



Housing Justice Project – FAQ (volunteers)

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

Attorneys

- Register and attend the full-day HJP CLE (offered each fall in Kent and each winter in Seattle) or watch a previously recorded training
- Complete and return the volunteer application to the appropriate Program Manager
- Sign up for 3 or 4 training sessions at your preferred location

Legal Assistants

- Complete and return the volunteer application to a coordinator
- Attend a group or one-on-one training session scheduled with the appropriate Program Manager
- Sign up for 3 or 4 training sessions at your preferred location

WHAT IS THE VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT?

Volunteer attorneys are asked to make a one-year commitment to the Housing Justice Project after attending the introductory CLE. Attorneys volunteer once per month (a weekday morning, 8:30 to 11:30am or a Monday or Thursday afternoon, 4:00 to 6:00pm).

Volunteer legal assistants are asked to make a 6-month commitment. Legal assistants volunteer once per week (a set weekday morning, 8:00am to 12noon or Monday or Thursday afternoon, 4:00 to 6:00pm). Scheduling is done quarterly and can be flexible to accommodate vacations, exams, and standing times of unavailability.

WHEN AND WHERE ARE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED?

The Housing Justice Project has offices in Kent at the Regional Justice Center (Room 1281) and in Seattle at the King County Courthouse (Room W-314). Both offices are located near the Ex Parte Department. HJP PM office hours (Monday and Thursday afternoons) are in Seattle *only* in Room W-314 of the King County Courthouse. Both offices are open weekday mornings from 8:00am to 10:30am. HJP PM hours are Mondays and Thursdays from 4:00 to 6:00pm.

WHAT SERVICES DO VOLUNTEERS PROVIDE?

Legal assistants conduct intake with clients, provide administrative support, research issues as needed, and give clients resource information. Legal assistants must not give any form of legal advice.

Attorneys advise tenants on a wide variety of eviction-related issues and offer brief service, including ghost writing, at HJP and HJP PM. For clients who are financially eligible at HJP, attorneys may choose to negotiate a settlement or represent the client at their show cause or stay hearing. Attorneys can indicate the level of service agreed to on the attorney-client retainer agreement.

HOW DO YOU DETERMINE CLIENTS' FINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY?

All residential King County tenants qualify for legal advice and counsel at HJP and HJP PM. Tenants with an income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guideline qualify for negotiation and limited representation. Tenants with an income above 200% of the Federal Poverty Guideline only qualify for advice and counsel.

WHAT SORT OF SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE TO VOLUNTEERS?

HJP staff members are available for mentoring and resource questions. Additional training opportunities are frequently offered through other Community Legal Services programs. Administrative support at the Project's offices is provided by volunteer legal assistants.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF I HAVE A CONFLICT OF INTEREST WITH AN HJP CLIENT?

For HJP, docket information is distributed by email a day or two previous to your assigned volunteer day. This gives you an opportunity to check for conflicts of interest for tenants scheduled for show cause hearings who might come to HJP. Because of HJP and HJP PM's limited scope, conflict checks are not necessary for walk-in clients at HJP and HJP PM according to RPC 6.5.

I'M AN ATTORNEY, AND IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE I'VE BEEN IN COURT.

If you're interested in getting court experience, morning hours at HJP offer a good opportunity to do direct representation on a limited basis. You'll be able to see a sample hearing at the introductory CLE. The first time you appear on behalf of an HJP client will be with the assistance of a staff attorney, ideally during your training period. When you appear, it is limited to one hearing, and you are able to give notice of your completion of appearance immediately following the hearing.

If you are not interested in returning to the courtroom, HJP PM (Mondays and Thursdays in Seattle only) is an opportunity to offer advice and brief service without the court component.

AM I COVERED UNDER KCBA'S MALPRACTICE INSURANCE?

The Community Legal Services programs (including HJP) carry malpractice insurance for volunteers' work at the Project office and for cases taken through our programs. If you have malpractice insurance of your own, through a firm, or through another employer, that malpractice insurance may also cover your pro bono work.

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO OFFER CLIENTS?

There are a number of resources available at the Project's offices. They can be found in brochures, a grid of referral organizations, the Internet, and the *Where to Turn* guide. Staff members can answer questions about appropriate referrals for clients in need.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A CLIENT SPEAKS A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH?

Court Interpreter Services are often able to provide an interpreter for clients appearing at HJP in the morning. The number for this service is posted in the Project's office. Clients needing an interpreter at HJP PM should be asked to return to HJP the following morning.

I WAS AWARDED ATTORNEYS' FEES. NOW WHAT?

A volunteer attorney may seek and retain fees for his or her services from any third party under any applicable rule, statute, or principle of common law, so long as the client is not directly or indirectly responsible for payment of such fees. In the spirit of pro bono, attorneys who recover an award of fees for their services are encouraged to donate all or a portion of their fees to support the Community Legal Services programs, but are not obligated to do so. In the past, the HJP offices have benefited from attorneys donating fees for a fax machine, copy machine, and the first telephone at HJP.

MY SCHEDULE FLUCTUATES. CAN I STILL VOLUNTEER AT HJP?

Yes. Schedules are created quarterly. Previous to the creation of a quarterly calendar, volunteers may submit scheduling preferences to the coordinator. Vacations, exams, trial calendars, and standing times of unavailability can normally be accommodated. Legal assistants are generally scheduled to volunteer on a consistent schedule (ex: Tuesdays weekly) while attorneys' volunteer schedules tend to vary.

CAN I GET CLE CREDIT FOR MY PRO BONO WORK?

Yes. You may get up to 4 CLE credits for the pro bono work you provide after attending a CLE in a related area during the same calendar year. We will report the hours from the CLE. You need to self-report the CLE credit for pro bono work, up to 4 hours annually. When space is available at CLEs sponsored by other Community Legal Services programs, current HJP and HJP PM volunteers are eligible to attend free of charge.

WHAT IS THE DRESS CODE?

All volunteers should dress professionally. Attorneys should wear clothing appropriate for a court appearance (ex: suit, tie, etc.). Legal assistants should be dressed in appropriate business wear (ex: dress slacks, button-up shirt, etc.). Keep in mind that all volunteers will be coming and going from courtrooms and interacting with court staff. Additionally, we want our clients to understand that, while the assistance we give is free, it is a professional office.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING AT HJP?

Volunteering at HJP and HJP P.M. are great opportunities to make a valuable contribution to the community, learn new skills, and earn CLE credits. In the way of making a difference in the community, the efforts of HJP volunteers result in the dismissal of unjust eviction cases, negotiation of reasonable settlements for renters facing difficulties in a tight housing market, and education of tenants regarding their rights and responsibilities under the law. For attorneys who wish to strengthen negotiation skills or spend more time in court, HJP offers a forum in which to do just that. In addition, HJP volunteers are able to attend related CLEs sponsored by KCBA's Community Legal Services Programs as space permits free of charge for the duration of their volunteer involvement with HJP.