



A day in the life of The Legal Aid Society

When people have trouble, they come to The Legal Aid Society, one of the busiest law firms in New York City and the oldest and largest not-for-profit legal services provider in the United States.

The Legal Aid Society is an indispensable component of the legal, social, and economic fabric of New York City — passionately advocating for low-income individuals and families across a variety of civil, criminal and juvenile rights matters, while also fighting for legal reform. The Legal Aid Society is the lawyer for low-income New Yorkers, the safety net when all else has failed. The staff is the core of this great institution – 900 Legal Aid Society lawyers working with 600 social workers, investigators, paralegals and support and administrative staff. Every job and every person help make it possible for The Legal Aid Society to be the voice for low-income New Yorkers. The Legal Aid Society takes on more cases for more clients than any other legal services organization in the United States. And it brings a depth and breadth of perspective that is unmatched in the legal profession. The Legal Aid Society's unique value is an ability to go beyond any one case to create more equitable outcomes for individuals and broader, more powerful systemic change for society as a whole. In addition to the annual caseload of 300,000 individual cases and legal matters, the Society's law reform work benefits some 2 million low income families and individuals in New York City and the landmark rulings in many of these cases have a Statewide and national impact



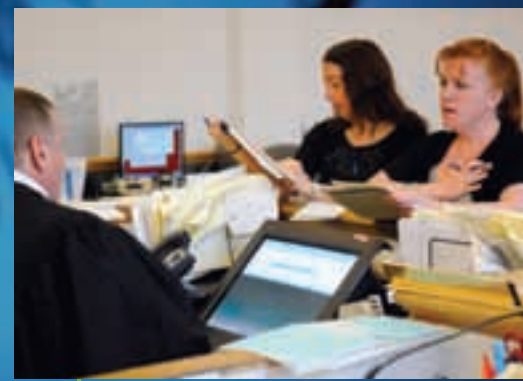
6:30 – 7:30 a.m.

Ramon Willoughby walks into the **Police Room at Manhattan Criminal Court**. They call him the “writ man” because he monitors the arrest to arraignment time. At Legal Aid headquarters on Water Street, **Aida Ramos-Herrera**, Director of Administration, is working on a Criminal Practice staffing report for the City. In the Queens Criminal Court Office in Kew Gardens, paralegal **Saleem Khan** inputs cases into the case management system that were arraigned in Night Court. He will also begin preparing folders and notices of appearances for today’s arraignments. **Karen Yazmajian**, Assistant Attorney-in-Charge of the Juvenile Rights Practice’s Brooklyn Office, is at her desk reviewing juvenile delinquency cases before meeting with individual staff attorneys to offer advice and suggest strategy for the cases in court today. On Rikers Island, **Marie Washington**, Director of Legal Aid’s Paralegal Program there, makes certain she has coverage in all 10 jails. If not, she will have to trouble-shoot between meetings with wardens and administrators. Civil Practice administrative manager **Ramona Gordon** opens the Harlem Community Law Office. In a few hours, Ramona will begin the screening intake process for low-income families and individuals with housing problems. Most often, our clients have other problems as well such as government benefit denials, domestic violence and immigration.



8:00 – 9:30 a.m.

Jose Martinez has made all the preparations for opening the **Civil Practice’s Bronx Neighborhood Office**. A few families with small children are waiting to come in. Jose helps the mothers with the strollers and gives the children some toys and books. **Sumani Lanka**, staff attorney, leaves the Civil Practice’s Queens Neighborhood Office and heads to court for a foreclosure settlement conference. **Judith Goldiner**, Attorney-in-Charge of the Civil Practice’s Law Reform Unit, is preparing testimony to present before the New York City Council. Later, Judith and staff attorneys **Ellen Davidson** and **Robert Desir** will meet with the Public Advocate’s Office about Section 8 federal rent subsidies. **Nanette Schrandt**, Director of the Juvenile Services Unit in the Juvenile Rights Practice, is setting up for a training program for new social workers. Meanwhile, staff attorney **Natalie Smith** arrives at the arraignment courtroom in Brooklyn Criminal Court and prepares to interview five incarcerated clients detained in the pre-arraignment pens. She reviews the court papers and proceeds to the holding area, while paralegal **Tarek Anderson** advises the worried mother of a client where she may check on her son’s status at the nearby clerk’s office. **Gary Solomon**, Director of Legal Support for the Juvenile Rights Practice, is on the phone, making arrangements to train two newly appointed Family Court Judges. Gary trains lawyers for children and Family Court Judges throughout the State.



