Human Services Campus Collaborative: Legal Clinic & Homeless Court Externship

In the fall semester of 2013, Arizona Summit Law School (AZ Summit Law) began participating in two programs providing pro bono legal services for clients of the Human Services Campus in downtown Phoenix. The campus, which is focused on creating solutions to end homelessness through collaboration, is one of the largest collectives of its type in the United States, and seeks to provide comprehensive services to people in transition. Through diligent work with campus leadership, AZ Summit Law identified two gaps related to legal services that it could help to fill; a legal clinic and a homeless court legal services externship.

Background:
The Human Services Campus operates with a mission for using the power of collaboration to create solutions to end homelessness and is situated on a 11-acre site in downtown Phoenix. Partnering with the campus was the recommendation of AZ Summit Law board member Pat McGroder, who has been involved with efforts to end homelessness for more than 20 years. As a board member for the law school, he identified a tie between the school's mission to serve under-served communities and an opportunity to expand the range of services offered at the Human Services Campus. After confirming that the Campus would benefit from additional legal services, AZ Summit Law faculty collaborated with campus leadership to identify needs and created a curriculum that accomplishes two educational goals, while assisting campus clients with navigating and resolving legal issues in order to facilitate their transition and re-entry into employment and the community. The educational goals accomplished include:

➢ Providing law students with hands-on legal skills experience, and
➢ Providing law students with valuable client service experience.

The outcome of the collaboration resulted in the creation of a legal clinic and a homeless court externship, in which AZ Summit Law students are able to participate each semester.

Legal Clinic:
Clients of the Human Services Campus have vast and varied legal issues, which have been roadblocks to their successful re-entry into employment and the community. Offering a robust range of unbundled legal services can help clients at the campus move through their transition. Participating students are on campus Tuesday and Thursday mornings and participate in a separate clinic class once each week. Each trimester, three – five students participate for course credit and gain hands-on legal skills experience working with a wide range of issues and individuals. Since beginning, the legal clinic has assisted approximately 175 clients each trimester.

Common legal issues presented to the legal clinic include, but are not limited to:

➢ landlord/tenant rights       ➢ immigration and citizenship issues
➢ divorce ➢ custody and family law related issues
➢ expungement of criminal records ➢ discrimination or harassment issues
➢ civil law issues
Maricopa County Regional Homeless Court Externship with Community Legal Services:
On the third Tuesday of each month, the Maricopa County Regional Homeless Court is held on the Human Services Campus. Clients are determined to be eligible by campus case managers once a client has demonstrated a commitment to their plan through the transition. In Homeless Court, criminal charges, fines and resolutions are determined. Fines are resolved through community restitution. One hour of community service resolves $10 of fines through the Court. In 2013, the court resolved 275 cases and heard approximately 120 defendants.

Each trimester, up to three AZ Summit Law students may elect to participate in the Homeless Court Externship program through Community Legal Services (CLS). Students work directly with the CLS attorney to represent clients, who are working to address various legal issues. The Court addresses misdemeanor victimless offenses and warrants, including parking, traffic, loitering, and trespassing charges and other nonviolent misdemeanors. Legal services vary, including:

- conducting research
- drafting briefs
- interviewing potential and actual clients
- writing letters to opposing counsel
- drafting memos to opposing counsel
- reviewing transcripts

Clients must meet eligibility requirements established by the court, including having no felonies within the last ten years, except drug and/or DUI convictions.

About the Human Services Campus:
The campus is a collaboration of public, private, non-profit, and faith-based organizations providing services and resources to individuals experiencing homelessness in metropolitan Phoenix.

The Human Services Campus is home to more than 12 unique, independent agencies responsible for the delivery of services to individuals at the campus. In an effort to complement, rather than duplicate, the work of its partners, the campus focuses its efforts on key areas, including:

- Provide a safe, clean, and dignified environment for all campus clients, staff, and visitors;
- Outreach to and engage individuals on and around the campus in an effort to connect them to services offered by partner agencies;
- Collaborate and coordinate with partners to address common issues faced by all partners (i.e. support for permanent supportive housing, hosting annual water drive, etc.);
- Advocate for and raise awareness of the campus, its mission, partner agencies, homeless issues and solutions; and
- Develop and maintain strong relationships with neighborhood partners and stakeholders.

Campus services assisting clients in transition include food, clothing, shelter, medical services, dental services, legal services, housing, employment training and assistance, mental health services, substance abuse counseling, identification resources, educational services, GED classes, Post Office, and homeless court.