

Returning Citizens Community Reintegration Fellowship Opportunity Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia

The Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia seeks applicants to sponsor for an Equal Justice Works and/or Skadden Fellowship. The Fellow will work with Legal Aid's new and growing Returning Citizens Community Reintegration Project on a project to provide comprehensive civil legal services to low-income individuals and families impacted by criminal records. The Fellow will focus on litigation, outreach, and advocacy with the ultimate goals of addressing and removing barriers to housing, employment, and public benefits and facilitating successful family and community reunification for returning citizens.

The Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia was formed in 1932 to "provide legal aid and counsel to indigent persons in civil law matters and to encourage measures by which the law may better protect and serve their needs." Over the last 85 years, tens of thousands of the District's neediest residents have been served by Legal Aid staff and volunteers. We currently work in the following four priority areas: housing law, family/domestic violence law, public benefits law, and consumer law. Legal Aid also has a nationally recognized appellate advocacy project. To learn more about Legal Aid, visit our website at www.LegalAidDC.org and our blog at www.MakingJusticeReal.org. Legal Aid has successfully sponsored both Equal Justice Works and Skadden Fellows in the past, and our staff includes numerous current and former fellows. Legal Aid will assist the applicant we select in formulating a project to present to the fellowship programs.

Returning citizens in the District of Columbia face myriad obstacles in reentering their communities and moving toward economic and social stability. Having exited jail or prison, they often are confronted with barriers—including those erected by prejudice, stigma, and bureaucracy. The Project's aim is to reduce these barriers through litigation, outreach, and advocacy. The Fellow will work with attorneys across Legal Aid's practice areas and will benefit from the subject matter expertise of each unit's attorneys while significantly expanding Legal Aid's capacity to focus specifically on challenges faced by returning citizens. The Fellow will handle a caseload of matters related directly to criminal records, including criminal record sealing cases and Human Rights Complaints relating to "Ban the Box" violations in the employment and housing contexts. In addition, the Fellow will handle reentry-related cases arising in our existing practice areas, including advocating for the reinstatement of public benefits for returning citizens and challenging the denial of subsidized housing applications.

The Fellow will also conduct outreach in cooperation with nonprofit and governmental organizations that serve returning citizens, both to identify potential clients and to provide general "know your rights" trainings. Moreover, the Fellow will organize and help lead a coalition of other legal services providers, community members, and other stakeholders to advocate for better legislation and better governmental policies to benefit returning citizens in the District.

Ideal candidates will be law students entering their third year or recent graduates who expect to complete a judicial clerkship in the summer of 2018. The successful candidate must have a commitment to public interest and a desire to work in a collaborative work environment.

Legal Aid values an inclusive, diverse workplace and encourages applications from interested persons from diverse backgrounds of any race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, personal appearance, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, genetic information, or any other legally protected status. We strongly encourage applications from people with personal experience with the criminal justice system and/or with lived experiences in the communities we serve. Fluency in Spanish or another language commonly used by Legal Aid's client community is preferred, but not required.

Applications will be considered on a rolling basis, so applicants are encouraged to apply early. Fellowship applications must be submitted in the fall of 2017. The fellowship, if awarded, will begin in the fall of 2018 and is anticipated to last two years.

To apply, please send cover letter and resume by email to:

fellowsearch@legalaiddc.org

Attn: Fellowship Candidate Search Committee
Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia

Additional information, such as writing samples, transcripts, and references, will be sought from those selected to interview with Legal Aid.