10 a.m. – noon

Criminal Defense staff attorneys Edgar Davila and Edna McGoldrick are appearing before **Presiding Justice Alex M. Calabrese** in the **Red Hook Community Court**. Paralegal **Al Wall** is preparing additional client files for their criminal cases. Criminal Practice Mental Hygiene attorney **Robert Peck** awaits arrival of his client at the Kings County Hospital clinic in preparation for the client’s competency examination. Bronx Criminal Defense staff attorney **Bharati Narumanchi** speaks to the Civil Practice’s Immigration Law Unit to determine a client’s risk of deportation if he chooses to go to trial. At the Brooklyn Office for the Aging, Attorney-in-Charge **Diane Lutwak** offers advice and help to a community advocate who has called about an emergency home care problem. An elderly woman is in dire straits because essential home attendant services were cut. **Katherine Mullen**, a Juvenile Rights staff attorney, interviews a teenage girl who has been abused by a man who has enlisted her to work as prostitute. Cait’s work with sexually exploited teen-agers is legendary. **Richard Joselson**, Supervising Attorney in the Criminal Appeals Bureau, is answering the email of a staff attorney on trial in the Bronx, advising her how to fully preserve the record should an appeal be necessary. **April Newbauer**, Attorney-in-Charge of the Queens Neighborhood Office, is on a conference call with a bar association committee arranging a seminar on consumer debt problems, while staff attorney **Tashi Lhewa** assists a client facing unscrupulous practices by debt collectors. Supervising Attorney **Laura Russell** and staff attorney **Jack Newton** are interviewing a domestic violence survivor in the Bronx who has immigration issues as well.



12:30 – 2:00 p.m.

Steven Banks, Legal Aid’s Attorney-in-Chief, and **Seymour James**, the Attorney-in Charge of the Criminal Practice, head over to City Hall with **Adriene Holder**, the Civil Practice Attorney-in-Charge, to testify before the New York City Council on indigent defense and the need for additional civil legal services funding. After the testimony, Seymour will leave for Albany for meetings as the President–elect of the New York State Bar Association. Adriene will be meeting with The Robin Hood Foundation, a major funder of the Civil Practice. **Alanda Edwards**, Director of Paralegal and Investigator Programs in the Criminal Practice, is conducting a training session for intern investigators, who are graduate and undergraduate students assisting with actual investigations. On Staten Island, **Christopher Pisciotta**, Attorney-in-Charge of the Criminal Office, conducts a meeting with his staff, Juvenile Rights staff attorney **Siri Kagan** prepares for a medical conference at Bellevue, and Civil health law staff attorney **Diane Spicer** speaks to a client who has serious medical issues. On Rikers Island, paralegals **Melvin Kenny** and **Lois Jackson** are interviewing a woman inmate in the Rose M. Singer Center whose family needs emergency assistance while **Eve Rosahn**, Director of the Parole Revocation Defense Unit, is representing a client who has been wrongfully charged with violating the conditions of his release. Back at Water Street in the Criminal Practice’s central office, staff attorney **John Schoeffel** is fielding phone calls from attorneys who need advice and facts checked so they can present new evidence to the Judge when court resumes at 2 p.m.



2:30 – 4:00 p.m.

Mia Plehn, a Juvenile Rights social work supervisor, speaks with a toddler during a Court-sponsored community fair on child abuse prevention in the Bronx. Harlem Community Law Office Supervising Attorney **Karen Hambrick** interviews potential clients at a Single Stop session at a community-based organization. Meanwhile, **Tamara A. Steckler**, the Attorney-in-Charge of the Juvenile Rights Practice, is on a conference call with *pro bono* counsel from Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP to discuss strategy in a federal class action lawsuit involving children placed in upstate detention facilities. **Marshall Green**, the Attorney-in-Charge of the Civil Practice’s Bronx Neighborhood Office, and Bronx Housing Court Supervising Judge **Jaya Madhavan** discuss new initiatives to prevent homelessness. In Manhattan, Juvenile Rights staff attorney **Beth Hofmeister** returns from Court to find three children produced by a child care agency without notification for interviews for an extension of placement. Juvenile Rights attorney **Adira Hulkower** speaks to a relative of young clients who may provide the opportunity to place the children with a capable family member. In Manhattan, interpreter **Hilary Weiss** assists attorney **Crystal Parham** in translating a client’s version of events the night he was arrested. Investigator **Oswaldo Rodriguez** will follow up and interview the individuals who were with the client at the time of the alleged incident. **Judith Waksberg**, the Director of the Juvenile Rights Appeals Unit, is reviewing an appellate case with staff attorneys **John Newberry** and **Marcia Egger**. Staff attorneys **Christina Bella** and **Karen Gutheil** are working on law reform litigation affecting the young clients of the Juvenile Rights Practice.



