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Clinical Program Newsletter

Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic

Summer 2023

Clinical Programs Newsletter

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Maine Law's Clinical Programs



Cumberland
Legal Aid Clinic

SUMMER 2023 NEWSLETTER



Pictured above are the 2023 Portland-based summer student attorneys standing in front of Maine Law's new home in the Maine Center in the thriving Old Port section of Portland. Front row, from left to right: Jessie Payson, Jenn Thompson, Rachel Bruns, Chris Guay. Back row, from left to right: Haley Brazier, Sahra Hassan, Kendi Dykema, and Devin Forbush. Not pictured: Nealy Fleming.

Dear Friends and Alumni,

Within the University of Maine School of Law's Clinical Programs, it is our mission to train the next generation of lawyers, promote access to justice, and meet the needs of vulnerable communities.

Since the Clinic was established in 1970, nearly 1,900 Maine Law students have passed through its doors as student attorneys, making it a tradition for many burgeoning attorneys in Maine to begin their careers by serving those most in need. As proud as we are of our student attorneys' work while they are at the Clinic, we are even prouder that so many of our alumni continue to carry the values of public interest law into their careers after graduation.

As we mark the end of another busy summer and delve into the 2023-2024 school year, we are excited to announce that we are starting a new tradition at the end of each term: sharing updates from our Clinical Programs directly with you.

In this newsletter, we highlight news from our team this summer, which consisted of nine student attorneys, three policy fellows, four student volunteers, eight supervising professors, and three staff members in our office at Maine Law in Portland. We also share updates from our new Rural Practice Clinic in Fort Kent, where two student attorneys and one supervising professor worked with clients in Aroostook County this summer.

The work that we do is made possible by the tremendous generosity of our donors and community partners. If you are interested in making a donation, please contact us or donate online by [clicking here](#). We are so grateful for your support.

Kind regards,

Christopher Northrop

Managing Co-Director
of Clinical Programs

Anna Welch

Managing Co-Director of Clinical
Programs and Director of the
Refugee and Human Rights Clinic



From left to right, student attorney Lyndsey Davolio, supervising professor David Soucy, and student attorney Christian Jones take a break from client meetings to canoe in the Allagash Wilderness Waterway.

Student attorneys take on Aroostook County

Lyndsey Davolio and Christian Jones were the first student attorneys in the history of Maine Law to spend their summer working at our new Rural Practice Clinic located on the University of Maine at Fort Kent’s campus!

Under the supervision of retired District Court Judge David Soucy, Lyndsey and Christian represented dozens of low-income clients this summer in criminal and civil cases, including matters concerning family law, small claims actions, collections, probate, and youth justice issues. Due to the shortage of attorneys in rural communities throughout Maine, the Rural Practice Clinic is providing an essential service for Aroostook County residents.

Youth Justice Clinic expands its reach

Hoping to inspire students to pursue careers in the juvenile justice system, most Clinic students this summer were provided with the opportunity to work on a delinquency matter. Under the supervision of Youth Justice Clinic Director Professor Sarah Branch, these students worked with youth clients in a variety of settings and courts, including the Portland, Biddeford, Springvale, and Lewiston District Courts.

New this summer, teams of Youth Justice Clinic student attorneys collaborated with policy fellows working with the Center for Youth Policy & Law, directed by Professor Jill Ward, to step up our representation and advocacy on behalf of youth and young adults with pending delinquency and civil legal matters.

The Youth Justice Clinic also regularly conducts the Preble Street Teen Center outreach project, where student attorneys provide legal information and advice to at-risk youth and young adults on a wide range of legal matters and, in some circumstances, provide full representation to clients they meet at the Teen Center.

For a more in-depth look at the Youth Justice Clinic’s work this summer, below is a reflection from student attorney Jenn Thompson:

“ Through my experience working as a student attorney in the Youth Justice Clinic, I have come to appreciate the unique and crucial role that the Clinic plays in the Maine legal community. While the constitution guarantees that youth charged with crimes have legal representation for those charges, there are often other legal needs that accompany a criminal case that court-appointed attorneys are not paid to litigate. For example, youth who have been charged with crimes frequently have related civil and education cases pending. This summer, I have had the opportunity to take a holistic approach to lawyering, and have helped my clients with their other legal needs in schools and civil courts, in addition to representing them in their criminal cases. This experience has fundamentally shifted my understanding of what it means to practice law, and the approach I hope to take to lawyering in future positions. ”

– Jenn Thompson



From left to right, the policy fellows for the Center for Youth Policy & Law this summer were Allie Smith, Grace Eddy, and Gabriel Siwady.

Youth Justice policy fellows' projects support system-involved youth

Student policy fellows spent the summer researching youth justice reform legislation, studying the continuum of care for justice-involved youth in Rockland, and developing information and tools that support working with and advocating for system-involved youth.

The fellows also worked with Maine Commission on Indigent Legal Services (MCILS) to plan a training for juvenile defense attorneys, which will be held at Maine Law on September 28 & 29, 2023. To learn more and register for the training, [click here](#).

Student-led workshops for asylum seekers in Maine

As part of the Refugee and Human Rights Clinic's work this summer, student attorneys ran pro se asylum workshops with the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project to give individuals seeking asylum the opportunity to learn about the process and file asylum applications with limited legal representation.

Due to the shortage of legal aid resources in Maine, many low-income asylum seekers must navigate the complicated application process without legal representation. By focusing on community education at a shelter in Portland and providing limited legal representation through these pro se workshops, student attorneys worked to improve unrepresented individuals' chances of being granted asylum in federal courts.

