Vanderbilt Law Summer Stipend Application

Vanderbilt Law School offers two forms of summer stipends to support unpaid summer legal work: Public Interest Stipend Fund (PISF) stipends and Vanderbilt Law School stipends. You must use this application form to apply for either kind of stipend, though note that some questions are applicable only to PISF stipend applicants. All applicants who meet the PISF criteria will necessarily meet the VLS stipend criteria, so all unsuccessful PISF applicants will be considered for VLS stipends.

All Applicants should be aware of the following:

A. Both full stipends and half stipends may be awarded. Full stipends are for $5,000 and presume that the applicant will be working for 10-12 weeks. Half stipends are for $2,500 and presume that the applicant will be working for five weeks. Any divergence from these time periods should be noted and explained in your application.

B. 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 student who has been awarded $2000 by an outside source for his otherwise qualified summer work may apply for $3000 from the PISF. Students working 5 weeks may apply for the difference between these outside/employer funds and $2500.

Vanderbilt Law School Stipend

INFORMATION AND CRITERIA

In order to be eligible for a Vanderbilt Law School stipend, students must be engaged in unpaid legal work serving the public interest. While the PISF defines public interest work as work devoted to underserved populations (see below), for Vanderbilt Law School stipend eligibility purposes, public interest is defined broadly to include government offices, offices of international organizations, judiciary, not-for-profit organizations, prosecutors' offices, and public defender agencies. To be stipend-eligible, a summer position must meet several threshold requirements:

I. The position must be devoted working in the public interest. This includes government offices, judicial chambers, NGO's, not for profit organizations, legal aid programs, prosecutors' offices and public defender offices.

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

III. The position must be unpaid or the funding awarded must be less than the standard 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 must disclose this in your application. It is possible to receive a partial Stipend up to the amount of $5,000.

IV. If the position is deemed eligible, the Committee will consider the following criteria in determining stipend recipients:

A. The student's enthusiasm for public interest work;

B. The quality of the student's application materials;
V. 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;

B. A letter from the employer stating the nature of the organization's work and confirming that you have an offer for summer employment;

C. 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 stipend you may apply for the difference). If you have received money from an outside source, you must also specify that amount.

PLEASE NOTE: Based on a request from the 2013-2014 Vanderbilt Bar Association, the Vanderbilt Law School stipend application includes an optional question regarding whether you are receiving financial aid in the form of loans and whether there are any financial circumstances that impact your need for the stipend. The responses to these questions are not dispositive of your eligibility for a stipend; there are many considerations we take into account in making stipend awards.

Public Interest Stipend

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:

I. 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.

A. 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.

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

III. 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.
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 the LAS PISF Director 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.) or a for-profit firm that qualifies under subsection (1) above;

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); AND

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. If the student has completed 5 hours of either pro bono work, or volunteer work for the Legal Aid Society;

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

C. A student's enthusiasm for public interest work;

D. A student's career goals and commitment to applying his or her legal education to a career in public interest; E. 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;
B. A letter from the employer stating the nature of the organization's work and confirming that you have an offer for summer employment;

C. 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.

i. 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.

ii. 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 Directors (students), the Public Interest Stipend Fund Director (student), the PISF Auction Chair (student), the Associate Dean for Clinical Education, and the Assistant Dean for Public Interest. The Faculty Advisors will redact the applications so that they are anonymous before the PISF student members consider 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. 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.

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

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**Stipend Application**

**Name:**

______________________________

**Student Class:**  
- [ ] 1L  
- [ ] 2L

**Address:**

______________________________

**Email:**

______________________________

**Phone:**

______________________________

**Applying for:**  
- [ ] Half Stipend (5 Weeks)  
- [ ] Whole Stipend (10 Weeks)

Please attach your resume. Do not include your GPA.

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.

**Employer:**

______________________________
Location: ____________________________________

Phone: ____________________________________

Attach documentation of offer.

Would you like to add an additional employers?  
  ○ Yes  
  ○ No

Employer: ____________________________________

Location: ____________________________________

Phone: ____________________________________

Attach documentation of offer.

Employer: ____________________________________

Location: ____________________________________

Phone: ____________________________________

Attach documentation of offer.

Will you be receiving funding from any other sources, i.e., other stipends, scholarships, or salary? If so, how much? ((do not add $ sign))

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.

Describe the opportunity for which you are applying. What do you hope to learn from it? Please include (1) the mission 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. If you are apply for PISF, please explain how the organization and the work meets the PISF requirements.

Discuss your educational, personal, and/or career goals and explain how this opportunity helps you reach those goals. If you are apply for PISF, please refer to PISF criteria which takes into account a student's commitment to Public Interest work.
Optional: Please indicate whether you are currently receiving financial aid in the form of loans and provide any other information regarding your financial circumstances that affect your need for stipend support.

Optional: If there is any other matter, concern, or additional information which you feel would be helpful to the Committee in reviewing your application, please present it.

Included documentation:

Are you applying for a VLS stipend only or both the PISF and VLS stipends?

- [ ] VLS Stipend
- [x] PISF/VLS

Provide documentation for at least five hours of pro bono service, or Legal Aid volunteer work, that you have competed through one or more Vanderbilt Law School 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.

Review the following pledge and sign below:

By signing below, I agree that the Vanderbilt Stipend Committee has my permission to review my stipend application. 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 the Stipend Committee, 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.

Date: ____________________________
(Use format: 01/01/2000)

Signature: ________________________

This is an example of the Summer 2019 stipend application. Application criteria and questions are subject to change in future stipend application rounds.