Legal Aid of West Virginia
Charleston, West Virginia

Mission Statement:
Legal Aid of West Virginia provides legal representation in civil cases to low-income people across the entire state of West Virginia. The principal types of legal problems handled are:

- **Family Law**, protecting victims of domestic violence, and protecting custodial rights of “primary caretaker” parents threatened with loss of custody of their children. In this area we coordinate many of our services with the statewide coalition of domestic violence *shelter programs*;
- **Housing Law**, assisting low income families in getting and keeping safe and adequate housing;
- **Public Benefits Law**, to secure Unemployment Compensation benefits, welfare benefits, food stamps, and Medicaid coverage.

In addition we have separate funding for (1) representing welfare recipients encountering legal obstacles to getting employment; (2) addressing quality of care problems for residents of nursing homes and other long-term care settings throughout the state; and (3) advocacy for people with mental health needs, both inside and outside state operated facilities.

The Charleston office is the largest of the 12 LAWV offices in the state, providing both direct local services and specialty advocacy work throughout the state. The Charleston office provides direct local services in a variety of settings, serving the coalfield counties, the urban capitol city area, and several extremely rural isolated central WV mountain counties.

**Internship Title:** Summer Intern

**On-site Supervisor/Co-educator:**
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Title: Attorney
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Physical Address (if different):

**Additional Contact:**
Bruce Perrone, Attorney, Charleston Office. (304) 343-4481 ext. 2127

**Duties/Project Description:**
- A Shepherd Program student will have a wide variety of opportunities with LAWV. Upon arriving at the office, their supervisor will assign them a project to work on over the course of the summer. This project will be designed to provide continuing benefit to our clients after the student has left. This project may be research based and could include compiling useful information for our website or creating a brochure to send out to clients who need legal assistance.
• An undergraduate student needs to be self-motivated and confident. On case-related tasks an undergraduate student may assist in information gathering and evidence development: talking with the client or their family, friends, neighbors, or employer; their church members or community supports; taking photos; researching substantive information; collecting records; and working with social agencies also serving the client.

• A law student will do the same work as an undergraduate and in addition will do case-related legal research and writing. Law students who have completed their second year of law school also are permitted by WV court rules to participate as an attorney (with direct LAWV supervision) in handling court hearings.

• Both undergraduate and law students will be given the opportunity to attend multiple hearings in different counties and with different judges. They will also be invited to sit in on client interviews and shadow in different departments at LAWV. They may also be asked to provide direct advocacy or negotiation with other agencies to obtain services a client may need.

Qualifications:
Law students are preferred but not required. We have had exceptionally good and productive undergraduate volunteers. In order to travel to other agencies for record collection and investigation, having a vehicle is preferred for all interns. If you bring a car LAWV will cover daily parking costs and reimburse mileage costs for work. The ability to relate in a friendly and respectful way to a wide variety of people is crucial.

Orientation Plan:
There is no required orientation to attend to work at LAWV. On the first day, your supervisor will take you around the office, explain your duties, and train you for anything you might be asked to do. As the first few weeks go by and you attend court, ask the attorney you’re with to show you how to use the database systems in Magistrate and Circuit Court. Once you learn this, you will be able to do more research for the attorney’s in the office.

Supervision/Mentor Schedule:
It is important to periodically check in with your mentor throughout the summer. The LAWV staff is very friendly and has an open door policy. Anytime you need to meet with your mentor, just go to their door and ask for help. You may not have assigned check in points because of this policy. Your mentor will expect daily interaction with you and updates about how your project is going.

Non-English language requirement?
No language requirement

Working Conditions:
The LAWV Charleston office is open every day from 8:00 – 5:00. Each attorney and office staff member works an 8 hour shift with a one hour lunch break at some point during that time frame. The staff is very accommodating for the hours that you want to work. For example, you could work 8:00 – 4:00, 8:30 – 4:30, or 9:00 – 5:00. It’s also

REV: July 2014
important to keep an open mind about your hours because some days hearings that you will want to attend will be late in the day or you may have to arrive early for a hearing in a county 2 hours away, so you will want to accommodate that to your hours.

You will have an office that you will share with a few other interns. You will be given a computer to work with and a phone and desk. You will have access to the internet, Microsoft office, and the LAWV storage drive.

The dress code is casual office attire. On most days a polo and khakis will be fine. On days that you attend court, a dress shirt may be advised. On Friday’s the staff dresses down and you will be allowed to wear jeans.

**Preparation:**
There is no prior preparation required for this internship

**Is the organizational accessible via public transportation?**
NO

**Does the internship require use of personal vehicle?**
No, but encouraged