

# Maine Law Clinic & Externship Programs



Train here. Go anywhere.

**MAINE**  
UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SCHOOL OF LAW  
**LAW**

Train here. Go anywhere.

# Clinical Programs & Externships

At the University of Maine School of Law, students don't just learn how to think like lawyers. They learn the skills they will need to work as lawyers. Experiential education has been at the heart of a Maine Law education since the school opened its doors in 1962. Through our legal aid clinics, externship placements and practice-focused coursework, Maine Law's goal is for students to be "practice-ready" at graduation. This is achieved through a variety of programs and initiatives:

**The Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic** is one of the oldest law school clinical programs in the nation. Established in 1970, the Clinic provides free legal aid to more than 600 low-income individuals and families every year. It is a defining program of Maine Law, providing practical skills training for students, and helping to fulfill the school's commitment to social justice. All legal services are provided by law students who are enrolled in one of four clinical courses: General Practice, Prisoner Assistance, Juvenile Justice, and Refugee and Human Rights. Students represent real clients in real cases. From intake meetings to filing court documents and standing up before a judge, student attorneys handle all aspects of client relations and case management, under the close supervision of faculty who are leaders in their fields.

**In the Externship Program**, students spend a semester working in a government agency, nonprofit organization, or corporate in-house legal department for academic credit. Externship placements are available in virtually every practice area and geographic location, and they provide Maine Law students the opportunity to develop essential professional skills while making valuable contacts throughout Maine, and in some cases, around the country. Students have worked alongside seasoned lawyers in cities and towns throughout Maine, at the epicenter of government in Washington, D.C., and as far away as Alaska. In addition to Maine Law's general Externship Program, students can also participate in a Judicial Externship, which matches students with judges in federal and state courts.

**In our classrooms**, Maine Law professors employ problems-based methods and skills training techniques throughout the curriculum. Learning opportunities such as drafting and simulation exercises are staples within our courses, from the building block offerings of the first year, through the upper level courses. We also continue to add new offerings, such as Technology for Lawyers, and Small Firm and Solo Practice Management, to meet the demands of a changing job market.

Please read on for more information about experiential learning at the University of Maine School of Law.

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## To learn more

For more information about clinical courses, externships, or experiential learning opportunities at Maine Law, please contact us at [mainelaw@maine.edu](mailto:mainelaw@maine.edu), or by phone at 207-780-4355.

- **Online:** [www.mainelaw.maine.edu/academics/clinical-programs/](http://www.mainelaw.maine.edu/academics/clinical-programs/)
- **Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/MaineLawCLAC](http://www.facebook.com/MaineLawCLAC)
- **Twitter:** [www.twitter.com/umainelaw](http://www.twitter.com/umainelaw)

# General Practice Clinic



*Students in the General Practice Clinic regularly brief and argue cases before Maine's highest court.*

"The Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic offers law students an unparalleled opportunity to experience real trial practice at its most involved level. Students, judges, and, most important, people in desperate need of legal services benefit from this terrific program."

*– Chief Justice Leigh I. Saufley (Maine Law '80),  
Maine Supreme Judicial Court*

Each student in the General Practice Clinic maintains a caseload and represents several low-income individuals in various areas of the law.

Student attorneys interview and counsel clients, develop case theories, conduct discovery, negotiate with opposing parties, prepare cases for court, and conduct hearings, trials and appeals. Students regularly brief and argue cases before the Maine Supreme Judicial Court and participate in hundreds of matters before Maine's federal, state and probate courts, and administrative agencies.

Student attorneys take on a wide range of case types in the General Practice Clinic, from criminal defense to family law to civil rights. For criminal cases, students might represent clients charged with crimes such as drug trafficking, assault, or robbery. Within the realm of family law, students help solve disputes involving parental rights and responsibilities, divorce, guardianship, protective custody, and other matters. For civil matters, students have the opportunity to represent consumers, victims of financial exploitation, or a family trying to keep their home. The legal issues are very real, they are life-changing for the clients, and also for the graduates of our program.

