

EBCLC PRACTICE GROUPS

1. Neighborhood Justice Clinic - General Self-Help Services and Litigation

At the Neighborhood Justice Clinic (NJC), students provide advocacy for low-income clients who cannot find other legal representation, most of whom are involved in active litigation. Students draft letters, do legal research, write motions, draft answers, discovery requests, and other court documents, and provide the guidance necessary to assist community members in advocating for themselves in the court process. Given the current economic crisis, many of NJC's clients are facing the harassment of debt collectors and experiencing other consumer abuses. The most common legal issues at NJC include:

- Illegal debt collection practices
- Consumer protection issues from car loans to magazine sales
- Retail race discrimination
- Police misconduct
- Small claims cases
- Traffic and minor criminal violations
- Bankruptcy

Another important piece of the NJC practice is protecting the rights of homeless clients. NJC provides representation to homeless people who have received criminal infraction citations originating from the necessities of life on the street, such as trespassing citations for sleeping on other people's property. NJC also works with community organizations and homeless rights advocates to challenge laws or practices that unjustly punish homeless people. Our clinic aims to provide a barrier-free environment so that people with mental illness or other disabilities, often turned away from other legal services providers, can access our services with ease and dignity.

To assist our homeless clients, students may:

- Interview clients and conduct intake
- Investigate cases, take photographs, talk to witnesses
- Do legal research and draft briefs
- If certified, represent clients in infraction proceedings
- Assist with research and letters related to homelessness policy issues

2. Clean Slate – Criminal Justice and Reentry Policy

Students in the Clean Slate practice provide direct assistance to help people access the criminal records remedies available in California in order to overcome barriers to stable employment, housing, educational opportunities and civic participation.

Clean Slate students:

- Interview clients and conduct intake
- Conduct legal research and write legal memos and briefs
- Investigate facts and prepare documents to file with the court
- If certified, appear at court hearings related to all California criminal records remedies
- Make presentations to community-based organizations, potential client groups, and community forums on topics related to criminal records remedies
- Work on policy advocacy to address common client problems, including influencing administrative policies, regulations and legislation at the local, state and national level.

3. Health - HIV & East Bay Medical-Legal Partnership - Multidisciplinary

Students in the Health practice focus on providing holistic legal services to either low-income HIV-positive clients or low-income families being seen at Oakland's Children's Hospital. Students carry a varied caseload that may include:

- Appeals of disability benefit denials and post-entitlement decisions, including representation at administrative law hearings
- Public benefits advocacy for General Assistance, CalWorks, Food Stamps, Medi-Cal and other state and county benefit programs, including representation at administrative law hearings
- Pre-litigation landlord-tenant issues, including advocacy related to habitability and reasonable accommodation
- Guardianship petitions
- Simple wills, health care directives and powers of attorney
- Legal trainings for providers and community members

4. Immigration – Administrative with Some Litigation

Students in the Health & Immigration Project provide legal services to low-income immigrants living with HIV and children with chronic health problems seen through the Medical-Legal Partnership. Students carry their own caseload of immigration cases, but are exposed to a broad range of immigration issues by conducting intake and participating in case rounds. A large number of clients come from Spanish-speaking countries.

Student work may include:

- Preparing affirmative applications for political asylum, green cards, citizenship, U visas, VAWA self-petitions, and HIV waivers
- Representing clients in administrative hearings before the Asylum Office, U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services, and Immigration Court
- Consulting with undocumented clients to explore avenues for obtaining legal status

- Locating expert witnesses, drafting declarations and letters, writing legal briefs, and performing legal research
- Drafting educational materials, conducting community/provider presentations, and developing outreach strategies

5. Housing Law – Litigation

The Housing Law Clinic is a litigation practice designed to ensure safe, adequate and affordable housing. Students represent clients in civil eviction proceedings in the Superior court as well as in administrative hearings arising under the jurisdiction of local rent control boards and before local housing authority agencies. Students staff a self-help clinic, represent clients facing eviction, conduct outreach and education workshops for tenants, and work on affirmative lawsuits for tenants as plaintiffs to enforce housing laws. Current projects include education and representation of tenants facing eviction due to the foreclosure crisis, including systemic efforts to ensure that banks and new landlords comply with local eviction ordinances.

6. Income Support – Administrative/Regulatory

The Income Support practice advocates for people receiving General Assistance and CalWORKs, the two welfare programs for those who would otherwise have nothing at all. Income Support students help families get all of the support services available through the CalWORKs program, such as child care, education, job training, transportation, etc. The practice specializes in problems that deny people benefits entirely: time limits, sanctions, and child exclusion. Students in the practice will be responsible for their cases including interviewing clients, performing discovery, conducting research, drafting briefs, preparing cross and direct examination questions, negotiating with the Social Services Agency, and representing clients at administrative hearings. In addition to individual case representation, the practice conducts legislative and administrative advocacy in those areas of specialization.