



The Pre-Law e-Newsletter from Pre-Professional Programs & Advising

Best viewed in HTML

Vol. 4, No. 6

Friday, November 19, 2010 – Thursday, December 2, 2010

- ~~~~~
- 1. Message from Ana L. Droscoski, Esq.**
 - 2. Internship Opportunity: Maryland Office of the Public Defender Law Clerk and Legal Internships**
 - 3. Interim Year(s) Opportunity: Massachusetts Legal Assistance for Self-Sufficiency Program, South Coastal Counties Legal Services, Inc.**
 - 4. Interview: Letha A. Miller, Assistant Public Defender, Baltimore City**
 - 5. Upcoming Pre-Law Meetings and Program Announcements**
- ~~~~~

1. MESSAGE FROM ANA L. DROSCOSKI, ESQ.

For those applying this cycle, you should be close to -- if not finished with -- submitting your law school applications. If your submissions are not yet complete, try to wrap up by Thanksgiving. Then you can be that much more grateful!

For those of you interested in public health law, try to take advantage of the ongoing *Berman Institute of Bioethics Seminar Series* downtown at the School of Public Health. Law school graduates present many of the sessions, including the upcoming, "The New Biopolitics of Race and Health" by Northwestern University Kirkland & Ellis Professor of Law, Dorothy E. Roberts. See Section 5 below for more details.

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving!

2. VOLUNTEER/INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITY: MARYLAND OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER LAW CLERK AND LEGAL INTERNSHIPS

Maryland Office of the Public Defender Law Clerk and Legal Internships are designed to give participants exposure to the work environment of the OPD, including opportunities to observe and assist in legal proceedings and contribute to the work of the criminal defense teams.

The program integrates law clerks and interns into all district and division offices and allows them to assume some of the same responsibilities as our full-time personnel.

For more information and to view all legal internship and law clerk listings, visit: <http://www.opd.state.md.us/lawclerklegalinternships.html>

3. INTERIM YEAR(S) OPPORTUNITY: MASSACHUSETTS LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM, SOUTH COASTAL COUNTIES LEGAL SERVICES, INC.

[Massachusetts Legal Assistance For Self-Sufficiency Program Description](#)

The Legal Assistance for Self-Sufficiency Program places 28 AmeriCorps members with an interest in public service law in participating legal services organizations throughout Massachusetts. Members will serve under professional supervision in providing legal assistance to low-income people in civil (non-criminal) matters. Members will be exposed to a wide range of legal assistance activities beginning with initial client contact and eligibility determinations, to case development, negotiation, hearing and appeal. The following civil law areas are commonly practiced in participating legal services organizations:

- Housing
- Domestic Relations/Domestic Violence
- Education
- Income Maintenance and Health Benefits
- Legal Problems of Elders
- Immigration
- Community Group Representation

AmeriCorps members will also conduct legal education and outreach activities, as well as developing volunteer resources for their legal service organization. Members will have defined responsibilities for completing training, conducting case activities, and fostering volunteerism.

This is an eleven month program scheduled to begin in early September. Members serve a minimum of 1700 hours over a forty-six week period ending in late July.

Eligibility Requirements

- At least 17 years of age
- U.S. Citizen, U.S. National, or lawful permanent resident alien of the U.S.

Qualifications

- A Bachelor's Degree
- A commitment to obtaining justice for poor people
- The desire to work with a diversity of low-income people
- Developed oral and written communication skills
- Interest in obtaining a law degree
- Proficiency in a non-English language used by clients is desirable

Benefits

Members making a firm one year service commitment, and who complete 1700 hours of community service, will receive:

- A \$17,000 taxable living allowance, paid bi-weekly
- Health benefits
- An educational award in the amount of \$5,350
- Day care assistance, if eligible
- Hands-on, supervised exposure to the practice of law

Contact Information

Kathy Marx, AmeriCorps Program Director
 Massachusetts Legal Assistance for Self-Sufficiency Program
 South Coastal Counties Legal Services, Inc.
 P.O. Box 2507
 Fall River, MA 02722-2507
 Email: KMarx@sccls.org
 Phone: 508-676-5022 Ext. 2019
 Fax: 508-676-8657

For a complete description of this program, visit:

<http://www.mlassp.org/overview.htm>

4. INTERVIEW: LETHA A. MILLER, ASSISTANT PUBLIC DEFENDER, BALTIMORE CITY

Letha A. Miller is an Assistant Public Defender (APD) for the Office of the Public Defender, Hargrove District Court of Baltimore City. In December 2005, Ms. Miller joined the Office of the Public Defender as a Law Clerk in the felony division. In December 2006, she assumed the role of APD.

