Michigan State University College of Law Legal Clinic

Michigan State University College of Law's Legal Clinic offers seven prominent clinical programs to assist low-income Michigan residents who are underserved by the legal system, and to provide its law students with directed, hands-on training in matters designed to make them superb, ethical lawyers with a commitment to public service.

Housing Law Clinic

Formerly known as the Rental Housing Clinic, the Housing Law Clinic reflects the Legal Clinics' commitment to assist clients with an expanded variety of issues affecting them, including foreclosure protection, housing discrimination, fair housing laws, homeownership, policy issues affecting Michigan tenants and consumers relative to their housing needs, landlord/tenant matters, and national housing issues. Student clinicians litigate housing-type cases, advocate on behalf of their clients in a variety of contexts, and research and write about housing issues.

Immigration Law Clinic

In place since Fall 2010, the Immigration Law Clinic focuses on direct representation of individual clients and families in matters such as immigration status and documentation, criminal and family law, and human trafficking. This Clinic takes on a diverse range of cases, with attention to pedagogical concerns, community need, and impact. Student clinicians represent clients in administrative proceedings, Immigration Court, and federal and state courts; some students may work in appellate and amici capacities, while others may engage in regulatory and legislative reform efforts. The Clinic exposes students to the broad reach of immigration law into a vast array of legal systems and social institutions. As students clinicians develop expertise with the various systems with which their clients interact, they also undertake critique and reform of these systems.

Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic

The Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic, which recently celebrated its ten-year anniversary, assists low-income taxpayers (defined as those whose income does not exceed 250% of federal poverty guidelines) with resolution of their federal, state, and local tax controversies; in addition, it instructs English-as-a-second-language taxpayers about their rights and responsibilities under the Internal Revenue Code. In their work in the Tax Clinic, student clinicians handle the client's case from inception to end, addressing diverse issues such as collection matters, installment agreements, offers in compromise, change notices, liens and levies, eligibility for deductions and credits, and the availability of innocent spouse relief. Clinicians receive special orders to practice before the Internal Revenue Service, and represent clients in cases before the United

States Tax Court, the United States District Court, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, the Michigan Tax Tribunal, and the Michigan Court of Appeals.

First Amendment Law Clinic

New in Spring 2011, the First Amendment Law Clinic reflects an expansion of an externship program that MSU Law students have participated in for many years. This Clinic, a collaboration between MSU Law and Michigan State University's School of Journalism, has several foci. Student clinicians receive intensive instruction about First Amendment Law in the media context and, in turn, teach what they have learned to high school journalism students throughout Michigan. The law students also consult with these students about First Amendment problems affecting their journalism programs, prepare memoranda concerning these issues, and take whatever steps are necessary – including administrative presentations and appeals and litigation – to ensure that the issues are properly resolved.

Civil Rights Clinic

The Legal Clinic's newest offering – the Civil Rights Clinic – will begin its work in Fall 2011. This program, begun at the request of the Judges of the United States District Court, WD, Michigan, at the outset primarily is designed to assist prisoners incarcerated in Michigan with litigation of their § 1983 claims in federal district court. These prisoners do not have the right to counsel in these proceedings, and therefore would be forced to proceed pro se without the Clinic's representation. Student clinicians who either are part of the Law College's Geoffrey Fieger Trial Practice Institute or who have amassed credits in advanced practice and procedure will represent selected litigants at all stages of their District Court proceedings under the supervision of a highly-experienced Director. Eventually, the Clinic will expand to represent clients in an array of civil rights matters.

Chance at Childhood Certificate Program

A collaborative arrangement between Michigan State University College of Law and Michigan State University's School of Social Work, the Chance at Childhood program pairs law students with social work master's degree candidates to address the needs of children in the judicial system from different perspectives. Student clinicians analyze requests for changes in child custody and write reports for the presiding judges; in addition, they work with parents and children in the supervised visitation setting to ensure that children renew and retain a healthy parental relationship.

Small Business/Nonprofit Clinic

The Small Business/Nonprofit Clinic features the delivery of transactional law services to both new and established Michigan entrepreneurs. The nonprofit component of this program assists Michigan nonprofit organizations with all manner of legal issues affecting them. Student

clinicians analyze the legal needs of their clients, counsel them about those needs, and draft all required documentation, such as articles of incorporation, bylaws, operating agreements, personnel-related documents, and commercial leases. As is the case with all of the Legal Clinic's programs, students in the SBNP clinic engage in community outreaches designed to educate others about a variety of timely legal topics.