

Volunteer Recruitment Tips

Justice Corps Program

In San Diego, we have college student interns through the Justice Corps program. It is a very involved program and the FLF does not administer it; you have to apply through the Judicial Council for your court to have JC students. The contact person here at the San Diego Superior Court that runs the program is Amoreena Urbeck. Her email is Amoreena.Urbeck@sdcourt.ca.gov.

The undergraduate students here come from three universities in our area: University of California at San Diego, San Diego State University, and California State San Marcos. The students have to apply for the internship through their university. They are interviewed by us (the court) and then placed, if accepted, to work at the FLF offices and other self-help programs the court contracts with (Legal Aid and the San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program). The students work 300 hours per year, which works out to about eight hours per week if they want to finish during their school year. They get a stipend of \$1200 that goes towards school tuition after completion of the program. They are fantastic. They receive orientation training through the court, on the job training through the area they are placed in, plus other periodic training the program offers.

Law Schools

In addition to the JusticeCorp program, we (FLF) also have our own law student internship program. We recruit from the three ABA law schools in our city. The positions are unpaid but the students can take the internship for credit through their school. Students must be second year when they begin their internships (they can apply at the end of their first year). We require 16 hours per week from each intern, taken in either 8 hour days, blocks of 4 hours, or a combination thereof. The interns must work their entire school semester. This program has been in effect for 17 years and has been valuable to the FLF and the students.

Both Justice Corps (JC) students and law student interns undergo background checks before being allowed to start their internship.

The pros for this program are many. The students, once trained, are an invaluable help to us and the public they serve. They also provide an opportunity for our

staff to be great role models. Staff are able to train and teach the students and it becomes a source of pride for them how well the students perform. It is nice to watch the college students apply and get into law school; it is even better to watch the law students graduate, pass the bar, and begin a family law practice!

The cons are the time it takes to train the students before they become proficient but I think it is well worth it. In general, the students are smart and learn quickly. It doesn't take long for them to start with RFOs for custody, then support, then onto the more detailed issues as their year progresses.

We don't accept any volunteer help other than or JC students and law student interns. Those students have a vested interest in the internship and a commitment through their schools and are very reliable help. They have scheduled hours and rarely does any student fail to follow through on their commitment. We have hired a former JC student as a paralegal and two former law student interns as staff attorneys (after they had several years of private practice) so it is well worth it!

If a Justice Corps program is not feasible for your court and there are no law schools close by, you might consider junior colleges or even high school students. You could contact the schools to see if there is any interest in setting up a volunteer program through their career development offices. If the students are able to get some kind of school credit or recognition for their volunteer time with you, it is more likely you'll be able to find candidates who are willing to commit to a certain number of hours per week for a long enough period of time that they can be properly trained. Be sure to run this by your court (and HR) however, before taking this step. 😊