

## NONPROFITS AT A GLANCE

(for more detailed information on nonprofits, see <http://www.law.harvard.edu/current/careers/opia/public-interest-law/practice-settings/public-interest-organizations.html>)

- **What is a non-profit?**

- Nongovernmental group that specializes in the problems of particular populations or specific sets of issues
- Types of advocacy can vary dramatically, depending on:
  - Substantive focus
  - Clients (individual vs. group)
  - Whether advocating for or against changes in the law

- **Types of nonprofit advocacy**

- ***Client-oriented organizations***

- Concentrate primarily on representing individuals within the organization's area of specialization, regardless of whether the individual client's case affects others
- Two types:

- ***Legal services organizations*** (ex: Greater Boston Legal Services, LAF of Chicago)

- Provide free or reduced-fee legal assistance to low-income and elderly clients
- Generally, civil (as opposed to criminal) practice
- Exist in some form in every state
- Issue areas include:
  - Family law
  - Domestic violence
  - Housing
  - Health
  - Government benefits
  - Consumer law
  - Employment law
- Day-to-day work includes:
  - Client interviewing and counseling
  - Administrative advocacy
  - Litigation
  - In some offices:
    - Impact work
    - Legislative advocacy
    - Community education

- Work environment:

- Heavy client contact
- Case loads often substantial (40-60 active cases); lots of variety
- Hours long but flexible
- Fast paced
- Early responsibility
- Congenial and informal
- Immediate and tangible results
- Starting salaries typically \$40-45K (higher in some urban areas)

- ***Direct services organizations*** (ex: Children's Law Center of D.C., Eviction Defense Collaborative)

- Provide representation to clients with problems in an organization's area of specialization
- Day-to-day work includes:
  - Writing demand letters for clients
  - Negotiating settlement of disputes
  - Administrative advocacy
  - Litigation
  - Advocacy training

- Drafting, negotiating, lobbying, tracking and reporting on relevant legislation
    - Work environment:
      - Heavy client contact
      - Relatively small staffs
      - Early responsibility
      - Immediate and tangible results
      - Starting salaries similar to legal services
  - Client-oriented work may be for you if:
    - You like working with people/want lots of client contact
    - You like immediate results
- **Law reform organizations**
  - Specialize in broader strategies to:
    - Advance an agenda
    - Protect or defend the legal rights of groups
    - Bring about social change
  - Typically organized around a particular set of issues (e.g., civil rights or civil liberties) or the interests of a specific disadvantaged group (e.g., racial minorities)
  - Generally, two types of advocacy organizations:
    - **Impact** (e.g., organizations that specialize in collective action litigation)
      - = work to bring about change through individual cases that present significant legal questions, affect a large number of people and hold the potential for systemic reform
      - Examples:
        - Public Citizen
        - ACLU
        - NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund
        - Earthjustice
        - Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders
      - Some organizations have specialty subdivisions
        - E.g., ACLU Women's Rights Project
      - Organizations engaging in impact advocacy may also:
        - Pursue class action litigation (representing a group of people with common grievances)
        - Write amicus (friend of the court) briefs in cases brought by other organizations
        - Collaborate/coordinate with other advocacy organizations (law and non-law)
        - Work with community-based organizations and organizers
        - Serve as clearinghouses on current developments in their specialty areas
        - Conduct public education programs
      - Day-to-day work includes:
        - Drafting complaints and motions
        - Drafting and filing briefs in trial court (law can involve a fair bit of civil procedure)
        - Occasional appellate work
        - Discovery
      - Work environment:
        - Much less client contact than legal/direct services
        - Less time in the courtroom/arguing before administrative agencies (though more time than in traditional corporate law firms)
        - Cases move more slowly than in client-oriented practices
        - Less immediate results, but more potential for wider reach and influence
    - **Policy-oriented**
      - = work to bring about change primarily through means other than litigation
        - Approaches can include:
          - Research
          - Policy analysis and advocacy
          - Lobbying for legislation

- Advocating with administrative agencies on pending regulations
    - Media advocacy
  - Lawyers often joined by professional from other disciplines (e.g., scientists, clergy, etc.)
  - Examples:
    - Environmental Law Institute
    - National Partnership for Women and Families
    - Children’s Defense Fund
  - Day-to-day work includes:
    - Research
    - Writing
    - Analysis (of trends/data/legislation)
    - Dissemination of information
    - Coalition building (especially around major pieces of legislation)
    - Developing relationships with Hill and agency staffers
  - Work environment:
    - Depends upon scale (national vs. state vs. local), but results can take even longer than in impact litigation
    - Good fit if dislike litigation but want to make large-scale change
  - Law reform work may be for you if:
    - You are passionate about the mission of the organization
    - You like research, writing, and the law
    - You can be satisfied with delayed gratification
- **Summer internships**
  - Do your research
    - Search out past interns – what was the experience like? Structured or unstructured? Legal or non-legal skills? Supervision? Necessary languages?
    - Attend OPIA’s domestic job search session in November
  - ***Client-oriented organizations***
    - Employers look for:
      - Interest in/facility for working with low-income clients
        - Ex: Teach for America, past work in a food pantry or homeless shelter
        - Need to express passion and commitment
      - Comfort with multi-cultural backgrounds
      - Interpersonal skills
      - Proficiency in another language (particularly Spanish)
        - If interested in client-oriented organizations and don’t have language skills, try to develop these skills during law school
      - Willingness to do non-glamorous tasks and to work in under-resourced environments
      - Research and writing skills
  - ***Law reform organizations***
    - Summer jobs, particularly in major metro areas, may be hard to get unless you have prior public interest experience
      - Ex: ACLU headquarters very competitive, state chapters less so
      - Generally speaking, summer positions easier to land at policy organizations than impact organizations
    - Employers look for:
      - Passion for the work
        - Need cover letter tailored to practice area
      - Relevant experience
      - Strong research and writing skills (work skews heavily towards research and writing)
- **Post-graduate opportunities**
  - ***Client-oriented organizations***
    - Positions with programs located in major urban areas are highly competitive
    - Due to limited funding, can be difficult to obtain even outside of major cities

- Fellowships are key
  - E.g. Skadden, Equal Justice Works, HLS Venture Fund
- *Law reform organizations*
  - Very seldom non-fellowship entry-level positions (limited staffing, low turnover, and high competition for openings)
    - Many organizations value judicial clerkships, but even after a clerkship, rare to be hired into a permanent, non-fellowship position
    - Typical way to break into field is to do several fellowships and then get hired on
    - Positions in organizations focused on policy work harder to land than impact (typically want substantive expertise in subject matter)
  - = fellowships are key
    - Organization-based fellowships common way to break in to both impact and policy work (e.g., Lindsay Fellowship at the Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights; Environmental Law Institute Fellowship)
    - Can sometimes use portable fellowships (e.g., Equal Justice Works)
  - Can also lateral from client-oriented direct services work, public defender offices, government practice, and firms (or from Hill for policy work)
    - BUT MUST:
      - Have relevant prior experience
      - Keep up substantive experience (e.g., through pro bono work)
      - Keep up networks