



**THURSTON COUNTY
VOLUNTEER LEGAL SERVICES
VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

Table of Contents

Mission, Program Scope and Services.....	Page 2
Program Operations.....	Page 3
Volunteer Policies.....	Pages 4-5
Volunteer Positions.....	Pages 6-8
Legal Clinic Descriptions.....	Pages 9-13
Pro Bono Representation.....	Pages 14-15
Resources.....	Page 16
Confidentiality Agreement.....	Page 17

Mission

Thurston County Volunteer Legal Services (TCVLS) promotes access to justice through the coordinated efforts of trained volunteers and community partners. TCVLS strives to enable low-income clients to resolve their civil legal problems by providing legal advice, information, and direct representation in a manner sensitive to individuals and their legal needs.

Purpose of Legal Clinics

To assist clients by providing legal advice, information, and document review to pro se individuals. Limited representation is provided at the Housing Justice Project clinic. Opportunities for limited and full representation are available through TCVLS. TCVLS services are free of charge and clients may schedule follow-up appointments, as needed, to resolve their legal matter. TCVLS keeps client case files and provides case information to volunteer attorneys.

Eligibility and Screening

Clients are screened for income and legal matter eligibility, and cannot be currently represented by another attorney. TCVLS receives case referrals from the statewide civil legal aid program (CLEAR), a branch of the Northwest Justice Project and other local social service agencies. Low-income is defined as under 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. TCVLS serves clients who reside in and/or who are facing a legal matter in Thurston, Mason, Grays Harbor, and Pacific counties.

Case Priorities

The following legal issues have been identified as current case priorities for TCVLS:

- family law
 - divorce and legal separation
 - custody, visitation, parenting plans
 - child support establishment and modification
- protection orders/domestic violence
- adult guardianship
- housing
 - eviction
 - landlord-tenant law
 - housing discrimination
- estate planning
 - wills
 - probate
- consumer issues
 - collection
 - loan issues
- employment law
 - discrimination
 - wage claims
 - employee rights

Resources for Volunteers

Volunteer attorneys are covered by TCVLS' malpractice insurance policy. TCVLS offers free CLE trainings periodically for volunteers that pertain to their volunteer activities. Materials from previous CLEs can be accessed via google drive at: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1foifdG4LpCESqJY32zC1N5Fd0v7rKthj>

Volunteer family law mentors are available to assist volunteer attorneys at the Family Support Center, SafePlace, and Shelton legal clinics. TCVLS has a contract with a telephone interpretation service for clients whose primary language is not English. TCVLS can arrange for meeting space, if a volunteer attorney offers to meet with a client outside of legal clinics.

The TCVLS Program Coordinator is available to support volunteers at all legal clinics. The Program Coordinator can: make copies, locate and print documents/forms, follow-up with clients, provide referrals to social service agencies or other legal resources, schedule follow-up appointments for clients, keep track of time during attorney meetings with clients, sit in on client interviews, address any conflicts or concerns that arise, problem-solve with volunteers and clients.

Online scheduling

Volunteers can sign up for clinics on the TCVLS website. Volunteers are assigned a username and password to access the schedule. To log in, go to the TCVLS website at www.tcvls.org and click on the yellow triangle at the top right corner of the page. Then, go to the tab that says 'Get Involved' and select 'Volunteer Sign Up' to see upcoming clinic dates and to sign up for shifts. Client appointments are based on number of volunteer attorneys expected. If a volunteer must cancel their clinic shift, they must contact the Program Coordinator as soon as possible.

TCVLS Staff

TCVLS currently has three full-time staff. The TCVLS main office can be reached at (360) 705-8194.

