
LEGAL AID JUSTICE CENTER

Attorney – Virginia Institutionalized Persons Project

The Legal Aid Justice Center seeks a creative and highly motivated attorney to drive forward its Virginia Institutionalized Persons (VIP) Project. Based in Charlottesville, the attorney will litigate issues involving prisoners and other institutionalized persons in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The attorney will both handle cases independently and serve as co-counsel with experienced pro bono, civil rights attorneys around the state. The attorney will also strengthen our alliances with state and national groups that address conditions in prisons, jails and mental health institutions. Working under the direction of the Legal Aid Justice Center's experienced legal staff, the attorney will operate in a positive learning environment while exercising discretion and using creativity to accomplish the goals of the project. Some travel is required.

The VIP Project investigates conditions in Virginia's prisons, jails and mental health institutions. Through community engagement, policy advocacy and legal action, we increase accountability to ensure that Virginia operates its institutions consistent with constitutional standards and human dignity. Thousands of letters from inmates in Virginia's prisons and jails describe problems that include grossly inadequate and sometimes improper health care; racial discrimination permeating staff-prisoner relations; inadequate access to legal resources; a failed prison grievance system; mistreatment of inmates with mental health impairments; a broken parole system; and denial of First Amendment rights such as the right to receive attorney mail and the right to attend worship services.

Communications from inmate families, friends, other attorneys, and even correctional staff substantiate these claims. Our legal work focuses on initiatives to improve the system as a whole for all Virginia prisoners. In partnership with Troutman Sanders LLP, we filed a class action lawsuit on behalf of 6,000 Virginia "old law" prisoners being denied fair review of their suitability for release by the Virginia Parole Board. In partnership with Wiley Rein LLP and the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights & Urban Affairs, we are investigating the quality of health care services at one of the state prisons for women. In the mental health institutions, we have protected the rights of patients to meaningful participation in treatment decisions. Our investigations led to the discovery of a man who had been in seclusion for more than 15 years. Our representation helped secure his subsequent transfer to a facility near his family where he could enjoy regular contact with other residents while receiving services.

The Legal Aid Justice Center is a nationally recognized, non-profit program providing free civil legal assistance from four offices throughout the state of Virginia. Our dynamic staff of more than two dozen attorneys pursue systemic legal advocacy for all low-income Virginians using a wide array of strategies. Through legal representation, community education, and statewide advocacy, the Legal Aid Justice Center works both to eliminate the immediate symptoms and to address the underlying causes of poverty in Virginia. We encourage diversity, value unique voices, pursue our goals with passion, and enjoy having fun while working for the public interest.

Qualified candidates will have at least five years of practice experience handling cases in federal court, preferably including class actions. Membership in the Virginia State Bar or eligibility for reciprocal admission is strongly preferred. The attorney will help supervise the Mental Health Law Clinic at the University of Virginia School of Law; experience with law school clinics and mental health law is therefore a plus. Because our clients often write about their criminal cases, experience in criminal law is also plus.

Competitive public interest salary DOE. Exceptional fringe benefits include generous leave, fully paid health insurance, excellent retirement plan, loan repayment assistance, and a great work environment. To apply, please e-mail a cover letter, resume, references and a writing sample to alex@justice4all.org, followed by a hard copy mailed to:

Alex R. Gulotta, Executive Director
Legal Aid Justice Center
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The Legal Aid Justice Center is a 501(c)(3) and does not receive funding from the Legal Services Corporation. We are an Equal Opportunity and affirmative action employer. Women, people of color, persons with disabilities, and LGBT individuals are encouraged to apply. For more information, please visit our website at www.justice4all.org.