

Clinic for Legal Assistance to Servicemembers (CLAS)

George Mason University School of Law
Section 309-001, Summer 2009

Mission Statement

The mission of the Clinic for Legal Assistance to Servicemembers of George Mason University School of Law is to provide free civil representation to support active-duty members of the armed forces and their immediate families in cases of clear injustice or in which they could not retain counsel without undue financial hardship, and to provide law students with practical educational experience, the opportunity to make a patriotic contribution, and encouragement to public service as a habit of mind.

Operational Summary

Casework. The focus of clinic students' efforts is casework on client and applicant matters, primarily accomplished outside the classroom. Students are required to submit to me weekly reports on this work, called the Weekly Status Report (WSR). I am regularly available in my office for meetings and discussions with students on any subject, including casework, Monday through Thursday. Meetings should be scheduled in advance, by telephone or email, which can be done in the same day. If questions arise that need answering outside normal working hours, I am also generally available at home by phone or email (to which emails directed to my gmu address are automatically forwarded). Currently, the clinic is representing five clients and has several applications for assistance pending from the Spring 2009 term. The clinic has received hundreds of applications since it began accepting cases in 2005, of which scores have been selected for representation.

Classwork. In addition to casework, students will meet for class each Wednesday during the term, from 4:00 pm to 5:50 pm, in Room 412, Hazel Hall, as to which normal academic rules apply. Classes will be devoted in part to instructional topics, drawn from the blocks of instruction set forth below. Course materials available on the password-protected TWEN site and elsewhere will be selected for review and classroom instruction at a schedule determined by class progress on casework. In addition to WSRs, timesheets must also be submitted weekly, with time allocated by each student between casework and classroom preparation/ attendance, to the CLAS secretary, Yen Kha. Some attention in each class may also be devoted to WSRs and timesheets, as well as legal and national security developments that may have an impact on servicemembers and their families; a portion of every class will also address substantive casework.

Grades. There will be no exams or papers required for the clinic. Students will be graded on factors involving casework and classwork: legal writing and analysis (including WSRs); responsiveness to supervisory direction, clients and applicants; judgment in case management; effort and allocation in time management (including timesheets); maintenance of electronic and paper files (including use of standard clinic

forms); relationships with supervisor(s); and classroom participation. The law school rule of thumb that each credit entails approximately 60 hours of work applies. Every student will arrange a final, individual transition meeting with me at the end of the semester to review case files, activity logs and transition memoranda for successor students.

Blocks of Instruction

Clinic Operations. *E.g.*, organization (law-firm model), history, resources, procedures, students, support, and publications.

Professional Skills. *E.g.*, client interviewing, client development, case and file management, and supervision.

Substantive Law. Military-unique (*e.g.*, Titles 10 and 38, UCMJ, TSGLI, SCRA, USERRA, USFSPA); professional responsibility (*e.g.*, confidentiality, conflicts, communication and competence); and case-related (*e.g.*, administrative, consumer, contracts, benefits, domestic relations and landlord-tenant).

Relevant Communities. *E.g.*, military, veterans, legal services, and clinical.

CLAS Cases. *E.g.*, status, lessons, supervision, questions, and next steps.

National Security. Most classes will include current developments relevant to members of the client population (*e.g.*, status of U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan Iraq; developments in Pakistan regarding Taliban activities near the Afghan border and with respect to nuclear facilities; piracy off the horn of Africa; and the Obama administration's approach to nuclear proliferation, test bans and missile defense).

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