

INDIGENT CRIMINAL JUSTICE PRACTICUM (IHCJP)

IHCJP 900: Indigent Criminal Justice Practicum

3-5 Credits/Maximum of 10

The Indigent Criminal Justice Practicum provides students with several opportunities to work in the criminal justice system within two different tracks. The Trial Track involves representation of indigent criminal defendants accused of misdemeanor offenses in the Centre County Court of Common Pleas under the supervision of an attorney from the Centre County Public Defender Office. Students learn litigation, negotiation and advocacy skills as they represent defendants through all stages of a criminal case. This hands-on experience is accompanied by a classroom component designed to give students guidance, feedback and an open forum to discuss their cases and the various facets of defense work. The subject matter of the classroom component is designed to follow the progress of each student's cases as those cases work their way through the various stages of the criminal justice system. The Post-Conviction/Amicus Track provides students with opportunities to not only represent indigent defendants in contested evidentiary hearings in the Centre County Court of Common Pleas, but also to advocate for broader changes in the criminal justice system through the filing of amicus briefs. While students learn a variety of trial skills in the context of hearings before a judge, they will also gain an appreciation for the vast array of problems in the justice system. This real-world experience is accompanied by a classroom component designed to foster practical skills as well as critical thinking. The Indigent Criminal Justice Practicum has two primary objectives: 1) provide criminal defendants who cannot afford private counsel with highly effective representation that is client-centered, professional and ethical, and 2) create a structured and supervised environment which enables each student to gain a detailed, working knowledge of how to represent a defendant; apply that knowledge to actual criminal cases; and gain feedback and reflection after each important stage of the case. Students earn 5 credits per semester for the Trial Track and 3 credits per semester for the Post-Conviction/Amicus Track and must commit to participate in the clinic for two semesters (Fall and Spring).

Prerequisites: PRORP 934, PROSK 955 Faculty Approval Required