Rachael Lundmark, Executive Director

(360) 515-5381

director@tcvls.org

Christa Lenssen, Program Coordinator

(360) 915-7488

coordinator@tcvls.org

Bonnie Aslagson, Equal Justice Attorney

(360) 890-4954

attorney@tcvls.org

Volunteer Policies

Ethical/Professional Conduct

Volunteers are the lifeblood of our organization, and we simply couldn't do all that we do without the dedication of the attorneys and professional staff who volunteer for us. Volunteers are also the face of TCVLS and it is therefore important to always act in a professional manner, extending courtesy and respect to all clients, other volunteers, staff, and the general public while volunteering with TCVLS. All volunteers are expected to be aware of and comply with the Rules of Professional Conduct that pertain to their volunteer activities.

Non-Discrimination

TCVLS is committed to ensuring equal opportunity and equal justice for all, regardless of race, color, religion, creed, national origin, disability, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, age, veteran status, marital status, or any other basis protected by federal, state, or local law. This policy includes all (current or prospective) clients, volunteers, staff, and board members.

If you experience or witness conduct you feel is discriminatory, please be sure to raise the matter for discussion and review so that TCVLS can investigate and take appropriate action.

Sexual Harassment

TCVLS strictly prohibits sexual harassment. TCVLS does not tolerate harassment of volunteers, clients, staff, or board members. Sexual harassment may be difficult to recognize. It can consist of sexual favoritism, unwanted verbal or sexual advances, or sexually explicit remarks.

If you experience or witness conduct you feel is sexual harassment, please be sure to raise the matter for discussion and review so that TCVLS can investigate and take appropriate action.

If you ever feel unsafe while volunteering, please inform TCVLS staff immediately.

Confidentiality

TCVLS takes client confidentiality and privacy seriously. While volunteering with TCVLS, you may have access to confidential client information, including written material, verbal disclosures, and other personal information. While volunteering with TCVLS (and at all times thereafter), volunteers must not use or disclose any confidential information for any purpose. All personal client information should be considered confidential and not discussed with persons other than TCVLS staff or volunteers, and only as necessary for providing client services. Rule of Professional Conduct 1.6 applies to confidential information obtained through volunteer activities with TCVLS.

Solicitation Policy

Volunteer attorneys may not solicit privately paid work from low-income clients they are serving through either direct representation or the TCVLS legal clinics. Attorneys may provide TCVLS clients with on-going legal representation for a fee only if the client initiates an inquiry about the attorney's continued legal representation for a fee. The attorney may respond to a TCVLS client's inquiry about how much the attorney would charge for representation. The attorney may agree to provide continued representation outside of the clinic setting for a fee and the client may agree to pay such fee.

Once the attorney has agreed to charge the client for representation, the attorney is no longer working for the client under the auspices of TCVLS. With the client's permission, the attorney will notify TCVLS that the client has retained the attorney.

Volunteer Attorney/LLLT (Legal Clinics)

Description

Provide information, advice, and document review for clients of the legal clinic. Attorneys may represent clients at the Housing Justice Project for the unlawful detainer calendar. Pro bono opportunities are available to provide representation to qualifying clients (see pages 14-15).

Benefits

Learn new areas of law, build connections and relationships, access free CLEs hosted by TCVLS, earn CLE credit by logging pro bono hours, help community members navigate the civil legal system, promote equal access to justice.

Key Responsibilities

1. Report on time to clinic on scheduled date
2. Notify TCVLS Program Coordinator of any changes in availability
3. Meet with clients at the clinic for 30-45 minute advice sessions
4. Complete Attorney Interview Report Form after each client interview, to be entered in client database
5. Submit completed forms to the TCVLS Program Coordinator
6. Communicate with TCVLS Program Coordinator about any need for follow-up with clients

Qualifications

Must be licensed to practice law in Washington State, or a Limited License Legal Technician. Willingness to learn new areas of law and work with clients who face multiple barriers to resolving their legal issues. Must maintain client confidentiality and treat all clients with respect.

Time Commitment

For clinics at SafePlace, Family Support Center, and in Shelton, clinics generally last from about 6pm to 9pm. The Aberdeen clinic generally lasts from about 6pm to 8pm. For the Housing Justice Project, clinic hours are generally between 8:30am and 12pm.

