



Volunteer Spotlight: Education Rights Counsel

by Laurie Heer Dale, Volunteer Lawyers Project



Education Rights Counsel is a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to providing access to counsel and legal support for Nebraska's indigent public school children, with a focus on special education and due process. Education Rights Counsel's mission is to close the access-to-justice gap and decrease the school-to-prison pipeline. Approximately 50,000 students in Nebraska are verified for special education services, and over half of these students qualify under federal poverty guidelines for free and reduced lunch. In addition, over 14,000 students are suspended or expelled annually in Nebraska, and nearly half of those students come from under-resourced families. Children with disabilities that are not immediately visible are not provided necessary services and support and are suspended at disproportionately high rates. Access to appropriate counsel can make an enormous difference.

In 2016, Lauren Micek Vargas, Executive Director of Education Rights Counsel, a juvenile public defender with a Master's Degree in Special Education, recognized the various legal issues concerning education that were not being addressed for students she was representing. Lauren reached out to long-time education lawyer Elizabeth Eynon-Kokrda, and together they found that no non-profit in Nebraska was focused specifically on legal representation for students despite the fact that access to public PK-12 education is a legal right governed by nuanced, layered, and complex laws. In October 2017, Education Rights Counsel was formally organized.

The Program

Through training, support, and direct representation, Education Rights Counsel seeks to leverage the expertise of Nebraska lawyers to create systemic change in child advocacy and improve the educational and life outcomes for Nebraska's under-resourced children. Direct representation

provided by Education Rights Counsel includes flat-fee and pro-bono services to qualifying families based on a sliding scale tied to federal poverty guidelines. Representation generally encompasses 30 hours of consulting & advocacy, seeking to help families become better-informed and better self-advocates while assuring that they don't inadvertently waive or lose rights due to lack of information or supports. Lawyers who affiliate with Education Rights Counsel agree to provide representation at a reduced hourly rate, paid by Education Rights Counsel. Any fees paid by families help address expenses.

Services are provided state-wide. Common activities include assisting families in student discipline hearings, attending Individual Education Plan (IEP) team meetings, change of placement issues, helping families obtain Individual Educational Evaluations, access to records, due process hearings, preparing complaints and briefs in support of complaints made to the Nebraska Department of Education, negotiations, and mediation.

Eligibility for Services

Services are available to Nebraska public PK-12 students and families with income no greater than 250% of the federal poverty income guidelines, with income adjustments for dependents. Education Rights Counsel provides 30 minutes of free intake consultation per family and evaluates need on a case-by-case basis. Income eligibility requirements assure lawyers that the program has established procedures to provide direct services only to students and families who do not have the financial means to pay for legal counsel.

Participation

To learn more about Education Rights Counsel, contact Lauren Micek Vargas at lmv@educationrightscounsel.org.



Pro Bono Current and Upcoming Events

VLP and Legal Aid of Nebraska Team Up to Offer FREE Legal Clinic Basics CLE!

“Just the Basics!: Providing Limited Legal Services in Walk-In and Virtual Legal Clinics”

Provides new and seasoned lawyers a review of ethical rules, general substantive law, procedure, and practical advice for assisting self-represented persons at walk-in and virtual legal clinics. This seminar is being offered in Norfolk and Grand Island in September, and North Platte and Scottsbluff in late October or early November. Visit the NSBA website for more information and to register.

Lawyers in the City Coming to Fremont and Lincoln!

Lawyers in the City brings teams of volunteer lawyers, law students, paralegals, and paralegal students to communities where low-income residents work and live. Volunteer lawyers provide free, limited advice on consumer, family, housing, small claims, and immigration legal issues. Individuals who attend the event are provided self-help court forms, legal resources and information, and referrals to legal service providers.

The 1st Annual Lawyers on Main Street—Fremont event, co-hosted by Legal Aid of Nebraska, Creighton University School of Law and the Nebraska State Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project, will be held on Thursday, September 26, 2019 at the Keene Memorial Library in Fremont.

The 1st Annual Lawyers in the City—Lincoln event, co-hosted by Legal Aid of Nebraska, Nebraska Appleseed, the Nebraska State Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project, the University of Nebraska College of Law and other area nonprofit legal service providers, will be held on Friday, October 25, 2019 in Lincoln.

