Crucial Help in the Appeals Process

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Crucial help in the APPEALS PROCESS

A major effort to give civil litigants the representation they need in New York’s appellate courts is now part of the UB School of Law umbrella.

As part of its commitment to ensuring equal access to the justice system, the School of Law’s Clinical Legal Education Program will administer the Pro Bono Appeals Program for the Fourth Judicial Department, which comprises 22 counties in Western and Central New York.

The program connects volunteer attorneys with litigants who are filing or defending a civil case on appeal. It’s designed for those who earn too much to be eligible for court-assigned counsel but cannot afford to hire their own attorney. The program includes litigants who earn up to 250 percent of the federal poverty guidelines; in a four-person household, for example, the program’s upper income limit is $62,750.

The litigants’ cases range from shelter and housing issues to subsistence income and benefits, health and education, personal safety and family stability. The law school’s partners in the initiative are the New York Bar Foundation and the New York State Bar Association’s Committee on Courts of Appellate Jurisdiction.

“We are thrilled to have this partnership with UB Law and its excellent staff,” says Timothy P. Murphy, co-chair of the program and chief attorney in the appeals and post-conviction unit at the Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo. “This program will enable the indigent appellant to have another place to reach out to in the Fourth Judicial Department.”

The Clinical Legal Education Program’s contribution to the effort is to provide pro bono expertise, outreach to the community, extensive administrative support, and Continuing Legal Education training in appellate advocacy for attorney volunteers.

“It is an honor to add this pro bono service opportunity to our multifaceted clinical programmatic offerings and our other experiential learning options,” says Kim Diana Connolly, director of the clinical legal education program. “We look forward to working with the NYSBA and the excellent volunteer lawyers to provide service-learning for our students while simultaneously offering legal assistance to those who need access to justice.”

Attorneys may volunteer for the program by emailing law-pbap@buffalo.edu.