



Social Work Direct Services Practicum/Internship

ArchCity Defenders (ACD) is a holistic legal advocacy organization that combats the criminalization of poverty and state violence, especially in communities of color. ACD's foundation of civil and criminal legal representation, social services, impact litigation, policy and media advocacy, and community collaboration achieves and inspires justice and equitable outcomes for people throughout the St. Louis region and beyond.

ArchCity Defenders envisions a society liberated from systems of oppression where the promise of justice and racial equity is realized; communities where our approach to public safety prioritizes investment in well-being, health, and transformation without relying on criminalization and incarceration; and people living freely in their communities, thriving regardless of their race or income.

ArchCity Defenders is working on broad-based change to the St. Louis region's criminal legal system. One way we advance this agenda is through the use of impact litigation. In order to effectively file and argue civil rights impact cases, it is necessary to have extensive knowledge of legal precedents, state and federal statutes, and county and municipal ordinances.

Although impact litigation has become one effective tool for change, ArchCity Defenders remains dedicated to representing our clients and changing the lives of our clients on an individual basis. To this end, we provide direct representation in housing, elder, consumer, family, criminal, and other areas of the law.

ACD practices a holistic model of representation by combining zealous legal advocacy with an understanding that for most of our clients the legal system is one very small part of their lived experience. Housing and economic insecurity often make it difficult or virtually impossible to resolve legal issues. Social work students serve a pivotal role in providing support, intervention, and advocacy with respect to the underlying causes of these legal matters. Common challenges and barriers to housing stability, economic security, and successful legal outcomes can include: homelessness, acute mental health symptoms, substance use disorders, unemployment, intimate partner violence, and limited access food, child care, and medical and behavioral health services.

ArchCity Defenders offers a unique experience for a practicum student, as there is a great deal of autonomy within this position. A successful student needs to be assertive, resourceful, independent, persistent, empathetic, proactive, and flexible. They will need to take initiative,

see projects through to completion, become a strong advocate for ACD's work and mission, and feel comfortable interacting with clients and staff. The practicum student must have the problem-solving skills and personal traits necessary to locate and collaborate with community resources to best serve the needs of our clients. The position frequently requires working with clients in crisis and the student must be comfortable and able to thrive in that atmosphere. Additionally, the practicum provides students with an opportunity to become familiar with various aspects of the legal system and the intersection between law and social work.

Responsibilities:

- Conduct intakes and assessments of client's social, environmental, and economic needs
- Strategize with field instructor, attorneys, and other social workers regarding case plan
- Provide case management, coordinate with legal team to support clients, and maintain proper records and documentation
- Offer crisis intervention, counseling, and family support as needed
- Be self-aware and know when to seek help from supervisor/co-workers
- Learn about and document community resources for clients
- Provide community education regarding mission of ArchCity Defenders
- Develop and maintain positive working relationships with community resources to foster effective coordination of services for clients
- Attend any trainings as assigned and participate in the implementation of direct services program
- Support the mission of ACD and work with staff to support that mission through social work services
- Follow all ethical standards of NASW Code of Ethics
- Perform any other duties as assigned to help the social work and legal staff do its best work

Qualifications:

- Proficiency in Microsoft Office Suite
- Excellent interpersonal, written, and verbal communication skills
- Comfort and experience with researching resources and programs for clients
- Detail-oriented approach to working in a team-driven organization
- High capacity for problem solving and self-direction and the ability to work independently within time constraints
- Flexible and able to respond appropriately to ACD's changing needs
- Commitment to racial and economic justice and systems change
- Cultural awareness and sensitivity toward diverse populations; awareness of structures of power, privilege, and oppression

- Knowledge of homelessness and/or the criminal legal system; best practices, particularly around economic gaps and needs; or passion to learn about these issues, systems, and resources
- Proficiency in Spanish or other languages is appreciated, but not required

All internships are unpaid, volunteer positions. However, ACD will work with students who secure funding from outside sources or to obtain class credit where available.

ArchCity Defenders is an equal opportunity employer and strongly encourages applications from people who identify with historically underserved or underrepresented communities, people of color, persons with disabilities, women, LGBTQIA+, and gender non-conforming applicants. ACD encourages applications from all individuals without regard to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, national origin, marital status, familial status, citizenship, disability, military or veteran status, and record of arrest or conviction.