

## Healthy Futures AmeriCorps VISTA 2019-2020 at Legal Council for Health Justice

The Healthy Futures AmeriCorps VISTA position with Legal Council for Health Justice is an unmatched opportunity for aspiring physicians to gain insight into the intersection of law and medicine.

The Legal Council for Health Justice uses the power of the law to secure health, dignity, and stability for people facing barriers due to illness and disability. We work with some of the region's leading children's hospitals and clinics providing free legal assistance to vulnerable families and children so that they are better able to access health care, public assistance, education, and a myriad of other benefits. Through regular resident training and collaboration with medical school faculty, we guide future generations of health care providers to recognize and respond to social and legal issues that undermine patient health. We also engage in high-impact systems change via legal action and policy advocacy to reduce health disparities and advance the welfare of our clients and the children of Illinois. Legal Council annually connects approximately 1500 low-income individuals and families to the services they are entitled to and engages in systems level advocacy that has affected over 3.1 million Illinoisans this past year.

Healthy Futures AmeriCorps VISTAs provide vital assistance in the public policy and medical education aspects of our work. VISTAs will receive the training and experience to enter careers as physician-advocates. They will learn about and assist in policy efforts, supporting vulnerable communities and developing public health initiatives, and will become well versed in the social programs and tools needed to best serve their future patients. VISTAs will have the opportunity to interact with medical residents at both large group and one-on-one resident trainings, and to work closely with leaders in Chicago's public health scene including lawyers, physicians, researchers and public health officials.

Healthy Futures AmeriCorps VISTAs are expected to work full time, on-site while they apply and/or prepare to enter medical or graduate school, however flexibility will be given around medical/graduate school interviews if applicable. The VISTA year will go from approximately June 2019 until June 2020, though other timeframes may be possible. The Applicant will work most closely with Legal Council's Children and Families Medical-Legal Partnership Program. Applicants should apply for this position directly via email to Amy Zimmerman and through the [AmeriCorps VISTA portal](#). Individuals will be required to submit two references via the AmeriCorps portal but can submit the application before the references complete their portion.

If interested in the position but unable to commit to an AmeriCorps VISTA position, opportunities may be available on a volunteer basis; applicants should still apply via email, but not also via the AmeriCorps portal.

### Requirements:

- Bachelor's degree
- Strong writing skills (writing sample required)

- Knowledge of Microsoft Office (including Microsoft Excel)
- Knowledge of Google Drive
- Interest in policy and a desire to work with underserved populations in the Chicagoland community
- Interest in issues impacting early childhood health and education
- Minimum 18-20 hours per week commitment if not interested in AmeriCorps VISTA position
- Website construction knowledge a plus
- Fluency in Spanish a plus

To Apply:

Please submit a cover letter, resume, writing sample, and anticipated timeframe of availability to [azimmerman@legalcouncil.org](mailto:azimmerman@legalcouncil.org) with the subject line “Healthy Futures AmeriCorps VISTA” by **April 15th**. Please note: **Position will close when filled**.

Testimonials:

*“Working at Legal Council for Health Justice has presented me with a rare insight into the incredible public health good that results from interdisciplinary collaboration, dedicated advocacy, and innovative leadership. While no single policy solution could possibly cover all of the bases, I have been privileged to engage in and observe the development of all the ‘little strings’ that weave together to form the net of health policy that we too often take for granted. Legal Council has given me a valuable understanding of state and national health policy, as well as an ability to better resonate with lived experiences wildly different than mine. From having a stronger grasp on upstream determinants of health in individual patient cases, to developing a greater fluency in successful policy development, my experiences at Legal Council are sure to color my medical education and future career with a richness that would not have been possible otherwise.”* – Johan Lee, University of Michigan Medical School, Class of 2023

*“I have always been interested in understanding how I can affect change in health and medicine not only on the individual level as a physician, but on the community level as an advocate. This position at Legal Council provided me exactly the experience I was hoping for and so much more. This opportunity allowed me to be part of the inspiring work Legal Council is doing to improve access to health-related services in Illinois, and to learn directly from passionate health advocacy leaders like Ms. Zimmerman who have spear-headed dozens of influential policies and initiatives and know the ins and outs of how to make systems level changes that serve communities. Due to this opportunity, I am entering medical school with a deep understanding of the social, emotional and environmental circumstances my future patients may be experiencing and the strategies – legislative, legal, social service related, or otherwise – that can be employed to best support them. I know I will be a better physician and advocate for my patients because of my time at Legal Council.”* – Jessica Hoffen B.A., Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University, Class of 2022

*“My experiences at [Legal Council for Health Justice] exposed me to the many social and economic determinants of health that are equally as influential on longevity and wellbeing as any medical conditions. The opportunity to interact with clients from all different backgrounds has prepared me to become a compassionate physician one day and to interact with a diverse group of patients. The work that the staff lawyers do every day to fight for equal access to health care for all is inspiring, and I have no doubt that it will carry into my career as a physician.”* – Nicolas Leighton, George Washington School of Medicine and Health Sciences M-ATS Candidate, Class of 2019

*“As an aspiring health care provider taking a gap year, I knew I wanted to do something different that would give me a window into the field I hope to work in. Working with [Legal Council for Health Justice] has given me unprecedented access to see the issues my future patients might face outside of the hospital. Everyday, I see clients who, despite getting some of the best medical care in the country at renowned children’s hospitals like Comer and Lurie, are unable to fully recover due to social and legal issues plaguing them. Perhaps they have asthma, but live in a home infested with mold and roaches; or their school does not have a seizure action plan in place; or they are unable to keep a home-health nurse and risk more expensive institutionalization. I have gained knowledge of tools that physicians can use to advocate for their patients’ rights and hopefully decrease costly hospitalizations. I was also able to talk about this work during medical school interviews and I am confident that this unique experience gave me an edge in the application process.”* -- Nina Clark, CCOM Midwestern University, Class of 2020

*“Working with [Legal Council for Health Justice] was probably one of the best experiences that I could have had, both in terms of my overall development as a future physician and during the medical school application process. My time there taught me a great deal about health disparities and social determinants of health on both an individual and systemic level. On an individual level, I was able to see how the right legal and social services referrals made at the right time can make a huge difference in the management of a child’s health condition as well as the overall well-being of the child’s family. On the systemic level, I was able to gain a greater understanding of the many players and moving pieces involved with addressing negative influences on health via policy and legislation. On any level, what struck me the most is how much more powerful both healthcare providers and lawyers can be in their respective field with the aid of each other. So much of health is inextricably intertwined with larger contextual and systemic issues – my experiences at [Legal Council] have given me a formative insight into these issues and I am confident that the lessons that I learned there will continue to prove invaluable in my future career as a physician and patient advocate.”* -- Amanda Kim, J.D., University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine, Class of 2019