

## Internship Placement Guide

*Representative sample of a real Pre-Law Blueprint deliverable. Client-specific names, local institutions, faculty, and research details are generalized or shown as bracketed placeholders; the structure, reasoning, and depth here are the real thing.*

The goal is to spend the next year or two building expertise at the intersection of your two focus areas from every angle. You already have one side covered at your current firm and the opposing side through your prior placement. This guide covers the remaining vantage points: the defense side, civil legal aid, judicial exposure, and the academic and faculty relationships that support all of it. Apply broadly and early. Don't limit yourself to posted openings; most of these offices are understaffed and will consider a strong cold application from a pre-law undergrad with real legal experience.

### PRIMARY OPTIONS

*These are the strongest fits and should be your first focus.*

#### Defense-Side Placement

**[Your county's primary public defender]**. The largest defense office in your area, representing indigent clients from the trial courts up through the state supreme court, with dedicated trial and appellate teams. Their internship page may reference law students and recent graduates, but one of your student organizations already coordinates with this office, so lead with that warm introduction rather than a cold application.

**[Your county's conflict / special public defender]**. Handles conflict cases the main office cannot take. Same type of work, same courts, often more hands-on because the office is smaller. Worth reaching out directly.

**[Your district's federal defender]**. Represents people accused of federal crimes who cannot afford an attorney, with trial, appeals, and habeas units. Federal cases tend to be more complex and higher-stakes than state cases. The most competitive placement on the list, but exceptional experience if they take undergrad volunteers or support staff.

#### Civil Legal Aid

**[Your region's main civil legal aid organization]**. A single organization here often runs several distinct projects that sit exactly at the intersection you care about. The bracketed items below stand in for the specific, named projects the full plan identifies; any of them would be a strong placement.

- **[Named project 1]**. A survivor-advocacy unit whose cases routinely cross the civil and criminal courts.
- **[Named project 2]**. A client-representation project in the courtroom you'll also work in as a volunteer advocate. The attorney who runs a project like this is often a law-school adjunct with bar or civil-rights leadership, exactly the kind of person to know.
- **[Named project 3]**. A project protecting people who cannot fully protect

themselves, another vantage on the population at the center of your work.

- **[Named project 4].** A services center for people harmed by the conduct your field addresses, and their families.

**[Your state's legal-services nonprofit].** A statewide nonprofit providing free legal services to low-income residents: tenant's rights, eviction defense, subsidized housing, public benefits, and criminal record sealing. Record sealing in particular sits right at your intersection: people with records who cannot get housing or jobs, which affects their entire household. They hire law clerks and may take pre-law volunteers.

## Judicial Exposure

**Individual judge internships.** Many judges take undergraduate interns directly, especially in the divisions where your two focus areas collide. Contact chambers directly; the full plan names the specific judges to target and why.

- **[Named judge 1].** A judge whose path to the bench and current docket line up squarely with your focus.
- **[Named judge 2].** A second judge whose calendar sits at the same seam, often one active in the relevant local reform or treatment-court community.
- **Beyond those, other departments in the same division.** These are large, and judge-to-department assignments shift with elections and reassignments, so the full plan points you to the current roster and the departments worth targeting.

**Specialty courts.** Most large trial courts run a set of problem-solving specialty courts, several sitting right at the seam between your two focus areas. Observing sessions is usually easy; volunteering or interning with one means contacting that program's coordinator through the court's specialty-courts page. The real plan names the specific courts most on-theme for you; broadly, they are the treatment and diversion courts that handle the populations you care about. Check the court's current specialty-courts page for the active list, since programs change.

**School-based diversion / truancy programs.** Courts often run programs to help keep young people in school. Some volunteer roles are limited to licensed professionals who are 21+, so they may not be a placement you can fill yet, but it's still worth asking whether you can observe or help in a support capacity. Good court exposure and a connection to the judges in that division.

## Academic and Faculty Relationships

These are not internship placements, but they are the foundation for research, letters of recommendation, and the professional relationships that will carry you through law school. The one who matters most for placements specifically is your department's internship coordinator. The broader research-faculty roster (who works on what across the relevant departments and the law school, and who to approach first) is laid out in full in the Thesis and Research Guide, so it isn't repeated here.

- **[Your department's internship coordinator].** Often a professor whose own research sits right at your intersection and who, by virtue of the coordinator

role, is the single person most equipped to help you get placed and, later, to supervise research. Your most important faculty relationship to build. Track down the exact name and preferred contact on your department's site, and confirm the correct email spelling before you write, since a misdirected first email is a wasted one.

- **[Named research-center director]**. A professor who runs a research center (and any affiliated data or policy unit), a source of paid or for-credit RA placements on funded projects.
- **[Named practitioner-adjunct]**. The specific attorney flagged above under the client-representation project; a practitioner who also teaches as an adjunct and holds bar or advocacy leadership is an unusually well-connected person for referrals and recommendations.

For everyone else (the faculty across the relevant social-science departments and the law school who work at this seam), see the Thesis and Research Guide, which ranks them and explains the fit. Start those relationships the same way: office hours first, a real question about their work, then the ask.

## **SECONDARY OPTIONS**

*Worth pursuing if the primary options don't work out or if you want to broaden your applications.*

**[Named advocacy nonprofit]**. A civil-rights or reform organization in your area, often with a young-advocate or emerging-leaders program. Not a traditional legal internship, but real policy and advocacy exposure, and frequently led by the same well-connected people you meet through legal aid.

**[Named reentry nonprofit]**. An organization working with people after system involvement lets you see what happens to them and their families afterward, and connects directly to the research faculty in the Thesis and Research Guide.

**[Your county prosecutor's office]**. You have already shadowed on the prosecution side. If nothing opens up on the defense side for a given semester, going deeper here still builds understanding, and these offices commonly accept undergraduate interns.

**[Your school's own internship program]**. Many departments run a formal internship program that places majors at organizations across the area. If you have trouble getting placed independently, this program can connect you. Contact the internship coordinator.

## **WHAT TO DO**

Don't wait for job postings. Send a short email with your resume, leading with your student organization's existing connection to the defender's office where you can, and checking LinkedIn for alumni from your school at the places you target (an internal referral beats a cold inbox). The Outreach Email Template covers the actual wording.

**Start the faculty conversations now.** Your internship coordinator is the one to reach out to this semester: attend office hours, ask about their research, and

mention you're looking for both placement help and eventual research. In that role they support all three: the placement, the research, and a strong recommendation. A law-school clinic director is worth a similar approach if you show initiative.

**Prioritize.** The strongest package is a combination: one direct legal placement (a public defender or legal aid role) plus one judicial or specialty-court exposure over the year. Any single one of these still gives us something real to work with.