These events are one-day legal clinics where volunteers meet with walk-in visitors to provide brief advice; referrals to a legal aid service provider; and give self-help forms, brochures and other helpful resources.

Visit the VLP website, www.nevlp.org, for more information and to register.

VLP offers new “Low Bono” Opportunity to Nebraska Lawyers through Program Aimed at Assisting Victims of Crime

The Nebraska State Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP) was awarded federal Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) funding to implement the EVOLVES (Essential Volunteers Offering Legal Services to Victims Ensuring Safety) project. Through this project, VLP aims to increase legal services to Nebraska rural, minority, and elder victims of abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and human trafficking by referring cases to volunteer attorneys to represent victims in family law, consumer and immigration matters on a reduced fee basis (\$60 per hour). This project is similar to VLP’s former LAPTOP program.

For more information, or if you are interested in providing legal assistance to victims on a reduced-fee basis, contact Laurie Heer Dale at (402) 742-8133 or lheerdale@nevlp.org.

University of Nebraska College of Law Pro Bono Research Fellow Program

The University of Nebraska College of Law’s Pro Bono Research Fellows Program is a free service to private attorneys in need of research assistance on pro bono legal matters. The program matches interested law students with pro bono attorneys on research projects that range from small assignments taking only a few hours, to larger projects that may last an entire semester. Research fellows work directly with the pro bono attorney and may assist beyond research in some circumstances. For new assignments, a member of the College of Law Library Faculty will provide one-on-one research guidance at the beginning of the assignment, as well as on-going support, as needed. Attorneys may apply for research assistance by completing an online application located at: <https://law.unl.edu/ProBonoResearch/>

For questions about the program, contact Kala Mueller, Director of Public Interest Programs, kalamueller@unl.edu.



VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROJECT

Pro Bono Partners

Volunteers make access to justice a reality for those of limited means. VLP extends its gratitude to the following pro bono partners who have provided pro bono services in 2019.

Nebraska Free Legal Answers

Sydney C. Aase, *Lincoln*
 Eric J. Adams, *Omaha*
 Erin M. Aitcheson,
Champaign IL
 Audrey A. Bellew,
North Platte
 Lindsay R. Belmont, *Omaha*
 Larry W. Beucke, *Kearney*
 Kristen M. Blankley, *Lincoln*
 Timothy P. Brouillette,
North Platte
 Angela Burmeister, *Omaha*
 Katherine R. Chadek,
Lincoln
 Katelyn Cherney, *Omaha*
 Joshua L. Christolear,
Syracuse
 Jaclyn N. Daake, *Alma*
 Kelly R. Davis, *Omaha*
 Carla J. DeVelder, *LaVista*
 Sallie V. Dietrich, *Lincoln*
 Quinn R. Eaton, *Omaha*
 Timothy R. Engler, *Lincoln*
 Whitney A. Estwick, *Omaha*
 Ashley L. Faier, *Omaha*
 Adam R. Feeney, *Omaha*
 Irina V. Fox, *Omaha*
 Thomas J. Freeman, *Lincoln*
 Maureen E. Fulton, *Omaha*
 Tana M. Fye, *Holdrege*
 John T. Haarala, *Omaha*
 Catrina K. Harris, *Ashland*
 Kelsey L. Helget, *Hastings*
 Miranda Hobelman, *Lincoln*
 Ryan Holsten, *Lincoln*
 Crystal D. Hunt, *Kearney*
 Christa B. Israel, *Lincoln*
 Jack W. Lafleur, *Madison*

Heart Ministry Center

David D. Ernst, *Coordinator*
 Andrew M. Collins
 William P. Crawford
 Richard A. Drews
 Andrew D. Sibbersen

Peng Li, *Omaha*
 Christin P. Lovegrove, *Geneva*
 Catherine M. Mahern,
Omaha
 Hollie Mason, *Washington DC*
 Jessica D. Meyer, *Tecumseh*
 Ashley A. Moore, *Manning IA*
 Jerad A. Murphy, *Kearney*
 Julia K. Palzer, *Omaha*
 Zachary D. Petersen, *Omaha*
 Sarah E. Preisinger, *Papillion*
 Thomas D. Prickett,
Plattsmouth
 Michael A. Ramirez, *Omaha*
 Jamie L. Reyes, *Lincoln*
 Nathaniel V. Romano,
University Heights OH
 Danielle L. Rowley,
Grand Island
 Kevin L. Ruser, *Lincoln*
 Heather L. Sikyta, *Ord*
 Blake K. Simpson, *Lincoln*
 Peter Sitzmann, *Lincoln*
 Kenneth M. Smith, *Lincoln*
 Rachael A. Smith, *Omaha*
 Meagan K. Spomer, *Omaha*
 Ryan Sullivan, *Lincoln*
 Rick Tast, *Lincoln*
 Anthony D. Todero,
Minneapolis MN
 James H. Truell,
Grand Island
 Christina Usher, *Lincoln*
 Kathryn E. Welsh, *Omaha*
 Erin E. Wetzel, *Omaha*
 Matthew J. Wurstner, *Omaha*

