THE KEY INGREDIENTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL TRANSFORMATIVE CHRISTIAN LEGAL AID CLINIC

1. JESUS. He is the reason for the clinic. He inspires, leads, equips and blesses. We want to love Him with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength, and others as ourselves, in deed and in truth. Only He changes lives. We follow His leading in this ministry.
2. IT IS FIRST A MINISTRY. And second a legal aid provider. It ministers to clients, to lawyers, to the church, to the neighborhood, and to the city.
3. AN INSPIRED LEAD ATTORNEY. Jesus must call one attorney to lead the clinic. He/she, once inspired, will inspire others to join. Busy as he/she is, he/she will make clinic a missional priority in his/her life and take responsibility for its success. He/she makes it fun.
4. A GREAT HOST MINISTRY PARTNER that is well positioned in the community and is already changing lives in the neighborhood. This partner sees us as their ministry’s legal clinic, part of their program, and one of many ways they are trying to reach people for Christ. They bring us their people, and we send our clients back to them for follow up care. The lawyers follow their lead.
5. Clinic volunteers, attorney and non-attorney, are willing to follow the CLCP model and processes and work with CLCP staff to develop best practices to improve the experience of clients, volunteers, host ministries and other ministry partners. This involves how phone calls are answered and clients are scheduled, what forms are used for intake, and the reporting of the results of clinic night. They are team players.
6. Volunteers need to grow and learn how to be patient and treat clients with kindness and respect. They realize they can’t help everyone, but even when we can’t, we can hear their stories and have them leave feeling well cared for.
7. Volunteers need to offer some tangible help that will improve the client’s situation in some way, big or small. By making a phone call, writing a letter, printing out a form from a website, writing out their advice and instructions, or making a referral.
8. Before the interview ends, the attorney (or other volunteer in the room) should say something to the effect: “I see all that you are going through, how can I pray for you?” This moment is so important and should not be missed. Listen to their heart. Then your time of ministry can begin. Are you involved in any type of church or fellowship? Are you a Christian? Would you like to know how you can become a Christian? May I pray with you right now?
9. Use scripture. Tell them something about Jesus. “Did you know that Jesus is like a lawyer for us? When we sin, He is our advocate and speaks in our defense before His father. He argues (and has already won!) our case so that we don’t have to when we trust in Him and receive His gift of salvation.
10. It is not just the host ministry’s clinic, it is the neighborhood’s clinic. Neighboring ministry partners must feel invited and included to come to clinic, send their people to clinic and allow us to use the resources they provide to the community. Prepare a local resource guide that is included in the help and hope client folder.
11. Busyness and lack of time is the biggest enemy to a successful clinic. It takes time to promote the clinic in the neighborhood. It takes time to field phone calls and set up appointments. Clinic volunteers must commit their time, including onsite three hours a month (or as otherwise scheduled), to clinic duty. Having too few volunteers can ruin the ministry part of clinic night because there is not enough time for the most important personal and spiritual time with the clients.
12. The attorneys are like a doubles group, it takes four to play. If someone can’t make it, they need to find a suitable substitute.
13. Food, fun and fellowship. Volunteers come to serve; they keep coming because they enjoyed their experience. They come after a busy day of work, tired, hungry and thirsty. Greet them warmly and have something for them to eat and drink. Have a room where they can meet and leave their things. Have short devotional ready to recharge their soul. Offer them pizza and a time of debriefing after clinic. Include those from the host ministry.
14. Follow up. Make sure clients are offered follow up cards and that they are left with the host ministry or other ministry partners, as appropriate. Let them know what happened during the consultation. Have someone call clients the next day or two and see if they have any questions. Pray for your clients even when they are gone!
15. Find roles for non-attorney volunteers, especially from the host ministry or from the neighborhood. They can play a key role as client advocate, chaplain, translator and hospitality.
16. Orientation and training. We like to bring new volunteers to our main clinic office for orientation and hands-on training, and then once they are ready to fly solo, redeploy them to another clinic.
17. Lead attorney meetings. It is important to have monthly lead attorney meetings to make sure everyone is on the same page and that there is consistency among clinics. We like to multiply the community we have at our main clinic to each of the clinics, much like a successful franchise models its parent.
18. Host ministry coordinator meetings. For the same reasons, it is also important to have monthly ministry coordinator meetings.
19. IT IS ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS. Each clinic’s success will depend on the strength of the relationships that are formed between the lead attorney and clinic coordinator and the attorney and non-attorney volunteers on the team.

***“He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you  
But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?” Micah 6:8***