

The logo for Mental Health Advocacy Services is enclosed in a rectangular border. It features a stylized sunburst or starburst graphic in the background. The text "MENTAL HEALTH" is at the top, "ADVOCACY" is in the middle, and "SERVICES" is at the bottom, all in a bold, serif font.

MENTAL HEALTH
ADVOCACY
SERVICES

3255 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 902
Los Angeles, CA 90010
Phone 213-389-2077 Fax 213-389-2595
www.mhas-la.org

A nonprofit organization protecting and advancing the legal rights of people with mental disabilities.

The MHAS Summer Internship Experience

MHAS offers summer clerks a variety of legal work and experience designed to familiarize clerks with the range of legal problems faced by low-income people with mental health issues. The summer encourages broad exposure both to the law and to the institutions that serve our clients.

- 1. Range of Legal Work:** Students will have immediate client contact through intake and follow up work, negotiation with third parties and investigation of issues presented by clients. All clerks are encouraged to participate in any existing community legal clinics and to attend advocacy meetings such as school education meetings and client interviews. Legal research opportunities can include general research, writing of compliance complaints and other administrative pleadings and documents, demand letters, public education outreach materials, letters and contracts. All work is done under the supervision of an attorney. MHAS's office environment is casual and attorneys operate with an open-door policy encouraging frequent contact, questions and discussion with clerks.
- 2. Introductory "Law-in-a-nutshell" Trainings:** MHAS begins the summer with a series of morning/breakfast "nutshell" trainings on topics students are likely to face during the summer. These include mental health law, working with difficult clients, special education law, government benefits and housing.
- 3. Court Visits:** Students have the opportunity to visit several courts in action and speak with local judges. Court visits typically include delinquency court and Department 95 mental health court.
- 4. Field Trip Opportunities:** Each summer numerous field trip and meeting opportunities are offered for students. Past summer tours have included Metropolitan State Hospital, residential treatment centers, mental health clinic facilities, the Twin Towers jail mental health facility and non-public schools. Meeting opportunities have included attending special education task force and health policy meetings so that students become familiar with the law at work in policy and institutional settings.
- 5. Brown Bag Exchanges:** MHAS organizes discussion opportunities at which attorneys, both from the public interest and private law firm sector, meet with law clerks to talk about issues of concern to law students, e.g., career paths, interviewing skills, resume problems, fellowship strategies, etc.
- 6. Social Activities:** In order to encourage a collegial working environment, MHAS offers clerks participation in a range of social activities. Past activities have included an executive director barbeque and our summer volunteer thank you event.

Resumes are accepted beginning in January. Please email cover letter, resume and writing sample to pmarx@mhas-la.org.

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Advocacy Projects

Mental Health Advocacy Services, Inc. (MHAS) provides free legal services to people with developmental and mental health disabilities. MHAS advocates for children and adults to obtain government benefits, protect rights, and fight discrimination. MHAS provides training and technical assistance to community members, including attorneys and service providers. MHAS also participates in impact litigation to improve the lives of low-income people with mental health disabilities.

MHAS's projects include the following:

Special Education Outreach Project – MHAS trains parents and professionals on special education law and procedures. For families needing additional assistance, MHAS offers direct representation, including representation at Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, mediations and administrative proceedings.

Fair Housing Advocacy Project – Through direct legal representation, fair housing training and legislative advocacy, MHAS fights housing discrimination. MHAS provides training and technical assistance to advocates and officials from local jurisdictions. MHAS provides representation in housing matters including landlord-tenant disputes.

Government Benefits/Access to Mental Health Services Project – MHAS has multiple projects involving government benefits advocacy. These include assisting individuals on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefit applications, denial of benefits, overpayments and disability reviews as well as working with partner agencies to train staff and ensure quality application assistance. MHAS' systems-level advocacy includes working with governmental agencies to develop strategies for increasing individual access to benefits and services.

Other Projects - MHAS also engages in policy advocacy related to mental health law and implementation, homelessness and housing rights, and mental health service reforms. Some past and present projects include stigma reduction, mental health parity and policy advocacy around reduction of barriers to housing for individuals with mental health disabilities.

For more information, contact Pam Marx at pmarx@mhas-la.org or 213-389-2077.