



STREET LAW CLINIC

Southwestern Law School's Street Law Clinic has law students teaching critical legal life skills to high school students in our Los Angeles community. Law Students step into the roles of teacher, mentor, and advocate to empower at-risk youth to make better choices, overcome adversity, and build stronger futures. The participatory lessons inform the teenagers about their rights and the laws that apply to them, and provide legal information and resources they need to successfully transition to independent living and adulthood.

Who are the youth we teach?

Our students are 16 to 18 years old, in high school, and many of our students are in the foster care system or on probation. Some students live at home with families and others live with foster families or in group homes. We teach at schools throughout Los Angeles County, including schools that are on site at residential facilities, charter schools, and continuation schools. Our students range regarding their learning abilities. All of our students need this vital information and benefit having law students answer their questions about life and the law.

How does the Street Law Clinic serve at-risk youth?

For 10 weeks, law students enter selected classes and use active-learning methodology to teach teenagers about the law. The Street Law Youth in Transition lessons include topics such as:

- What laws affect you when you turn 18
- The attorney-client relationship
- What to do if you are stopped by the police or are arrested
- The Juvenile vs. Adult Criminal Systems
- Labor and housing laws
- Post high school opportunities and resources to help pay for higher education

In addition, law students meet with each youth individually to assist in formulating and implementing a transition plan, focusing on 3 areas: education, employment, and housing. Based on this transition plan, the law students prepare a resource binder specific for each youth that targets their individual needs and interests. In the future the youth will be able to refer to the resource binder and use the information it contains to aid them in everyday challenges, such as finding a job, applying to college or a trade school, or obtaining legal assistance if needed.

How can the Street Law Clinic benefit my legal education and career as a lawyer?

Students in the Street Law Clinic have the opportunity to become familiar with the inner-workings of the Dependency and Delinquency Courts. Law students observe hearings at the Children's Court in Monterey Park and at a Delinquency Court in Los Angeles, and are given the opportunity to meet with attorneys and hearing officers that specialize in this area of the law. During the classroom meetings attorneys from public interest agencies are invited as guest speakers to review the laws and answer questions in their areas of expertise that relate to this special population. For example, an employment attorney from Bet Tzedek or Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles may review the wage and hour laws that relate to teenagers, as well as discuss how to prevent typical employment problems that may arise with their prospective employers.

Students in the Street Law Clinic gain hands-on exposure to the needs, struggles and daily lives of probation, foster, special needs, and low-income youth. Street Law students gain an understanding and can work towards resolving legal issues this population commonly faces. For instance, probation youth need assistance with getting their records "sealed"; many of our students have outstanding citations that must be cleared; and foster youth need help in securing the government benefits and services they are entitled to. Law students can continue to utilize this experience in their careers as advocates for this population. For those law students who are not sure of their career path after law school, the Street Law Clinic offers an opportunity to explore areas of the law that they may not have been exposed to. And for those students who are interested in juvenile law, the Street Law Clinic is a valuable experience to prepare them for this career path.

"The Street Law Clinic provides the opportunity for law students to enrich their own legal education while gaining an appreciation of the importance of providing public service to our community. Law Students will enhance their ability to explain legal concepts in terms understandable to their students using real life examples. As a result, they become more confident and effective public speakers and later will become more confident and effective lawyers."

-Professor Laura Dym Cohen
Director, Street Law Clinic and
Community Outreach

What are the Clinic eligibility requirements?

To be eligible for the Clinic, students must be in good academic standing and completed their first year of study.

How do students apply for the Clinic?

Interested students must submit a Street Law Clinic application and resume through the portal to Professor Cohen. Students are selected based on their application with priority given to students who have not had prior in-house clinic experience and to students with dependency, delinquency, public interest and other related work or volunteer experience. Selection is not based on academic rank.

What are the hour requirements for students participating in the Clinic?

Students are expected to spend approximately twelve hours per week for this Clinic. This includes two hours of classroom time, classroom reading, lesson preparation, teaching in their classrooms, meeting with their students and other clinic duties. Students are required to teach ten classes at their assigned school site.

When does the class meet?

The Street Law class at Southwestern meets on Tuesdays from 9 to 11 a.m. The school sites and teaching times will be arranged by Professor Cohen depending on site availability and students' schedules.

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION

The Street Law Clinic is a semester course; it is three units and graded. 50% of the grade will be based on class attendance, participation in classroom discussion, demonstration teaching exercises, and submission of lesson plans and guided reflections. 50% of the grade will be based on teaching Street Law lessons including techniques, preparation, and organization of lesson plans, innovative approaches and collaboration with partner.



Professor Laura Dym Cohen

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