



The greater Denver area has recently seen a rise of indigent clients needing family law legal services. Through Metro Volunteer Lawyers (MVL), there are hundreds of attorneys who take pro bono cases every year. But what about those attorneys who cannot commit to an entire pro bono case but still want to help? Or what if you are a new attorney and the idea of an extra case seems overwhelming? The answer is, you can volunteer with the Family Law Court Program.

WHAT IT IS: The Family Law Court Program (FLCP) is a legal clinic that assists low-income clients in Dissolution of Marriage and Allocation of Parental Responsibilities cases. The clinic serves Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Douglas and Jefferson Counties. In most counties, the clinic takes place once a month, with an average of 10 intake clients and four permanent order hearings per clinic day.

HOW IT WORKS: Client applicants are first referred to MVL by Colorado Legal Services. The clients must be at or below 200 percent of the poverty line to qualify for FLCP. Before sending to MVL, the case is screened to ensure that it is low conflict and non-contested. If at any point the case becomes contested, MVL works to assign a pro bono family law attorney to take the case, so the client is not left without legal services. After the referral, the client goes to an FLCP clinic day for an Initial Client

Meeting. Usually, these initial meetings take about three hours and are in a group setting. The purpose of the Initial Client Meeting is to gather information from the client, walk through paper work and the steps of the legal process, and complete a Sworn Financial Statement. MVL then files the case, serves the opposing party and notifies all parties of upcoming court and conference dates. The final stage of FLCP is the Permanent Order Hearing. There, a volunteer attorney meets with the client, helps to prepare final paperwork to be submitted to the court, enters a limited appearance just for the clinic day, and represents the FLCP client in their case. If the adverse party appears, the attorney will also work to reach an agreement between the parties.

WHY YOU SHOULD SIGN UP TO VOLUNTEER: In 2017, FLCP resolved 411 custody and divorce cases. Those are 411 families served that otherwise would not have been able to receive legal aid. You can sign up for a morning or afternoon time slot, which is usually just a three-hour time commitment. If you are hesitant to dive right into the clinic, you can sign up to observe until you are comfortable enough to assist in a trial or provide legal advice. You can volunteer for the FLCP even if you have limited or no knowledge of family law. FLCP is also a great way for new lawyers to gain courtroom experience. Lastly,

FLCP is the perfect solution for lawyers who want to help Colorado families but who cannot currently take on an entire pro bono case. Your commitment could be as brief as a few hours! With so many women, children and families in need of legal services, FLCP is a powerful and easy way to effectuate change in your community. Please contact Liz Jones at ejones@denbar.org to help! 📞



JAMIE L. (RUTTEN) CAGE

Jamie currently serves as treasurer of the CBA Family Law Section Executive Council and has been a

section member since 2014. Jamie formerly served as secretary, treasurer, vice president, and president of the Adams/Broomfield Bar Association. She is currently an MVL board member and representative for the 17th Judicial District for Metro Volunteer Lawyers.

STEPHANIE DANKEL

Stephanie is a 3L law student at the University of Denver. She went to Clemson University for her undergraduate degree, and worked as a Foster Care Social Worker after college. Stephanie came to law school to work with children and families, and has had the privilege of interning with both judicial officers and attorneys who are passionate about building and reforming the field of family law in Colorado.