Vanderbilt Legal Aid Society
Public Interest Stipend Fund Application
Summer 2015

I. INFORMATION AND CRITERIA

The Legal Aid Society of Vanderbilt University Law School aims to address the needs of the economically disadvantaged and other populations traditionally under-served by the American legal system. Its Public Interest Stipend Fund program exists to enable students to hold public-interest legal positions during their 1L or 2L summers that support this goal. **To be stipend-eligible, a summer position must meet several threshold requirements:**

1. **The position must be devoted to serving one or more underserved populations.** In the past, students have received stipends for working with such groups as low-income citizens, LGBTQ populations, and primarily Spanish-speaking migrant workers. Most government positions do not qualify. If the sponsoring organization does work that does not qualify under this criterion (e.g., a law firm that pays its bills with regular divorce cases so that it can afford to undertake custody issues for low-income clients) you must ensure that your summer will be spent working with an underserved population 100% of the time. You must present a letter/email to this effect from someone in authority at the sponsoring organization with this application.

2. **The position must be comprised of legal work done under the direct supervision of at least one lawyer.**

3. **The position must be unpaid** or the funding awarded must be less than the standard Public Interest Stipend for your classification. If you are receiving funding from your employer or a stipend from another source (e.g. a scholarship or charity), you disclose this in your application. It is possible to receive a partial Public Interest Stipend up to the amount of $5,000 for a 1L and $6,000 for a 2L.

Read the following guidelines thoroughly before filling out the PISF application. Should you have any concerns about whether your organization qualifies, or any other questions about the PISF, please contact Alex Spartz (alexandra.c.spartz@vanderbilt.edu) **before** turning in your application. To facilitate the evaluation of whether your organization qualifies, you will need to provide information regarding the factors listed below.

I. An employer will be considered eligible if:

A. It is a non-profit organization qualifying for tax exemption status under IRS Code §§ 501(c)(3), (c)(4) or (c)(5) or a government office (if working in a prosecutorial governmental office the project will be closely scrutinized with respect to I.B.);
   AND

B. It serves clients or interests that are traditionally underserved by the legal system;

C. It will not be providing funding for your summer position (OR you will be receiving less funding than the maximum PISF award from the employer and any other sources);

D. It will provide you with legal work that will be supervised by an attorney.

II. If the employer is deemed eligible, the PISF Committee will consider the following criteria in determining stipend recipients:

A. A student’s experience in public interest work and public service generally;

B. A student’s enthusiasm for public interest work;

C. A student’s career goals and commitment to applying his or her legal education to a career in public interest;

D. The quality of the student’s application materials;

E. The sponsoring organization’s history with former stipend recipients, if any, and its general reputation; and

F. Variation among the place and types of employment represented by potential recipients.
III. The following will be categorically excluded from consideration:
   A. The employer’s political, social, or religious affiliations, if any;
   B. Personal opinions that the selection committee may have regarding the potential employer
      that are unrelated to a specific committee member’s own past experience with the employer;
   and
   C. The general financial need of the student.

IV. Required documentation to be included with this application:
   A. Potential dates you plan to work and whether you are applying for a full or half stipend; a
      letter from the employer stating the nature of the organization’s work and confirming that
      you have an offer for a summer externship; if your plans are not yet solidified, you will
      need to note this in your application and supply us with a letter before your funds will be
      disbursed
   B. A statement from the employer confirming that the position will be unpaid, or stating the
      amount to be awarded (if this amount is less than the standard PISF stipend you may apply
      for the difference). If you have received money from an outside source, you must also
      specify that amount.
      If your sponsoring organization serves both regular and underserved populations as
      described at the outset of this application, your employer letter will need to contain a
      guarantee that your position will be 100% dedicated to the latter.
      If you are awarded a stipend and you plan to work for a tax-exempt organization, you
      will be required to provide evidence of § 501(c)(3), (c)(4), or (c)(5) status.

V. The discretion inherent in the application of these guidelines to specific student applications
   lies with the PISF Committee of the Vanderbilt Legal Aid Society. This committee is comprised
   of the Executive Director (student), the Public Interest Stipend Fund Director (student), and the Dean
   of Clinical Programs/LAS Faculty Advisor (faculty member). The Faculty Advisor will redact the
   applications so that they are anonymous before the PISF Committee considers them. Thus, the
   student members of the PISF Committee will be considering applications independent of any
   direct knowledge of the identities of the applicants. The PISF Committee reserves the right to
   award any amount to any applicant up to $5000 for 1Ls and $6000 for 2Ls. Applications not chosen
   to receive a PISF stipend, or those awarded less than the full amount for which the applicant would
   be eligible as a VULS stipend applicant, will be forwarded for consideration by the VULS stipend
   committee.