# Juvenile Justice Clinic

“The Juvenile Justice Clinic both forced and allowed me to leap outside of my comfort zone to learn the skills necessary to be a fierce and effective advocate and to truly understand the meaning of the phrases ‘due process under the law’ and ‘justice for all.’”

– Gabrielle Bérubé-Pierce,  
Class of 2014



Martha Mickles photo

Students in the Juvenile Justice Clinic work with at-risk youth on a number of levels. The primary focus is the direct representation of juveniles with pending delinquency matters in state courts. Student attorneys appear in Juvenile Court each week with their clients for proceedings such as arraignments, detention hearings, plea negotiations and trials.

On behalf of their clients, student attorneys work closely with social service agencies, other legal aid providers, schools, and community representatives. The goal is to implement personalized, holistic solutions for each juvenile. Such programs are designed to keep young people out of jail, and on track to completing their education.

The “Tuesdays at the Teen Center” project connects Maine Law students with homeless teenagers at the Preble Street Teen Center for legal advice, resource referral, and sometimes direct legal representation. Some students get involved in the development of juvenile justice policy at the state and national levels. For example, students recently have had success in challenging a policy of some county sheriff departments, which requires children to be handcuffed and shackled during transportation to and from juvenile court, and to remain in shackles during their court proceedings.

## A Client's Story: Joey

Portland District Court appointed us to represent Joey, who had been charged with multiple assaults and other property crimes at his father's home. Although the evidence against Joey was questionable, the court did not want to send Joey back with his father because of the constant chaos and police involvement at that house. Prior to our appointment, the court placed Joey with his mother, but it was not comfortable with him staying there, based on her prior history. She had been investigated by DHHS a few years earlier, and Joey had been removed because of substantiated allegations of neglect.

The student attorney did a thorough investigation of the two homes, and looked into potential relative placements throughout New England. After many interviews the student attorney found an aunt who lived out of state, but had a very close and positive relationship with Joey. The student convinced the mother and father to provide the aunt with a Power of Attorney that allowed her to enroll Joey into a new school, as well as take care of his medical care and other needs. Based on Joey's great performance in his new school and new home, the Assistant District Attorney agreed to dismiss all his pending charges.



**On behalf of their clients, student attorneys work closely with social service agencies, other legal aid providers, schools, and community representatives.**

# Refugee and Human Rights Clinic

“Participation in the Refugee and Human Rights Clinic permitted me to directly represent clients for the first time. I learned that effective lawyering takes more than knowledge of the law, careful research, and persuasive writing.”

- Elizabeth Valentine,  
Class of 2014



In the Refugee and Human Rights Clinic, student attorneys assist low-income immigrants through a broad range of cases and projects. The course targets a critical gap in access to justice – providing direct legal representation to immigrants and refugees seeking political asylum and similar protections under federal law, while training future attorneys on how to best serve the legal needs of immigrants.

Clients include, for example, asylum applicants who have fled human rights abuses in their home countries and are seeking refuge; immigrant survivors of domestic violence; and abandoned or abused children seeking legal status in the U.S. Under faculty supervision, student attorneys not only develop their substantive knowledge of immigration law and human rights laws and norms, but they also build core legal skills relevant to the general practice of law.

Clinical work for students includes: interviewing clients and witnesses and preparing testimony, working with interpreters and translators, conducting factual and legal investigation and marshaling of evidence, analyzing and presenting human rights documentation, developing case strategies, writing legal briefs, and appearing in administrative hearings. Students also have opportunities to collaborate with local nonprofit organizations and community groups on a range of advocacy projects.

## A Client's Story: Jane

In her home country in the Middle East, Jane was fed up with government corruption and impunity for human rights abuses. She stood up, advocated for change and participated in pro democracy demonstrations. As a result, Jane was detained and beaten and received threats against her life.

Students at Maine Law's Refugee and Human Rights Clinic took Jane's case. They spent countless hours documenting their client's experience. They worked with expert witnesses to document conditions in Jane's home country; they conducted multiple interviews with Jane and various expert and lay witnesses; they marshaled domestic and international evidence; and they researched and drafted a legal brief arguing that Jane is eligible for and deserving of asylum.

