

**Minnesota Justice Foundation
Frequently Asked Questions**

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Frequently Asked Questions

Does my school have a volunteer requirement?

St. Thomas: Yes. However, volunteer work for UST's graduation requirement (50 hours) need not be law-related, and MJF volunteer work must be law-related. Volunteer hours logged with MJF can and should also be logged in the UST tracking system so students can receive credit toward their graduation requirement.

Mitchell Hamline: No.

University of Minnesota: No.

What is the 50 hour challenge?

Students who log 50+ law-related volunteer hours through their MJF accounts receive recognition at graduation. Students may log hours from volunteer opportunities available through MJF or through other sources.

What qualifies for MJF volunteer hours?

There are a variety of options that may qualify for volunteer hours. Generally, for MJF eligibility, work must be: 1) law-related; 2) public interest or public service-related; 3) unpaid; and 4) not for academic credit. If you have volunteered in a legal capacity with a pro bono attorney, government agency, or 501(c)(3) non-profit, please let your MJF staff attorney know the details to confirm whether the work can count for MJF hours. Also, surplus hours that exceed the course credit requirement for some public interest externships, field placements, or clinics may be counted as MJF hours. Contact your school's staff attorney with any questions.

When are new volunteer opportunities made available?

Through the MJF website, we offer volunteer opportunities in the fall (beginning on August 1), spring (beginning on December 1), and summer (beginning on April 1). New opportunities may arise throughout the year and MJF may send out targeted emails based on the information students include in their interest profiles.

What can I do as a 1L?

There are a variety of opportunities available to incoming and 1L students. Please check out the placements marked "available to all" that are currently available on the MJF website to find out more information.

I am a 3L, and I did law-related public service during my 1L/2L year. Is it too late to count my previous volunteer work for MJF hours?

No, it is not too late! Contact your MJF staff attorney for assistance and to learn the pre-graduation reporting deadlines for your school.

How do I log my hours?

Sign in to your MJF account, and you will see menu options including “Edit Account,” “Search Placements,” and “Log Hours.” Click the “Log Hours” link to view your list of confirmed volunteer placements.

To log your volunteer hours, click the title of that particular placement from your list. Next, fill out the log sheet as prompted. Please remember to include training time in your total hours. Once you have filled in the log sheet, check the affirmation box at the bottom of the page and click “Submit.”

If you go to log volunteer hours and your list of confirmed placements is blank or missing some information, contact your MJF staff attorney. The staff attorney can determine whether the volunteer opportunity you have been engaged in is eligible for MJF hours, and then they will add the placement to your profile for you to log the hours at your convenience.

Please note that MJF records are organized by semester. If you continue a volunteer placement into a new semester (or summer), please contact your staff attorney to update your MJF account’s placement list so you can log your hours under the appropriate semester(s).

I don’t see a place in my account to log my hours for my volunteer experience. What should I do?

Contact your school’s MJF staff attorney. The staff attorney can determine whether the volunteer opportunity you have been engaged in is eligible for MJF hours, and then they will add the placement to your profile for you to log the hours at your convenience. If you were referred by MJF, your staff attorney just needs to confirm the placement in your account and you’ll be able to log the hours.

How do I get started with volunteering? What is a referral?

To get started, create a student account on the MJF website and check out our current volunteer opportunities. You can also email your law school’s MJF staff attorney.

After connecting with your staff attorney, if you decide you would like to commit to a volunteer opportunity, the staff attorney will “refer” you to the agency that has the volunteer opportunity. The staff attorney will send you an email with the agency’s contact information. Please contact the agency and let them know you have been referred by MJF and ask what the next steps are to begin volunteering. If the staff attorney tells you to send a resume/cover letter/writing sample, please include it in your initial email to the agency contact. The staff attorney also sends the agency contact an email letting them know you will be contacting them. It is important that students follow through on the referral. Please also remember to let your staff attorney know if you have any difficulties reaching the agency contact.

I worked more hours than required for credit at my public interest clinic/externship. Can I count the surplus hours as MJF hours?

Most likely, yes! If your externship serves the community in a way that is in line with Rule 6.1, the time you work over and above the required hours of the class can be counted as volunteer hours.

What is the MJF Tri-School Public Interest Expo (Tri-PIE)?