VI. Applicants should be aware of the following:
   A. Both full stipends and half stipends may be awarded. Full stipends are for $6,000 for 2Ls
      and $5,000 for 1Ls and presume that the applicant will be working for 10-12 weeks. Half
      stipends are for $3,000 for 2Ls and for $2,500 for 1Ls and presume that the applicant will
      be working for six weeks. Any divergence from these time periods should be noted and
      explained in your application.
   B. 2Ls: Students working ten to twelve weeks who are receiving outside funding or funding
      from their qualified employers totaling less than $6000 may apply for the difference. For
      example, a 2L who has been awarded $2000 by an outside source for his otherwise
      qualified summer work may apply for $4000 from the PISF. Students working 6 weeks may
      apply for the difference between these outside/employer funds and $3000.
   C. 1Ls: Students working ten to twelve weeks who are receiving outside funding or funding
      from their qualified employers totaling less than $5000 may apply for the difference. For
      example, a 1L who has been awarded $2000 by an outside source for his otherwise
      qualified summer work may apply for $3000 from the PISF. Students working 6 weeks may
      apply for the difference between these outside/employer funds and $2500.

Source: Some portions of the above guidelines were adapted from the NAPIL publication, Students Funding Students.
II. STIPEND APPLICATION

Remember:
- All applications must be typed.
- Place completed application in Felicia Vaden’s mailbox in the Clinic office by 5 PM on March 30, 2015.
- Place your application in an envelope labeled “LAS PISF Application.”
- DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THE ENVELOPE.

Name: ___________________________________________ Year (2016/2017): ________
Address: ____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

Phone: ___________________________ Email: ______________________________________________

Applying for [check one]: _____ half stipend (5 weeks) _____ whole stipend (10 weeks)

I. Attach a current resume. Do NOT include your GPA.

II. Please specify the employer(s) with whom you have obtained a position and the title of that position, if any, and where the position is located.

1. __________________________________________________________
   Location (city, state, country): ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   Phone: ____________________________

2. __________________________________________________________
   Location (city, state, country): ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   Phone: ____________________________

3. __________________________________________________________
   Location (city, state, country): ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   Phone: ____________________________

III. Complete the following brief essays. One to two well-written paragraphs will suffice for each answer. The answer to any one question should not exceed two typewritten pages.
A. Describe the public-interest opportunity for which you are applying. What do you hope to learn from it? How will you be contributing to public interest work? Please include (1) the purpose and scope of the agency, firm, or organization with which you will be working or wish to work (be sure to include if it is non-profit or a governmental agency); and (2) the details of the work you will be doing, including your anticipated time commitment (part-time, full-time, number of weeks, hours/week). Please refer to the Information and Criteria section at the beginning of this application form when crafting your answer.
B. Provide documentation for at least five hours of pro bono and/or community service that you have competed through one or more Legal Aid Society programs in the past academic year. Be sure to include the name and contact information for the person who supervised your service. Discuss how your involvement in these programs (along with any other pro bono and/or community service you have completed) demonstrates your personal interest in and commitment to serving the public with your legal skills.
C. Discuss your career goals and your commitment to applying your legal education to a career in public interest. How will this summer experience help you reach these goals? How does a legal education put you in a unique situation to contribute and help others?
D. Optional: If there is any other matter, concern, or additional information which you feel would be helpful to the PISF Committee in reviewing your application, please present it.
DO NOT RETURN PAGES 1 & 2

IV.  Will you be receiving funding from any other sources, i.e., other stipends, scholarships, or salary? If so, how much?

☐ Yes       How much $________  ☐ No

If so, include some form of documentation regarding the amount and source.

V.  Review the following pledge and sign below:

By signing below, I agree that the Vanderbilt Legal Aid Society’s Public Interest Stipend Committee has my permission to review my application for the Public Interest Stipend. The information contained in this application packet will be kept confidential and will be used only for the purposes of selecting stipend recipients. I understand that if my plans change I must contact Alex Spartz, Director of the Public Interest Stipend Fund, immediately. Further, I understand that if I do not work for the organization for which a stipend is awarded, or, if I do not fully disclose information regarding other outside sources of funding, the stipend may be revoked. Finally, I have read the Information and Criteria at the beginning of this application form, and I understand the terms and conditions that apply to my application.

Signature: ____________________________________________

Date: ________________________________________________

Number of pages in application (including this page):_______