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POSITION: “SAVE YOUR HOME PHILLY” RENTAL ASSISTANCE TEMPORARY PARALEGAL

Philadelphia Legal Assistance (PLA) seeks to immediately hire a full-time paralegal to work with low-income Philadelphia tenants in danger of losing their homes. This position is expected to be funded for one year.

Background

PLA provides free civil legal assistance to low-income individuals and families in Philadelphia. For Philadelphia residents who are low-income, elderly, or disabled, our legal assistance is often crucial to protecting their homes, their children, their safety, and their livelihood.

PLA operates the “Save Your Home Philly” Hotline, a central point of contact for Philadelphia residents at risk of losing their homes. The lawyers and paralegals at PLA work in close collaboration with Community Legal Services, Philadelphia VIP, and a network of housing counselors to assist homeowners and renters in navigating the legal system, understanding and safeguarding their rights, and avoiding homelessness. The Hotline is a critical piece of the network of services available in Philadelphia designed to prevent homelessness; to preserve neighborhood and family stability by enabling low-income individuals to remain in their homes.

Currently, the City of Philadelphia is administering an Emergency Rental Assistance Program to help tenants with hardship due to COVID-19. There is also an Eviction Diversion program, created under the recently enacted Emergency Housing Protection Act, which gives tenants who have experienced a hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic the option to participate in a mediation program. This program allows tenants to work with housing counselors to negotiate, where possible, payment agreements with their landlords. The “Save Your Home Philly” Hotline supports both these programs by contacting tenants and connecting them to community resources for completion of their rental assistance applications, while screening for additional tenant issues that indicate the need for mediation.

During the economic crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hotline has a critical role to play in connecting homeowners and tenants with programs that threaten their housing. Especially during this time, Hotline paralegals are playing a direct role in preserving housing for Philadelphia residents.

Responsibilities

A successful candidate will have a variety of responsibilities as part of a team of attorneys and paralegals, including:

- Making a high volume of calls to tenants whose landlords applied for rental assistance
- Providing information and assistance to tenants about the Rental Assistance program
- Evaluating a tenant’s situation and making appropriate referrals
- Coordinating and managing case referrals
- Identifying cases for advice and representation by unit attorneys

- Working with Housing Counselors to make appointments and ensure that housing counselors are aware of any special needs or circumstances with the tenant's case
- Working within a team of Eviction Diversion staff to improve the services we provide for this new and growing program

Qualifications

Working with "Save Your Home Philly" is a hands-on, skill-building experience. Previous knowledge of consumer and landlord tenant legal issues is not a requirement for this position. Qualifications include:

- Excellent communication and interviewing skills
- Strong writing skills
- Commitment to improving the well-being of low-income communities
- Compassion, understanding, patience, and a talent for working cooperatively with a broad spectrum of people
- Maturity, self-motivation, and ability to adapt quickly
- Prior work or volunteer experience at a non-profit serving low-income clients is preferred
- Spanish language fluency a plus

Work Location

The successful candidate may be working from home in this position until further notice. Training will be held through video conferencing. Applicants will need to have their own phone with a google voice account, a secure laptop or desktop computer and a robust internet connection.

Application Process:

Philadelphia Legal Assistance (PLA) is an equal opportunity employer. PLA values a diverse work environment and strongly encourages women, people of color, people who identify as LGBTQ, people with disabilities, people who have experienced poverty or homelessness, and people who have had prior contact with the juvenile, criminal, or child welfare systems to apply. PLA invites all applicants to include in their cover letter a statement about how your unique background and/or experiences might contribute to the diversity, cultural vitality, and perspective of our staff and legal services practice.

Send cover letter, resume, references, and five page writing sample, preferably in one PDF document, to work@philalegal.org.

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis, and the position will remain open until filled. We encourage applicants to submit applications early.