

Ramsey County Housing Court Clinic

Volunteer Information Sheet

The Ramsey County Housing Court Clinic is a partnership between the Second Judicial District, Ramsey County Emergency Assistance (EA), Neighborhood House, the Dispute Resolution Center (DRC), Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services (SMRLS) and Volunteer Lawyers Network (VLN). All parties will be on hand to provide services during Ramsey County's initial appearance hearings in eviction cases.

Where and when is the clinic?

Location: Ramsey County Courthouse, 15 Kellogg Blvd. W, St. Paul, MN 55102
Volunteers report to the lobby outside Courtroom 131 (first floor).

Date and Time: Clinic shifts are every Tuesday and Thursday from 8:00 a.m. until 11:00 p.m.

What type of training is provided?

In person training can be provided upon request. An on-demand video training with 1.75 free CLE credits attached is available on VLN's website. All new volunteers will be paired with an experienced volunteer at their clinic shifts until the new volunteer indicates a willingness and ability to staff shifts independently!

What type of legal service will I be providing? Will I be expected to take cases full rep?

The Ramsey County Housing Court Clinic is an advice only clinic for people before their first appearance in eviction cases. There is no expectation that volunteers do anything more than provide legal advice at the clinic.

What resources will be provided for my use?

- A VLN clinic assistant will be on-site to assist with clients, paperwork and general questions
- A laptop with access to the internet and a printer
- Commonly used forms, such as settlement agreements and affidavits of compliance
- Computer access to documents filed with the court (MPA-Courthouse)

What happens during the clinic if the client presents an issue I do not feel prepared to answer? What should I do?

Don't guess! Check-in with the clinic assistant or with another attorney at the clinic that day. There are many people willing and able to assist. And, cases that need more legal help can be referred to VLN or SMRLS for additional legal assistance.

What if I think my client needs full representation?

See the clinic assistant. VLN has an online link for full rep referral (www.formstack/forms/VLN-HCPreferral); SMRLS prefers contact through the clinic assistant.

Please provide the most complete advice you can. Don't assume a full rep attorney will be found. Placing clients for full representation is very difficult.

If you are an experienced volunteer and would like to take cases beyond the initial appearance hearing, that is wonderful and we can make it happen. In fact, we find once volunteers become more experienced, they are some of the best people to take a client's case to trial.

This is my first time giving legal advice in a clinic setting, how can I make the most effective use of my time?

- Set the expectation. Tell the client you have approx. 20 minutes to listen to their story and provide advice.
- Give the client a chance to tell his or her story. Even though your time is limited, your empathy and kindness are so important to the client.
- At some point, you may need to take control of the conversation. If the client is focusing on irrelevant facts, providing too much detail, or simply off track, interject with pointed questions that elicit the information you need.
- Write explicit instructions regarding next steps for the client to take, including a script as to what the client can say in front of the judge when appropriate.

What if my client does not speak English?

- Court interpreters may be available to assist.
- Alternatively, see the clinic assistant. Phone translation may be available.

Wow! This sounds amazing. How can I volunteer?

Please contact Muria Kruger at VLN at the contact information below.

What should I do if volunteer and later find out I cannot make my shift?

We understand. Shift cancellations happen. We just ask that you provide as much notice as possible. Late cancellations are difficult to reschedule.

For more information or to volunteer, please contact:

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