

**ABA Law Student Division
2006 Work-A-Day Community Service Program**

**Helping Hands
Law Students Assist Youth-at-Risk**



**ABA Law Student Division
Work-A-Day Community Service Program
October 2006**

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A Message from the Committee

Dear ABA Law Student Division Member,

This year the theme for Work-A-Day is “Helping Hands: Law Students Assist Youth-at-Risk.” The Law Student Division is very excited about this year’s theme and we are eager to help law schools implement programs accordingly.

Together, we can address the legal issues of vulnerable youth through education, assistance, and crime prevention. Work-A-Day is an event that encourages law students to get involved in their community and give back where they live. We selected youth-at-risk this year because it involves issues that affect every community.

If you have any questions or you would like to get more involved, please contact your circuit governor or any of the public interest committee members.

Sincerely,

Carrie Tenschert

Carrie Tenschert
2006-2007 Chair
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What Is Work-A-Day?

Each year, the ABA Law Student Division Public Interest Committee chooses a Work-A-Day initiative in which law students from across the country can work together to address an issue of public interest. This year the Committee has chosen “**Helping Hands: Law Students Assist Youth-at-Risk**” as the theme for all Work-A-Day programs.

Law schools and students are encouraged to create activities and events during the **month of October** to address the legal needs and education of youth. The Law Student Division provides this Tool Kit to help get you started, but please feel free to be creative in designing programs that target specific issues in your community.

This is a fun and meaningful way for **law students to give back** to the community and raise awareness about important issues in our society and the legal system. The Law Student Division encourages all students and schools to get involved by implementing a Work-A-Day initiative this October. Your community will be all the better for it.

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Getting Started

Create a Committee

- The first step in developing a successful Work-A-Day initiative is to create a planning committee, comprised of faculty, staff, and students which is charged by your school organization or administration with developing and implementing a plan for a successful “Helping Hands: Law Students Assist Youth-at-Risk” campaign.
- It is important that you put together a diverse team, council, or committee of the proper size. Some experts say that more than 10 or 15 members can be counterproductive. Remember that inclusion is better than exclusion. Find a way for willing individuals to participate. It is important to create a broad base of participation.

Determine the Objective

- The committee should define its overall objective. Do you want to reach out to the students in your school, the community, children in the community or a combination of all three? Consider whether your main objective is to disseminate information, fund-raising or hands on contact through an organization. It could be a combination of all these things or something we haven’t even mentioned.
- Support for your public interest initiatives from all levels of the law school is important, but administration support is critical. If you are interested in accomplishing multiple tasks, consider creating teams co-chaired by members of the administration. This allows the committee to have authority and legitimacy while serving as an advisory role for the administration.
- For a public interest plan to be successful it must have two components: (1) it must be measurable and (2) there must be accountability. Committees help create accountability. The committee should develop a scorecard that helps track their progress and aids in reporting to school administrators. The committee might also want to use personnel evaluations to reflect and refine the school’s future short and long-term public interest goals.

Make a Plan

- If your goal is to incorporate public service at your law school on a long-term basis, the length of your committee's plan will be critical. Although it is important to develop a plan that will provide long-term sustainable change, it is also important to have some short-term accomplishment to create momentum. In this case, a plan could be designed for 12 to 18 months. You could then create quarterly checkpoints for consistent follow-up.
- If your objective is to create a campaign for only the short term, then your plan should include those goals that you decide are most important for Work-A-Day 2006. Again, developing a plan that will include achievable goals is important to entice momentum for future campaigns. Create a time line to include checkpoints for reviewing your progress throughout the planning process.
- Education is critical for the success of any initiative. The committee might want to develop a "Youth-at-Risk Handbook" or powerpoint presentation for faculty, staff, and students to review.
- For any Public Interest Committee to be successful, its champions must be recognized. Give out awards and show how serious the law school considers the furtherance of public interest within its walls and in the communities surrounding your institution.

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Tips for Success

When planning your event, here are some ideas to keep in mind that will help your hard work pay off and ensure that your attendees will leave the program appreciating a unique experience.

