

## VOLUNTEER LEGAL SERVICES OF CENTRAL TEXAS

### Clinic Volunteer Guidelines

**Welcome** and thank you for volunteering. These guidelines have been prepared to offer specific information relating to duties and responsibilities of volunteers at our legal advice and intake clinics in Travis, Hays, and Bastrop counties. Please know that the time you spend with us is greatly appreciated!

#### DON'T FORGET

- Sign in and make a nametag (first name only).
- You can look up cases and/or file legal documents with the Travis County Clerk's office (WEBB ONLY).
- Copies of VLS Legal Advice Clinic Handbook and Texas Family Code are available for reference at the sign-in table.
- Let us know areas of expertise and we will do our best to match you with appropriate cases.
- Do not sell or promote any products or services during clinic, this includes sharing business cards with applicants as this can be perceived as soliciting business.
- VLS staff are available to help.
- Give us your feedback on how to improve the volunteer experience.

#### INTAKE/ADVICE

- When an applicant is ready for intake and legal advice, a VLS staff member will hand you an application.
- An application consists of:

General Law	Family Law
Application Form	Application Form
A general or topic-specific Client Intake Interview Form indicating whether a client is eligible or not	Family Law Legal Resource List to give to clients as a takeaway
Topic-specific one-page resource sheets and General Law Resources, if any, to give to applicants as a takeaway	List of Family Law Pleadings & Orders
Notice of Limited Services to give to applicants who are marked eligible but who you determine are "Clinic advice only" after the session.	Applicant Interview Form for Modifications or Enforcements Involving Domestic Violence gains the Applicant and/or Children (if applicable)

- **There is a 15-minute time limit on all intake/advice sessions.** VLS staff will enforce this time limit in order to ensure that: 1) other applicants do not have to wait too long before receiving assistance; 2) all applicants can be helped within our scheduled clinic hours; and 3) our staff and volunteers can leave on time. **NOTE:** To help with keeping to 15-minute intake/advice sessions, tips are provided on the back side.
- **FOR FAMILY LAW:** If the applicant is receiving legal advice, they have been deemed ineligible for VLS representation. VLS staff will inform the applicant of this determination, but applicants may still ask you about it.
- **FOR GENERAL LAW:** If the client has been marked **Ineligible** on the Client Intake Interview Form, VLS staff have communicated with applicant that they will receive advice only. VLS staff will also mark "Clinic advice only" on the bottom/last page of intake form. Please let the applicant know they may return to clinic if they have further questions or if you would like VLS to refer this case to you, please indicate so at the bottom/last page of the Form.

If the client is marked **Eligible**, then please indicate whether the applicant is "Clinic advice only," or can be referred to a "Volunteer attorney" at the bottom/last page of Client Intake Interview Form. If you recommend referral, let the applicant know that they will be contacted by VLS within a week. If you don't recommend referral, please give the client the Notice of Limited Services.

- If you need help determining whether or not to refer, please consult a VLS staff member and/or review the factors to consider on the back.
- Please return the application to the table and take your next case.

## TIPS ON SPEAKING WITH APPLICANTS

### At Start of Session:

*"I am sorry, but our time is limited to 15 minutes. So, I am going to probably stop you from time to time. This is not because what you are saying isn't important. I have to ask you certain questions to give you the best advice."*

### During Session:

- To manage and/or validate an applicant's emotions:

*"I can see that you are very upset about what happened. I would be mad/worried, too. I understand that this is a difficult time for you."*

- To manage time left:

*"I want to let you know, we only have xx minutes left." "I am sorry, but I need to interrupt you and ask you some specific questions. I wish we had more time together."*

### To End Session:

*"Unfortunately, I need to wrap up our discussion. The staff are indicating to me that I must meet with the next person waiting."*

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## GENERAL LAW

### Factors to Consider in Referring a Case to a Volunteer Attorney

-Is there something an attorney can do right now to help this person? If so, refer to VLS.

-Are there any possible arguments on merits? If so, refer to VLS.

-Does applicant need to do something first before an attorney can help? If so, advise to return to clinic.

-Is this a case that an attorney might take on contingency? If so, refer to Lawyer Referral Service of Central Texas (Note: Contact information for LRS is provided in the General Law Resources sheet).

-Would courthouse be outside of Travis, Bastrop, or Hays counties? If so, refer to Lawyer Referral Service of Central Texas. (Note: Contact information for LRS is provided in the General Law Resources sheet).