

Chicago Volunteer Legal Services

Because equal access to justice is everyone's fight.

Upcoming Events

December 25 - CVLS Closed

January 1 - CVLS Closed
New Years

January 3 - New Volunteer
Orientation; 12:15 p.m. - 1:15 p.m.

January 15 - CVLS Closed
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

January 17 - Seminar: Complex
Issues with U Visas
12:15 p.m. - 1:15 p.m.

January 18 - GAL for Minors
Training; 12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

February 7 - New Volunteer
Orientation; 12:15 p.m. - 1:15 p.m.

February 15 - GAL for Minors
Training; 12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

GIVE THE GIFT OF JUSTICE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

We are only able to help those in need of legal services because of your generosity. Please consider donating to CVLS this holiday season to help our staff and volunteers continue their important work. Remember, any gift to CVLS is completely tax deductible.

www.cvls.org/donate

JUSTICE ACCESSED

CVLS Volunteers Help Keep Food on the Table

Kenneth relies heavily upon his food stamps to make ends meet. Two years ago, Illinois' Department of Human Services (DHS) conducted an over-the-phone re-certification for his benefits and asked him whether he was receiving any income. Kenneth answered, "no" although he was getting unemployment compensation at the time. He didn't understand that this state benefit was considered income. DHS later learned of the unemployment benefits and informed Kenneth that a small percentage of his food stamps would be deducted every month until he repaid \$590. Kenneth understood and did not contest this because he would still have enough to eat. Kenneth felt he was safe.

However, three months later, citing fraud, DHS completely suspended his food stamps for a year. Although DHS had never established that his reporting error was intentional, they refused to reconsider. Kenneth tried to remedy the issue on his own, but eventually he filed a pro se complaint for judicial review. Luckily, the judge sent him to CVLS through the Access to Justice Program.

Arefa Shakeel and Kendall Scott of Ropes & Gray represented Kenneth, arguing that his response did not arise to fraud. The Chancery Court agreed and reversed DHS's termination. Arefa and Kendall continue to help Kenneth, to ensure that his withheld benefits are restored. Well done Arefa and Kendall!



Arefa Shakeel, Ropes & Gray LLP



Kendall Scott, Ropes & Gray LLP



Tina Tran, Needle & Thread Law

THE POWER OF BANKRUPTCY

How Marissa Got Back on Her Feet

You may remember the beginning of Marissa’s story from our Facebook page. A homemaker and the mother of a five-year-old son, Marissa was laid off from her job. She decided to go back to school with the support of her husband, the sole provider of the household. Overwhelmed with debt and struggling financially, Marissa and her husband came to CVLS for help.

CVLS reviewed Marissa’s finances and recommended a Chapter 7 bankruptcy. Her case was placed with Tina Tran, a CVLS volunteer with the Justice Entrepreneurs Project. Tina helped Marissa and her husband file for a joint Chapter 7 Bankruptcy. Thanks to Tina, the couple recently received a joint discharge and they are now well on their way to a new financial life!

Bankruptcy is a powerful tool that can provide a family like Marissa’s with a much-needed fresh start. However, few people know how or when to file, or even if they should file. In CVLS’ Chapter 7 Bankruptcy Program, CVLS volunteers

advise potential clients about the benefits and limitations of bankruptcy, and, if appropriate, represent them throughout the process.

A typical CVLS bankruptcy case includes completing all of the necessary documents and filing the case, using special software on CVLS computers, attending a creditors’ meeting, and reviewing and negotiating any reaffirmation agreements. If you are interested in taking a bankruptcy case or would like more information about the program, please contact CVLS attorney Matt Hulstein at mhulstein@cvls.org.

**THANK YOU TO
OUR SUPPORTERS**

KIRKLAND & ELLIS LLP

Schiff
Hardin

SIDLEY

New FREE CLE seminars available online!

Guardianship Planning for Immigrant Families

Rebekah Rashidfarokhi, CVLS Director, Guardianship for Minors
0.50 hours CLE credit
<https://goo.gl/VQiTy0>

Highlights of the 2017 Income Shares Act - - What You Need to Know

Stephanie Tang, Kogut & Wilson, L.L.C. Olga Allen, Hurst Robin & Kay, LLC
0.75 hours CLE credit
<https://goo.gl/5UW9Wh>

Not Your Grandma’s Medicaid: Applying for Medicaid

Matthew Margolis
1.00 hours CLE credit
<https://goo.gl/vzmvep>

VAWA and Immigration: The Basics

Massiel Ojeda, Marsal Avila Law Group
1.00 hours CLE credit
<https://goo.gl/JGFaZi>

More available at www.cvls.org/onlinecle

eFILING UPDATE

New Year, New Rules

EFiling becomes mandatory in Cook County state trial courts (e.g. Daley Center) on January 1, 2018. The Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County has created pre-recorded training videos and an End User Guide in .pdf format. In addition, four In Person Training Sessions are available each weekday. Please take advantage of these resources in order to familiarize yourself with eFiling procedures. Find them at the Clerk's website: cookcountyclerkof-court.org

If you still need help, CVLS staff can help you eFile. However, every attorney who files in Cook County must first register. CVLS can also help with document preparation and scanning, although you can access and complete many court forms online using the fillable .pdf files on the Clerk's website.

Keep your eye out for a page coming to cvls.org with information and links.



Laura Ashmore, Davis | Friedman, President of the Illinois Chapter of The American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers

ILLINOIS AAML ELECTS NEW PRESIDENT

Long Time Volunteer Honored With the Position

CVLS would like to congratulate Laura Ashmore on her election as president of the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers. Laura

has been a longtime CVLS volunteer and is an active proponent of pro bono legal aid. Needless to say, we think the Illinois AAML made an excellent choice and are confident that she will provide fantastic leadership during her term.