1. When seeking presenters (faculty or staff) for your educational programs, try to bring in individuals who represent different ethnic groups, gender, and lifestyles. This can help your school to make contact with people who represent diverse backgrounds.
2. When advertising your **“Helping Hands: Law Students Assist Youth-at-Risk”** initiatives, use creative, quality publicity. Try to use titles that students can easily understand and that specifically identify the topic of the program.
3. Use bulletin boards to demonstrate the legal issues associated with youth-at-risk. While the issues you have selected are being highlighted on the board, offer programs or study breaks that highlight the messages you are attempting to convey.
4. When planning activities make a commitment not to “mask” the issues or bury your initial intent by focusing on entertaining attendees. Bring the issues to the forefront of your event.
5. There is a fine line between providing the facts and initiating a shock effect, which is something you want to avoid. Remember, your objective is to create a life-long passion for your cause not shocking your audience into short-term action.
6. Plan early. Promote your event in the law school and in the community in order to provide maximum attendance and create a link between the law school and the community it occupies.
7. When sponsoring a symposium or roundtable, provide time at the end for attendees to meet and mingle. Having the opportunity to speak casually with featured speakers is important to students.

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Avoiding the Pitfalls

In constructing a Work-A-Day Day event, it is important to develop your programs in a way that makes everyone feel included. There are many common mistakes that student leaders inadvertently make which could hinder their hard work. Here are a few tips to keep in mind as you plan your event.

1. Check the calendar to prevent scheduling your event to coincide with any religious observance that may exclude some members of your school or community.
2. Be sure to be inclusive. Provide means and accessibility to community member with disabilities. Include a diverse mixture of individuals as speakers, invited guests, in your activities and publicity.
3. The scope and publicity of your event should convey an open invitation to all and entice interest in your cause. If you are planning a fund-raiser in the evening, consider a family event. If it is a luncheon in the afternoon to debate the issues, consider creating an atmosphere that will entice a lively forum instead of talking-heads.
4. Avoid mottos or program titles that may be misconstrued as insensitive.
5. In your publicity you want to entice interest not shame your audience into attending. While you want to bring your cause to the forefront of your event, you also want to generate a genuine enthusiasm and give your audience a sense of being part of the solution. This can be accomplished whether you are having a community fair to raise money or a forum to debate the issues.
6. Attempt to have things donated by your local bar associations, community groups, law firms, businesses, etc. In addition to thank you letters, be sure to give them credit for their support of your event by acknowledging them in a program or with signs thanking them publicly for the amenities they have so graciously provided.
7. Don't be afraid to ask other organizations at your institution to participate even if they're not part of your law school.

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Project Ideas for Your Campus

The Public Interest Committee is pleased to provide you with some suggestions and quick ideas for student leaders at law schools to organize on their campus. We encourage you to read more on our website (www.abanet.org/lsd/work-a-day/). These ideas are by no means all inclusive and if you or the students at your school have other thoughts for this theme we welcome you to share them with us.

- Work with local attorneys or law enforcement to sponsor talks on the legal system
- Collect stuffed animals and other items to be given to comfort children entering the foster system
- Raise money or do a volunteer drive for CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate)
- Distribute informational materials to schools on legal issues and how to contact local programs
- Team up with a local children's law center and ask how law students can contribute
- Hold a symposium on the unmet legal needs of children by inviting local counsel for children
- Organize an auction for donated items and give proceeds to the Children's Defense Fund
- Plan a benefit party with all proceeds going to a child welfare agency
- Hold a symposium on issues of teens in the legal system
- Conduct a skills building course on effective communication with teenage clients
- Develop an educational program on the importance of maintaining a clean criminal record
- Teach dispute resolution techniques to school aged children
- Invite a speaker to talk about domestic violence issues and how it effects children
- Go to local schools to educate and promote entering the legal profession
- Contact your local bar association and assist in creating and organizing a CLE program on youth in the legal system
- Assist a local organization in recruiting professionals to serve as mentors to children
- Begin a tutoring program with a local school
- Create a public awareness campaign on concerns of youth or statistics
- Author an article for your school newsletter on the concerns of youth in the legal system
- Display articles written by faculty and students highlighting youth issues
- Hold a writing contest on issues facing children in the legal system
- Create and sponsor an award given to local attorneys striving to address youth at risk issues
- Contact your local school system and help them address issues of chronic truancy
- Sell blue ribbons that symbolize awareness of child abuse and neglect
- Present a PowerPoint on legal issues involving children to students of all ages

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Statistics

Below are statistics to demonstrate the status quo regarding Youth-at-Risk in the United States. For a complete reference for such statistics, please visit the American Bar Association Division for Media Relations and Public Affairs, *Facts About Children and The Law* (www.abanet.org/media/factbooks/childlaw.pdf).

