Allegheny County Office of Conflict Counsel

The Allegheny County Office of Conflict Counsel: Dependency Division was established in December 2010 in order to provide skilled and diligent legal representation to children and youth in the child welfare system throughout Allegheny County. The team is comprised of six attorneys, who may be assigned as either Guardian Ad Litem or Legal Counsel, and one Child Advocacy Specialist who is a Masters level licensed social worker. Upon entry into the child welfare system, the Family Court appoints to each child a Guardian ad Litem or Legal Counsel to represent them throughout the court process. The attorneys of the Office of Conflict Counsel are appointed to represent a child when Kids Voice, the nonprofit group of child advocates traditionally appointed in Allegheny County, has identified a conflict of interest preventing them from providing competent advocacy for the child.

Position: Child Advocacy Specialist- Internship

Description: The Office of Conflict Counsel utilizes a team approach both within the office, as well as with the greater community of providers serving the children. Each attorney works in conjunction with one another and the Masters level licensed social worker to identify any mental health, educational, developmental and medical needs. Once such needs have been identified, they will advocate for the youth to be matched with the most appropriate services. A representative from the team will be present to advocate for the best interests of the child, and the child's wishes, in court proceedings, as well as all meetings and treatment planning sessions. This includes working with service providers such as Children Youth and Families, schools, behavioral health or mental health services, and medical providers. It is vital that each child receives the most effective and efficient services possible in order to combat the physical, emotional, psychological harm, and the developmental delays that can accompany abuse, neglect, and removal from their home. Most importantly, we believe that in order to best represent the child's wishes and formulate informed recommendations on the best interest of the child, it is imperative that a working relationship is established between the attorney, social worker, and the youth. This is done through spending time with the youth and their caregiver, and getting to know the youth on a more intense level. Each youth and each case is unique, and both are treated as such.

Location: 429 Forbes Ave Suite 1200 (The Allegheny Building), Pittsburgh PA 15219

Start Date: Fall/Spring Semesters

Hours: To coincide with required credit hours. Hours available are the typical working hours (8am – 5pm) with limited evening hours

Compensation: There is no compensation for this placement.

Requirements: MSW students may apply. A social work internship would include participating in case planning and review meetings with each attorney, attending home visits and interacting
with our clients to understand their needs and wishes, attending meetings and maintain contact with service providers. A student would begin by shadowing the current social worker and attorneys and then take over responsibility of managing the case, the file and consulting with the attorney to prepare for upcoming hearings. Required skills for the position include the ability to manage time appropriately, ability to work independently as well as within a team setting, confident written and oral communication, and a willingness to learn about the child welfare and dependency court system. No prior experience is needed, but the ability to work and interact with children is required. Those students who are interested are asked to submit a resume as well as give a brief overview of what they wish to accomplish during their internship. Act 33/34 Clearances along with FBI Clearances are needed prior to start the internship. Access to a car is not required but has proven helpful to previous students due to the need to meet with clients in the community setting.