



Pro Bono Opportunities from the *Collaboration for Justice*: Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice and the Chicago Council of Lawyers

Chicago Appleseed is a social impact research and advocacy organization which uses multidisciplinary research to identify community injustices, and to develop and advocate for practical solutions. Chicago Council of Lawyers is a public interest lawyer organization which advocates for a fair and effective administration of justice. Together, the two organizations comprise the Collaboration for Justice focusing on the areas of Criminal Justice Reform, Judicial and Lawyer Ethics, Immigration Court Reform, Payday Lending Reform/Economic Inclusion, and Family Law. The Chicago Council of Lawyers works independently of Chicago Appleseed in its efforts to evaluate judges for the purpose of educating voters.

Pro Bono Opportunities

If you are interested in changing lives at the systemic level with Chicago Appleseed and the Chicago Council of Lawyers, please contact Malcolm Rich at malcolmrich@chicagoappleseed.org or 312.988.6552.

Court Reform & Judicial Accountability

- Assist with the work of the *Judicial Performance Commission of Cook County (Commission)*. The Commission seeks pro bono assistance to:
 - Conduct in-depth interviews of lawyers, supervising judges, and courtroom staff
 - Participate in targeted court watching
 - Prepare research-based reports and judicial performance improvement plans
- *Solovy Revisited Project*.

In the wake of the federal Operation Greylord and Gambat investigations, the late Jerold S. Solovy was chosen to chair two Special Commissions on the Administration of Justice in Cook County (“Solovy Commission”). Between 1984 and 1993, the Solovy Commission made more than 200 recommendations aimed at

improving the efficiency and general performance of the Circuit Court through structural and administrative reform.

The *Solovy Revisited* project arose out of a desire to build on the original Solovy Commission's work by assessing how far the courts have progressed in the past two decades. The project will focus on a limited number of recommendations emanating from the original Solovy Commission – to ascertain to what extent they have been implemented and what additional efforts are needed to bring about systemic reform.

Pro Bono Opportunities from the *Solovy Revisited Project*:

- Judicial Selection. The original Solovy Commission focused on merit selection. The *Solovy Revisited Project* will focus on an analysis of the different methods by which judges are selected or elected, and the impact that each of those methods have on the quality and diversity of the bench. The goal of the Project will be to recommend ways to improve the different ways judges are selected and elected in Illinois.
- Oversight. The original Solovy Commission focused on the need for an office of the Inspector General for the judiciary. The *Solovy Revisited Project* will examine the impact of inspectors general that have been established in other areas of government, and determine whether such an Office of Inspector General would make sense for the judicial branch.
- The Solovy Commission focused on the Clerk of the Court. It suggested that the Court should recommend that the General Assembly enact legislation requiring the appointment, rather than the election, of circuit court clerks. The *Solovy Revisited Project* will assess the continuing need for such legislation today.
- *The Solovy Revisited Project* will review the status and impact of the original Solovy Commission recommendations involving how cases are assigned to judges.

The Center for Judicial Performance and Integrity.

This Center has been created to provide impact research and analysis of current practices and proposed ideas related to judicial ethics. Pro bono opportunities include:

- Prepare and advocate for new judicial recusal standards and procedures.
- Prepare and advocate recommendations for increasing disclosure of judicial campaign contributions.
- Analyze the feasibility of public financing of judicial election races.
- Analyze the concept of conducting nonpartisan judicial elections.
- Voter Education - Assist in the implementation of a web and media based campaign to educate voters about judges seeking retention on the general election ballot and about judicial candidates running in the March Illinois primary.

- Small Donor Campaign Financing. Explore the viability of small donor campaign financing systems for judicial elections.
- Docket Reporting in the Cook County Civil Courts. Chicago Appleseed released a policy brief advocating for comprehensive docket data reporting in the criminal courts in Cook County. We would like to prepare a companion brief concerning docket reporting in the civil courts. The policy memo will examine other state systems for compiling and disseminating meaningful docket statistics for their courts.

Criminal Justice

The felony criminal justice system has become the de facto and underfunded community mental health and drug treatment provider in Cook County. Many of the Chicago Appleseed recommendations are aimed at increasing the number and scope of court-related services and diversion programs.

Pro bono opportunities:

- Analyze the constitutionality or legality of practices involving the uses of bond money to help fund Cook County agencies, and the failure of mandated court fees to fund their intended beneficiary, the mental health and drug courts within the criminal justice system.
- Targeted court watching
- Analyzing the impact of pretrial services in Cook County. Based on best practices here and elsewhere, what information should judges be receiving and by when?
- Analyzing the impact of adult probation services in Cook County. Based on best practices here and elsewhere, what should be the role of adult probation in expanding the use of diversion of defendants into treatment services.
- Advocating for a Coalition for Diversion, aimed at coordinating, enhancing, and ultimately expanding the use of diversion of defendants into treatment services.
- Analyzing and Advocating for the establishment of a Diversion Section within the Criminal Division of the Circuit Court for oversight of court-based alternatives to incarceration.
- Analyzing and Advocating for reinstatement of felony review of drug cases following arrest and other approaches to early assessment of cases in order to identify cases for dismissal or diversion early in the case processing.
- Advocate for enhanced pretrial services to conduct more background investigations, verify critical information, and identify candidates for the Diversion Section.
- Advocate for increased use of safe, effective, and low-cost non-monetary conditions of pretrial release in Bond Court.
- Advocate for a centralized and independent data collection system in the criminal justice system to lay the groundwork for using evidence-based best practice approaches.

Community Justice

- Participate in the Immigration Court Reform Advisory Group by conducting policy research, crafting of proposed federal rules and legislation, and the writing of policy positions and editorial pieces for the media and for publication. Analyze the feasibility of:
 - Right to Counsel
 - Right to have access to records
 - Right to a speedy trial
 - Public Access to the Immigration courts
 - Right to videoconferenced proceedings that meet the basic tenets of due process
 - Participate in an ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness and fairness of the Illinois child support system, with an eye toward issues pertaining to the bifurcated judicial and administrative processes.
 - Participate in a national Appleseed Network project researching and recommending ways to reduce intra-school district resource inequities and to develop/implement strategies for reducing them.
 - Develop and participate in a Collaboration for Justice research project involving the investigation and adjudication of employment discrimination claims. This is a follow-up project involving the Illinois Department of Human Rights - the state agency handling complaints related to employment discrimination. We would like to return to see what progress has been made since a previous research project was conducted, and to compare the outcomes from the state employment discrimination claims system to those from the federal process. Pro bono lawyers will assist in designing the project, conducting interviews, and strategizing around developing recommendations.
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Chicago Appleseed Website and Blog: www.chicagoappleseed.org

Chicago Council of Lawyers Website, including the *Directory of State Judges in Chicago: Judicial Evaluations conducted between 1986 and 2010*:

www.chicagocouncil.org