

2026-2027 PUBLIC INTEREST VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT GUIDE

This guide outlines how students can get involved in the Henry N.R. Jackman Faculty of Law's public interest volunteer opportunities.

To obtain a volunteer role, students must participate in the **joint volunteer recruitment process**, which involves identifying and applying to preferred opportunities in a single application.

While preference is given to first-year JD students, all students are welcome to apply to any of the following seven public interest programs (provided they meet the eligibility criteria):

- **The David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights (Asper Centre)**
- **Downtown Legal Services (DLS)**
- **Future of Law Lab (FLL)**
- **International Human Rights Program (IHRP)**
- **Investor Protection Program (IPP)**
- **Law in Action Within Schools (LAWS)**
- **Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC)**

We encourage all students to read this guide in full before reaching out with questions. For inquiries about the joint volunteer recruitment process, please contact **Allison Williams** at allison.williams@utoronto.ca.

PLACEMENT GUIDELINES

While all students at the law school are welcome to apply to these programs, we make every effort to ensure that **all 1L students who wish to volunteer receive at least one placement**.

To support fair access, the matching process will take place in **two rounds**:

- **Round One:** Open to 1L students only (for their first placement)
- **Round Two:** Open to 1Ls seeking a second placement, as well as to 2Ls, 3Ls, and graduate students

To improve the likelihood of being matched with a program that aligns with personal interests, students are **required to rank their top volunteer opportunities**. However, to ensure broad access to opportunities, **1L students may accept no more than two placements**.

Example: A 1L student may accept **one placement in Round One** (e.g., with PBSC) and **one placement in Round Two** (e.g., with an Asper Centre working group). However, they are **not permitted to accept more than one placement per round** and should not accept a third volunteer position from another program.

This policy will be strictly enforced by all participating public interest programs.

RECRUITMENT PROCESS

To help match students with meaningful volunteer opportunities across the Asper Centre, DLS, FLL, IHRP, IPP, LAWS, and PBSC, the recruitment process has been largely centralized.

1L students who wish to volunteer with any of these programs must complete the Round One Form before the application deadline, Monday, September 21 at 12:00 p.m.

To increase the likelihood of receiving a placement that aligns with their interests, **1L students are required to rank their top opportunities. We encourage students to diversify their rankings rather than concentrating heavily on one program, as this increases the chances of a successful match with a top-ranked option.**

Please Note: 1L students interested in at least one placement are **required** to apply in Round One. They should not wait for Round Two.

Since **1L students** are eligible to apply in both rounds, **applying in Round One** will maximize their chances of securing one of their top picks. Many public interest programs will fill up after Round One, meaning fewer options will be available in Round Two. Additionally, some opportunities in Round Two are reserved for upper-year or graduate students and may not be open to 1Ls.

ROUND ONE: KEY DATES & INSTRUCTIONS

Round One Form Opens -

Thursday, September 17 at 3:00 p.m.

1L students interested in volunteering with any of the following programs must complete the **Round One Form**.

Application Deadline -

Monday, September 21 at 10:00 a.m.

This is the final deadline to submit the Round One Form for all public interest program volunteer opportunities.

Placement Notification -

Thursday, September 24 between 12:30 – 3:00 p.m. (and continuing on a rolling basis)

All 1L students who are matched with a project will be notified during this time.

Placement Acceptance Window -

Thursday, September 24 from 12:30 – 3:00 p.m.

Students must **accept no more than one placement** during this window.

If a student does not respond within this timeframe, the offer will be considered declined.

ROUND TWO: KEY DATES & INSTRUCTIONS**Round Two Form Opens -**

Friday, September 25 at 11:00 a.m.

All students (1Ls, 2Ls, 3Ls, and graduate students) interested in volunteering with any of the public interest programs must complete the **Round Two Form**.

Application Deadline -

Monday, September 28 at 12:30 p.m.

This is the final deadline to submit the Round Two Form for all remaining public interest program volunteer opportunities.

Placement Notification -

Tuesday, September 29 between 12:30 – 2:00 p.m. (and continuing on a rolling basis)

Students who are matched with a project will be notified during this time.

Placement Acceptance Window -

Tuesday, September 29 from 12:30 – 2:00 p.m.

Students must **accept no more than one placement** during this window.