“I will follow in the footsteps of my partners, as well as all past Presidents, by promoting professionalism and excellence in our practice.”

The 124 Fellows who comprise the Illinois Chapter promote professionalism and exceptional advocacy, and are recognized by the bench and bar as leading practitioners in the area of matrimonial law. Laura is the 6th Davis Friedman

partner to hold this office since the Illinois AAML was founded in 1962.

“I would like to reinvigorate the relationship between the AAML Illinois Chapter and Chicago Volunteer Legal Services Foundation,” says Laura. “CVLS was founded just a few years after the formation of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, and, over 50 years later, CVLS remains the preeminent pro bono civil legal aid provider in Chicago. Illinois Fellows have in the past been valued CVLS volunteers, and I encourage every Fellow to take a case from CVLS during my term.”





Sandra Crawford, Law Crawford, P.C.

FROM CONFLICTS TO SMILES

CVLS Volunteer Uses Mediation to Bring a Family Together

CVLS was appointed as GAL of 18-month Marcell after his young mom petitioned to discharge the paternal grandmother's guardianship. When volunteer attorney Sandra Crawford stepped in, the family was in dire straits. Marcell's mom was living in a homeless shelter. His father refused to participate in the case and the frustrated guardian was on the verge of walking away.

Sandra thought that might be the perfect case to use her mediation and conflict resolution background. After meetings with all of the adults involved, including personnel at the homeless shelter, Sandra negotiated with the mother and guardian. Her first goal was to rebuild trust between the parties by crafting a visitation order, giving mom access to her son for the first time in months. Sandra also encouraged the mother to enroll in parenting classes and consider complet-

ing her high school education. Sandra listened to the parties' concerns and built rapport with them.

On the last court date, the mother and grandmother, who both loved the minor child, entered an agreed order with liberal but specific boundaries. They walked away from court together, smiling and making plans for Marcell's birthday party. The Judge was pleased, satisfied that the family had built a foundation for a better relationship without the need for a hearing.

This case started out with incredibly high tension, but the parties walked away happy because of the work of the GAL. It was truly a win-win for everyone involved!



Margaret Benson, CVLS Executive Director

MAKING AN IMPACT

Familiar Faces Awarded for Excellence

Nobody in the history of legal aid has ever made their career in this field for money, fame or power. It's not fancy cars or big houses that draws people to a life dedicated to serving your fellow human beings. What drives these special individuals is a selfless desire to help others because it is right, and it is good. That



Susan DeCostanza, Director, CVLS Guardian ad Litem for Adults Program

is all the reason they need. The world will keep spinning and may not ever notice, but the people whose lives they've changed will forever be the better for it.

We at CVLS are always very proud of our attorneys and support staff and the work that they do, which is why we are so excited that Margaret Benson, CVLS Executive Director, and Susan DeCostanza, Director of CVLS' Guardian ad Litem for Adults Program, have each been recog-

nized recently for their work in the field of legal aid.

Meg was honored with the Loyola University of Chicago School of Law Alumni Public Service Merit Award for demonstrating an outstanding commitment to public service and social justice in her career.

Susan interned at CVLS in 2007, joined our staff in 2010 and currently serves as Director of CVLS' Adult GAL Program. The Public Interest Law Initiative honored her with their Distinguished PILI Alumni Award at their 40th Anniversary gala this year.

We are ecstatic that these great attorneys are receiving the recognition they didn't seek, but certainly deserve.

In 2017

2,431 Active Volunteers



Closed Cases **3,292**

Child Rep
159 Children Given a Voice

GAL for Minors
642 Children Had an Advocate

GAL for Adults
657 Parents and Siblings Not Forgotten

Access to Justice
336 Cook County Residents Represented in Court

Panel Referral Program
2,414 People Connected with Skilled Attorneys

Your generosity makes a difference.

Last year's donations provided life changing support to thousands of families.

PLEASE CONTINUE YOUR SUPPORT
cvls.org/donate



Dave Zulkey, Law Offices of Zulkey and Associates

CAR CRASH CASH

CVLS Volunteer Scores Big Against Insurance Company!

65-year-old William relies on Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) as his only source of income. For clients like William, unexpected expenses can be devastating.

In March 2016, William's car was hit by another driver. Although no one was hurt, his car required \$2,000 in repairs, which he couldn't afford. His claim to the other driver's insurance company was promptly rejected. After CVLS' demand letter was equally unsuccessful, we filed a lawsuit against the other driver and added the insurance company as a third party defendant.

When the case was set for arbitration, CVLS needed a volunteer and Dave Zulkey jumped at the opportunity to handle William's case. On a short deadline,

Dave gathered evidence, drafted a statement of damages, assembled a list of repair costs, and filed itemized affidavits on behalf of his client and the testifying mechanic.

"A few hours of Dave's time was worth more to William than he could ever know."

Kristen Harrison, CVLS Panel Program Coordinator

When the insurance company received Dave's evidence, it acknowledged the damage and processed William's claim. William received a \$2,000 settlement offer - nearly the entire cost of repair - one week before the arbitration hearing! Without Dave's work, William would not have been able to afford to fix his car.

The logo for Chicago Volunteer Legal Services is a black, stylized shape resembling a speech bubble or a folded piece of paper. It has a white rectangular cutout on the right side. The text "CHICAGO VOLUNTEER LEGAL SERVICES" is written in white, bold, uppercase letters inside the black shape.

**CHICAGO
VOLUNTEER
LEGAL
SERVICES**

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