Creighton Will Clinic

Katelyn Cherney
 Lexie Fleming, Law Student
 Nathan Kinport, Law Student
 Nicholas Le, Law Student
 Christopher A. Mihalo
 Kali Roundy, Law Student
 Nicole Wilson, Law Student

Set-Aside and Record Sealing Clinics

Mae Adkins, *Omaha*,
 Paralegal Student
 Sapphire Andersen, *Omaha*,
 Law Student
 John Bergstresser, *Omaha*,
 Law Student
 Heather Bernt, *Lincoln*,
 Paralegal
 Mark T. Bestul, *Lincoln*
 Brigitta Bogue, *Lincoln*,
 Law Student
 Katelyn Cherney, *Omaha*
 Annie Christenson, *Lincoln*,
 Law Student
 Montana Crow, *Omaha*,
 Law Student
 Katie Davis, *Omaha*,
 Law Student
 Bridget DeLeo, *Omaha*,
 Paralegal
 Katie Delmonico, *Omaha*,
 Law Student
 Quinn R. Eaton, *Omaha*
 Scott M. Eckel, *Omaha*
 Jennifer L. Gaughan,
Lincoln
 Jessica Gilgor, *Omaha*,
 Law Student
 Rose Godinez, *Lincoln*
 Kamron T. Hasan, *Omaha*

Lawyers on the Prairie

Vincent L. Dowding
 Laurie Heer Dale
 Nathan Kinport,
 Law Student
 Susan M. Koenig
 Daniel McDowell,
 Law Student
 Michelle M. Mitchell
 Jazmin Ross, Paralegal
 Melissa Robinson, Paralegal

Patrick Hayford, *Lincoln*,
 Law Student
 Marian G. Heaney, *Omaha*
 Laurie Heer Dale, *Omaha*
 Talia Hughes, *Omaha*,
 Paralegal
 Marnie A. Jensen, *Omaha*
 Tannaz Kouhpainezhad,
Omaha
 Grant D. Leach, *Omaha*
 Alix Mahoro, *Omaha*,
 Paralegal
 Brent A. Meyer, *Omaha*
 Claire Monroe, *Lincoln*,
 Law Student
 Ellen Prochaska, *Omaha*,
 Law Student
 Noah Rasmussen, *Lincoln*,
 Law Student
 Scout Richters, *Lincoln*
 Samantha Robb, *Omaha*,
 Law Student
 Justice Simanek, *Omaha*,
 Law Student
 Sami Schmit, *Lincoln*,
 Law Student
 Ryan P. Sullivan, *Lincoln*
 Amy E. Swoboda, *Lincoln*
 Kaitlin Logan Wimmer,
Omaha, Law Student
 Lea Wroblewski, *Lincoln*

Audrey A. Rowley
 Emily Santa-Rodriguez
 Keith Smith
 Nichole Sklare, Law Student
 Charity Thomas,
 Department of Justice
 Accredited Representative
 James H. Truell
 Annie Waxman Lopez
 Nicole Wilson, Law Student



VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROJECT

Pro Bono Partners

Pro Bono Cases

Rebecca S. Abell-Brown, *Fremont*
Jill M. Abrahamson, *Omaha*
Roxanne M. Alhejaj, *Omaha*
Christina L. Ball, *Lincoln*
Frederick T. Bartell, *Norfolk*
Christopher F. Blomenberg, *Lincoln*
Sara J. Bockstadter, *Hastings*
Nichole S. Bogen, *Lincoln*
Kimberly A. Booth, *Omaha*
D.C. "Woody" Bradford III, *Omaha*
Robert M. Brenner, *Gering*
Michael T. Brogan, *Norfolk*
Lucrece H. Bundy, *Omaha*
Angela J. Burmeister, *Omaha*
Mona "Molly" L. Burton, *Lincoln*
James A. Cada, *Lincoln*
Katelyn Cherney, *Omaha*
Brian J. Davis, *Cozad*
Jeffery W. Davis, *Beatrice*
Jason S. Doebe, *Norfolk*
Charles E. Dorwart, *Omaha*
Vincent L. Dowding, *Grand Island*
Michael R. Dunn, *Falls City*
Audrey M. Elliott, *Gering*
Timothy R. Engler, *Lincoln*
David H. Fisher, *Hastings*
Kyle J. Flentje, *Bellevue*
Stefanie S. Flodman, *Lincoln*
Julie Fowler, *Omaha*
Ronald E. Frank, *Omaha*
Tana M. Fye, *Holdrege*
William D. Gilner, *Omaha*
Lucinda C. Glen, *Hastings*
Vanessa J. Gorden, *Lincoln*
Charles L. Grimes, *Omaha*
Jodie Haferbier McGill, *Omaha*
Emilee Higgins, *Columbus*
Adam A. Hoelsing, *Scottsbluff*

Kenneth F. Jacobs, *Omaha*
Mark F. Jacobs, *Omaha*
Dean J. Jungers, *Bellevue*
Jessica Kallstrom-Schreckengost, *Omaha*
Jennifer D. Kearney, *Grand Island*
Casey W. Kidwell, *Omaha*
Frederick R. King, *Lincoln*
Melanie A. Kirk, *Lincoln*
Steffanie J. Kotik, *Lincoln*
Jane F. Langan Mach, *Lincoln*
Dayna L. Langdon, *Lincoln*
Peng Li, *Omaha*
Joseph Lopez-Wilson, *Omaha*
Kate M. Manuel, *Lincoln*
Amie C. Martinez, *Lincoln*
Gretchen L. McGill, *Omaha*
Deziree N. Medina, *Lincoln*
Jerad A. Murphy, *Kearney*
Melissa M. Oestmann, *Omaha*
Daniel C. Pape, *Omaha*
Jeffrey T. Palzer, *Omaha*
Ellen P. Prochaska, *Blair; Law Student*
James E. Reisinger, *Omaha*
Sean P. Rensch, *Omaha*
Katherine E. Sharp, *Columbus*
Meagan K. Spomer, *Omaha*
Elizabeth A. Stobel, *Scottsbluff*
Catherine N. Swiniarski, *Omaha*
Jason R. Thomas, *Omaha*
Jim R. Titus, *Lincoln*
Nicolas C. Viavant, *Omaha*
David R. Webb, *Lincoln*
Elise M. White, *Lincoln*
Abbie J. Widger, *Lincoln*
Megan M. Zobel, *Lincoln*

Self-Help Centers

Buffalo
Melodie T. Bellamy, *Coordinator*
Michael W. Baldwin
Jack W. Besse
Larry W. Beucke
Brandon J. Dugan
Marsha E. Fangmeyer
John D. Icenogle
Elizabeth J. Klingelhoefter
Mitchell C. Stehlik
Michael J. Synek
Thomas W. Tye II
Luke E. Zinnell

Douglas
Christina Thornton, *Coordinator*
David A. Blagg
James F. Busse
Joseph S. Dreesen
Richard A. Drews
Ronald E. Frank
Michael J. Haller Jr.
Karisa D. Johnson
Kendall K. Krajicek
Stephen J. Lefler
Craig F. Martin
Tyler A. Masterson
Michael P. Moran
Melany S. O'Brien
Ralph E. Peppard
Arturo Perez
Kathryn D. Putnam
Justin A. Quinn
Danielle L. Rowley
Michael F. Scahill
Alan C. Schroeder
Judith A. Schweikart
Karine E. Sokpoh
David Sommers
J.G. "Gerry" Sullivan
Kenneth M. Wentz III

Douglas/Creighton
Larry W. Beucke
Molly M. Blazek
Katelyn Cherney
Karen Hicks
Martha J. Lemar
Catherine "Kate" Mahern
Christopher A. Mihalo
Jennifer N. Rowling

