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pro bono

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW WHEN
WORKING WITH PBSC:
A REFERENCE GUIDE FOR ORGANIZATIONS
2011-2012

A National Program

Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC) is a national *pro bono* organization with chapters in all 21 law schools across the country. Founded in 1996, PBSC is the only national *pro bono* service organization anywhere in the world. Each year, about 1500 PBSC volunteers, under the supervision of qualified lawyers, provide approximately 120,000 hours of free legal services to between 400-500 organizations, courts and tribunals across the country.

PBSC at the University of Calgary

The University of Calgary joined the PBSC network in 1999 and since then the program has continued to expand, gaining a positive reputation within the law school and wider community for the enthusiasm and dedication of our student participants. Over the past six years, the program has doubled in size, and has expanded to include new long-term initiatives such as the Family Law Project, through which students provide legal information to unrepresented litigants at the Provincial Family Court and various educational and outreach initiatives targeted towards aboriginal youth, elementary students, newcomers to Canada, and the general public. In order to further our mandate to provide legal services to individuals in need within Calgary, we are in the process of expanding our 2011-2012 program to provide legal information to unrepresented litigants through the development of a Human Rights Project and a Small Claims Court Project.

The University of Calgary's PBSC program has developed long term relationships with a wide range of organizations including the Alberta Civil Rights Research Centre, the Centre for Newcomers, Ecojustice, among others. Projects have included developing public legal information presentations, assisting organizations in applying for non-profit status, drafting organizational bylaws, and preparing memos on specific issues of law.

There are approximately 300 students at the University of Calgary's Faculty of Law. Of these 300 students, approximately 70 student volunteers decide to enhance their legal skills by partaking in the PBSC program each year. These volunteers have a genuine passion for public interest work and are committed to increasing access to justice in our local community.

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What Students Can Do

PBSC deliverables vary depending on the needs of your organization and/or the project you require assistance with. Our students can:

- research pending legislation, legal issues or current policy questions;
- pro-actively monitor pending legislation, legal issues or current policy questions;
- draft policies or manuals for organizations;
- develop and deliver public legal education workshops and seminars to low and middle-income individuals; and
- help provide legal information to the clients of partner organizations.

What Students Cannot Do

The law student volunteers are not qualified as lawyers, do not have professional liability insurance and are restricted from providing legal advice or otherwise holding themselves out as lawyers or legal professionals. While we require that your organization's project be legal in nature, students cannot give legal advice, and may only provide legal information to your organization or to those your organization assists. (Legal advice is a legal opinion or interpretation about specific facts or problems, while legal information merely provides a general sense of the state of the law.) PBSC volunteers are not expected to incur any expenses in relation to materials created or distributed as part of their placement.

What PBSC Expects of our Partner Organizations

1. Organizations are expected to complete all necessary forms given to the organization by PBSC, and to return them to PBSC in a timely fashion.
2. Organizations must ensure that their expectations surrounding the project are clearly set out and understood by PBSC prior to the commencement of the placement.
3. Organizations must ensure that each project has an insured Lawyer Supervisor available to the student(s) over the course of the project. The role of the insured Lawyer Supervisor is to answer questions of a legal nature, as well as to review the student(s) work product periodically over the course of the project, and at least once upon final completion. If you do not have a lawyer working for your organization, we can help you find a qualified lawyer supervisor.
4. If the insured Lawyer Supervisor is not a staff person of the organization, the organization must ensure that there will also be a designated Project Supervisor available to the student(s) over the course of the project.
5. The designated Project Supervisor must check on the student(s) progress throughout the placement so that potential issues will be discovered before they turn into problems. If a problem does arise, the organization must ensure that the Project Supervisor contacts the PBSC Coordinator(s).
6. The organization must make efforts to integrate the student(s) into the organization, and provide an appropriate work space, resources and other applicable materials where necessary.
7. Organizations must complete and return all program evaluations provided by PBSC in a timely fashion.

What You Can Expect of PBSC

1. That we will provide you with a qualified law student who will provide you with approximately 3 – 5 hours per week of legal services without charge.
2. That we will assist you if necessary in finding a qualified lawyer supervisor to supervise your student's work.
3. That we will monitor your students progress and address any problems or concerns in a timely fashion.
4. That your student will complete the project as set out in the timeline or notify PBSC promptly of any concerns or delays they encounter.

Program Roadmap

1 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Summer

Program Coordinators provide a Project Proposal Form and Organization Agreement Form to the organizations. Organizations are encouraged to contact the Program Coordinators to discuss and develop project ideas together.

Strong project descriptions will identify clear objectives and specific tasks for the student. Consulting with the Program Coordinators provide the organization an opportunity to ask questions about the program and brainstorm and/or refine possible project ideas.

2 MATCHING AND TRAINING

mid-September

Students receive their project assignments. Training sessions introduce students to legal research, the distinction between legal advice vs. information, and reinforces the importance of ethical and professional conduct.

Student Coordinators match students with projects based on their interests and experience and the requirements of the organizations.

3 MEETING AND WORK PLAN

early October

The Project Supervisor and student teams meet to discuss the project and set out concrete goals and a timeline for their completion. Students and Project Supervisors fill in a Work Plan together and provide a copy to the Lawyer Supervisor and Program Coordinators.

This initial meeting provides students and Project Supervisors the opportunity to plan ahead for the program year. The Work Plan will be provided to the organization and students prior to this meeting. It will allow students and organizations to focus their conversation on ways to ensure the project's success.

4 PROJECT REVIEW MEETING

mid-October

Each student team meets with one of the Program Coordinators to review their Work Plan for the term and confirm the details of their placements.

This is an opportunity for students to speak with the Program Coordinators about their project and communicate any questions or concerns. Coordinators will ensure that the project is on track and address any concerns raised by the students.

5 TERM REPORT

late November

Both students and organizations will be sent a term report to fill out and return to the Program Coordinators by the end of November. PBSC is closed during the month of December for the winter examination period and winter break.

Reports allow organizations and students to reflect upon the progress of the project. The Program Coordinators review these reports to monitor placements.

6 PROGRESS ASSESSMENT MEETING

early January

Students and supervisors should meet to evaluate the project's progress and reassess and/or set new goals for the term if necessary.

This is an opportunity to re-evaluate the project goals and timeline and to resolve any concerns with the project's progress to date. Project Supervisors should also make students aware of any changes in their availability during the new term.

7 PROJECT WRAP-UP, FINAL REPORT, AND PBSC SURVEY

late March

All projects must be completed before exams begin in April. Both students and organizations will be sent a final report to complete, due at the end of March. Project supervisors and students will also be asked to fill in a brief internet survey to allow for the PBSC National Office to monitor each PBSC chapter's progress.

The Final Report and PBSC provide an opportunity for students to speak with the Program Coordinators about their project and communicate any questions or concerns. Coordinators will ensure that the project is on track and address any concerns raised by the students.

2011-2012 Program Coordinators



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Summer & Fall/Winter Program Coordinator
J.D. Student, Class of 2013



Sarah Davis
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Contact Information

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