

**Volunteer-Based Christian Legal Aid Clinic**

**Startup Checklist**

1. **Organizational setup**
   1. Independent organization?
      1. Board of directors
      2. Articles of Incorporation
      3. Bylaws
      4. Employer Identification Number (EIN)
      5. 501(c)(3) application
   2. Part of another ministry?
2. **Clinic partner host** 
   1. Type of organization (church, homeless ministry, law firm, etc.)
   2. Location
   3. Facilities
      1. Clinic meeting space
      2. Storage space
      3. Donation of staff office space
   4. Support of church leadership
   5. Help with recruiting volunteers
   6. Donation of church staff assistance (e.g. intake coordinator)
   7. Financial support
3. **Clinic sessions**
   1. Frequency: monthly, biweekly, weekly?
   2. Which days/times: Saturdays, weekdays, weeknights?
4. **Types of legal issues** 
   1. General, open?
   2. Specific issue focus (e.g., immigration)?
5. **Client demographics**
   1. Geography
      1. Downtown/urban, suburban, rural?
      2. Specific areas?
   2. Specific economic class?
      1. Poverty, homeless, working poor?
   3. Specific population?
      1. Immigrants, refugees?
      2. Elderly?
      3. Victims of domestic violence/human trafficking?
      4. Specific ethnic group?
6. **Services**
   1. Advice & referral
   2. Limited representation
   3. Full representation
      1. Paid staff attorneys
      2. Trained in-house volunteers
      3. Referrals to network of pro bono attorneys
   4. Community legal education
7. **Clinic format**
   1. Appointment based
      1. Obtain client intakes in advance by phone, email, or website

- Get client contact info, summary of legal issue, key documents  
- Need trained intake coordinator  
- Need intake process and forms

* + 1. Attorneys meet with clients in scheduled meetings
  1. Walk-in / helpdesk style
     1. Advertise walk-in clinic open hours
     2. Attorneys advise on whatever issues come in

1. **Facilities setup**
   1. Client greeting/waiting room
   2. “War room” for equipment, files, and volunteers to prepare, debrief
   3. Closed rooms for confidential client meetings (but preferably with windows for transparency purposes)
   4. Adequate tables, chairs
2. **Logistics**
   1. Volunteer and client scheduling procedures
   2. Client intake process
   3. Clinic directions/signage
   4. Greeter/hospitality (e.g. offer coffee)
3. **Technology on site**
   1. Computers/tablets (for on-the-spot research)
   2. Printer/scanners?
   3. Wi-fi?
4. **Volunteer base** 
   1. Leadership
      1. Initial start-up team
      2. Board members
      3. Advisory board members
      4. Clinic directors
   2. Legal
      1. State-licensed attorneys (need at least 1 per meeting)
      2. Non-licensed attorneys
      3. Law students
      4. Paralegals
   3. Types of legal help
      1. Clinic attorneys
      2. On-call attorneys (to answer questions during clinics)
      3. Referral attorneys (to take pro bono cases)
   4. Non-legal
      1. Admin volunteers
      2. Hospitality volunteers
      3. Ministry volunteers
      4. Interpreters
      5. Communications (e.g., website, newsletters)
      6. Event coordinators (e.g., fundraiser dinners, social events)
5. **Volunteer recruitment**
   1. Christian Legal Society attorney chapters
   2. Word-of-mouth, personal contacts
   3. Churches
   4. Local bar associations
   5. Website
6. **Volunteer training**
   1. Formal training sessions on serving clients
      1. Live sessions by experienced volunteers
      2. Recorded webinars (available in CLA Resource Library[[1]](#footnote-1))
   2. On the job training
   3. Informational meetings for volunteers to share best practices with each other
   4. Formal CLE training on legal issues
      1. By attorneys experienced in specific legal issues (either volunteers within program or recruited from outside)
      2. Partner with secular legal aid programs
      3. Recorded webinars
      4. Online training (e.g. Practicing Law Institute free webinars)
7. **Legal research resources**
   1. National and state legal research sites
      1. [www.probono.net](http://www.probono.net)
      2. [www.lawhelp.org](http://www.lawhelp.org)
   2. Local secular legal aid websites
   3. CLA Resource Library
8. **Liability insurance**
   1. Malpractice liability insurance options:
      1. Attorneys provide their own through private practice
      2. National Legal Aid & Defenders Association (NLADA) [www.nlada.org](http://www.nlada.org)
      3. Commercial carriers
   2. Directors & Officers coverage (optional)
   3. Errors & Omissions coverage (optional)
   4. General liability (usually carried by host facility)
9. **Client advertisement**
   1. Website
   2. Churches with low-income congregations or who serve low-income people
   3. Ministries to the poor (e.g., shelters, food pantries, clothing ministries, etc.)
   4. Social service agencies
   5. Community charity databases
   6. Post flyers in public housing, laundromats, grocery stores, other businesses frequented by low-income clientele
10. **Communications**
    1. Volunteers
       1. Email
       2. Volunteer newsletters
       3. Scheduling software (e.g. Sign-Up Genius)
       4. Intranet / wiki page for sharing documents, schedules
    2. Donors/Public
       1. Newsletters (e.g. Constant Contact, Mailchimp)
       2. Solicitation letters
       3. Social media
11. **Ministry aspects**
    1. Require Statement of Faith?
       1. Everyone?
       2. Board and leaders only?
       3. None?
    2. Attorneys encouraged/trained to pray, give spiritual advice, and share gospel?
    3. Special ministry volunteers to pray, give spiritual advice, and share gospel?
    4. Referrals to churches and other ministries
12. **Client Forms** (see CLA Resource Library)
    1. Intake form
    2. Consent/waiver form
    3. Client advise form
13. **Fundraising**
    1. Events (e.g. prayer breakfasts, dinners, wine & cheese events)
    2. Solicitation letters & emails
    3. Churches
    4. Foundations
14. **Client legal education**
    1. Live community education seminars led by attorneys (either volunteers within your program or recruited from outside your program) who are experienced in specific legal issues (e.g., “Know your rights” seminars, immigration, landlord/tenant issues, etc.)
    2. Online recorded videos
    3. Online articles
    4. Printed pamphlets distributed at clinics or other public venues (e.g., food pantries, homeless shelters)

1. [www.christianlegalaid.org/clinic-resources/legal-aid-resources](http://www.christianlegalaid.org/clinic-resources/legal-aid-resources) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)