

Pro Bono Press

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Training Dates

Family Law

August 29, 2007
September 19, 2007
October 24, 2007
November 7, 2007
4:30–6:00 PM

Introduction to SSI/SSDI

September 18, 2007

Representing SSI/SSDI Clients at an ALJ Hearing

November 13, 2007
4:00–6:00 PM

Claimant Defense at Unemployment Hearings

August 21, 2007
October 4, 2007
December 6, 2007
4:00–5:30 PM

Housing

September 24, 2007
October 22, 2007
4:30–6:00 PM

Bankruptcy

Boston Bar Association
November 2, 2007
9:00 AM–12:00 PM

To sign-up, please contact
cloftus@vlpnet.org

SUMMER ASSOCIATE PROGRAM EXPANDS TO INCLUDE IN-HOUSE COUNSEL

This year, **Liberty Mutual**, thanks to **Kathleen McGrath**, became the first in-house counsel office to join VLP's summer associate program. For the past several years, VLP has sponsored a summer program with five or six firms, with summer associates handling administrative law cases referred by VLP. Liberty Mutual chose to handle social security benefits cases (SSI), with two summer law clerks assigned to each case, supported by a mentor at Liberty Mutual.

Liberty Mutual assisted five VLP clients with two successful decisions and three decisions still pending. Summer law clerks found their pro bono experience invaluable. One noted that...“Being put in charge of a pro bono case was a wonderful experience...We got to manage the case through the entire process. We called the medical providers...asked questions of the clients. We liaised with VLP. We wrote the On The Record brief. We argued in front of the ALJ. The whole case was in our hands. I could not have asked for a much more fulfilling summer assignment.”

Another learned how lawyers can make a difference in peoples' lives. “It was very inter-

esting to learn about the procedure involved with applying for SSI/SSDI benefits, the various obstacles that face applicants, and the ways in which lawyers can help in their efforts.”

Law firms participating in the summer program this year were **Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge**, **Nutter McClennen & Fish**, **Sullivan and Worcester**, **Brown Rudnick Berlack & Israels** and **Bingham McCutchen**.

Summer associates at these firms provided representation to claimants appealing denials of their unemployment compensation benefits. Participating firms also agree to accept VLP unemployment compensation referrals throughout the year.



On behalf of the many clients assisted this summer, VLP thanks the participating law firms and students. Peoples' lives are better for your work.

COMINGS & GOINGS AT VLP

The past several months have brought a number of staff changes to VLP. In January, **Nausheen Iqbal**, a graduate of NYU Law, joined VLP in the newly created position of Pro Bono Manager. **Nicole Dupré**, who served as VLP's Referral Coordinator for the past year, departed in June to spend a month working at an AIDS orphanage in Tanzania before matriculating at Wake Forest Law School in North Carolina. **Jessica Rubin-Wills**, a 2006 Harvard graduate, is following capably in Nicole's stead. **Caitlin Loftus**, a 2006 BC graduate, joined VLP as an Administrative Assistant in July after spending a year with Ameri-Corps.

Special attention is warranted to note the departure of **Damaris Gayle**. Damaris first served as VLP's receptionist in 1998, leaving after a year only to return in 2000 as the Administrative Assistant. Three years ago, Damaris expanded her responsibilities to include case referrals for both bankruptcy and unemployment matters. By the time she left VLP, Damaris was spending virtually all of her time on paralegal tasks, including appearances as an advocate at Unemployment Compensation hearings. VLP appreciates all the contributions she has made over her long tenure.

Practice Tip: Domestic Relations Court Forms on the Web

The Probate & Family Court now provides many domestic relations forms on the web via the Court's website, www.mass.gov/courts. What's more, the electronic version of the Financial Statement and Child Support Guidelines worksheets are self-calculating.

VLP STAFF DIRECTORY

Let us help you find the right person to contact with questions and concerns. The following is the VLP staff directory with names, job titles, substantive areas of expertise and VLP business, and e-mail addresses and phone extensions.

Joanna Allison
Staff Attorney, Boston Housing Court Project, housing, consumer law and bankruptcy
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Jessica Rubin-Wills
Referral Coordinator, case referrals, training programs, MCLE vouchers, interpreters
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Martha Williams
Program Administrator, out of pocket reimbursements, Closure forms
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EXCITING NEW PROJECTS AT VLP!

EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION PROJECT

In June, Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP) and the Legal Services Center (LSC), a clinical program affiliated with Harvard Law School, initiated a project to provide representation to low income persons who have experienced employment discrimination. LSC screens and evaluates cases based upon in person interviews and available documents. Meritorious cases are referred to VLP for assignment to pro bono counsel. The pro bono attorney will assist the client in the filing and development of the case at the MCAD up to a Probable Cause or Lack of Probable Cause determination.

It is hoped that the project will enable low-income workers to more readily challenge discriminatory conduct in the workforce and make the MCAD a more hospitable forum for low income workers.

A training program will be scheduled in the fall for lawyers who would like to take a case but do not practice in the employment discrimination area. If you would like to participate in this effort and/or attend the training, please contact Lynn Girton at lgirton@vlpnet.org or Jessica Rubin-Wills at jrubinwills@vlpnet.org.

VLP & SENIOR PARTNERS PROVIDE PRO BONO REPRESENTATION UNDER THE LIMITED ASSISTANCE REPRESENTATION PILOT PROJECT AT SUFFOLK FAMILY & PROBATE COURT

For the past few months, Senior Partner for Justice and Volunteer Lawyers Project have been operating a program at Suffolk Family and Pro-

bate Court to provide limited representation to parties appearing pro se. The program was designed to take advantage of the pilot project on limited assistance representation (LAR) now being conducted in Suffolk and Hampden Counties.

Under the special rule, attorneys may enter a limited appearance, which allows an attorney to appear for proceedings on a particular date or for a specific issue in a case. Once the terms of the appearance are met, the attorney simply enters a notice of withdrawal, not a motion to withdraw.

Once a week, Senior Partners volunteer to be available at Suffolk Family and Probate Court to handle cases for pro se clients that are referred to them by the court. Once the attorneys confirm that the client is eligible and the case is appropriate for limited representation, they enter limited appearances and provide representation in court that day. They then enter a withdrawal as soon as the court case is over.

The project has been quite successful and clients have been assisted with child support, custody, visitation, guardianship of minors and paternity testing among other issues. In some cases, clients have been able to resolve all their issues and obtain a judgment in their case on the same day.

LAR is an excellent way for experienced practitioners to provide assistance to pro se parties without committing themselves to cases that can develop into protracted disputes.

In September 2007 the LAR pilot is being extended to Norfolk Family and Probate Court. Senior Partners and VLP plan to expand efforts to assist pro se parties through use of LAR in the Norfolk County Court using the model developed in Suffolk County. Training in Limited Representation will be available in the fall. Please check the VLP website for dates.

Visit us Online
At www.vlpnet.org

Providing Equal Access to Justice!

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Volunteer Lawyers Project of the Boston Bar Association

HELP NEEDED WITH SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY BENEFITS CASES

Due to a change in social security procedures, VLP is experiencing an increased demand for assistance with appeals of denials of Social Security disability benefits—either Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). VLP takes cases at the administrative hearing stage, after a claimant has applied for benefits and been denied twice. VLP staff members obtain and review the clients' files from the Social Security Administration, and they provide extensive mentoring and support to attorneys taking the cases. The attorneys and paralegals are responsible for obtaining updated medical records, ensuring that the doctors' reports persuasively support the claim, and advocating for the client at a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge. The total time involved in an SSI/SSDI case generally averages 20 hours.

VLP panel members who have already taken SSI/SSDI cases have reported that the experience has been personally rewarding as they have obtain an income stream fro individual who are often ineligible for any other assistance. In addition, the cases have been professionally valuable to them, since it helps them better serve disabled clients in their private practices.

Please help with this valuable work.

Free training is scheduled for **Tuesday, September 18 from 4 to 6 p.m** at VLP, **“Introduction to SSI and SSDI.”** To register, go to our website, www.vlpnet.org, or call the VLP reception desk at (617) 423-0648.

For more information please contact Referral Coordinator Jessica Rubin-Wills at (617) 423-0648, ext. 129, or jrubin-wills@vlpnet.org.