

TENANTS' RIGHTS PROJECT

REAL CLIENT CONTACT • COURTROOM EXPOSURE • HELPING LOW-INCOME TENANTS



Info Meeting - FAQs

What is TRP?

The Tenants' Rights Project is a student-directed pro bono organization. Our only goal is to connect Columbia Law students with the lawyers at the Goddard Riverside West Side SRO Law Project so that we can help low-income tenants remedy bad conditions in their apartment.

What would I do as a volunteer?

You would be assigned another volunteer as a partner, and together you would help the attorney manage every aspect of the client's case in New York's Housing Part Court. You'd get real client contact and courtroom exposure.

The main things you would do:

- Contact the client to introduce yourself and setup a site visit
- Visit the apartment to meet with the client, learn about the tenant's concerns, and document the problems
- Prepare documents using boilerplate templates we provide (including a petition, affidavit, order to show cause, and inspection request with the city)
- Meet with the client and the attorney to have the documents signed and prepare for court
- Go to court and assist the attorney in representing the client--perhaps negotiating a settlement, drafting a default judgment order, or speaking to the judge

I don't know anything about the law--how could I do all this?

We provide the tools you need to succeed. First, you will be working closely with and under the supervision of an attorney from the West Side SRO Law Project. Second, we'll provide you with training, a detailed manual, checklists, and boilerplate documents. Third, the TRP Student Chairs have done this in the past and are always available to answer your questions.

Can I get credit for my pro bono hours?

Yes. TRP is a recognized pro bono organization. 1Ls get voluntary pro bono credit that is listed on their transcript. 2Ls and 3Ls get mandatory pro bono credit which counts toward their 40 hour requirement. To get credit, you must complete documentation from the Pro Bono office.

What's the commitment?

These are real cases, so once you commit you're expected to finish the case. But each case usually takes only about 10 hours of student time over the course of a couple months. Part of the commitment is also promptness so we can be responsive to the client and get the conditions in their apartment fixed as soon as possible.

Am I guaranteed a case?

Unfortunately, no. We hope to match every volunteer to a case, but in the past we have sometimes had more volunteers than cases. We will try to accommodate everyone, but some students may be asked to wait until later in the year or until next semester.

How can I get more info or have my questions answered?

Email trp@law.columbia.edu or go to our website at <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/law/trp>.