



Summer Internship Description

Georgia Justice Project – Atlanta, GA

Categories: Reentry Legal Services, Criminal Defense, & Policy Advocacy

For over 32 years Georgia Justice Project (GJP) has offered an innovative approach to representing justice-involved individuals. For the first 20 years GJP focused exclusively on indigent criminal defense combined with holistic social service support and job assistance. GJP continues to provide this service as an alternative to a public defender. Maintaining a small caseload per attorney allows us to provide a vigorous defense and for each client to be paired with a social worker. Defense work continues to be an integral part of our work, but our services have expanded.

GJP's work now encompasses the many ways individuals are impacted by the justice system throughout Georgia. Twelve years ago GJP began assisting individuals who had a criminal record with expungements and pardons. We currently represent over 300 individuals a year who are trying to clean up their criminal record. We have also expanded our legal reentry services in recent years, representing clients facing housing and employment discrimination based on their criminal history, assisting with child support issues for justice-involved individuals, and assisting with restoration of suspended driver's licenses for reentering citizens.

GJP also works to reduce legal barriers to reentry through policy advocacy. We worked closely with the Georgia Council on Criminal Justice Reform over the last eight years, successfully advocating for 19 changes to Georgia law related to reentry. GJP has become a respected expert on indigent defense and on legal barriers to reentry - around the state and around the country. We have produced the definitive manual on dealing with criminal records in Georgia and we make presentations to thousands of impacted individuals, service providers, judges, attorneys, and concerned community members each year.

At the heart of our work is the belief that the criminal justice system is biased against poor people and people of color, that justice-involved individuals deserve respect and zealous representation whether or not they can afford an attorney, and that an arrest or a conviction should not be a life sentence because of the impact of so called "collateral consequences."

Students will work at the Georgia Justice Project office in the historic Old Fourth Ward neighborhood near the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center in downtown Atlanta. Summer internships generally are full-time and last for ten weeks. GJP works hard to make sure our students have a wide range of experiences, get to work directly with clients, meet local justice leaders, and participate in educational events. Our interns are consistently thrilled with the meaningful work they were able to participate in over the summer and the diverse range of experiences.

GJP interns may assist with one or all three facets of legal work at GJP depending on their interest and our current needs: (1) reentry legal services (2) policy advocacy; and (3) criminal defense

- **Criminal Defense:** GJP represents indigent criminal defendants in municipal, state, and superior court (felonies and misdemeanors). Students assist with all aspects of a case. During the summer, students interview potential clients, gather information from court and police personnel, visit crime scenes, interview witnesses, participate in negotiations with prosecutors, perform legal research, draft and file motions, and observe court proceedings.
- **Policy Advocacy:** GJP's policy work aims to reduce the legal barriers faced by those with a criminal record. GJP has established itself as a subject-matter expert with legislators by providing factual data and first-hand testimony about the impact of Georgia's laws on people with a criminal record. GJP's current legislative priority is providing a mechanism to restrict (expunge) convictions; as the law stands now, only a very limited category of convictions are eligible for possible restriction. Students will assist with research, drafting materials, and outreach.
- **Barriers to Reentry:** GJP assists clients whose criminal record acts as a barrier to opportunities, such as employment and housing. We file applications for restriction (expungement) of criminal records and file related motions and petitions, we help remove barriers to driver's licenses, and we assist with child support modifications. Work will include correcting clients' criminal history reports, drafting and arguing court motions, and applying for pardons. Students will also assist with legal research and writing needs related to appeals and other criminal records issues. Students will assist with our collaboration with a new and innovative reentry prison in Atlanta to remove barriers for the men who are about to be released from the facility.

REQUIREMENTS

- GJP will consider both current 1Ls and 2Ls
- An interest in the criminal justice system and racial and social justice
- Strong writing and research skills
- Organized and prepared to work in a collaborative and team-driven work environment

PROCESS

- Contact: Brenda Smeeton, Legal Director, brenda@GJP.org, 404-827-0027, ext. 235
- Submit a cover letter, resume, and brief writing sample (no more than five pages) via email and combined as one PDF document with subject line SUMMER INTERN APPLICATION 2019
- 2Ls – Applications between October 1st, 2018 and February 15th, 2019, decisions will be made on a rolling basis so please submit your materials as early as possible
- 1Ls – Applications accepted between December 1st, 2018 and February 15th, 2019

Georgia Justice Project is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer, which welcomes applicants of all races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations and strongly encourages people with a criminal history and people who have a family member impacted by the justice system to apply.