

Legal Services NYC has forged new partnerships with the law firms of Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP and Milbank Tweed Hadley & McCloy LLP, as well as with Williams College, to help meet the dramatic increased need for civil legal services for the poor across New York City.

The offices of Legal Services NYC have been scrambling to meet the increased legal needs of low-income New Yorkers – estimated at over 30% – since the precipitous fall of the City’s economy began last September, while at the same time dealing with decreases in funding on the City and State levels, and an anticipated steep decline next year in funding from The Interest on Lawyers Account Fund of the State of New York (which is tied to interest rates of major banks).

Help has come, however, in the form of new externships. Externships provide major benefits to both clients and firms – Legal Services NYC programs are able to help more people, and associates get hands-on litigation and transactional experience. In January, Rafael Vasquez, an associate with Simpson since 2006, began a four-month externship with the Community and Economic Development (CED) Unit of *Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A*, where he will collaborate with the other CED Unit attorneys on their clients’ larger community development projects (which largely relate to affordable housing, healthcare and education). Mr. Vasquez is already hard at work negotiating and preparing legal documents relating to the financing and zoning requirements for a new health care facility, preparing the real estate documents for upcoming small home resale closings to low-income, first time homeowner families, among other matters. CED Unit Director Jessica Rose said, “We are all extremely excited about this new relationship between Simpson and Brooklyn A. Mr. Vasquez as our first Simpson extern has set the bar high as he brings enthusiasm, intelligence, hard work and kindness to his work for our clients.” Mr. Vasquez shares in the CED Unit’s enthusiasm, stating that “this is a great opportunity to extend my corporate transactional experience to the representation of community-based organizations and to see the direct and tangible results of our legal work on the local level.”

Last fall, Milbank sent two associates to do three-month externships with Legal Services NYC offices – Matt Latterner worked with the *NYC Bankruptcy Assistance Project* helping pro-se claimants prepare bankruptcy petitions, and Jennifer Beaudry worked in the Employment Unit of *South Brooklyn Legal Services*, where she worked on appeals for clients who were initially denied unemployment insurance benefits. Said Ms. Beaudry of her experience with South Brooklyn, “I have had a very positive experience at South Brooklyn and am glad to have met so many passionate and talented lawyers. It has been a great way to begin my career.”

The Bankruptcy Assistance Project has also secured an extern from Williams College – Charlotte Silverman, a junior, will commence a “Williams in New York” semester as a part-time extern with the Project on January 27th. She’ll assist in helping to screen clients, conduct research, and manage client case files.

Long-term externships with Legal Services NYC programs include: Dewey & LeBoeuf LLP and Kramer, Levin, Naftalis & Frankel LLP, which contribute to *South Brooklyn Legal Services* by filling attorney positions in its Housing Law Unit; and Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP, which sends associates to *Legal Services NYC Brooklyn Branch* to do Family Law.

Legal Services NYC—the largest organization exclusively devoted to providing free civil legal services in the United States, with neighborhood offices in every borough of New York City—provides free help on cases involving housing, family, domestic violence, public benefits, income tax, employment, education, consumer rights and economic development. Legal Services NYC programs include Legal Services NYC-Bronx, Bedford-Stuyvesant Community Legal Services, Brooklyn Family Defense Project, Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A, Legal Services NYC-Brooklyn Branch, South Brooklyn Legal Services, Manhattan Legal Services, Queens Legal Services, Staten Island Legal Services, and the Legal Services NYC Legal Support Unit. Funding for the Legal Services NYC programs comes from the Legal Services Corporation, grants from the city, the state and federal agencies, private foundations, United Way of New York City, the New York State Interest on Lawyers Account Fund and private donations.

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