



Children & Family Field Placement

Possible Placements (Statewide Office of the Guardian ad Litem, Legal Aid Society of OCBA Guardian Ad Litem Program, Regional Conflict Counsel, Department of Children and Families – CLS)

SUMMER: 6 Credits –40 Hour Week–10 Weeks–Total 400 Hours plus a Weekly Seminar

SPRING AND FALL: 6 Credits–30 Hour Week–13 Weeks–Total 390 Hours plus a Weekly Seminar

Placement Requirements: Students placed in the Department of Children and Families Child Welfare Legal Services, Statewide Office of the Guardian Ad Litem or Orange County Legal Aid Society Guardian Ad Litem Program must meet the following criteria - Have completed 4 semesters and received not less than 48 credit hours by the beginning of the externship, have a 2.0 or higher cumulative grade point average, and satisfactory completion of Professional Responsibility and Evidence. Students are required to spend a minimum of 30-40 hours per week at their placement, depending on the semester and will receive six hours of credit for satisfactory completion. Attendance at a pre-semester orientation and weekly seminar is also required. The seminar portion of the externship is graded; the field portion is pass/fail.

Students participating must be certified as legal interns (CL's) in order to participate. This will be completed as part of the application process. However, the students cannot be certified if they have not received a background clearance from the Florida Board of Bar Examiners.

Objective I: Developing and applying the law of dependency, juvenile procedure, family law, adoption or other substantive areas of the law. A placement in a children or family law office provides students with the opportunity to use the law learned in substantive law course to bring a case or defend involving children and families. In real cases, supervised by experienced attorneys, student use the rules of juvenile procedure, rules of civil procedure, substantive abuse/neglect, delinquency or family law to advocate for their clients in juvenile and family law proceedings. Students participate in all levels of litigation from drafting pleadings, investigations, case plan drafting and hearings of all kinds. Their experience will include both trial preparation and trial performance.

Objective II: Developing and applying the abilities learned in our trial skills program. These children and family offices provide students with the opportunity to put into real life practice those litigation abilities they learned in classroom and mock trial settings. In court, students are able to bring together substantive, procedural, and evidentiary instruction in a way that allows them to understand how the law fits together, and how to effectively use it to protect citizens from those who violate the law.

Objective III: Developing witness relation skills. By first observing experienced lawyers, and then applying the skills observed, students develop professional and interpersonal communication skills.

Objective IV: Learning negotiation skills. Because the great majority of cases are resolved without a contest on the merits, it is vital for students to learn the alternate and diversionary options available, and how to best implement them. At their placements, students initially observe experienced attorneys resolve real cases using these techniques, and then apply the learned skills to resolving their own cases. This process is particularly important to agreements to the issues and then being able to have those agreements accepted by the trial court.

Objective V: Improve research and writing skills. Students learn to draft written motions, briefs, stipulations, case plans and related trial documents. Similarly, students provide research materials for their supervisors' case and for their own case. This aspect of the field placement teaches students the interrelationship between thorough preparation and success. The value of the written work and its professional presentation is highlighted here. Students also learn that the standards for success in a practical setting may be far different from those in an academic setting. Learning how much preparation is sufficient, in light of a busy trial docket, helps students learn how to wisely use their most limited resource – time.

Objective VI: Gathering and using facts. As in other litigation-based placements, a vital skill for lawyers concerns their ability to collect and use facts crucial to the outcome of their cases. In these placements, students learn how to handle real and demonstrative evidence, and collect government and private records. Interviewing techniques learned in law school are often implemented here as are skills necessary for creating and responding to interrogatories and other written forms of information gathering.

Objective VII: Understanding the requirements of Florida's Rules of Professional Conduct. Cases often present difficult ethical issues for attorneys in these cases which involve children. There are questions about the role of the attorneys involved including the issue of who the client is as well as the importance of the best interest of the child. It is important for students working in the children and family law placements to know and abide by the ethical and moral constraints of our profession. In this placement, students have the daily opportunity to observe how their supervisor and others in the office reach effective results by uniformly working within the rules.