If a student does not respond within this timeframe, the offer will be considered declined.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**What if I don't get one of my top choices?**

The public interest programs will make every effort to match students with one of their top ranked choices. However, some projects have specific eligibility requirements – such as

language skills or a preference for upper-year JD and graduate students – which may affect the matching process. To maximize preferred outcomes, we strongly encourage students to **diversify their rankings rather than concentrating heavily on one program** when completing the application form.

How do rolling offers work?

Placement offers are sent out during the designated notification and acceptance windows. Offers are made on a rolling basis within that window, meaning students may receive an offer at any time during the period.

Once a student receives and accepts a placement offer via email, they must **immediately decline any other offers**. This allows programs to extend opportunities to other students without delay.

Students are asked to monitor their emails closely during the following windows:

- **Round One (1Ls only):** Thursday, September 24 from 12:30 – 3:00 p.m.
- **Round Two (all students):** Tuesday, September 29 from 12:30 – 2:00 p.m.

If a student does not respond within the acceptance window, their offer will be considered declined.

SUMMARY OF VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Asper Centre: Asper Centre [student working groups](#) are student-led projects that bring together approximately 10-12 students to work in conjunction with Jackman Law faculty, civil society groups and members of the bar on Charter rights advocacy projects and/or current constitutional law issues. The working groups are led by upper-year law students and are supervised and supported by Asper Centre staff. This year, the Asper Centre is pleased to support the following working groups: 1) Supreme Court Case Materials; 2) Online Safety & the Charter; 3) Trans Prisoners' Rights, 4) Indigenous Rights: Cowichan Case Study; and 5) Constitutionality of Bail Provisions.

DLS: Client and community services provided by DLS are offered in six divisions: Criminal Law & University Offences, Employment Law & Academic Appeals, Family Law, Housing Law, Refugee & Immigration Law, Disability, Health, and Income Security and Prison Law. Each division is supervised by a staff lawyer and led by experienced student caseworkers called Division Leaders. This year, we are recruiting approximately 60 volunteers into our program where they will:

- Conduct intake on the phone, in-person or in the community to screen potential clients for our services.
- Shadow Division Leaders in one of our seven divisions and assist them with their clinic work. This may include sitting in on client meetings, conducting case-specific legal research, drafting pleadings, and attending court or tribunal proceedings. It may also include developing and delivering public legal education, engaging in community outreach, collaborating on law reform projects, and contributing to systemic litigation.
- In partnership with a Division Leader, take carriage of a casefile where the student will be jointly responsible for client counselling, conducting case-specific legal research, drafting pleadings, and appearing in a court/tribunal proceedings.
- Work directly with clients seeking pardons for past criminal offences in our Record Suspension Project.

The outreach team will attend satellite clinics at Evangel Hall Mission (ECM) and Native Canadian Centre of Toronto (NCCT) on a regular basis.

- Evangel Hall Mission is a community service agency that has supported individuals experiencing poverty, homelessness, and social isolation in Toronto for over a century. EHM aims to encourage and equip each person they serve to face the challenges of today while striving towards better tomorrows.
- Native Canadian Centre of Toronto is a membership-based, charitable organization located in the heart of downtown Toronto in a beautifully renovated heritage building. NCCT offers a wide range of programs and services based on Indigenous cultural traditions and teachings. All are welcome.

All volunteers will receive training and ongoing support throughout their experience at DLS from Division Leaders and DLS staff. DLS is committed to building a team that reflects the diversity of the communities it serves, recognizing that such representation strengthens the organization's ability to fulfill its mission. Volunteers from communities that experience structural discrimination – including those from marginalized racialized and cultural backgrounds, genders, sexual orientations, abilities, and diverse life experiences – are strongly encouraged to participate. Lived experience relevant to DLS's work is recognized and valued.

FLL: This year, students will have the opportunity to volunteer with a variety of Future of Law Lab working groups, focused on novel and cutting-edge areas of the law. This year's groups will include topics such as dealing with the major societal challenges of the 21st century, the future of work and employment, Governance of AI, Privacy Law, Entrepreneurship, and more.

Each group provides an amazing opportunity to engage with high-profile issues, build skills as a writer and researcher, and gain experience presenting work to regulators and other practitioners. Visit the [FLL website](#) for more information.