- The child poverty rate in the United States is among the highest in the developed world. In 1995, 20 percent of children lived below the poverty line (\$15,569 for a family of four.) One study that examined child poverty rates in 17 developed countries indicates that the child poverty rate in the United States was 50 percent higher than the next highest rate.
- Each year, anywhere from 3 to 10 million children will be harmed by domestic violence as unwilling witnesses to battering incidents, secondary targets of the batterer's rage, or injured when trying to stop abusers from hurting victims.
- As of the end of 1995, an estimated 494,000 children were in foster care, a considerable rise from the estimated 280,000 children in such care at the end of 1986. Most of these children are in foster care because of abuse, neglect, or abandonment by their parents, some are placed through a court order in a child protection case, while others are voluntarily placed by parents unable to provide for them.
- A federal incidence study on runaway children (1999 data) estimated that over 123,000 children annually run away or are forced out of their homes for between one and six months at a time. Within this statistic is an incalculable number of youth who are "throwaway" ? that is, their parent(s) have asked or forced them to leave home and have not allowed them to return.
- Recent reports have estimated that annually, between ten and fifteen thousand American youth are sent by their parents to privately run residential facilities, boot camps or wilderness programs. Unfortunately, as relayed in numerous newspaper articles and exposes, many youth who are enrolled in these programs are not afforded basic and fundamental rights and protections
- Annually, approximately 165,000 (2000 data) children are the subject of juvenile court "status offender" petitions. These youth are brought before the court not because they have committed an act of delinquency, but because they are missing school, run away from home, are allegedly 'beyond the control' of their parents, etc.
- Over twenty-five percent of all newly identified victims of child maltreatment are between the ages of twelve and seventeen. Teenagers coming under the care of child protection agencies often do so for reasons other than "typical"

substantiated abuse or neglect. Many enter the dependency system because they chronically run away from home or are allegedly out of the control of their parent(s). Too often these youth are ill-served by this system of public intervention and "fall between the cracks" in terms of the services they and their families require.

High School Graduation and Dropout Rates

As matriculation from high school is absolutely necessary for a constructive role in society, the following statistics demonstrate the dire problems with high school graduation in the United States. School Dropout Rates: National Dropout Prevention Center, 2005, *Information About the School Dropout Issue Selected Facts & Statistics*

- National High School Graduation Rate is 70%. National Graduation Rate by race is 54% American Indian, 79% Asian, 52% Hispanic, 51% Black, and 72% White.
- Students from low-income families have an event dropout rate of 10.7%; students from middle income families have a dropout rate of 5.4%; and 1.7% of students from high-income families drop out (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004a).
- Based on calculations per school day (180 days of seven hours each), one high school student drops out every nine seconds (Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosio, & Thompson, 2004).
- In 2001, the standard diploma graduation rate for students with disabilities age 14 and older was 47.62% (*Twenty-Fifth Annual Report to Congress*, 2003).
- The dropout rate for students with emotional/behavioral disabilities is approximately twice that of general education students (Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosio, & Thompson, 2004).
- The proportion of all 16-24-year olds who were dropouts declined between 1998 (12%) and 2004 (10%) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005).

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Helpful Websites and Resources

- ABA President-Elect Youth At Risk Initiative
<http://www.abanet.org/initiatives/youthatrisk/home.shtml>
- ABA Center on Children and the Law
www.abanet.org/child/home2.html
- National CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate)
<http://www.nationalcasa.org/htm/about.htm>
- The National Association of Counsel for Children
<http://www.naccchildlaw.org/>
- ABA Division for Public Education
<http://www.abanet.org/publiced/>
- National Center for Youth Law
<http://www.youthlaw.org/>
- Library of Congress Legal Guide
<http://www.loc.gov/law/guide/>
- Findlaw Family Law Database
<http://family.findlaw.com/>
- Criminal Justice Statistics
www.albany.edu/sourcebook/
- Helping America's Youth
<http://guide.helpingamericasyouth.gov/default.htm>
- National Foster Parent Association
<http://www.nfpainc.org/ref/nfcc.cfm?page=5>
- US Department of State
<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/legalotln/>
- US Department of Justice for Kids and Youth
<http://www.justice.gov/kidspage/index.html>
- US Courts Outreach Programs
<http://www.uscourts.gov/outreach/programs/opendoors.htm>
- Lexis State Information
www.lexisone.com/legalresearch/legalguide/states/states_resources_index.htm
- White House Drug Policy Facts
<http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/drugfact/index.html>
- Gang Prevention and Intervention Information
<http://www.stedwards.edu/educ/eanes/ganghome.html>
- National Criminal Justice Reference Service Juvenile Justice Page
<http://www.ncjrs.gov/app/topics/topic.aspx?topicid=122>
- National Foster Care Coalition
<http://www.natl-fostercare.org/>
- US Bureau of Justice Statistics
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/>
- PAVNET
<http://www.pavnet.org/>
- Youth Crime Watch of America
<http://www.yewa.org/>

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