

Legal Advocate (Full-time, Permanent)

Mental Health Law Program

[The Community Legal Assistance Society \(“CLAS”\)](#) is seeking a Legal Advocate committed to social justice to join its Mental Health Law Program (“MHLP”).

CLAS provides free legal services to disadvantaged British Columbians through five programs: the Mental Health Law Program, the Community Advocate Support Line, the Community Law Program, the Sexual Harassment Advice, Response, and Prevention for Workplaces Program, and the BC Human Rights Clinic (the “Clinic”).

[The Mental Health Law Program](#) provides representation to involuntarily detained patients at Mental Health Review Board hearings under the BC *Mental Health Act* and to patients at BC Review Board hearings under the Mental Disorder Provisions of the *Criminal Code of Canada*.

THE POSITION:

The MHLP Legal Advocate is a lawyer or non-lawyer who will specialize in providing representation to persons involuntarily detained in or through psychiatric facilities under the *Mental Health Act* throughout the province.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Legal Advocacy Component

- Conduct client interviews;
- Advise clients of their rights, civil commitment procedures, and the Review Panel process;
- Review client files and request necessary medical records;
- Prepare clients and witnesses for hearings;
- Prepare for and represent clients at Mental Health Review Board (Review Panel) hearings pursuant to the BC *Mental Health Act*, and/or British Columbia Review Board (Review Board) hearing pursuant to the *Criminal Code of Canada*, depending on the advocate’s level of experience;
- Maintain accurate and current records of all work done on the client’s file; and
- Liaise with appropriate parties involved in preparation for the Review Panel hearing.

Training Component

- Participate in workshops and training for ad hoc lawyers/advocates, community groups, the legal community, and service providers, as directed.

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Legal education, training, and legal advocacy experience;
- Ability to communicate effectively with individuals diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder and provide legal advice on patients' rights and the hearing process;
- Ability to use sound and reasonable judgment in evaluating a patient's understanding of advice their capacity to accurately interpret instructions;
- Ability to deal with a diverse client base in a patient, compassionate and professional manner;
- Understanding of the *Mental Health Act* of BC, any relevant provisions of the *Criminal Code*, as well as other statutes and regulations and court decisions pertaining to mental health law;
- Knowledge of Mental Health Review Board and British Columbia Review Board functions;
- Strong legal advocacy and analytical skills;
- Excellent interviewing skills;
- Background in the law of evidence and administrative law in general will be an asset;
- Ability to use the DSM-V and the Compendium of Pharmaceuticals as reference tools to learn various types of mental illnesses, and the medications and treatment regimes given to patients;
- Knowledge of the issues related to the capability of the client to retain and instruct counsel;
- Excellent organizational skills including the ability to prioritize workload and balance time in the office and attending client meetings and hearings;
- Ability to contribute as a positive team player with an appropriate combination of an independent and collaborative work style;
- Valid Class 5 B.C. driver's license, access to a vehicle, and ability to do regular local travel, and travel outside the Lower Mainland, as required.

COMPENSATION:

CLAS offers an excellent benefits package which includes pension, medical, dental, and extended health benefits. Salary is commensurate with relevant experience.

APPLICATION DETAILS: Closing Date is **October 22 at 5:00 p.m.** (PST)

Please submit applications **in PDF format** to **careers@clasbc.net**. At this time, we ask that all interested candidates submit their application by email. Due to the COVID-19 situation, our office is currently closed at its location but we are continuing our work and providing services remotely.

Should have any questions regarding this position, please contact us at the email above.

CLAS strives to create a diverse and inclusive workplace. A workplace that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve strengthens our ability to achieve our mission.

We strongly encourage applications from members of communities that face discrimination and disadvantage. In order to achieve a representative team, preference may be given to applicants self-identifying as a member of one or more of the following groups: Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ2S+ people, and people from ethnic or cultural minorities. We encourage applicants to self-identify in their application if they feel comfortable doing so.