

Making the Most of Your Pro Bono Placement Experience

The following is a checklist to be used to make your *pro bono* placement worthwhile to both you and public service agency where you are volunteering. Your goals should be to do good work and gain skills, and also to make valuable public interest and social justice contacts. Key to achieving these goals will be obtaining a recommendation, if appropriate, and staying in touch with employers after the end of the placement. You are representing Santa Clara Law, so making a positive impression will serve you well and help pave the way for future SCU law students. Below is a list of practical reminders for making your placement a success.

Before You Arrive

- Research the organization before beginning your volunteer placement.

On the Job

- Arrive on time and leave when scheduled.
- When you start your placement, introduce yourself to office staff and other volunteers.
- See how small tasks affect the bigger picture.
- Be flexible.
- Seek out the work that you want to do. If an attorney is looking for some help, don't be afraid to offer your services.
- Take your responsibilities seriously.
- Become involved in the office: accompany coworkers on lunch breaks, go to meetings, and go to court.
- Do a good job on small tasks to be given more and more responsibility.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions.
- Establish a positive relationship with your supervisor and other office staff.
- Recognize that every person in the office, no matter what their position, plays a valuable role and should be treated with courtesy and respect.
- Schedule meetings with your supervisor to get feedback.
- As appropriate, get involved in a long term project.

Appropriate Use of Technology at Work

- Computer and Internet Use:** While volunteering at an agency, familiarize yourself with the office internet and email policy.
 - Do not use the organization's computers for personal internet searches or emails. The same applies to use of Westlaw or Lexis accounts for personal research.

- If you take your laptop to work, use it only for work-related matters.
- **Cells Phones and PDAs:** Use of cell phones for personal calls and texting should be restricted to non-working hours.
 - iPods, iPads, and PDAs should not be used at work unless they are needed to complete an assigned task.
- **Emails and Texting:** Be sure to treat emails and texts as carefully as you would the preparation of a research memorandum or a final exam.
 - Consider that any email or text you send could potentially be read by anyone, not just the intended recipient.
 - As a rule, do not send a text or an email that you would not feel comfortable having published on the front page of a newspaper or read by your parent.
- **Social Networking Sites:** Your personal information and photos on sites such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs can be viewed by current or prospective employers. Unprofessional communications on the internet can have an adverse effect on potential job offers.

Personal Grooming and Dress:

- Make a positive impression with a neat, professional appearance. It is a good idea to err on the side of business/professional attire.
- Dress and grooming are important elements of presenting yourself to others in a workplace setting, and will have an impact on how you are received by clients, judges and attorneys, as well as prospective employers.
- First impressions do matter. Personal grooming and clothing communicate a lot about how you view yourself as a professional.

Networking

- Keep a journal of your activities and projects while volunteering at your agency.
- Seek out a mentor who is working on issues you care about.
- Periodically get together with the other volunteers in your office and brainstorm things you'd like to learn/do.
- Make connections with other volunteers at your placement. Keep in touch with them and share resources. Your contacts could result in future opportunities.
- Have lunch or coffee with attorneys in your office who work in areas different from yours and alums from your school working in your office locale. Ask them about their chosen career path and any advice they can offer you on establishing your own.
- Ask your contacts for information on others you should talk to regarding your career.

Before You Leave and Afterwards

- Keep a detailed log of everything you do during your *pro bono* placement. It's helpful for your supervisor to have something concrete to refer to when providing a reference for you and it's helpful for you when you go to update your resume or prepare for an interview.
- Note how a particular organization impacts the community in which it is located. If it is a public service organization, what is its place in the larger network of local and/or national organizations? If it is a government agency, where does it fit into the government structure as a whole?
- Note how individuals participate as members of the community and envision your particular role there for a long period of time. Connecting to a community is a critical part of quality of life in public service.
- Note interactions of people with whom the attorneys regularly work, such as social workers and police officers.
- If appropriate, ask for a recommendation. Present your recommender with a bullet-point list of your volunteer placement accomplishments.
- Stay in touch with supervisors and mentors. Write or email them every so often.