacy Project

The Harvard Tenant Advocacy Project (TAP) is an SPO dedicated to representing residents of public and subsidized housing before local housing authorities. TAP provides badly needed assistance to low- and moderate-income tenants who are facing eviction or who have been denied admission to public housing or a subsidy program. TAP also provides advice on general landlord-tenant questions. TAP offers 1Ls the opportunity to do hands-on lawyering by handling every aspect of their cases from the initial client interview to the trial-like hearing. TAP members are supervised by attorneys. For more information of TAP, visit its website at <http://www.law.harvard.edu/academics/clinical/tap/>.

Section 10

Academic Paths at HLS

Courses at HLS can be very useful in helping you prepare for a career in legal services by providing you with more information about both public interest law in general and the work of legal services organizations in particular.

COURSE OFFERINGS

The following is a partial list of course offerings that may be helpful to students interested in or curious about legal services. Note that these courses may or may not always be available for enrollment. For the most recent course listings and descriptions, visit the online course catalogue at <http://www.law.harvard.edu/academics/curriculum/catalog/index.html>.

- Access to Civil Justice
- Administrative Law
- The Art of Social Change: Child Welfare, Education, and Juvenile Justice
- Child, Family, and State
- Community Economic Development
- Seminar: Critical Perspectives on the Law: Issues of Race, Gender, Class, and Social Change
- Education Advocacy and Systemic Change: Children at Risk
- Family Law
- Gender Violence, Law and Social Justice
- Immigration Law
- Law and Economic Development
- Law and Social Change
- Legal Profession: Delivery of Legal Services
- Legal Profession: The Responsibilities of Public Lawyers
- Local Government Law
- Mediation
- Poverty Law
- Public Interest Lawyering
- Theory and Practice of Social Change

CLINICS

Harvard Law School has one of the most extensive clinical legal education programs in the country. Clinical courses have required or optional clinical components in which students can undertake legal work for academic credit. Some clinical courses focus on lawyering skills, ethics and professional responsibility, while others emphasize subject matter doctrine, policy and theory. Clinical experience is crucial for those looking to begin a career in legal services. The following is a list of clinical courses relevant to legal services:

- Child Advocacy Clinic (note that many of these placements can be more law reform or policy-oriented)
- Education Law Clinic: Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative
- Veteran’s Law, Disability Benefits and Estate Planning Clinic (At the WilmerHale Legal Services Center)
- Judicial Process in Community Courts Clinic
- Employment Law Clinic
- Family, Domestic Violence, and LGBT Law Clinic: Litigating in Family Court (At the WilmerHale Legal Services Center)
- Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinic
- Harvard Legal Aid Bureau
- Post-Foreclosure Eviction Defense/Housing Law Clinic (At the WilmerHale Legal Services Center)
- Predatory Lending and Consumer Protection Clinic (At the WilmerHale Legal Services Center)

For more information on the HLS Clinical and Pro Bono Programs, visit their website at

<http://www.law.harvard.edu/academics/clinical/index.html>