



## **Volunteering for Hennepin In-Person Housing Clinic**

### **Contact information for VLN Hennepin Housing Court Staff:**

1. Vadim Trifel: Staff Attorney – vadim.trifel@vlmn.org
2. Barb Cruz: Clinic Coordinator - barb.cruz@vlmn.org

### **Preparing for in-person clinic:**

1. At least two days in advance of your volunteering date, you will receive an email that includes the date and time of your shift and a copy of the court calendar listing the parties and cases to be heard during that shift.
2. Run any conflict checks required by your firm and notify VLN of any conflicts.
3. Bring a laptop to the clinic to access case documents
4. Dress for court as you may be making a brief appearance before a referee on behalf of a client
5. Location of Hennepin Housing Court Clinic:  
Hennepin County Government Center  
600 South 6<sup>th</sup> St., Minneapolis 55487  
C tower, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor room 372.
6. Check out our website for information and resources for serving clients at Housing Court Clinic: <https://www.vlmn.org/volunteer/housing/court-clinics>

### **Who's who at the clinics:**

1. Volunteer Attorney
2. VLN clinic assistant
  - a. Completes intakes and notifies volunteer attorney which clients they will assist
  - b. Can assist with representation agreements or other forms
  - c. Can assist with finding opposing counsel for negotiations
  - d. Can contact VLN staff attorney if volunteer wants to consult of if there are too many clients for the volunteer to assist
  - e. Can assist with finding space/conference rooms for volunteers to meet with clients
  - f. Can help clients connect to emergency assistance or other resources
  - g. Is available if volunteer has further questions or concerns

3. Court staff
  - a. Referee
  - b. Court Clerk
4. Opposing counsel
  - a. You or the clinic assistant can ask the court clerk in the court room who the opposing counsel is on any particular case.
5. VLN Staff Attorney
  - a. Available for consultation and advice during clinic hours

**Hennepin Housing court Clinic Process:**

1. The court clerk calls everyone scheduled for a hearing to enter the courtroom at 8:30 am or 1 pm
2. During roll call, the clerk asks each participant if they would like to talk to a free lawyer
3. ARS (Adult Representation Services of Hennepin County) screens all eviction defendants wanting a free lawyer and assigns ARS attorneys to those who qualify for their services.
4. VLN screens the following clients for potential services:
  - a. Clients who are over income for ARS services
  - b. Landlords
  - c. Anyone involved in a rent-escrow case
  - d. Anyone involved in a civil housing case (homeowners)
  - e. Anyone who has a conflict with ARS
  - f. If there are no other cases for VLN, ARS may refer one client that is eligible for ARS. These clients must be provided full-rep services through VLN.
5. VLN clinic assistant completes intake with clients to determine eligibility
6. If the client qualifies for VLN services, the clinic assistant notifies the volunteer of client name, case number, and level of eligible service:
  - a. Advice/brief service Only
  - b. Full Representation eligible
  - c. Full Representation Mandatory
7. Volunteer accesses Court Documents on their personal laptop through the MN court website MCRO at <https://publicaccess.courts.state.mn.us/DocumentSearch>
8. Volunteer provides the client with legal service on case. Options of types of legal service include:
  - a. Advice only
  - b. Limited Representation
    - i. speak with opposing counsel
    - ii. negotiate settlement
    - iii. brief court appearance
  - c. Full Representation
    - i. If Volunteer Attorney plans to provide full representation to client
      1. VLN clinic assistant will help with representation agreement

2. Volunteer may appear in Court with or on behalf of the client
3. Volunteer can choose to work with the client beyond the clinic at trial, with expungement, or other further service
- ii. If client is eligible for full representation, but Volunteer Attorney serving the clinic cannot provide full representation
  1. Advise client that VLN will try to find a volunteer lawyer to take case, but do not promise
  2. Notify the clinic assistant and VLN staff attorney will determine if VLN can try to place the case with a volunteer.
  3. Take good notes as to why case is recommended for full representation.
- iii. If client is full representation mandatory and volunteer attorney does not wish to provide full representation to this client
  1. Treat the case as a normal advice case and try to resolve it through negotiation.
  2. If the case does not resolve through negotiation, notify VLN clinic assistant. A VLN staff attorney will come to take over the case before the end of the session
9. If you plan to appear in Court, let clinic assistant know so they can notify court staff