Scheduling

Volunteers can sign up for legal clinics according to their needs and schedule. There is an online schedule where volunteers can log in to sign up for clinic shifts.

Mentor Attorney (Legal Clinics)

Description

Provide information, guidance, and resources to volunteer attorneys at the Family Support Center, SafePlace and Shelton legal clinics, specifically in the area of family law. Many attorneys who volunteer with TCVLS are employed by state government, or practice other areas of law and may be unfamiliar with family law.

Benefits

Help fellow attorneys learn new areas of law, mentor new attorneys, access free CLEs hosted by TCVLS, earn CLE credit by logging pro bono hours, help community members navigate the civil legal system, promote equal access to justice.

Key Responsibilities

1. Report to clinic on scheduled date
2. Notify TCVLS Program Coordinator of any changes in availability
3. Provide information and advice to volunteer attorneys as they meet with clients
4. Remain available for support until the last attorney-client meeting has ended

Qualifications

Must be licensed to practice law in Washington State. Experience in family law.

Time Commitment

Clinics generally last from about 6pm to 9pm. Mentor attorneys must be available for assistance until the last attorney-client meeting ends.

Scheduling

Volunteers can sign up for legal clinics according to their needs and schedule. There is an online schedule where volunteers can log in to sign up for clinic shifts.

Administrator (Legal Clinics)

Description

Conduct client intakes and brief volunteer attorneys at TCVLS legal clinics. Ensure clients meet TCVLS income and legal matter eligibility.

Administrators at the Housing Justice Project will help prepare copies, gather court forms for attorneys, perform research if needed, and update the TCVLS Program Coordinator when new clients arrive at clinic, if the Coordinator is in the court room.

Benefits

Gain familiarity with the civil legal system, develop customer service and interviewing skills, build connections and relationships with fellow volunteers, help community members navigate the civil legal system, promote equal access to justice.

Key Responsibilities

1. Report on time to clinic on scheduled date
2. Notify TCVLS Program Coordinator of any changes in availability
3. Fully and accurately complete intake form and client agreement with clients
4. Clarify clinic services and procedures for clients
5. Brief volunteer attorneys on client needs and case information
6. Communicate with TCVLS Program Coordinator about any concerns

Qualifications

Must maintain client confidentiality and treat all clients with respect. Ability to summarize and take accurate notes is desired. Attention to detail is helpful for filling out all items on the intake form. Professionalism is key, as administrators are the first point of contact when clients attend the legal clinics.

Time Commitment

For clinics at SafePlace, Family Support Center, Shelton, and Aberdeen, intakes are completed between 6pm and 7:30pm. For the Housing Justice Project, clinic hours are generally between 8:30am and 12pm.

Scheduling

Volunteers can sign up for legal clinics according to their needs and schedule. There is an online schedule where volunteers can log in to sign up for clinic shifts.

SafePlace Legal Clinic

Schedule

SafePlace is a walk-in clinic that begins at 6pm on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month at the SafePlace administrative office (521 Legion Way SE, Olympia).

Clientele

Clients have experienced domestic violence (past or current) and are seen regardless of income. Clients may be directed to other clinics or community resources if they present a legal issue not included under TCVLS case priorities. Family law and protection orders are the most common legal issues.

Staffing

An intake is completed with all clients by volunteer administrators. Doors close for client intakes at 7:30pm, or earlier depending on capacity. A family law mentor is available to assist volunteer attorneys. Volunteer attorneys meet with clients for 30-45 minute advice consultations. Childcare is provided on-site by SafePlace staff and advocates are available to connect clients to SafePlace services as needed.

Facilities

A copy machine, printer, and internet access are available for volunteer use. TCVLS maintains a binder with basic court forms that may be copied to be distributed to clients, as needed. An interpretation service is available through TCVLS and phones are available in each meeting room to utilize phone interpretation services.