IHRP: [IHRP working groups](#) are student-led projects that provide experiential learning opportunities involving legal research, report drafting, and open-source investigations into current, emerging, or contentious international human rights issues. Working groups, comprised of 10-15 students, are led by upper year law students who work in collaboration with Jackman Law, civil society, and members of the legal profession and are supervised and supported by the IHRP Director, Research Associate, and Program Coordinator. This year, the IHRP has four working groups: Cameroon Atrocities Project (CAP), Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan (GAA), Women's Human Rights Resources (WHRR) and, together with the Future of Law Lab, AI and International Human Rights (AIHR).

IPP: This year, the IPP will provide law students with unique opportunities to hone their legal skills through developing and delivering public legal education, as well as collaborating with a variety of regulators and key stakeholders on policy projects intended to modernize the financial services industry. Projects will include topics such as building financial literacy in Ontario, developing a database of common financial scams, reviewing the use of AI in financial advice, and public legal education in areas such as budgeting, buy-now-pay-later schemes and more.

We also have ongoing projects with the Financial Services Regulatory Authority as we assist them in implementing their 2026-2027 action plans.

LAWS: The LAWS program offers law students the chance to make a meaningful impact by supporting high school youth who face barriers to postsecondary education. Volunteers can choose from a variety of roles, including Public Legal Education (PLE) Workshop Facilitator, PLE Research and Development, After-School Program/Mock Trial Leader, Law Firm Mentoring Program Leader and more. Through these roles, volunteers develop valuable skills such as mentoring, public speaking, legal research, and advocacy, while connecting with participating volunteers. The time commitment is flexible and varies depending on the role. For more information, please visit the [LAWS Website](#).

PBSC: This year Pro Bono Students Canada has **approximately** 40 projects placing students across all years of study. Student volunteers will have the opportunity to develop their legal skills by supporting the work of community organizations under the supervision of lawyers in nearly every area of law, including family, constitutional, human rights, immigration and refugee, landlord and tenant, employment and labour, LGBTQ2S+ rights, and environmental law. For a full listing of projects, please review the PBSC Project Handbook.

TRAINING DETAILS

Asper Centre: Students will hear directly from their individual working group leaders about training, if required. The leaders will be in touch to arrange the first group meeting and any project-specific training courses that participants must undertake.

DLS: All DLS volunteers will receive mandatory basic orientation and phone training on-site at the clinic (655 Spadina Avenue). Additional volunteer training for those volunteers joining the Record Suspension Project will take place during a lunch hour of mutual availability, to be determined after recruitment.

FLL: Students will hear directly from their specific working group leaders. The leaders will be in touch to arrange the first group meeting and any project-specific training courses that participants must undertake.

IHRP: Students will hear directly from their specific working group leaders. The leaders will be in touch to arrange the first group meeting and any project-specific training courses that participants must undertake. The IHRP team will also host a welcome lunch for all working group student volunteers and leaders (stay tuned for the date and more details, which will be provided by working group leaders prior to the event).

IPP: Students will hear directly from their specific working group leaders. The leaders will be in touch to arrange the first group meeting and any project-specific training courses that participants must undertake.

LAWS: All student volunteers are required to complete mandatory training. This orientation will introduce volunteers to their specific roles, connect them with others in their projects, and cover essential best practices and skills. Stay tuned for the date and additional details, which will be provided in the volunteer assignment offers before the event.

PBSC: All student volunteers must complete the following mandatory training:

- General Training: Monday, October 5, 12:30-2PM - Room J140
- Anti-oppression Training: self-directed training module to be provided to all volunteers

Please note that some projects require student volunteers to undergo additional project-specific training given the nature of the work and/or communities being served. Please review the [PBSC Project Handbook](#) for more details.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

- **Asper Centre:** tal.schreier@utoronto.ca
- **DLS:** law.dls@utoronto.ca; jm.mathew@utoronto.ca
- **FLL and IPP:** josh.morrison@utoronto.ca
- **IHRP:** estefania.rueda.torres@utoronto.ca
- **LAWS:** snilausen@lawinaction.ca
- **PBSC:** probonostudents.utoronto@gmail.com;
charlee.toliver@probonostudents.ca

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