



BEGIN THE JOURNEY TO CHANGE.

Pro Bono Opportunities with Rubicon Legal Services

Your help can make a **significant impact** on the lives of those we serve. Contra Costa County has very few low-cost and/or free legal services. Individuals living in poverty and living with mental illness or other disabilities encounter a wide range of problems for which legal intervention can make an important difference.

Are you interested in donating your time and legal skills to help Rubicon Legal Services' clients?

How You Can Make an Impact

- **Be available to staff attorneys for consultation:** Provide technical assistance, answer questions or provide guidance in your areas of knowledge and expertise. We especially need attorneys who have expertise in civil litigation, consumer law, employment law, and family law. *Time commitment: variable – up to you!*
- **Provide direct assistance to clients:** Accept client referrals for consultation and advice, limited scope representation or full representation in a court or administrative proceeding. *Time commitment: variable – commit to one client or more, limited scope or full representation*
- **Volunteer on-site at Rubicon:** Assist on an ongoing basis or for a special project. A prerequisite for this opportunity is availability of Rubicon staff to supervise, and availability of office space. *Time commitment: generally this requires a commitment of at least 8 hours per week for a minimum of three months.*

- **Participate in Clean Slate day:** Momentum is building for holding a “clean slate” day in Contra Costa County in Spring 2011. Volunteer legal services during the day or assist in event planning. *Time commitment: one day plus training time prior to the event.*

Areas of Greatest Need

- **Clean Slate:** Post conviction remedies (expungements and certificates of rehabilitation), clear warrants and infractions, and advocate for parole revocation.
- **Family Law:** Advice and representation in all areas of family law: dissolution, guardianship, custody, and child support arrears.
- **Financial Security/Consumer Law:** Bankruptcy claims, delinquent taxes, predatory lending, aggressive debt collection, negotiation with creditors.
- **Foreclosure:** The current mortgage crisis has greatly impacted our clients. With increasing frequency we see clients who have owned their homes for years and are facing foreclosure and homelessness.
- **Disability Law:** Fair housing and disability related employment claims. Clients also need services related to conservatorship, estate planning, and special needs trusts.
- **Immigration:** An area of great need; Contra Costa County has few free or low-cost resources.

We look forward to hearing from you. For further information or to volunteer, please contact:

We welcome attorneys with varying levels of experience and interests and we will do our best to make the right match for you.

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About Rubicon Legal Services:

Through direct representation, counseling and advocacy, Rubicon Legal Services provides vital legal assistance to very low-income people in the East Bay. Our clients live with incomes below the federal poverty line, are living with disabilities, including mental illness, or are seeking to achieve financial independence through employment but face multiple barriers to successfully finding jobs and advancing careers.

Our Impact and Our History.

Each year, we represent *more than 500 low-income clients*, primarily in administrative proceedings; and we provide brief services, other assistance and *information and referral to more than 1,500 others*.

Although our name is new, our services are not. The Hawkins Center of Law and Services for People with Disabilities, known as the Hawkins Center, was founded in Richmond in 1986. In 2003 we merged with Rubicon Programs. This merger laid the foundation for the integration of legal services with Rubicon's mental health, housing and employment services, creating a new model for the delivery of legal services to extremely vulnerable individuals with complex needs.

Our new name, Rubicon Legal Services, reflects our strategy to deepen the impact we have through even greater coordination of legal services with Rubicon's Mental Health and Wellness, and Economic Empowerment divisions.

Our Services.

Workforce-Legal Services: Rubicon's Workforce-Legal Services integrate legal services with Rubicon's comprehensive employment services in West Contra Costa County. A large percentage of West County residents accessing these employment services face multiple, challenging barriers to employment: a history of incarceration, homelessness, disability, and financial illiteracy often coupled with significant debt and, for non-custodial parents, child support obligations and arrearages. For many of these individuals, successfully entering and sustaining employment requires that these barriers be addressed. We work in coordination with each individual's career coach to identify barriers and provide the legal interventions necessary to remove or reduce them.

Mental Health Legal Services Project (MHLSP): With the help of an Equal Justice Works fellowship grant and support from the California Bar Foundation, we initiated the Mental Health Legal Services Project (MHLSP) in late 2009. In its first year, the MHLSP served 65 clients with legal issues ranging from unlawful detainers, temporary restraining orders, medical debt, and public benefits advocacy. Entering our second year, we expect to serve even more clients. MHLSP delivers legal services following a mental health-focused medical legal partnership model to low-income residents of West Contra Costa County who are living with mental illness.

Within Rubicon, we work closely with the Bridges to Home program in our Mental Health and Wellness division. By working closely with these providers, MHLSP offers legal services that are integrated with mental health treatment, addressing issues that require legal expertise and advocacy.

Social Security Disability Advocacy: Through successful representation on Social Security and SSI disability cases alone, our clients have cumulatively recovered over \$30 million in past-due disability benefits over the last 24 years. Ongoing monthly disability benefits will top \$200 million over our clients' lifetimes.

We provide direct legal representation to individuals with severe, and often multiple disabilities who are unable to work and are seeking the basic income security of Social Security's disability programs. Approximately two thirds of those we serve have mental illness which causes or contributes to their disability. This is the only legal service we provide for which attorney's fees are charged.

HIV Legal Services: Since 1997, we have provided civil legal services to people living with HIV/AIDS who are low-income residents of Contra Costa County or are clients of the Family Care Network based in Alameda County. Services include housing, public benefits, family law, permanency planning, and creditor protection.

Our goal is to increase our clients' health and wellness through assuring access to health care, maintaining stable housing, and achieving and retaining a livable income, whether through disability benefits or protecting employment for those who are able to work. We work closely with community partners, including physicians, nurse case managers, medical social workers, and community based mental health and substance abuse providers.