As an Assistant Public Defender, Ms. Miller represents low income clients in every aspect of Maryland District Court proceedings, including plea negotiations, bail review hearings, trials, felony preliminary hearings and civil violations of probation. Ms. Miller appears in court approximately three times per week, with an average of 10 to 15 clients per day. In addition, she conducts investigations involving possible client defenses and supervises student interns.

Ms. Miller graduated with a Juris Doctor, *cum laude*, from the University of Baltimore School of Law in 2006. While in law school, she served as the Managing Editor of the *University of Baltimore Law Review*. She was a Founding Member-at-Large of UB Students Supporting the Women's Law Center and Chair of the Curriculum Committee. Ms. Miller's employment during law school included service as: a Research Assistant to a professor in law school; a Law Clerk at a firm in Rockville, Maryland; and a Judicial Intern to an Associate Judge in Baltimore City Circuit Court and a Former Presiding Judge of the Criminal Division in Washington, D.C. Superior Court.

Before entering law school, Ms. Miller worked primarily in politics. From 2002 to 2003, she was a Political Associate for NARAL Pro-Choice America. From 2001 to 2002, she was a Development Assistant at The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, and from 2000 to 2001, Ms. Miller was a Legislative Assistant for the National Air Traffic Controllers Association. From 1999 to 2000, she served as Director of National Donor Research of Stabenow for U.S. Senate; from 1996 to 1998, she served as a Legislative Aid/Caseworker to Michigan State Senator Gary Peters.

Ms. Miller received her Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from Michigan State University (MSU) in 1999. While there, she was the President of the MSU College Democrats and of the College Democrats of Michigan.

1) Describe a Day in the life of an Assistant Public Defender in Baltimore City.

I am in District Court about three times a week. When I am in court, I need to be in the office by 8:00 AM to go to lockup and see my clients that are incarcerated. I am in the courtroom by 8:30 and checking my clients in. I talk to them about what happened if I haven't already interviewed them and I convey offers from the State's Attorney. I present all the options and find out how they would like to proceed. I usually have 10-15 clients in the morning and a few in the afternoon. Then, I go check in with the State's Attorney to see which cases they are ready on (meaning they can go forward in a prosecution against my client and have their police officers, civilian witnesses, chemical analysis for drug cases, etc.). I also negotiate better offers for my clients. The judge usually comes out at 9:00 AM and the docket is called. I help my clients plead before the judge or assist them in sending their case to the downtown courts for a jury trial, or I have a trial before the judge. I have had approximately 50 trials since I began in 2007. Before the afternoon docket, I usually have lunch and prepare anything necessary for the afternoon. The afternoon docket begins at 2:00 PM.

If I am not in court, I am generally preparing for my next docket in court. I make phone calls to clients and interview them. I also go to the Baltimore City jails (there are three different ones for the City, but they are all near each other). We are allowed to travel in the general population of the different jails. In order to prepare for court, I must research where my client is located and what other pending legal issues they may be dealing with (parole, probation, pending cases, etc.). I also read the Statement of Probable Cause which is the police officer's version of what crime occurred. If there is a factual or legal issue that arises from that document or from my client's version, I must research it. Most of the time, that means legal research of relevant statutes and/or case law. Sometimes, I go the scene of a crime and do my own investigation. Usually, I am able to go home by 4:30 PM for the day.

2) What initially attracted you to this field? What are some of the rewards of this area of law and the legal profession?

I found myself drawn to criminal law while I was in law school. Reading case law while you're a student can be very dry, but I always found the criminal law stories intriguing. I always felt that everyone should be entitled to a lawyer. I have seen people come to court without an attorney and be taken advantage of because they do not understand the proceedings.

Practicing as a Public Defender can be very rewarding because you are serving your client at one of their worst moments. Helping someone and reassuring them when they are petrified of incarceration is very worthwhile. Obviously, it is very gratifying when you can have a trial and your client is found not guilty, but that doesn't happen as often as one might hope. It is also rewarding to find your client help when they genuinely need it, such as drug treatment for someone who has had a drug addiction for many years.

