

Frequently Asked Questions about Volunteer Opportunities at NLS-LA

1. What work do volunteers/interns do?

Volunteers work at clinics and on cases and projects in our offices, at sites in the community, and in our clinics. At our clinics volunteers help litigants prepare court forms or paperwork for administrative hearings. Under the supervision of an attorney, volunteers may be asked to provide information about the legal process, as well as other community resources. All non-attorney work is reviewed and approved by an attorney.

2. What types of legal clinics do you have?

We have different types of legal clinics:

The Self-Help Legal Access Centers assist people with family law matters (divorce, custody disputes, and paternity actions), housing matters (evictions) and other matters (name change, guardianships, and conservatorships). These are located in the San Fernando, Van Nuys Pomona, Pasadena and Antelope Valley Courthouses. The Centers are open Monday – Friday 8:30 am – 12:30 pm and 1:30 – 4:30 pm. All the Centers are closed Friday afternoons.

The Domestic Abuse Self-Help (DASH) clinics assist litigants with domestic violence restraining orders. Litigants are also provided information to shelters, counseling and other social services available to victims of domestic abuse. These are located in the San Fernando, Van Nuys Pomona and Antelope Valley Courthouses. The Centers are open Monday - Friday 9:00 am – Noon.

The Workers' Rights Clinic assist workers with claims for unpaid wages and overtime, appeals of unemployment benefit denials and criminal records clean up. We have clinics in Pacoima (Saturdays from 9am – 12 pm), El Monte (Wednesdays from 5 pm – 9pm) and Glendale (1st and 3rd Tuesday from 5 pm – 9 pm).

The Foreclosure Clinic assists low income homeowners with the foreclosure process. At the clinic we screen for either a referral to New Economics for Women for counseling, for negotiations, or for litigation.

3. What types of in-office projects do you have?

The types of in-office work can vary widely. For Examples at this time we have volunteers doing clerical work, translating or working with clients in our different advocacy groups. We have advocacy groups in the area of Administrative Law, Community Development, Family Law, Health Consumer Center, Housing/Consumer Law, Immigration Law and Workers' Rights/Employment. The advocacy groups have limited volunteer opportunities.

4. What are the qualifications for a volunteer/intern?

NLS needs volunteer attorneys, paralegals, law students, undergraduate students and community volunteers who are able to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, and to carry out instructions. In addition, volunteers must be able to work well with people who may be in crisis – many of the litigants we assist are experiencing very stressful situations. Note: Bilingual volunteers (especially Spanish, Mandarin and Cantonese speakers) are always needed, but a second language is not required.

5. Is any training required?

Yes, we will train you. Volunteers must attend either a 1 hour orientation or 3 hour training (depending on the clinic) before working in a particular clinic. There is also some "on the job" and other follow-up training provided as needed. In some situations, we can make individual arrangements for training, especially if you have prior experience.

6. Are there a minimum/maximum number of hours?

It varies by clinic type. For Domestic Abuse Self-Help, volunteers are asked to work at least one 4 hour clinic shift per week, with a minimum 60 hour total commitment. For Self-Help, it is usually two 3 hour clinic sessions per week for at least 12 weeks, about 70 total hours. (Note: Many Domestic Abuse and Self-Help volunteers find they learn much faster if they work two or more shifts per week). For Workers Rights, we ask at least one 4 hour clinic shift every three weeks, over the course of a semester, about 40 hours total.

7. How do I apply?

Send your resume via e-mail to Diana Avendaño at volunteers@nls-la.org or fax to 818.896.6647. We will send you the volunteer/intern application. Return the complete application along with your resume to get started.

8. Is this a paid internship?

No. Although, we offer some paid internships in the summer. Those applications are due in early Spring. If you have any questions about the summer positions please contact Diana Avendaño at volunteers@nls-la.org or 818-834-7585.

9. How soon can I start?

Right away. Our trainings and orientations are scheduled on a regular basis. Send in your resume and application and we will get right back to you.