The Tri-School Public Interest Expo, affectionately known as Tri-PIE, is a chance to bring attorneys and staff from public interest legal service agencies together to meet with law students from all three schools in the state. This is an opportunity to learn more about agencies in Minnesota (both metro and state-wide), to talk with attorneys about their professional journeys, and to learn more details about what their work is like and clients they serve. Some of the agencies represented at Tri-PIE may also host MJF Summer Fellows or have historically hosted PILF/PIC students and students can learn more about those opportunities as well.

Can I apply for more than one MJF Summer Fellowship?

Yes! Students can apply to as many MJF Fellowships as they want, and MJF Fellowships are open to 1Ls and 2Ls.

What is the difference between the Summer Fellowship Program and PILF/PIC?

MJF administers the Summer Fellowship Program, which creates and provides funding for full-time paid summer positions at MJF partner agencies. Mitchell Hamline and St. Thomas students fundraise for and administer the PILF programs at their respective schools, and University of Minnesota students fundraise for and administer the PIC program. PILF and PIC are summer funding programs for law students that have secured unpaid summer jobs in the public interest sector.

What is Street Law? How do I sign up?

Street Law is a volunteer program in which small groups of law students present engaging lessons on fundamental legal rights, responsibilities, and resources to local students in middle school, high school, and adult learning centers. Volunteer training is provided.

There will be an info session in the fall that will provide you with more detailed information about Street Law. You will receive information about signing up from your school's staff attorney. Once you indicate that you are interested in the program, either the MJF Street Law program director or your MJF staff attorney will send you information about the classrooms available and a link that will allow each team of law students to choose a Street Law classroom for spring semester.

Is there an MJF office located at my school?

Yes, each law school in Minnesota has an MJF office to make it easy for law students to meet with their MJF staff attorney.

How do I get involved with my school's MJF Student Chapter?

The MJF student chapters host educational events, coordinate volunteer opportunities, and fundraise for their classmates with unpaid summer public interest jobs. Attend a student chapter event at your school or contact your MJF staff attorney to be connected with the student chapter leadership.

School-Specific Questions

MHSL: Can blended learning students or part-time students volunteer through MJF?

Yes! Talk with the MJF staff attorney at MHSL to discuss which volunteer placements will be a fit, such as remote placements. Students can also find local public interest law volunteer opportunities, and if it meets the MJF volunteer program criteria it can count for MJF hours.

UMN: Does the Asylum Law Project (ALP) count as MJF hours?

Yes, email the UMN staff attorney to get ALP added to your MJF account so you can log your volunteer hours for that experience.

UST: Can I log my required volunteer hours as MJF volunteer hours? Is it considered “double-dipping”?

You are encouraged to log your law-related volunteer hours in both systems (MJF’s website and Tommie Link). Your entry in Tommie Link will allow UST to give you credit for those hours toward your graduation requirement. Entries on the MJF website will allow you to receive recognition by MJF for your service.

Logging the same hours in MJF and UST’s system is NOT double-dipping. (Double-dipping usually refers to logging hours you volunteer as a mentor experience for class credit and toward your 50 hour volunteer requirement.)

Miscellaneous Questions

I plan to take the NY Bar Exam. Do my MJF hours count for the 50 hours of required legal volunteer service for the NY Bar Application? Will MJF fill out the affidavit for my volunteer work?

It depends. Please review the NY Bar’s FAQ about eligible volunteer activities. Some volunteer opportunities available through MJF do not qualify for the [New York Bar’s pro bono requirement](#). MJF does not fill out the Affidavit of Compliance for your volunteer work; the affidavit should be filled out by an attorney who supervised your volunteer work. Please note, it is easiest to get the affidavit signed during or immediately after the time when you are volunteering, because it can be hard to track down supervisors after time has passed (people switch jobs, etc).

Can MJF help me find a public interest externship site, or a host agency so I can apply for outside funding or fellowships?

Your MJF staff attorney can be a resource for externship or summer placement ideas and can suggest potential contacts. Other resources include your school’s job search platform (12twenty or Symplicity) and your career counselor.

I can’t log into the website. What should I do?

First, try using a different internet browser, and/or clearing your browser’s cookies. If you have forgotten your account password, click on the “Send my password” link on the bottom of the student sign-in page. If problems persist, contact admin@mnjustice.org or your MJF staff attorney.