The Department of Homeland Security approved Jane's asylum application, and that of her four young children. With this approval Jane may remain in the U.S. without fear of being targeted for death because of her political beliefs.



*An asylum petition can take hundreds of hours to prepare.*

**Under faculty supervision, student attorneys not only develop their substantive knowledge of immigration law and human rights laws and norms, but they also build core legal skills relevant to the general practice of law.**

# Prisoner Assistance Clinic



Martha Mickles photo

“I knew I had rights, but had nobody to represent me. It felt so good to have a lawyer for this, and I’m really happy about this program. Thank you very much for helping me keep my sanity in this fight for my rights with my son. I am overwhelmed with joy.”

– Client, Prisoner Assistance Clinic

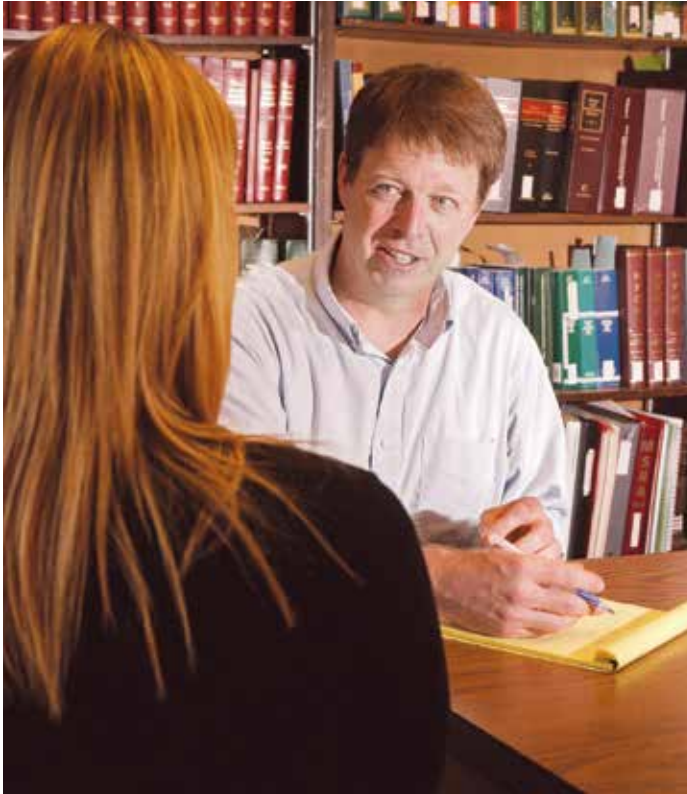
Prisoners have family, consumer, and other civil legal matters, many of which arise from the circumstances of their incarceration. These court matters have an impact not only on the lives of the prisoners, but on the lives of their sons, daughters, parents and other family members who never committed a crime.

The Prisoner Assistance Clinic places an emphasis on interviewing, counseling and providing “unbundled” legal services to prisoners. Student attorneys provide the information, forms, and advice they need to represent themselves in civil proceedings. For some matters in Southern Maine courts, the Clinic provides full representation when a prisoner is not able to advocate for himself or herself. The program is popular with students, corrections staff, and prisoners alike.

Clinic students travel to the Maine Correctional Center in Windham every week to meet with prisoners. Most of the matters involve family law, such as parental rights and child support, and probate-related proceedings, including guardianship. But students also assist prisoners with a wide range of legal matters, ranging from tort defense to bankruptcy. Students also help disabled prisoners apply for Social Security, to ensure they receive assistance and medical treatment when they are released.



# Protection from Abuse Program



“Thank you so, so much. This was a scary thing for me to do, and your support was truly appreciated.”

- Client, Protection from Abuse Program

Most students enrolled in Clinic courses also participate in the Protection From Abuse Program, where they represent victims of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking who are seeking civil protection orders. Student attorneys attend at least one or two days of the protection from abuse (PFA) docket calls in Lewiston District Court. The Clinic’s work in this program is highly valued by the courts, as the PFA proceedings are often highly contentious and emotional.