Shelton Legal Clinic

Schedule

The Shelton clinic occurs on the 1st Tuesday of every month at the Shelton United Methodist Church in the Kid's Clubhouse (1900 King Street, Shelton). Client appointments are scheduled for 6pm and 7pm.

Clientele

Clients are screened to meet TCVLS income eligibility. A variety of civil legal issues may arise, but primarily fall under TCVLS case priorities (family law, wills/estate planning, landlord/tenant, consumer/collections issues, employment law, and guardianship). Most clients are referred by CLEAR, the statewide legal aid hotline. TCVLS staff will provide case notes for clients referred by CLEAR, and/or repeat clients.

Staffing

An intake is completed with all clients by volunteer administrators. A mentor attorney is available to assist volunteer attorneys. Volunteer attorneys meet with clients for 30-45 minute advice consultations.

Facilities

A laptop with internet access and a supply of basic court forms are provided for distribution to clients as needed.

Family Support Center Legal Clinic

Schedule

The clinic at the Family Support Center (3545 7th Ave Southwest, Olympia) occurs on the 2nd, 4th and 5th Tuesday, and 3rd Wednesday of each month. Client appointments are scheduled for 6pm and 7pm.

Clientele

Clients are screened to meet TCVLS income eligibility and case priorities. Most clients are referred by CLEAR, the statewide legal aid hotline. TCVLS staff will provide case notes for clients referred by CLEAR, and/or repeat clients.

Staffing

An intake is completed with all clients by volunteer administrators. A mentor attorney is available to assist volunteer attorneys. Volunteer attorneys meet with clients for 30-45 minute advice consultations.

Facilities

A copy machine, printer, and internet access are available for volunteer use. TCVLS supplies basic court forms that may be distributed to clients, as needed. An interpretation service is available through TCVLS and phones are available to utilize phone interpretation services.

Housing Justice Project

Schedule

The Housing Justice Project meets every Friday morning starting at 8:30am at Thurston County Superior Court (2000 Lakeridge Drive SW, Olympia) in Building 2 in the law library. HJP is a walk-in clinic that provides both landlord/tenant-related advice and representation to clients on the unlawful detainer calendar. The unlawful detainer calendar takes place from 10am-12pm on Friday mornings.

Clientele

Clients are screened to meet TCVLS income eligibility and to ensure they have a landlord/tenant-related issue. Clients who have an unlawful detainer hearing are given priority over clients who need landlord/tenant advice only.

Staffing

An intake is completed with all clients by volunteer administrators. No mentor is available at this clinic. Volunteer attorneys meet with clients for advice consultations, and/or submit a limited notice of appearance on behalf of clients who have a hearing.

Facilities

A copy machine, printer, and internet access are available for volunteer use. TCVLS supplies basic court forms that may be distributed to clients, as needed. The court provides interpreters if needed for unlawful detainer hearings.

Aberdeen Legal Clinic

Schedule

The Aberdeen clinic occurs on the 2nd Wednesday of every month at the law office of Ingram, Zelasko & Goodwin (120 East 1st Street, Aberdeen). Client appointments are scheduled for 6pm and 6:45pm.

Clientele

Clients are screened to meet TCVLS income eligibility. A variety of civil legal issues may arise, but primarily fall under TCVLS case priorities (family law, wills/estate planning, landlord/tenant, consumer/collections issues, employment law, and guardianship). TCVLS staff will provide case notes for clients referred by CLEAR, and/or repeat clients. TCVLS staff will provide a list of scheduled clients with potential conflicts in advance of the clinic.

Staffing

An intake is completed with all clients by volunteer administrators. Volunteer attorneys meet with clients for 30-45 minute advice consultations.

Facilities

A laptop with internet access and a supply of basic court forms are provided for distribution to clients as needed. An interpretation service is available through TCVLS and phones are available to utilize phone interpretation services.

