



Princeton
Internships in
Civic
Service

PICS 2010 Internship Description

Organization Name: Tennessee Justice Center

Internship Location: 301 Charlotte Ave. Nashville, TN 37201

Required Dates: Yes No If yes, internship must start on: _____ and end on _____ or
must include the period:

Housing Will Be Available to Intern: Yes No If yes, housing will be free: or
housing will cost the student:

Expected working schedule for this internship:

Start Time: 8:00am End Time: 5:00pm
Lunch break: 1 hour (duration) (specific time, if applicable)

Additional Information, if necessary:

(Please indicate if any of the preparation work will take place outside of the regular work schedule)

Organization Description

Please describe your organization briefly, including mission statement, activities, size etc. Please also explain the benefit that will be derived by your organization by sponsoring a Princeton intern.

The Tennessee Justice Center is a private, non-profit public interest law firm that represents low-income families throughout Tennessee. Our mission is to advocate on behalf of poor Tennesseans:

- in areas of public policy having the greatest impact on their health and welfare;
- by means which afford clients opportunities to make their own voices heard; and
- in ways which emphasize collaboration across lines of race, class and generation.

Our clients inspire and drive the work that we do. The Center also supports the work of others engaged in similar advocacy efforts, beyond state boundaries, on behalf of the poor.

TJC was founded in 1996 to provide free legal assistance in policy-related cases, such as class actions, which federally funded Legal Aid programs were no longer allowed to handle. In deciding which cases to accept, priority is given to those cases in which successful intervention on behalf of the client would also bring benefits to large numbers of poor people statewide. Priority is also given to legal matters affecting the necessities of life, primarily public assistance and access to health care. TJC provides technical assistance to several advocacy coalitions and prides itself on its successful collaborations with other advocates and client groups.

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TJC operates out of an office in Nashville, the state capital, with a staff of two on-site attorneys, two part-time contract attorneys, five paralegals, and two support staff. In addition to class action litigation, the organization engages in administrative advocacy with government agencies, represents clients' interests before the state legislature and develops and disseminates materials informing client communities of their legal rights and responsibilities.

Business Tennessee magazine described TJC as having directly affected the lives of more Tennesseans than any other non-profit in the state. TJC's work on welfare reform has led to several creative policy initiatives that have been duplicated by other states. Families USA Foundation recognized TJC's legal work regarding Medicaid managed care by giving TJC its national Health Advocate of the Year Award. TJC's advocacy has earned numerous awards from state organizations, as well as the American Bar Association and the National Legal Aid and Defenders Association.

Most of the organization's resources are currently devoted to advocacy relating to the protection of people enrolled in the state's Medicaid managed care program, known as TennCare. TJC represents plaintiffs in several ongoing class actions involving:

- managed care appeal rights
- health screening and treatment of low-income children
- child protective services and treatment of children in foster care
- individual safeguards regarding eligibility determinations and
- nursing home resident protections

TJC has sponsored Princeton interns for several years and has always found the experience rewarding. PICS interns bring energy, creativity, and new perspective to the work we do each day. We have found that the intern allows us to initiate and complete outreach and research projects that would not have happened otherwise.

Internship Description

Describe in detail the work or project will do; please be as specific as possible. Please also explain the benefit that a student will obtain by interning with your organization.

A current priority is the enforcement of a 1998 consent decree in the case of *John B. v. Goetz*, which requires the State of Tennessee to comply with federal quality of care standards for low-income children enrolled in Medicaid. The state has failed to fulfill commitments made in the decree. The case is a class action that involves health and mental health services for 650,000 Tennessee children, including 10,000 in the state's troubled foster care system. TJC is lead counsel in the case with two large national private firms that are helping us *pro bono publico*. There are five major law firms on the other side. The case is not yet scheduled for trial.

While the particular case or project on which the intern will work will depend upon the needs and circumstances prevailing next summer, it is almost certain to involve the *John B.* litigation. The work will fit a pattern that can be described in general terms as primarily involving the gathering, investigation and documentation of client stories. Our clients' stories are what guide our advocacy and give it potency. It is the actual experiences of real people that provide a reality check on public policies and social theories. Poignant client experiences, whether disseminated to the news media, shared with elected officials or provided to courts as testimony, possess a compelling authority that gives immediacy and force to TJC policy advocacy. In a broader sense, the collection and dissemination of client stories also helps to put a human face on poverty, which is increasingly important in an affluent society which stereotypes and marginalizes poor people.

The intern will review records, interview clients (usually by phone), write up their experiences and compile supporting documentation. Depending upon the particular project demanding TJC's attention next summer, the intern may draft affidavits

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for witnesses in litigation. The intern will also make phone calls and write letters on clients' behalf as needed to help resolve their individual problems. Online review and analysis of documentary evidence provided to TJC by the state of Tennessee in the discovery process will probably be a component of the intern's work. The intern will likely be asked to assist with community education presentations for client groups and other audiences relating to the advocacy projects that are active at the time of the internship.

An internship with TJC will benefit the intern in that he or she will have an inside view of the workings of a public interest law firm. TJC's brilliant and dedicated lawyers and its creative and hard-working paralegal and support staff will provide a mentoring environment in which the intern will gain both knowledge and skills applicable to a variety of future professional pursuits. The intern will learn a good deal about the federal Medicaid program, which provides health insurance for millions of poor and disabled people nationwide. The intern will gain intimate knowledge of Tennessee's Medicaid program, TennCare, which serves more than 1 million citizens of the state, and has been looked to as a model (both positive and negative) by other states across the country in efforts to enact health insurance reform. The intern will directly contribute to the well-being of Tennessee's children by participating in projects designed to help children gain access to the healthcare services their doctors have prescribed.

Intern Qualifications

Describe any particular skills, background, or qualities you are seeking in an intern.

An intern should have good analytical/ critical thinking skills. The person must be empathetic, with good writing skills. Flexibility, dedication to getting the job done, and willingness to work as part of a team are important qualities. Prior experience interacting with people who come from different backgrounds is desirable, but not essential.

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