With the assistance of counsel, most cases are settled without a trial. Clinic student attorneys work closely with court advocates from Safe Voices, a non-profit organization based in Lewiston-Auburn. This collaboration ensures that every client not only receives legal representation in his or her protection order case, but also receives the necessary support and resources to escape violence in the long-term. Furthermore, every Clinic student receives training on the dynamics of domestic violence as well as the legal remedies available to victims.

# Externship Program

## A Student's Experience: Meghan Higgins

For Meghan Higgins, an externship paved the way to a fulltime job after she graduated from Maine Law in 2012. During her 2L summer, Higgins worked at the Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic, and then in the fall worked as an extern in the Child Protection Division of the state Attorney General's Office.

"The office's generosity with their caseload was one of the best gifts I received in law school, certainly, but also one of the best gifts I've ever received in life," Higgins said. "It gave me the confidence to know I could do the job."

Higgins was hired as an Assistant Attorney General in the Child Protection Division, and she now works out of the Bangor office, which is just a few miles from the family farm on which she grew up.



Another important component of experiential education at Maine Law is the Externship Program, which allows students to work alongside seasoned attorneys and judges for academic credit. Depending on the placement, students in the Externship Program handle advocacy, policy, regulatory enforcement, and transactional legal matters, and may have the opportunity to practice as a student attorney during their third year of law school. Students in the Externship Program receive valuable feedback and mentoring from their placement supervisors, who are experienced judges and lawyers, and also from the Externship Professor and Director. Recent externship placements include:

**CORPORATE** – TD Bank N.A.; InterMed; Cianbro Corporation; Mercy Hospital

**CRIMINAL** – Offices of the United States Attorney and the Maine Attorney General; Federal Defender's Office

**ENVIRONMENTAL** – Conservation Law Foundation; Maine Attorney General's Office – Natural Resources Division; Maine Department of Environmental Protection

**PRIVACY** – International Association of Privacy Professionals; Elsevier

**PUBLIC INTEREST** – Disability Rights Center; Legal Services for the Elderly; Pine Tree Legal Assistance

**JUDICIAL EXTERNSHIPS** – State District Court, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, U.S. District Court (Maine), and the U.S. Court of Appeals (First Circuit).

**CREATE YOUR OWN EXTERNSHIP** – In addition to regularly offered Externship placements, students can also create their own externships at any number of courts, agencies, or institutions.

## Go anywhere . . .



And our students do go everywhere. Here are just a few examples of the opportunities our recent graduates have as a result of their clinic or externship experiences:

**Kate Kolosowski-Gager**, Class of 2012, is now working as a Patent Examiner at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). She completed an externship at the USPTO during the summer between her second and third years at Maine Law.

**Taylor Kilgore**, Class of 2013 participated in the General Practice Clinic and completed an externship with the Administrative Office of the Courts during her final semester in law school, and is now practicing law in a small firm in Western Maine. She's pictured above with her faculty supervisor, Professor Jim Burke, preparing to argue before the Maine Supreme Judicial Court as a Clinic student attorney.

**Christopher Marot**, Class of 2014, who was a student attorney in the Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic and completed an externship with Pine Tree Legal Assistance in Portland, Maine, was selected to be a Frank M. Coffin Family Law fellow at Pine Tree.

"My semester with the Refugee and Human Rights Clinic (RHRC) was easily my most valuable experience in law school. My clinic supervisor exposed me to various possible career options then guided me in working on the tools that were essential in my chosen career path. Through working with RHRC I developed the writing and advocacy skills that made me an attractive candidate for my current position with RefugePoint. Currently, I am working in Nairobi, Kenya as a RefugePoint deployee at United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

"My position involves interviewing refugees and drafting Resettlement Referral Forms, which UNHCR then processes and submits to various countries including the U.S. to be reviewed for resettlement. Every day I use the legal standard, the interviewing skills and the legal writing skills that I learned and developed at RHRC at Maine Law."

*- Katie Narbus, Class of 2014, Nairobi, Kenya*



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