

VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LAWYERS AT LAB

Since its inception, LAB has provided quality legal aid and advice to persons of limited means. This would not be possible without its panel of Assigned Solicitors and Volunteer Lawyers.

1. Assigned Solicitors Scheme

Assigned Solicitors are lawyers from private practice who volunteer their time and services to LAB. They have been a key pillar of the Legal Aid Scheme since its inception.

Under Section 4(1) of the Legal Aid and Advice Act (Cap 160), the Director of Legal Aid is empowered to maintain a panel of solicitors (Assigned Solicitors) who are willing to:

- (a) Investigate, report and give an opinion upon applications for the grant of legal aid;
- (b) Act for persons receiving legal aid; and
- (c) Give legal advice under the provisions of the Legal Aid and Advice Act.

A solicitor-client relationship exists between an Assigned Solicitor and a legally aided person. An Assigned Solicitor has the responsibility to act for the legally aided person as if the latter is his private client, until the proceedings are complete. Examples of cases assigned to Assigned Solicitors include:

- (a) Cases in which both the Plaintiff and the Defendant have applied for legal aid, in which case there is a conflict of interest in the LAB acting for both of them; and
- (b) Cases involving specialised areas of the law such as the law of medical negligence and Syariah Law.

2. Volunteer Scheme for Lawyers

Launched in 2008, the Bureau's Volunteer Scheme for Lawyers gives lawyers without practising certificates an opportunity to assist the less privileged in litigation-related matters. Volunteers on this Scheme include lawyers who have retired from full-time practice, lawyers who are on sabbatical or who have taken time up to bring up their children and academics¹. Volunteers will be gazetted as Assistant Directors of Legal Aid.

Volunteers on the Scheme fall into two categories: Advice and Support Lawyers, who undertake work that a Legal Officer would do, such as research, drafting opinions and court documents, as well as giving legal advice as a duty officer; and

¹ Participants must be qualified persons, within the meaning of the Legal Profession Act (Cap. 161).

Case Lawyers, who would be assigned cases, just like any other solicitor on LAB's Panel of Assigned Solicitors.

- *Advice and Support Lawyers*

This group of volunteers would be expected to attend at LAB on a regular basis – for not less than half a day a week during office hours, – for a minimum period of three months. They will be provided training in LAB's work, and may attend its continuing education programmes. They will also be given an in-house Legal Officer as a mentor.

- *Case Lawyers*

This group of volunteers would be expected to take on a certain quota of cases from LAB over the course of a year². They need not attend at LAB on a regular basis, though they will be provided training in LAB's work, and may attend its continuing education programmes. They will also be provided with a mentor. However, they will be expected to be fully responsible for, and to conduct the cases they are assigned as independently and professionally as any Assigned Solicitor, and to see the case to its conclusion. LAB will provide support services in matters such as e-filing and the service of documents.

² Quota of cases to be agreed upon by LAB and the volunteer.

VOLUNTEERING AS A COMMUNITY MEDIATOR WITH CMC

About CMC's community mediators

CMC's mediators are volunteers who are respected members of society from all walks of life, different age groups, ethnicities and professions. They comprise leaders from grassroots and other community organisations, and are chosen for their commitment, passion and dedication to community service.

Volunteers who successfully complete the basic mediation training and assessment will be eligible to be appointed as a 'Mediator'. Mediators who have achieved a requisite level of expertise and experience in mediation with positive peer and customer feedback, and have displayed commitment to serve at the CMC for a sustained period of time, may be promoted to 'Master Mediator'. Mediators who have accumulated vast experience during their years with the CMC and are recognised for their expertise in mediation may be promoted to 'Executive Master Mediator'. The highest title accorded is 'Principal Master Mediator', a new pinnacle appointment where the mediator assumes a mentoring role - training, leading and developing other community mediators.

Volunteering as a community mediator

Individuals interested in joining our panel of mediators may fill in the online volunteer registration form available at www.cmc.gov.sg. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an initial interview and successful applicants will be required to attend CMC's basic mediation training programme.

Candidates assessed to be suitable will then be eligible for appointment as a CMC mediator. Mediators are formally appointed by the Minister for Law for a three-year term, renewable upon review, at an appointment ceremony held every three years.