Pro Bono Representation

TCVLS has opportunities for pro bono representation for volunteers who are willing to take on limited or full representation of a TCVLS client, and for attorneys who are willing to mentor a volunteer attorney on a pro bono case. If you are willing to provide pro bono representation, please let us know! To sign up for the TCVLS pro bono attorney/mentor pool email Equal Justice Attorney, Bonnie Aslagson at: attorney@tcvls.org The pro bono attorney will determine the scope of representation with the client and define the scope of representation in the TCVLS attorney-client agreement.

Support provided by TCVLS

TCVLS can provide support for attorneys who take on pro bono cases, such as: copying, office supplies, meeting space (must be scheduled with TCVLS staff in advance), administrative support, and connection to a mentor attorney who can provide guidance. TCVLS has a small budget for any court or case-related costs, such as postage, process serving, interpretation, document translation, and other costs, if provided with receipts. TCVLS provides malpractice insurance for volunteer attorneys.

Attorney's Fees Policy

Volunteer attorneys who participate in the direct representation program with TCVLS are encouraged, but not required, to donate a portion of any attorney's fees collected from the opposing party in the course of their pro bono representation to TCVLS. Volunteer attorneys are discouraged from seeking attorney's fees that would reduce the total amount of the award the client would otherwise receive.

Reporting

TCVLS receives grant funding for operations. TCVLS is required to report on services provided to grant funders. Attorney participation in reporting services provided will help preserve TCVLS' funding for future operations. TCVLS asks that volunteer attorneys track and submit their time and activities spent on the case, provide regular updates on case status, and submit a summary of outcomes at case closure.

Client/Case Eligibility

TCVLS serves low-income people, with gross incomes under 200% of the Federal Poverty Level who have assets and financial resources less than \$40,000. A client's primary residence and vehicle will not contribute to this resource test. TCVLS will consider financial resources when determining which cases will be assigned direct representation. Clients with limited income and assets will be prioritized. TCVLS staff may waive the resource limit on a case-by-case basis. Factors to be considered may include the accessibility/liquidity of assets, and access to resources due to domestic violence.

TCVLS will prioritize cases where the client has significant barriers to self-representation, such as: language/literacy barriers, disability, potential for violence against the client, complexity of the case, and significant power differential between the client and opposing party.

TCVLS accepts cases related to family law, landlord/tenant, estate planning, consumer issues, and some employment law issues.

Referring a Case for Potential Direct Representation

If you advise a client at the clinic who you feel has significant barriers to self-representation, such as the examples listed in the previous section, you can refer the client for consideration for direct representation. There are questionnaires available at the clinics for attorneys to fill out when they would like to make a direct representation referral. TCVLS' staff attorney will review cases recommended for direct representation placement. Staff will attempt to match cases that meet TCVLS' criteria with a volunteer attorney. If TCVLS staff are not able to place a case with a pro bono attorney within 3 months of recommendation, the case will be removed from the queue.

Please note that filling out the recommendation form is not a guarantee that the client will be chosen for the direct representation program, or that a pro bono attorney is willing to take on the case. Please do not promise representation to any clients!

Taking on a Pro Bono Case

If you meet a client at the legal clinic that you believe meets TCVLS' criteria and you feel they need representation, you can elect to take their case pro bono. You do not need to fill out a form recommending the case for direct representation placement and go through the selection process. Here is what you need to do:

- 1) Check with either the TCVLS Program Coordinator or Staff Attorney to confirm TCVLS does not have any conflicts in the case.
- 2) There is a packet of forms available at clinic with the following paperwork: a client-attorney agreement, an acknowledgement of receipt of TCVLS policies, a time sheet & a case closing form. These are also available electronically. Email attorney@tcvls.org for electronic forms.
- 3) Go over the scope of your representation with the client, outline this in the client-attorney agreement, and provide a copy of this agreement to your client and to TCVLS.
- 4) Let TCVLS know you are taking on a pro bono case. Email attorney@tcvls.org or call (360) 890-4954. TCVLS staff will follow up with you to obtain time sheets, case updates, client agreement forms, or other information.
- 5) Keep track of your time spent on the case, what you worked on, and case outcomes. TCVLS provides an excel time sheet, but if you have an equivalent time keeping document, you may choose to use that instead.