Hall
Shawn J. Farritor, *Coordinator*
Kevin A. Brostrom
Brandon J. Dugan
Grady C. Erickson
Stacie A. Goding
Andrew D. Hanquist
Jonathan M. Hendricks
Karisa D. Johnson
Jennifer Kearney
Susan M. Koenig
Charles R. Maser
John B. McDermott
Mark T. Porto
Kane M. Ramsey
Audrey A. Rowley
Keith Smith
Mitchell C. Stehlik
James H. Truell
Erin M. Urbom
Kevin P. Walsh

Kimball
Stacy C. Bach, *Coordinator*

Madison
Ryan J. Stover, *Coordinator*
Joel E. Carlson
Jason S. Doebe
Luke P. Henderson
Jack W. LaFleur

Scotts Bluff
Stacy C. Bach, *Coordinator*
Adam A. Hoelsing
Maren L. Chaloupka
Astrid G. Munn



VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROJECT

Pro Bono Partners

The following Creighton University School of Law and the University of Nebraska Law College students provided free legal assistance for low income individuals in 2019. We are grateful for students' commitment to improving access to justice through contributions to law-related pro bono services.

Creighton University School of Law

Allison Adachi	Juliann Lauphler-Wilson
Sapphire Andersen	Katelyn Lawrence
Adeline Baker	Nicholas Le
John Bergstresser	Kristin Lindgren
Abigale Brohard	Kaitlin Logan Wimmer
Maggie Brokaw	Jeffrey Lyons
Lauren Camp	Daniel McDowell
Montana Crow	Hattie Miller
Katie Davis	Nick Mizaur
Kathryn Delmonico	Ashley Palma
Katherine Devney	Amanda Palmer
Edward Diaz	Ellen Prochaska
John Bergstresser	Candace Roach
John Farrell	Sammantha Robb
Christopher Felts	Savannah Robertson
Alexandra Fleming	Kali Roundy
Bethany Foster	Helen Russell
Jose Galvan	Amber Schlote
Anthony Galvvez	Mark Shimizu
Jessica Gilgor	John Sigmon
Kenneth Glodo III	Justice Simanek
Francisco Gomez-Mancillas	Regina Smith
Emily Grude	Miriam Tucker
Eric Hagen	Jamel Walker
Stephen Hueber	Patrick Wier
Callie Kanthack	Nicole Wilson
Nathan Kinport	Kristyn Wong
John Landrie	

University of Nebraska College of Law

Kelsey Arends	Ryan Coufal
Dylan Bakken	Katie Curtiss
Arielle Bloemer	Brianna Duda
Janell Bock	Addison Fairchild
Therese Bohaty	Melissa Figueroa
Shannon Bond	Becca Fischer
Andrew Broadfoot	Thomas Gage
Brett Bruneteau	Ellen Geisler
Angela Choe	Chris Gütter
Taylor Christopher	Christopher Gütter
Coy Clark	Stewart Kane Guderian
Carey Collingham	Melani Hagge
Graham Conlon	James Hannon
Paloma Contreras	Elise Harris

University of Nebraska College of Law

Payton Harris	Gabriela Navarro
Megan Heinzinger	Lauren Nichols
Brianne Hellstrom	Erin Olsen
Paul Henderson	Adam Onken
Deanna Hobbs	Jackson Osborn
Jordan Hohwieler	Brian Paden
Madison Huber	Deanna Piña
Damon Hudson	Jordan Pitcher
Andy Huynh	Joseph Price
Burke Brown III	Sam Raybine
Nicole Iraola	Mauricio Murga Rios
Cierra Jackman	Shelby Rowan
Brig Jensen	Sami Schmit
Nick Khihnisky	Shannon Seim
Nathan Klein	David Shea
Hunter Knight	Arpi Siyahian
Adam Kost	Nichole Costanzo Sklare
Abby Kuntz	Jackson Slechta
Rachel Kunz	Rachael Snyder
Maureen Larsen	Caroline Sojka
Eric Leise	Matt Soltys
Tessa Lengeling	BriAnn Straub
Beth Levine	Alexander Sycher
Abigayle Lindgren	Cady Troester
Samantha Lowery	Andrew Vinton
Michaela Lutz	Amanda Wall
Daniel Martin	Vincent Ware
Nicholas McGrath	Adam Werner
Tyler McKeone	Jared West
Brett McNea	Leigha Wichelt
Claire Monroe	Anne Wurth
Tyson Moodie	Lauren Ziegenbein