4:30 – 6:00 p.m.

Employment Law Unit staff attorney **Aaron Halegua** interviews a client, referred by the Chinese Staff and Workers Association, who has problems involving overtime violations and unpaid wages. Aaron is a Skadden Fellow. Staff attorney **Michael Perkins** is on trial in Supreme Court in Manhattan conducting a vigorous cross-examination of a police officer in a Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance case. In the Bronx, staff attorney **Robin Frankel** and Supervisor **Peter Jones** are on a conference call with Criminal Appeals staff attorney **Elizabeth Emmons** to discuss the DNA findings in a robbery case which may be going to the grand jury. **Caroline Hsu**, a staff attorney in the Prisoners’ Rights Project, is looking for a supportive program for a client with disabilities who is being released from prison. In the Bronx, Supervising Attorney **Lauren Donnelly** prepares to meet with the Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Courts in New York City **Fern Fisher** to assess the new Housing Help Project, which has prevented literally hundreds of families and their children from becoming homeless over the past year. Forensic social worker **Karen Dubin-McKnight** and staff attorney **Gary Alexion** rush to the holding pens at Queens Criminal Court at the request of the Court to interview a mentally ill man who was arrested last night to determine if he can be placed in a program. Staff attorneys **Adam Heyman**, **Claire Nicolay** and **Daniel Ashworth** begin the night shift in Brooklyn Criminal Court where they will arraign clients until 1 a.m.



6:30 – 10:00 p.m.

Cara Chambers, supervising attorney of the Kathryn A. McDonald Education Advocacy Project, has just finished interviewing a young client before rushing off to conduct a training session for caseworkers, parents and community leaders about the rights of children with disabilities. By the time she gets home, her email box will be filled with follow up questions which she will answer that night and tomorrow morning. The Project helps children in foster care with developmental issues in education. Family Court in the Bronx has ended just a little while ago so **Dawne Mitchell**, Attorney-in-Charge of the Bronx Juvenile Rights Office, is finishing up for the day, while in Queens Supervising Attorney **Carolyn Silvers** has just learned of an emergency situation with a young client. In Harlem, Civil Practice Supervising Attorney **Magna Rose-Rios** and paralegal **LeShawn Earl** are conducting a Know Your Rights session for a community group, while **Elizabeth Hay**, Attorney-in-Charge of the Harlem Community Law Office, is handling an emergency situation for a client who was referred by a State Assembly member. **John Boston**, Director of the Prisoners' Rights Project, is answering questions from a prison advocacy group in California planning to file litigation on conditions of confinement. John's advice on prison litigation is sought by attorneys throughout the country.



1:30 a.m.

Steve Banks has edited testimony that Civil staff will present to elected officials in the morning and reviewed court documents in a Legal Aid law reform case. He is about to work on his email. **Edward McCarthy**, arraignment supervisor, is leaving Manhattan Criminal Court. The Night Court shift is over. Everyone knows Ed — court officers, EMTs, court clerks, Assistant District Attorneys and Judges alike. He will have to swing back in the morning to conduct a training class for new lawyers at the Legal Aid headquarters on Water Street. He stops and jots down a note for his training class: "Why are you working so hard to keep me out of jail?" The question came from a client he represented earlier — a disheveled, frightened young man whom Ed will refer to the Legal Aid MICA Project to try to get him into a treatment program for mentally ill, chemically addicted clients. Later today during the training session, Ed will tell the new young lawyers his answer: "Because I am your lawyer and I will fight for you." In just a few hours, **Aida Ramos-Herrera** will be back at her computer. **Ramon Willoughby** will check arrest to arraignment times. **Saleem Khan** will prepare folders for arraignments and **Ramona Gordon** will open the Harlem Community Law Office.

And another day at The Legal Aid Society begins.



MAKING THE CASE FOR HUMANITY

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