In comparison to being in private practice, my job affords me absolute honesty. Some private attorneys are afraid to tell their clients the reality of their legal situation until they can secure their fee.

3) What are some of the downsides of this area of law? How would you compare the reality of your profession to the picture you had of it while in school?

The biggest downside of my job, personally, is that Public Defenders, in general, have a bad reputation. Sometimes your clients will assume that if they had paid for an attorney, they would be better off. Often, they will say as much to you and wonder why you are offended (example: "I'm going to hire an attorney." In a tone that suggests that you are not an attorney).

The other downside is the salary. While we are paid well in comparison to other states, it isn't much when your student loan repayments start. I think that is what I was most unprepared for in law school. The last downside is that it can be difficult to represent people who, sometimes, have no hope. One realizes the systemic problems of the city where one works because those problems lead to the issues we deal with in court. Sometimes, you see the worst of the worst in a city.

4) Do you have any advice for an undergraduate interested in pursuing this body of law and the legal profession?

I would clerk at the Office of the Public Defender or the States Attorney Office while you're in law school. Some people really aren't cut out for the adversarial nature of the job or the nature of crime in Baltimore City. I would also consider how much student loan debt you take on, because it will be difficult to pay it back with the salary of a starting ASA or APD.

Contact Information

If you would like to learn more about criminal law, being a Public Defender in Baltimore City, or have any further questions for Letha A. Miller, you may contact her via email at: Letha.miller@gmail.com.

Additionally, she has the following recommendations:

An episode of PBS Frontline on 11/9 that I highly recommend for exploring the complexities of confessions. It can be found at: www.pbs.org/frontline/the-confessions. In addition, episodes of Frontline are available on Netflix for video streaming online.

The following is one of the most harrowing and excellent pieces I've ever read about faulty forensic evidence and alleged experts: http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/09/07/090907fa_fact_grann

Finally, this is an article regarding the inaccurate nature of witness identifications: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/22/nyregion/22witness.html?ref=false_arrests_convictions_and_imprisonments

5. UPCOMING PRE-LAW MEETINGS AND PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENTS

Berman Institute of Bioethics Seminar Series: "The New Biopolitics of Race and Health"

Location: Wolfe W3008 (School of Public Health)

Date: Monday, November 22, 2010

Time: 12:00 pm - 1:30pm *Lunch will be provided*

Description: A new biopolitics of race and health attributes disparate health outcomes to race-based genetic difference and prescribes race-specific therapies to address them. [Dorothy Roberts, JD](#) will argue that this genetic approach obscures the social determinants of health as well as the need for social change to eliminate health inequities.

Upcoming LSAT Administration for 2010

Location: Check with LSAC for testing locations (next on campus/JHU LSAT administration – June 6, 2011).

Date: Saturday, December 9, 2010; Saturday, February 12, 2010

Time: Registration begins at 8:30am -- consult with LSAC for all controlling details.

~~~~~  
**STAFF IN THE OFFICE OF PRE-PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS AND ADVISING**

Ana L. Droscoski, J.D., Assistant Director, Pre-Law Advisor & Pre-Dental Advisor

David Verrier, Ph.D., Director, Pre-Health Advisor

Kirsten Kirby, M.S.Ed., Assistant Director, Pre-Health Advisor

Ellen Snyderman, M.S., Pre-Health Advisor

The Administrative Coordinators are available to answer questions regarding your file:

Carolyn Mae Krause, Administrative Coordinator, [ckrause@jhu.edu](mailto:ckrause@jhu.edu) 410-516-6744

For students whose last name begins with A-L, contact Mrs. Krause.

LaTonia Sanders, Administrative Coordinator, [ladytee@jhu.edu](mailto:ladytee@jhu.edu) 410-516-4140

For students whose last name begins with M-Z, contact Mrs. Sanders.

Angie Decker, Office Manager, [decker@jhu.edu](mailto:decker@jhu.edu)

Please feel free to use the resource library between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. every day or visit our website <http://web.jhu.edu/prepro/> for additional information.

Ana L. Droscoski, Esq.

Assistant Director

Office of Pre-Professional Programs & Advising

Johns Hopkins University

Garland Hall Suite 300

3400 North Charles Street

Baltimore, MD 21218

Tel: 410.516.4140

Fax: 410.516.4040

email: [adrosco1@jhu.edu](mailto:adrosco1@jhu.edu)

[web.jhu.edu/prepro](http://web.jhu.edu/prepro)