Roles

Volunteer Attorney or LLLTs can take on a pro bono case through TCVLS and be paired with a mentor attorney.

Mentor Attorneys are experienced attorneys who are willing to act as a mentor to a volunteer attorney who is less familiar with the area of law in their pro bono case.

Paralegals can assist volunteer attorneys with a pro bono case.

Resources

Helpful websites:

www.washingtonlawhelp.org provides self-help materials and court forms for civil legal matters in Washington State.

www.courts.wa.gov/forms has court forms for civil legal matters in Washington State.

Legal Help:

The WSBA's Moderate Means program provides referrals to sliding scale, low bono attorneys throughout Washington State for family law, landlord/tenant and consumer law issues. Income limits are between 200 and 400% of the Federal Poverty Level. TCCLS serves clients with incomes up to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. Contact the Moderate Means program at (855) 741-6930

Northwest Immigrant Rights Project: (206) 587-4009

Northwest Justice Project Foreclosure Prevention & Consequences Unit: 1-800-606-4819

Thurston County Family Law Facilitator: (360) 709-3269 or (360) 709-3274, \$25 for ½ hour appt.

Mason County Family Law Facilitator: Shelton (360) 427-7775, Belfair (360) 275-4467 ext. 775,

Elma (360) 482-5269 ext. 775, free of charge

Office of Public Defense for Thurston County: (360) 754-4897

Parents Representation Program (for CPS cases): (360) 586-3164

Domestic Violence:

SafePlace 24-hour HelpLine: (360) 754-6300 and SafePlace business office: (360) 786-8754

Thurston County Family Justice Center: (360) 754-9297

Victim Advocate, Thurston County Family & Juvenile Court: (360) 709-3255

Turning Pointe (Mason County): (360) 426-1216

Domestic Violence Center of Grays Harbor Office: (360) 538-0733, Crisis Line: (800) 818-2194

Landlord-tenant non legal advice:

Solid Ground Tenant Services: (206) 694-6767

Tenant's Union of Washington Tenant's Rights Hotline: (206) 723-0500



CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Thurston County Volunteer Legal Services

All TCVLS employees, interns and volunteers must adhere to strict confidentiality requirements. Signing this Confidentiality Agreement is a requirement for anyone who seeks to work at TCVLS as paid staff, intern or a volunteer.

In the course of your work with TCVLS, you will have access to confidential client information. It's one of your most serious responsibilities to use this information only in the performance of your duties at TCVLS and in no way reveal any confidential information outside of these duties. Even after you are no longer working or volunteering with TCVLS you may not share confidential information about TCVLS clients. Should you have doubts about what might be considered confidential information, please seek advice from the Executive Director.

Confidential information will take many shapes including, but not limited to, the following:

- Names, address and phone numbers of clients who phone TCVLS, attend legal clinics or receive direct representation from TCVLS volunteer attorneys;
- The fact that a client made of a phone call or visit to a TCVLS clinic;
- Any documents or record with client information, including information provided by a client, an attorney or recorded in Legal Server;
- Any information that you hear about a client from the client or another person associated with TCVLS.

If a volunteer attorney requests that you share confidential information with another party, please discuss with the Executive Director or Program Coordinator prior to following the request. If the other party is another volunteer attorney with TCVLS or officer of Thurston County Superior Court, you do not need to discuss with TCVLS staff.

All documents with confidential information (including name, addresses and/or phone numbers of clients) are destroyed when no longer needed using paper shredders available for that purpose. If you have questions about whether to destroy a document, discuss with the Executive Director or Program Coordinator.

Employees found to be in violation of the firm's confidentiality policies are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, and may also be subject to civil and/or criminal penalties. Interns and volunteers found to be in violation of this confidentiality agreement may lose their ability to work with TCVLS.

I have read and understand this agreement and agree to abide by its provisions.

Signature

Date