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Georgia Legal Services Program, the State Bar Pro Bono Project and the University of Georgia School of Law Launch "Legal Research Match"

Georgia Legal Services Program advocates now have the opportunity to work with law students at the University of Georgia on research projects. GLSP, the State Bar of Georgia Pro Bono Project and the Law School's Civil Clinics have developed a pilot project that matches research needs from GLSP advocates with UGA law students working in one of the Law School's many service programs.

The selection of research projects will range from the simple to the complex. Students will consult directly with assigning advocates, and will receive necessary training on the substantive law from UGA Law Professor and Civil Clinic Director Alex Scherr or from GLSP program experts in the relevant area. Once the research is complete, the law student, the GLSP advocate and law school supervisor will evaluate the work and suggest improvements to the process.

Referrals in Legal Research Match currently occur through e-mail; but by spring semester, 2008, the Pro Bono Project will convert the service into an online web project, using a web module that was initially developed by Legal Aid of East Tennessee and funded by the Legal Services Corporation. This new online tool will help streamline the referral process and document sharing, channel e-mails, capture and store work product for review, and host evaluation tools.

When the pilot project has completed, GLSP and the State Bar Pro Bono Project will seek to expand the project to include students at the Walter F. George School of Law at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia. Long-term plans include opening up the research service to pro bono lawyers across the state who need assistance with their pro bono cases.

Lisa Krisher, GLSP's Litigation Director, notes, "The Project will enhance GLSP's services to clients, especially in complex cases." Professor Scherr adds, "The project gives students experience in legal research on pressing issues for real clients. It reflects a valuable addition to the Law School's tradition of service learning for its students."

Georgia Legal Services Program is the law firm for 72% of Georgia's poverty population, more than 1.5 million people residing in 154 counties outside the metro-Atlanta area. Founded in 1971, Georgia Legal Services Program provides legal aid in small cities and rural towns for families and individuals who need urgent help with critical legal problems in cases involving their families, their homes, their health care, their jobs, their children's education, and more.

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