

EQUAL JUSTICE WORKS

2008 SUMMER CORPS

SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Early public interest experience for law students and new lawyers leads to a lifelong commitment to public service. Equal Justice Works has created and continues to develop a continuum of opportunity for law students and new lawyers. Learn more at www.equaljusticeworks.org.

Equal Justice Works Summer Corps

Cait Clarke, Director of Public Interest Law Opportunities

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Summer Corps is an AmeriCorps-funded program that each year provides hundreds of law students with the opportunity to dedicate their summer to public service at a qualifying legal project at a nonprofit public interest organization.

In 2008, Equal Justice Works Summer Corps members provided crucial legal assistance to communities across the country. They gave their time and talents in exchange for a modest educational award, but many discovered that the true rewards are in public service work experience and in making lasting differences in the lives of others.

In the 2008 Summer Corps program, 333 members served at 234 organizations in 37 states and the District of Columbia, and completed over 120,434 service hours. The following report is a compilation of data gathered from 323 of these 333 members (97 percent reporting).

OUTPUTS

The following outputs track the program's progress toward its performance measures, which are reported to the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Output 1: Direct Legal Assistance

Summer Corps members expanded the delivery of assistance by providing direct legal services to 18,395 low-income individuals.

“This summer at Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services I spent one-half of the time clerking for the Education Law Advocacy Project and the other half of the time clerking for CORE Housing. I really enjoyed having an opportunity to work for two different units, in two different offices, during the summer. One of my best experiences this summer was negotiating with a local utility company on behalf of one of our clients. The client had asthma and needed electricity to use her nebulizer. The power company turned off her electricity because she was behind on her bill. I talked with the client about what kind of payment plan would work with her, and then negotiated a payment plan with the power company. My client's electricity was kept on. In all, I have had a great summer working at Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services (SMRLS). I plan on volunteering for SMRLS in the upcoming school year, and I hope to work for them when I am finished with law school.”

Elizabeth Rosar
Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, St. Paul, MN

Output 2: Collaboration with Community-Based Organizations

Summer Corps members reached 1,128 community and faith-based organizations serving the needs of low-income individuals or communities across the country by participating in 808 community education presentations or outreach activities benefiting 23,842 individuals.

“I was literally a jack-of-all-trades. My supervisor, Ms. Baumann, commended me for going above and beyond to help clients. Some highlights include: I had a weekly appointment where I drove a single mother to a domestic violence class and to a counseling appointment; I updated a community resource list that was much needed because it had disconnected phone numbers on it; I helped a client go to various appointments to Secretary of State, Vital Records, Social Security office, doctor/dental appointments so she would have all these things done before she relocated to Georgia; I took transitional/homeless clients to Capital Area Community Services to help them obtain housing; I helped a woman with 4 children get an emergency PPO (approved by a judge immediately) because her husband chased her with a deadly weapon; I helped a client with H.I.V. find suitable insurance required for her immigration paperwork; and I co-facilitated a support group for victims of domestic violence.

Overall, I absolutely loved my summer internship. It was the perfect marriage of law and social work. I am confident I have learned valuable skills to help me with the Chance at Childhood Law Clinic next spring, and possibly an internship at Friend of the Court next summer.”

*Gloria Stamat
MSU Safe Place, Lansing, MI*

Output 3: Member Skills Development

100% of respondents reported that they gained practical legal skills as a result of their 2008 Summer Corps experience, with percentages gaining particular legal skills as follows:

- Legal Research: 97.9%
- Legal Writing: 92.4%
- Client Interviews: 92.4%
- Intake Interviews: 76.4%
- Representing Clients in Administrative Proceedings: 36.6%
- Representing Clients in Court Proceedings: 38.1%
- Other Legal Skills: 29.3%

“I had more client contact than most third-year associates at big law firms have. That experience was invaluable as I learned how to deal with clients and get the necessary information from them. I also learned what additional questions I should ask of clients and learned how to anticipate what sorts of questions the clients would ask so that I could better serve all of them.”

Kari White
The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, Cleveland, OH

98.8% of respondents agreed with the following statement: *My summer experience has developed or strengthened my belief that I can use my legal skills to improve community conditions.*

“GBLS is a fantastic place to work. Not only is the work compelling, but the people are very welcoming and happy to swap stories whenever they’re not too busy. My previous legal job had involved complex litigation that was often drawn out over the course of three or more years, and I very rarely had the sense that I was truly helping someone, but rather working in an academic setting removed from the real world.”

