



Law School Partnership Project

*BRINGING TOGETHER LAW SCHOOLS, PUBLIC
DEFENDER OFFICES, AND TOMORROW'S CHANGE
AGENTS TO TACKLE ONE OF OUR PROFESSION'S
MOST IMPORTANT CHALLENGES*

WHAT IS GIDEON'S PROMISE?

Criminal justice is this generation's greatest civil rights challenge and public defenders are the foot soldiers of the effort to address this issue. Named after *Gideon v. Wainwright*, the landmark case that guaranteed the right to counsel, Gideon's Promise is building a movement of public defenders, on the front line of this struggle, to drive indigent defense reform.

Gideon's Promise works with public defender offices, primarily in the Deep South, to raise the standard of representation for poor people in our nation's most broken systems. Each of our "partner-offices" is led by a chief defender who shares this reform vision and is committed to supporting the next generation of public defenders to usher in change.

WHAT IS THE LAW SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP PROJECT (LSPP)?

LSPP is a three-year program that provides permanent employment, training/continuing legal education, and support to recent graduates committed to public defense. Those who are selected are guaranteed employment with a Gideon's Promise partner-office within a year and will be financially supported by their respective law schools until their first day of work through a grant, fellowship, and/or stipend.

The LSPP gives law graduates unique opportunity otherwise not available to them: to join a public defender office working to improve criminal justice in areas where the need is greatest, and to become part of a broader movement to transform indigent defense across the South.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Our goal is to groom a generation of public defense leaders in places most in need of reform. We are not looking for students who want to experience public defense in the South for only a year or two. The LSPP is, therefore, available only to third year law students and recent graduates who:

- Demonstrate a strong commitment to public defense;
- Are interested in a career in the office beyond the term of the fellowship/grant;
- Desire to work in a system where the challenges are greatest; and
- Aspire to be part of a larger reform movement

WHICH PUBLIC DEFENDER OFFICES ARE PARTICIPATING IN LSPP?

The following offices are participating in this year's LSPP program:

- **Alabama**
 - Jefferson County Community Law Office – Birmingham, AL
 - Tuscaloosa County Office of the Public Defender – Tuscaloosa, AL
- **Georgia**
 - DeKalb County Public Defender – Decatur, GA
- **Louisiana**
 - 15th Judicial District Public Defender – Lafayette, LA
 - 16th Judicial District Public Defender – New Iberia, LA
 - Orleans Public Defenders – New Orleans, LA
- **South Carolina**
 - Office of the Richland County Public Defender – Columbia, SC

- **South Dakota**
 - Minnehaha County Public Defender – Sioux Falls, SD
- **Tennessee**
 - Law Offices of the Shelby County Public Defender – Memphis, TN
 - Metropolitan Public Defender Office – Nashville, TN

Note: Placement eligibility is determined by applicants' law school. Visit <http://gideonspromise.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/2015.09.11.-LSP-Placement-Options-3.pdf> for more information.

HOW DOES GIDEON'S PROMISE PARTNER WITH LAW SCHOOLS?

The vast majority of our law school partners have committed to funding one or more graduates either by raising the money to fund this initiative or by allocating existing fellowship funding specifically for this program. As long as the school can commit to supporting a graduate for a year, its students are eligible to apply for a permanent position, training, and support, through Gideon's Promise.

The amount of the fellowship is determined by the school. The student must understand that they should not expect any additional financial support from Gideon's Promise or the office in which they are placed until they are moved into a permanent position within the first year of participation.

Some schools have existing fellowship/grant opportunities **not dedicated** to LSPP. Typically in this situation, interested students must secure a commitment of employment **BEFORE** they can apply for the fellowship/grant. The extent to which these funding opportunities can be used to support a graduate who wishes to join a Gideon's Promise partner-office and participate in our Core Program, depends on the timing of the school's funding decisions and the requirements of the particular award. For career service professionals who wish to consider placing students in LSPP using an existing fellowship not dedicated to this initiative, please contact Gideon's Promise to discuss how we might make this work.

Because a graduate is more valuable to one of our partner-offices if s/he is able to sit for the July Bar exam, a law school that makes a funding award prior to the latest bar examination deadline for the relevant state has a better chance to place a student through this initiative. Students must be mindful that bar exam registration deadlines vary from state to state. Students should check the deadline for state of the office in which they are interested as well as the timing of the award of the applicable funding source.

Note: Because some of the Bar registration deadlines are very early in the spring semester, several schools have agreed to make early funding decisions of existing fellowship/grant opportunities for students seeking participation in this initiative. A list of our partner offices and the applicable bar registration information can be found here <http://gideonspromise.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Law-School-Partnership-Project-Bar-Deadlines-2015-2016.pdf>

HOW DOES A STUDENT APPLY?

1. Gideon's Promise will announce the 2016 participating partner offices and the 2015-16 application deadlines in early fall.
2. Each applicant must submit an application to Gideon's Promise during a date to be determined in the fall. The applicant will indicate the offices for which it wishes to be considered. Gideon's Promise will conduct an initial screening and determine whether to pass the applicant on to the requested office(s). During this process we appreciate input from the law school professionals familiar with the applicant.
3. Once each office receives a pool of applicants, it will determine which ones it wishes to interview. The office will then conduct interviews and rank applicants.
4. Based on office rankings, applicant rankings, input from the law school, and other factors, Gideon's Promise will match applicants with offices.

5. Because of the need to coordinate placements before the earliest bar deadline of our participating offices, we will plan to finalize all placements by the end of January 2016.
6. For additional questions about the LSPP, contact Afton Mallard (afton@gideonspromise.org) or AJ Simonton (AJ@gideonspromise.org).

This year, we have partnered with law schools from across the country in this effort to bring passionate future public defenders to offices where the need is greatest. Together, we are driving change in our nation's most broken systems. We hope you will join us in this effort!