



AN OVERVIEW OF VOLUNTEERING WITH PRO BONO STUDENTS CANADA'S
FAMILY JUSTICE CENTRE

Introduction

The FJC was developed by Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC) with the support of Founding Partner, Epstein Cole LLP and LegalAid Ontario (LAO). The FJC offers free unbundled family law services to low-income people in Ontario. Please see our [website](#) for further information about the FJC.

Clinic Structure

The FJC holds virtual legal clinics where clients receive summary advice from *pro bono* family law lawyers and, in some cases, receive the option of having court documents prepared by a law student under the supervision of the *pro bono* lawyer following the initial summary advice meeting (clinic).

Prior to the clinic, law students complete an intake with the client and gather relevant information, including their eligibility for the FJC. The student is the primary contact person for the clients of the FJC, under the supervision of the *pro bono* lawyer supervisor.

Role of *Pro Bono* Lawyer Supervisors

The FJC provides Ontario family law lawyers with a unique opportunity to engage in a tangible response to Ontario's family justice gap. Mentoring students is personally rewarding and provides a pathway between law students and the family law bar.

Leveraging technology allows the FJC to provide services to low-income Ontarians from anywhere in Ontario, including in historically under-served locations. It also enables the engagement of lawyers and law students from across the province. This model allows services to be provided on a flexible schedule (i.e. weekends, evenings, weekdays) and without the need for the client or lawyer to travel.

The virtual legal clinics are held approximately twice per month except for April and December (to permit the law students to prepare for and write their final exams). Each clinic is three hours long and Lawyer Supervisors can expect to see between two and four clients during this time.

When meeting with clients, Lawyer Supervisors provide summary advice and instructions to students regarding the preparation of court documents for clients who qualify for and require this service.

Following the clinics, in appropriate cases, Lawyer Supervisors supervise the work of law students as they complete court forms. Once the Lawyer Supervisor has approved the court forms, the Lawyer Supervisor, client, and student will meet to review the documents. For each client who receives document-drafting services, it is estimated that the Lawyer Supervisor will spend approximately three hours to supervise the student and to meet with the client to review the documents. Depending on the complexity of the file and other factors, the time required may range.

To ensure consistency, to the extent possible, the same Lawyer Supervisor, client, and student will work together throughout the client's involvement with the FJC. If any document drafting is incomplete when a student's term with the FJC ends, the Lawyer Supervisor may be required to complete the documents or to wait until the next group of students begins.

Lawyer Supervisors must have sufficient experience practicing family law in Ontario and will be on the roster for a minimum of one year during which time they should expect to be scheduled for at least one clinic. Lawyers will be required to complete training before participating in their first scheduled clinic.

Contact

If you are interested in volunteering with the FJC, please fill out our [online survey](#). If you have any questions about volunteering, please contact PBSC's Program Manager, Hilary Ingle, at hilary.ingle@probonostudents.ca.

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