Christopher Jones
Greater Boston Legal Services, Boston, MA

“Since May, I have clerked at Community Legal Aid Society, Inc., in Wilmington, Delaware. This experience has convinced me that I must represent and fight for the rights of those who are impoverished, weak, marginalized and without a voice. I have never felt prouder in my life than when I advocated for a single mother of four, living in a Section 8 unit, who was facing eviction by her landlord for trumped allegations of criminal activity. After convincing the landlord’s attorney of this injustice, I later learned that the landlord had racist motives and was actively seeking to evict all Section 8 tenants in order to quickly remodel and sell his property. Such stories have become daily encounters at CLASI, and I now know that it is my professional prime mover to fight for what is right. I can not thank the staff and attorneys at CLASI enough for their support, mentoring and friendship. Also, I thank Summer Corps for supporting such service; it has been a tremendous summer. Thanks again.”

Jayson Dewey
Community Legal Aid Society, Inc., Wilmington, DE

99.1% reported continued and enhanced commitment to public interest work.

“When I first signed on to be with BayLegal for the summer, I never dreamed the deep impact that it would make on my view on public interest law, or the way that I viewed society in general. During the past 10 or so weeks, the great need of my local community for affordable legal assistance has been impressed upon my heart.”

Allison Young
Bay Area Legal Aid, San Francisco, CA

What Summer Corps Members Say about Summer Corps

“This summer answered a HUGE question for me, “Why am I in law school?” And the answer is, “To help others.” This program really frames the question in a way that illuminates the true value of the legal system. Without looking at the law in a social context, the true value of legal training isn’t clear.

Gloria Stamat
MSU Safe Place, Lansing, MI

“I would never say anything was perfect, however the Equal Justice Works Summer Corps program was pretty close to it. When receiving emails, assistance with documentation, and the thank you packet in the mail, I knew I was supported and appreciated by Equal Justice Works. Coming from the South and from an area that seems to value private gain more than working for the public interest, Equal Justice Works made me feel right at home in pursuing my dream of legally representing those persons with the most need.”

Kristianna Rodriguez
Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, San Antonio, TX

“A wonderful opportunity to expand your experience in law while doing good. How can you beat that?”

Sanford Weintraub
Alaska Legal Services Corporation, Fairbanks, AK

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Summer Corps members were surveyed regarding their experience with Equal Justice Works and the Summer Corps program as well as their career goals.

Equal Justice Works Staff

- Average rating of assistance from Equal Justice Works staff (out of 10): 9.16
- Percentage that rated staff assistance 8 or higher: 89%

Member Orientation Guide

- Average rating of the 2008 Member Orientation Guide (out of 10): 8.74
- Percentage that rated the guide 8 or higher: 82.4%

Host Organization

- Percentage that would recommend their host organization to other law students seeking summer internships: 99.40%

Overall Experience

- Percentage that would recommend the Summer Corps program to other law students: 99.70%

Long-Term Impact on the Public Interest Field

- 80.9% plan to devote their career to public service, in the public or government sector.
- An additional 18.8% plan to provide pro bono legal services to low-income and/or underserved communities during their career.

HOST ORGANIZATION FEEDBACK

Summer Corps members provide invaluable capacity-building power to hundreds of under-resourced legal services organizations each year. While Summer Corps members are given an environment in which to learn, organizations are given the ability to serve greater numbers of individuals and to create and complete new projects.

In 2008, 278 organizations served as host sites for the Summer Corps program. Those who served as supervisors for Summer Corps members were asked about their experiences and 138 responded. The following information comes from that survey.

Program Evaluation

- Average rating of Summer Corps member (out of 10): 8.7
- Average rating of Equal Justice Works (out of 10): 8.84

What Host Organizations say about Summer Corps

“Our organization greatly appreciates Equal Justice Works’ support. The Summer Corps Program provides a win-win situation in so many ways. The students are able to afford to intern with our organization due to the education award. While they are interning with our organization they gain great hands-on experience, and they allow us to assist more clients while providing the highest quality of legal assistance. Thank you.”

*Amanda Glover Evans
North Mississippi Rural Legal Services*

“Thank you so much for the financial support that you provide! Our Summer Corps interns helped us serve more clients who are in desperate need of legal assistance.”

*Cynthia Mark
Greater Boston Legal Services*

“Thank you for continuing the great work that you do supporting students interested in pursuing public interest work. I was an Equal Justice Works Fellow and three years after the end of my fellowship, I am still doing work related to my fellowship project at my host organization.”

*Jody Marksamer
National Center for Lesbian Rights*