Providing legal aid at the U.S.-Mexico Border

Four student attorneys, Haley Brazier, Rachel Bruns, Sahra Hassan, and Kendi Dykema, and two Refugee and Human Rights Clinic faculty members, Anna Welch and Erica Schair-Cardona, traveled to Laredo, Texas this summer to volunteer with The Laredo Project, a program run by the global law firm Jones Day that assists asylum seekers navigating the asylum and immigration processes at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Working with interpreters and Jones Day attorneys, the student attorneys and faculty spent long days in Laredo providing legal counsel to individuals and families seeking asylum in the United States. This summer, students and faculty were in Laredo in the immediate aftermath of Title 42 ending, making it all the more critical to provide individuals with information about how the asylum application process had changed and how new policies might impact them.



Pictured above, student attorney Sahra Hassan was one of the student attorneys this summer to volunteer in Laredo, Texas.

Hard-fought wins in the Protection from Abuse Program

Under the supervision and mentorship of Professor Tina Schneider, student attorneys this summer continued the Clinic’s long-standing work of conducting same-day representation with protection from abuse (PFA) clients in the Lewiston District Court.

Representing a total of 31 PFA clients between the beginning of June and mid-August, student attorneys went to Lewiston 10 times this summer to provide representation to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking who are seeking a PFA order.

One of the PFA clients we worked with this summer gave us permission to tell her story, which you can read below (names have been changed).

Sally met Bill when she hired him to do some work on her home. They started dating, but within a couple of weeks, Sally figured out that he was trouble – erratic, irrational, suffering from a severe substance use disorder, and dangerous. She broke off the relationship, but Bill wouldn’t take no for an answer. She blocked his phone, but he called her repeatedly and incessantly from other numbers. Then, the threats started. “I am the wrong person to be doing this to,” he told her.

The student attorney helped Sally get the protection she needed. The student attorney successfully negotiated with Bill’s attorney to craft an order that not only stopped Bill from having any contact with Sally, but also barred him from having firearms and required him to repay money he owed her.

In addition to providing PFA clients like Sally with high-quality, same-day representation in the Lewiston District Court, student attorneys collaborate with court advocates from Safe Voices, Immigrant Resource Center of Maine, and Sexual Assault Prevention and Responses Services to ensure their clients receive the necessary support and resources to escape violence after court adjourns.

Continuing in-person legal aid visits at Maine Correctional Center

Our Prisoner Assistance Clinic continues to be the only legal aid organization in Maine that provides pro bono legal assistance to residents of Maine’s jails and prisons who are navigating civil legal matters.

Under the leadership of Professor Courtney Beer, the Director of the Prisoner Assistance Clinic, every student attorney at the office in Portland this summer represented at least one client residing at one of Maine’s correctional facilities, giving the student attorneys valuable professional experience working with Maine’s incarcerated population.

Over the course of the summer, student attorneys completed over 40 in-person meetings with their clients at Maine Correctional Center’s facilities, including the Southern Maine Women’s Reentry Center. Students also provided remote legal support to residents of other correctional facilities in Maine, including Mountain View Correctional Facility and Maine State Prison.



From left to right, student attorneys Rachel Bruns, Sahra Hassan, and Devin Forbush stand outside of Maine Correctional Center after meeting with their clients as part of the Prisoner Assistance Clinic in August 2023.

Experts join Clinic for lunch discussions about critical legal issues

A few summers ago, the Clinical Programs started a tradition of hosting “Lunches with a Side of Revolution” with the goal of exposing students to innovative legal and policy work that is being done throughout Maine and beyond.

This summer, our students had the opportunity to hear from Professor John Nidiry about his work representing individuals on federal death row in post-conviction review proceedings, criminal defense attorney and Executive Director of the Maine Association for Criminal Defense Lawyers Tina Nadeau about indigent criminal defense work in Maine, and Chief Judge of the Penobscot Nation Tribal Court Eric Mehnert about his court’s approach to justice and community reintegration.

Volunteers provide much-needed legal aid referral services

The Clinical Programs are able to run efficiently thanks to the dedicated work of our student volunteers. In addition to fielding calls related to our existing cases, volunteers conduct full-time referral services, ensuring that callers are informed about all the legal resources that may be available to them.

Our volunteers this summer included Maine Law students Phillip Corp, Irene Chirmanova, Jess Wibby, and Tristan Dewdney. Thanks to all their hard work, the Clinic provided referral services to over 340 individuals seeking legal aid between June and August. With so many low-income Mainers struggling to navigate the legal system, the referral work conducted by our volunteers is essential to improving access to justice in Maine.

Honorable Eric Mehnert, Chief Judge of the Penobscot Nation Tribal Court (right), came to Maine Law this summer for lunch to discuss his work with the Clinical Programs’ students, faculty, and staff.



Wondering how you can support our work?

■ **Donate:** Nearly 70% of the Clinical Programs’ funding comes from outside of the University of Maine System. In order to continue providing high-quality representation and outreach work, we depend on the generosity of our donors. To donate, contact us or [donate online by clicking here](#).

■ **Volunteer to be on our referral list:** If you are a private attorney in Maine looking to help address the dire need for indigent legal services in the state, volunteer to be on our referral list! To do so, contact us at clac.info@maine.edu or call us at 207-780-4370.

■ **Connect with us on social media:** If you are on [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), or [X/Twitter](#) be sure to follow us for year-round news about our work.

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